

# Slow Togethering as a tool for dialogic development amongst dance dramaturgs

**Laurence, M. C. & Zivkovic Kranjc, S**

Published PDF deposited in Coventry University's Repository

**Original citation:**

Laurence, MC & Zivkovic Kranjc, S 2023, 'Slow Togethering as a tool for dialogic development amongst dance dramaturgs', Documenta, vol. 41, no. 1, pp. 183–201.

<https://doi.org/10.21825/documenta.85992>

DOI 10.21825/documenta.85992

ISSN 0771-8640

Publisher: S:PAM - Studies in Performing Arts & Media

**Authors retain the copyright and grant the journal the right of first publication of the work under a Creative Commons Attribution License that enables others to share the work, indicating authorship of the work and its first publication in this journal.**

# 'Slow Togethering' as a Tool for Dialogic Development amongst Dance Dramaturgs

-- Miranda Laurence (COVENTRY UNIVERSITY  
/ AARHUS UNIVERSITY)

-- Sara Živkovič Kranjc (UNIVERSITY OF  
LJUBLJANA)

This article is an experiment in 'slow togethering' between two dance dramaturgs. It investigates dance dramaturgy practice beyond the making of a creative product, in which dialogue *about* practice occurs simultaneously with dialogue *as* practice. Thus, the authors propose this article itself as practice research. We understand 'slow togethering' as a form of dialogue over time: the article presents a series of exchanges by the authors which were written over a period of one month. Alongside these exchanges, there is a commentary reflecting on these texts and the overall process. With this format, the authors aim to disrupt the conventions of linear and sequential thinking, offering an opportunity for the reader to explore different ways of encountering the narratives of the article. In this vein, the authors suggest the reader takes up the role of a dialogue partner in their own right, acknowledging that a reader's dialogic response resides in a space and time beyond that of the article.

Keywords: dance dramaturgy, dialogue, collaboration, practice research, process

## 18 – 21 January

On 'slow togetherness'

It might seem odd to use the break-up of two lovers, in this case also artistic collaborators, to open up our discussion on 'slow togetherness'. But what I would like to present in the following is that the idea of 'slow togetherness' is already concealed in its very opposition, that of decoupling.

When Marina Abramović and Ulay stood 5,955 km apart on the Great Wall of China and began walking towards each other only to come to an end of a twelve-year collaboration (*The Lovers*, 1988), they used a long walk as a tool and a tactic to reflect on their common past. The distance and duration allowed for other factors to have influenced them – their encounters not only with nature, but also with the locals, stories, myths (Johnston 19-23), all of which have helped them sharpen their thoughts on this journey. We might see the result of this walk in the separation of the two bodies. Simultaneously, through this separation, the physical act of equal travelling has constituted the now two individual entities, induced by their togetherness-action, that of a mutual decision.

Dear Sara,

Togetherness, this is the word that I chose to start with. Together + ing, we made it into a word that doesn't really exist, to be a bit mysterious perhaps? Or maybe to emphasize that it is a form of doing, not a form of being. Our together-ing is surrounded by doing: by many messages and emails to determine times and dates to meet; last minute contact to reschedule because we or our children or our partners are sick. All these surrounding activities are also a form of our together-ing. And the thinking that happens for us individually, as we respond to an email from the other, or look at a text the other has written, and comment on it, is continuing the togetherness, so that it doesn't just become one point in time when we are able to have a conversation in real time, but the conversation stretches across time. The response forms in my mind over time, each time I think about my response I'm thinking of you too, so we are together at least in my mind, because my response is shaped by what I know of you. The togetherness is conversation, as much as conversation is togetherness.

Even though the word togetherness presupposes at least two or more bodies, I would like to propose that the 'slow togetherness' can actually manifest itself within one single body.

Take butoh for example. It is not my intention here to talk about the slow hyper-controlled motion butoh is traditionally based on. Nor about the "slow dramaturgy" (Eckersall 178-192) one might observe in many of the butoh performances. The slowness that fascinates me the most came from observing a butohist in process and preparation. Right there, I could witness the 'slow togetherness' in action. To reach butoh, one must first go through a separation of reason and emotions, in other words one must get rid of all possible structures and put one's instincts to the forefront. These instincts then inhabit the empty body. Only then can you really start practising butoh. What this example portrays is that a beginning starts with a separation in order to bring together a new 'truth' through awareness.<sup>3</sup>

I perceive a process of 'slow togetherness' as an attentive participation. I would argue that the attentiveness of 'slow togetherness' chooses, or at least emphasizes, listening over hearing, thinking over reading, watching over seeing.

And it feels like an active verb now, not just something that happens to us, but something we make happen – dare I say it – something we practise. [...]<sup>2</sup>

The idea of having two dramaturgs for one artist, or one show, has long been something I assumed to be a bad idea. How could I carefully nurture a relationship with an artist, and the unfolding work, if there was someone else also in that role, but perhaps working quite differently, with different input and ideas? I assumed this would be undermining for me, and confusing for the artist. In making this assumption I had been nurturing the idea of me, as dramaturg, in a rarefied role: I would be the person the artist would turn to for support, maybe guidance, that was my area of expertise. And also there is a sense of exclusivity about being someone's supporter if it all goes wrong. I would be the final fall-back, and I would be there to pick up the artist if they felt like they were falling. If there were two people doing this, who would the artist turn to? And would that make the other one redundant, or less important? Would that mean the other one was less trusted? And since the ideas offered by a dramaturg are so fragile and subjective, what

Also, I understand the principles of ‘slow togethering’ not so much as a method of Q/A, but more of Q/Q or A/A, both Q and A standing for an equal (in power) X, which represents thoughts, impressions, experiences, doubts, truths etc. As such, slow togethering is not based on hierarchical and/or power relations, because there is no hidden authority in between. To be more exact: the Q/A presupposes a relationship of dominance. The most basic example would be the “expert” disseminating “knowledge” or “good practice” to those who “need” the knowledge. [...]

Let me reiterate that ‘slow togethering’ commences already in the very detachment from set and established relations/ideas/views. It holds a potential to lead towards an autonomous and emancipatory practice (existence). This practice embodies less determined power relations, less product driven actions ...

Dramaturgs struggle to imagine their practice autonomously: as a dramaturg, one’s work is almost always practised in relation to the creative process of another artist. Developing a dialogue as two dance dramaturgs, we were intrigued by the question posed by Nienke Scholts: “what exactly constitutes ... [an] independent dramaturgical practice[?]” (111). We asked ourselves why space for dialogue between (dance) dramaturgs was difficult to find. Imagining

would happen if I put forward an idea, and the other dramaturg had the opposite thought? Well, now I write this, I realize this all has to do with the fragility I feel, and have felt, about my own worth and status as a dramaturg. [...]

Why did I fall into the trap of assuming that, out of all the other kinds of collaborators I sought out to work with – to conduct the process of togethering – it wasn’t possible with another dramaturg (at least, not when working with an artist on a production)?

Why do so many others seem to have this often unspoken assumption? Does it all come back to the fragility of the dramaturg, which seems related to the fragility of the single author and their subjective view of what feels right and wrong for a production?<sup>3</sup>

what such a space might look like has led us to pursue the question of what dance dramaturgy practice is beyond the creative process of making a piece of (art)work, and how dance dramaturgs might collaborate to conceptualise and develop our practice.

In response to these questions, we propose the idea of ‘slow togethering’ as a tool, a tactic, and an ecology (La Selva et al.) to offer a method and a practice of thinking about dance dramaturgy. For us, slow togethering takes the form of a dialogue over time. Dialogue as part of dramaturgy practice is well-documented in scholarship and practice; indeed, Scholts’s question, on which we build, arises from an account of her ongoing dialogue with fellow dramaturg Igor Dobričić.<sup>4</sup> However, our interest is specifically in understanding what dialogic practices are *in relation to* dance dramaturgy practices – investigating dialogue itself as a method, a practice, and a tool. Aligning with La Selva et al’s “dialogue-between-practices ... praxical dialogues” (17), we see dialogue *about* practice occurring simultaneously with dialogue *as* practice.

Following on from Scholts’ exploration of “what kind of dramaturgy can develop between two dramaturgs that “do not work for a work” (111), this article is the first iteration of an experiment in ‘slow togethering’, employing this dialogic practice explicitly to research dance dramaturgy *beyond the making of a creative work*.

For the purposes of researching and writing the article, our method was a framework in which we exchanged responses in writing, over a set period of time. Each author wrote an initiating piece during the same time frame, the two pieces were sent to each other on an agreed-upon date, and then each author wrote a response to the received piece, and we exchanged the threads on the next agreed date. After four such exchanges we met to discuss our experiences and reflections of this process, setting it into the context of our wider professional experience and the scholarship with which we engage. This discussion resulted in a ‘third thread’, which you are reading now.

We have presented the two ‘live’ dialogue threads alongside each other, reflecting the time periods in which they were written (simultaneously, and without the authors’ interaction during each period). In this way we attempt to acknowledge how the *communication* of

this experiment is an ongoing part of the experiment. We would like to invite the reader to experiment themselves with reading the content of this article: for example by time period; by 'voice' (of each author); or by 'thread' (of responses). In this way, we invite you to engage in the logic of time passing within which we worked, and which conditioned precisely how the dialogue developed and how our thoughts were organised. At the same time, you have the privilege of ignoring restrictions of time passing. You can move laterally (Protopapa and Georgelou) between the elements of this slow togethering, and in doing so you may form an understanding of the progression of ideas from the perspective of shared time *and/or* shared thought. This 'third thread', or commentary, which you are currently reading, signifies a time in which the two authors' ideas mingled, as we looked retrospectively at the dialogue of the past weeks, as well as looking prospectively to the time when the article would be read. Those lateral connections emerging in the reading are part of this dialogue, but as yet out of our authorial reach.

## 22 – 26 January

[...]  
The picture or feeling I get from the idea of 'detachment' is something about how you and I might have drifted towards each other in a way that enabled the togethering process between us to start. We 'found' each other, we togethered, because of some kind of separation we each felt from the status quo of how we each understood our surroundings of the 'dance dramaturgy' world.

Is 'separation' the same as 'segregation' though? In your example of the butoh preparation, what you describe is perhaps a form of

Thank you, Miranda, for opening up the conversation on together+ing and for connecting it also to other key elements such as distance and proximity, but also support, care, and fragility that, at least from my perspective, all seem to be subsumed under the term.

With the utmost respect, I will first paraphrase your question about working as two dramaturgs with one artist, as I would like to enter into this debate on relationships from yet another perspective – that aside from both being drama-

segregating different parts of the way we act and exist in the world – reason and emotion, as you put it. Is this where you see the 'attentiveness' being useful? Attending to parts that are separate, which we can only do if we segregate them. [...]

And I'm especially interested in how we can have that attentive focus to more than one layer simultaneously. How many layers of being, doing, thinking (Nelson 45) can we attend to at the same time, and what does this simultaneous attentiveness bring to, or change about, our modes of listening/hearing, watching/seeing?

On returning to your text a few days later, I am struck by two things that stir a response in me.

Firstly, responding to 'attentive participation':  
What would inattentive participation look like? Or attentive non-participation? Or inattentive non-participation? Is this something that is habitual in my or your daily life? Would that mean that attentive participation entails a specific kind of labour, a specific kind of activity, skill, expertise, ... and are these things which are related to the specific activity, skill, expertise of being a dance dramaturg? I feel that this exercise, of a slow dialogue across time and space, is a form of attentive participation. I

turgs we also share – of being a parent. I offer instead the question: 'How could I carefully nurture a relationship with my child, if there was someone else also in that role, but perhaps working quite differently, with different inputs and ideas?'

In support of my substitution of the word artist with a child, I will borrow a short reflection from Guy Cools ("Distances"):  
As I grew older and became, hopefully, a bit wiser, I started to discover more and more cross-overs between being a parent and being a dramaturg, and with that I don't mean I take a parental role with the artists. Both as a parent and as a dramaturg, you have to stay humble because it always remains unpredictable how your guidance and support will be received and what will actually contribute to the other's development.

What I would like to add to Cools' comparison is that I perceive the child-parent relationship as an everyday example of the process of the slow togethering:  
i) Slow togethering is a durational process (in a way of growing (up/old) together)  
ii) The distance and proximity don't affect the togethering (I am as much of a parent when I am living together with my child or,

feel that it is hard work, to attend to your writing, and to participate by contributing the development of thoughts I feel, to ‘move forward’ this generation of ideas. Not just listening – my default mode when I am not sure what *I* have to say.  
[...]

Secondly: Q/Q is the underpinning philosophy of our current exercise, I think. I like to hear your questions, they raise questions in me, which I ask you. In ‘responding’ to each other’s questions, you and I are not ‘answering’ them (which presupposes existing knowledge to be found out, as you said). So for me, this clarifies the difference between responding and answering, and it makes sense of why my work of shaping responses to things so often materializes in questions. I once wrote that my practice consists of asking questions. And I think that there is a great amount of skill and experience needed to consider how to ask questions: that is whether to ask it; when to ask it; what to ask about; how to phrase it and how to frame it; how to act with the asking of the question; who to address the question to; and understanding why I am asking it.<sup>5</sup>

later on, when living separately)  
iii) The togetherness emphasizes an open process with no fixed structure (there are plenty of guidelines to parenting, each one also telling you there are no rules really)  
iv) The slow togetherness affects not only the (doing of the) relationship but also the (being of the) individual (a parental role is ever-learning, ever-evolving, ever-changing in its being and doing. Also, you don’t simply become a mother by giving birth. It is much more of an ever-lasting work/support/care, in fact, giving birth is not even a necessary condition to *become* a mother.)

If I now return back from this detour with an excerpt from Marianne Van Kerkhoven (“European Dramaturgy”): “Approaching each other takes a long time. ... We have to give time to the talks, so that slowly hesitation and fear can turn into clarity and pleasure. Sometimes it will succeed and sometimes it will not. Will we get somewhere? We’ll see if we get somewhere.” (10)  
[...]

We find it important to emphasize that we are not just *writing about* slow togetherness; this article itself is part of the *practice* of slow togetherness. We propose that this article is a piece of practice research.<sup>6</sup> Not only do we present our practice research into dance dramaturgy (Scholts’s “independent dramaturgical practice”), but we perform (or practise) it.<sup>7</sup>

In practising slow togetherness, we found that how we responded to another’s ideas and perspectives mirrored practices which we each consider important when we work individually with our collaborator artists. In this experiment, we embraced the dramaturgical principles we would normally apply in an artistic research process, but in a context in which our ‘product’ is an article, rather than a performance piece.<sup>8</sup>

In this context, we note Cools’ evocation of a dramaturg as a “silent witness” (“Correspondence” 96) proposing that you, as reader, could be in a relationship with us that mirrors that of a dramaturg’s relationship with the creator. Our dialogue, presented to you more or less ‘as it happened’, is a form of open rehearsal.<sup>9</sup> Thus, in this article our original intention of ‘performing’ a dialogue – showing what happened in real time – instead of writing ‘about’ it, has expanded to propose the possibility of inviting the reader’s participation in the dialogue, and thus practising with us.

The significance of the reader’s active presence or participation in the dialogue is twofold: first, in the context of ‘slowness’. That is, we offer an opportunity for the reader to experience the way in which our thought was organised in and through, and conditioned by, time. Secondly, in the context of ‘togetherness’, in which we attempt to activate the quality of non-hierarchical dialogic practice. This became a key part of our thinking around what, precisely, the principles of our dramaturg-dramaturg collaboration might entail. A reflection on slowness and togetherness emerges in the text exchange (demonstrating how the *content* of this particular dialogue-in-process is intertwined with the *practice* of it as a method). The key aspects of togetherness which we have discovered through the process of dialoguing – both in terms of experience and in terms of the way in which our thoughts developed – is moving from a ‘question-answer’ model (which is a core principle in conventional scholarly discourse, of the hypothesis-results structure), and continues past the ‘question-response’ model, which we consider

to be a core principle we each utilize in our dramaturgy work. We have come to the 'question-question' and 'response-response' model (Q/Q-R/R), which we consider to be a key finding of the significance of a dramaturg-to-dramaturg dialogue as a practice in its own right.

## 22 – 26 January

### *On oppositions*

[...] To respond to your question on attentive participation: I would say that for me attentiveness presupposes all your combinations, because it has the ability to recognize what is needed. [...] I am also thinking of the very common situations when dramaturgs (deliberately) step in and out of the studio. When we choose to detach ourselves from work, from space; and it is not always because of practical (economical or other needs). Don't we, right there, attentively participate in the very act of consciously not participating?

I just returned home, after spending a few days with artists working on a new piece.<sup>10</sup> I was surprised to notice how much our dialogue has influenced my thoughts while in the studio, but it might as well be the other way around.  
[...]

Humans always tend to search for logical and familiar situations, patterns, relations, pre-

I am so surprised and delighted by the way you shifted my perspective so unexpectedly and eye-openingly, proposing the analogy of being a parent in the framework of my question about collaborating with another dramaturg.  
[...]

Rethinking the dramaturg-artist relationship in the context of my ideal parent-child set-up, underpins what I have always known, that what I offer is something specific to the relationship between *me* and the artist. But it comes back to the way in which the value of those labouring in the arts world is judged according to the criteria that are perhaps more applicable to manufacture and commerce in a purely capitalist mindset. That is, the assumption that there is something that can ultimately be named (a skill, a capacity for transformation that is not person-specific), that signifies the value of a dramaturg to the artistic process. In this worldview, consequently, if a dramaturg does not *have*

dictable reactions or behaviour, whatever recognition that seems possible. It makes us feel comfortable; it gives us a sense of 'I know, I understand'. Not-knowing seems to have little, or maybe even no value in our (belief) system. We like to know and experience everything immediately. We plan in advance. We prepare in advance. We like to know in advance. What is it like to keep coming back to the moment *before* we know or understand, to push our minds as well as our bodies to forget, in order to allow for the illogical, irrational, unexpected to happen? To clarify: with the moment of 'not-yet-knowing', I mean the state of *not yet* being familiar with a situation, event, relation, or even movement. This landscape of unknown potentiality, unpredictability, openness, magic, *fantasma*. A place of no right or wrong feelings and expressions. Those innocent moments of not-yet-knowing (how, when, who, why, where).

This time we don't write to (explicitly) say something. We write to explore unpredictable states of being but also not being (in dialogue) with each other. But what might come out of it, could also be *something*.

If I may I will paraphrase a dialogue that happened between a dancer and a choreographer in the studio:

this skill or this thing, then they are of less or even no value to the artist as a dramaturg.  
[...]

If we saw things a bit more in the way we might see parenting: the relationship comes first, and you negotiate what you need and what you can offer and how you behave in relation to the other person, from that basis.

And there is an ultimate fragility to us saying that we are working as a dramaturg, but not necessarily with the "useful thing" that labels us as good value dramaturgs, as an entity that can plug a gap in the artistic making process which would otherwise leave the process incomplete and the product of lesser quality. "What is it we miss that we need a dramaturg to compensate for?" asks Van Imschoot (58).

In fact, you and I are perhaps deliberately, or knowingly, setting that conversation aside by wanting to practise dramaturgy *without* the work.

Van Imschoot proposed the taking away of the dramaturg in order to concentrate more on the artistic process and perhaps, the work (63, 65). What step are we proposing, by taking away the artistic process and product, and leaving only the dramaturgs?

How do you know, it is the right thing?

I don't.

But when is it then working for you?

When I feel that it is worth it.

The Q/Q-R/R idea demonstrates the potency of non-hierarchical dialogue. Firstly, instead of in a conventional dialogue model, in which one dialogue partner initiates a conversation about a theme that is important to them, and the second partner offers their thoughts, answers and responding questions to that initial idea, our dialogue begins with *two* initiations, independent of each other. Secondly, the continuation of the dialogue requires the activity of 'attentive participation'. Reflecting our practices as dance dramaturgs, our work in responding to the other's text lay in attentively participating in a dialogue with our conversation partner's ideas. We created responses, sometimes in the form of questions, which would facilitate further thinking in our partner about their original idea.

Where it *diverged* from our usual dance dramaturgy model of practice, was that each of us also took time to attentively participate in the dialogue *as originator* of an idea. We each had to think: in what ways do I respond to the responses of my dialogue partner to my original text? And how does the development of my own thinking interact with my facilitation of the development of my dialogue partner's thinking?<sup>14</sup>

Unlike in our usual professional context of being the sole dramaturg in a creative process, in *this* dialogue, the conditions of our work were the same (the agreed time frame, the space, and the attention we each had from one another). We also have the same relationship as each other to the outcome of our process, in terms of responsibility and accountability.

We propose that the Q/Q-R/R model is a quietly radical re-imagining of dance dramaturgy practice, simultaneously developed, practised and performed through slow togetherness as a method of dialogic exchange.

## 4 February – 22 February

Because we both had family situations which took time away from our other work, this break between responses has been longer than previously.

In her audio work *This walk is a pause* (2022), Nienke Scholts explores the idea of the pause, proposing that it is not just a silence or a stop between more productive activities, but that a pause itself can be generative.

A couple of years ago, I started to wonder about the role of the pause dramaturgically: the way in which a pause can be dramatic because it builds anticipation of what is to come, for example. Or the way in which we might use a pause to close off one thought, and open another.

Our slow dialogue is forefronting this experience, and I wonder about how it generates thoughts (for example connections, tangents, insights) and how those thoughts, or even that way of generating them, is or isn't different from the way in which thoughts are developed in a different style of collaborating on an article. In my reading experience, and more recently in my movement-inquiry experience, I have found that pauses are a way of enabling layers that create new ways of thinking. I don't think this would have been my response if I had written

I am looking at the gap between our last and current writing. From the outside it seems like a good portion of time, definitely longer than what we had before. But we both know it took more time solely because so many unpredictable factors emerged throughout this month. Today is 22 February and this morning I took the early train from Ljubljana to Hannover. It is a long journey, about 11 hours, so I imagined I would have enough time to transform my draft into a final version and send it to you. I started to write immediately after the first train departed, but already an hour later it turned out that the trip will *unfold far from what I have expected*.

*1. Time is relative and only valid for the person that experiences it in a concrete state and situation.*

So, what actually determines slowness in our togetherness? And what does it bring to the togetherness? [...] Are we (you and me) embodied together in the same slow time (pace and duration)? Do we perceive it as a necessary 'setting' to favour quality instead of quantity? And furthermore, what about the connotations that the word



immediately after reading your text. I am interested to poke a bit more into your proposal that there is 'a moment of not yet knowing', that this is associated with forgetting, but also there is something innocent which is 'before right and wrong'. And that this enables the illogical, irrational and unexpected to happen.

[...]

But there is nothing that is inherently unexpected – only inasmuch as it is unexpected in a certain framework of normality in which we participate. I suppose what I am perhaps getting at, is that this process we are experimenting with is both setting aside some of the patterns we might conventionally work with (for example, trying to plan and write a whole article at once, instead of letting it grow slowly over time); and also is making visible those patterns with which we frame our thoughts, which perhaps we don't always share with one another. The form that we use – of the response to each other over time – allows me to develop thought in a meandering manner (or as Tim Ingold might say, "alongly" (154)). This is a new pattern of thinking, meaning that perhaps it allows for something that might be called illogical or irrational or unexpected.

A small coda, responding to a point you made which I find very

'slow' brings? Consider how often nowadays we connect it to un-efficiency, weakness, a sort of disability and failure? And how, very contrary to this, 'slow' (e.g. living, food) became a luxury created by and made for those who are socially or financially superior?

2. *What might seem sustainable, can also be non-sustainable.*

The train journey I experienced today made me delete my draft.

It seemed unaligned with my most current state of being-doing-thinking. With this erasure, I *deleted my work* done in those rare available moments of the month. Is the idea of slow togetherness bringing any sustainability to the dramaturgical thinking, to the dramaturg's work, and, if so, what would that be? Or is it just the maintained level of pace that already opens space for certain qualities to emerge?

I apologize for not reflecting on your previous thoughts.

I will return to them on the next occasion. The unexpected very much affected me and my work.

beautiful: maybe this practice of slow dialogue is a way of attentively participating in dance dramaturgy, precisely by not participating in dance dramaturgy.

Through this experiment – part of which continues here, now, on this page and in relation to you, our reader – we present a methodology-in-the-making, through which we can explore, develop, and articulate dance dramaturgy practice. We have proposed that it is possible and indeed generative to practise dramaturgy beyond the creative process of making a work, and have offered some initial thoughts about what kind of knowledge this practice generates *about* practice: how the element of practice that is in process can be practised and communicated in process.

We also posit that this method offers a possibility in which dance dramaturgy practice itself can become a tool or a tactic for non-hierarchical knowledge exchange, simultaneously generative and communicative. Finally, we offer an idea of what dance dramaturgy practice research can look like, in the context of the notorious invisibility<sup>15</sup> of the dramaturg and by implication the dramaturg's practice.

There is more work to be done on this experiment for which we do not have the space or the scope in this article: for example, looking more closely at the entanglement between our reflections on our experience of the dialogue and the content of the dialogue itself. We are curious to think more about the relationship between our emerging slow togetherness practice and questions about value, and the potency of the unexpected. As we develop this work, we will specifically look at the way in which thought developed *in dialogue and over time*, to explore further the significance of both togetherness and slowness to the work of dance dramaturgy practice-research-into-practice.

As we draw to a close, we acknowledge you, our third dramaturg of this dialogue. You may be in the role of silent witness, but we should also not forget that as we were performing this experiment, you have been a presence. Having cast you into the potential role of

dramaturg, we propose framing your ghostly presence not so much as a spectator or a reader but as a dialogue partner.

We have been interested in exploring the possibilities of slow to-gethering as non-hierarchical; however, we also acknowledge that you, as ghostly presence and silent witness, do not have the same choices in terms of responding to our dialogue and bringing your own thoughts into conversation with ours, to fully participate in the creation of the joint imaginative process.<sup>16</sup> One way we begin experimenting with disrupting this is to present our dialogue as it was written, the thoughts as they developed through time, with its unknowns and unexpecteds, its unresolved ideas and unanswered questions. It has been important to us to evade, to some extent, the editorial choices that we might conventionally put upon such a collaborative dialogue; in this way, we tentatively offer a mode of ‘presentness’ in which the reader may encounter us, a little like a dramaturg who is present in the process of making, over time. Indeed, we could figure this presentness itself as a dramaturgical ‘third element’.<sup>17</sup> As reader, you may not be able to literally enter into dialogue with us (though you may, by writing to us or meeting us). Instead of imagining the question you might pose, and attempting to answer it, our experiment invites you to come together with our text in its time, in your time, and over time.

#### Works cited

Ali-Haapala, Anja. *‘Insider-other’. Spectator-Dancer Relationships fostered through Open Rehearsals*. Queensland University of Technology, PhD Dissertation, 2016. Accessed 6 March 2023. <http://eprints.qut.edu.au/93088/>

Barton, Bruce. “Wherefore PAR? Discussions on “a line of flight.”” *Performance as Research: knowledge, methods, impact*. Edited by Annette Arlander, Bruce Barton, Melanie Dreyer-Lude, and Ben Spatz. Routledge, 2018.

Cools, Guy. “Correspondence and Ekphrasis”. *The practice of dramaturgy: working on actions in performance*. Edited by Konstantina Georgelou, Efrosini Protopapa and Danae Theodoridou. 93-101.

– “Distances and Proximities”. *Invisible Diaries*. Accessed 6 March 2023. <https://www.dramaturgy.co.uk/single-post/invisible-diaries-guy-cools-distances-and-proximities>

– “On Dance Dramaturgy”. *Cena 29* (2019): 42-52. Accessed 10 March 2023. <https://seer.ufrgs.br/cena>

Eckersall, Peter and Eddie Paterson. “Slow Dramaturgy: Renegotiating Politics and Staging the Everyday.” *Australasian Drama Studies* 58 (2011): 178-192.

Georgelou, Konstantina, Efrosini Protopapa and Danae Theodoridou, eds. *The Practice of Dramaturgy: Working on Actions in Performance*. Valiz, 2017.

Graham, Fiona. *Performing Dramaturgy*. Wellington: Playmarket, 2017.

Ingold, Tim. *Being Alive: Essays on movement, knowledge and description*. Routledge, 2011.

Johnston, Chloe. ““The Lovers’: On the Great Wall and Beyond.” *Performance Research* 17:5 (2012): 19-23.

La Selva, Adriana, Marije Nie, Andrea Maciel and Patrick Campbell. “Parliament of Practices: No-Topian Tactics for Praxical Dialogue.” *Performance Research* 25:8 (2020): 15-17. <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/13528165.2020.1930765>

Midgelow, Vida. “Improvisation Practices and Dramaturgical Consciousness: A Workshop”. *Dance Dramaturgy: Modes of Agency, Awareness and Engagement*. Edited by Darcey Callison and Pil Hansen. Palgrave Macmillan, 2015.

Nelson, Robin. *Practice as Research in the Arts (and Beyond): Principles, Processes, Contexts, Achievements*. Palgrave Macmillan, 2022.

Peeters, Jeroen. “Heterogeneous Dramaturgies.” *Maska* 25:131/132 (2010): 16-27. Accessed 6 March 2023.

Profeta, Katherine. *Dramaturgy in motion: At Work on Dance and Movement Performance*. University of Wisconsin Press, 2015.

Protopapa, Efrosini, and Konstantina Georgelou. “Meeting on Paper: Dramaturgy as a Practice of Lateral Movement.” *Performance Research* 26:4 (2021): 118-123. <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/pdf/10.1080/13528165.2021.2005969>

Rancière, Jacques. *The Emancipated Spectator*. Translated by Gregory Elliott. Verso, 2009.

Rutgeerts, Jonas, and Ivana Müller. “Notes from the Margin”. *The practice of dramaturgy: working on actions in performance*. Edited by Konstantina Georgelou, Efrosini Protopapa and Danae Theodoridou. 119-129.

Scholts, Nienke. “Dramaturgs That Do Not Work for a Work.” *The practice of dramaturgy: working on actions in performance*. Edited by Konstantina Georgelou, Efrosini Protopapa and Danae Theodoridou. 109-117.

Stalpaert, Christel. “A Dramaturgy of the Body”. *Performance Research* 14:3 (2009): 121-125.

<https://nyuskirball.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/04/A-Dramaturgy-of-the-Body-by-Christel-Stalpaert.pdf>

Trencsényi, Katalin. *Dramaturgy in the Making: A User’s Guide for Theater Practitioners*. Bloomsbury, 2015.

Van Imschoot, Myriam. “Anxious Dramaturgy.” *Women & Performance: A Journal of Feminist Theory* 13:2 (2003): 57-68. <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/07407700308571425>

Van Kerkhoven, Marianne. “European Dramaturgy in the 21st Century.” *Performance Research* 14:3 (2009): 7-11. <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/13528160903519476>

---. “Looking without pencil in the hand”. *Theaterschrift, On Dramaturgy* 5-6 (1994): 140-149. Accessed 10 March 2023. [https://intellectdiscover.com/content/journals/10.1386/maska\\_00072\\_1](https://intellectdiscover.com/content/journals/10.1386/maska_00072_1)

Vass-Rhee, Freya. “Distributed Dramaturgies: Navigating with Boundary Objects”. *Dance Dramaturgy: Modes of Agency, Awareness and Engagement*. Edited by Darcey Callison and Pil Hansen. Palgrave Macmillan, 2015.

## Notes

- 1 Interestingly, one of the basic exercises in butoh is called a 'slow walk'. A certain distance, which is very disproportionate to the time, must be covered in complete concentration. For a basic slow walk, they would usually walk five meters of a straight line in one hour.
- 2 *Note to the reader*: the [...] represent thoughts written in the live dialogue exchanges that cannot be included in the article for reasons of space; but along with white space on the page, also represent the thoughts emerging 'live' in the moment of reading. Both are intended to provide space, time and opportunity for a reader to journey around the questions and responses offered through our article.
- 3 This train of thought was inspired by a talk given by Konstantina Georgelou, Genevieve Murphy, and Nienke Scholts about the process of making Murphy's *The Spot where I find myself* (2022) in which Georgelou and Scholts both participated as dramaturg, in the context of an existing friendship and professional relationship.
- 4 For examples of dialogue in dramaturgy practice, see e.g. Profeta 180-181; Trencsényi 264; Graham 97-101; Cools (2019) 48-49.
- 5 See also Georgelou et al (42).
- 6 This article's scope does not allow for an extensive discussion of practice research. We align ourselves e.g. with Barton, who cites amongst others Lynette Hunter and Estelle Barrett & Barbara Bolt, with concepts such as "intersection between subjectivity and interaction", the "emergent nature" of Practice Research, and its "situated sites of interaction" (12).
- 7 See Nelson's "onto-epistemological model for Practice Research" in which practice research is an interaction between "know-how", "know-that" and "know-what"; the latter being "the tacit made explicit through critical reflection" (146). Instead of this article being "an evidence-based "exposition", by means of a rational argument"" (28), we perform the exegetical in our 'third thread', presented alongside the abridged actual dialogue, together as one experiment.
- 8 Specific examples of dialogue as dramaturgical practice presented in written form include Rutgeerts & Müller, in which Müller adds responses to Rutgeert's initial text in the form of marginal notes, and Protopapa & Georgelou, in which the dialogue between the two authors is presented as an "experiment with the notion of lateral movement on the page ... seek[ing] to iterate thought laterally, parenthetically and in mutable temporalities, instead of requiring a process of looking for depth in a linear progressive way" (118).
- 9 There is more to explore in this metaphor, particularly in how it could imply the change in relationship between reader and author/text through a sense of inclusion. See e.g. Ali-Haapala on how "... the knowledge developed during rehearsal, while limited, shifted the spectators from outsiders ... to insideroutsiders ..." (194). We wonder how this understanding of spectator as insideroutsider may also relate to Rancière's emancipated spectator, who "participates in the performance by refashioning it in her own way" (13).
- 10 This is during the making of the piece *LOST TITLE* (choreographer Fabio Liberti) with LANDERER&COMPANY (artistic director Felix Landerer).
- 11 Georgelou et al discuss related thoughts (47-54).
- 12 For further thoughts on the value of dramaturgical work in a capitalist context, see a discussion on 'commoning' in Georgelou et al (57-59).
- 13 Other writers have also argued for this 'dispersed dramaturgy' where dramaturgy is the responsibility of everyone involved in the process and thus a 'dramaturg' is not needed, see e.g. Middelow, Stalpaert, Vass-Rhee, Georgelou et al.
- 14 We are interested in the affinities between our experiment and the activity described by Georgelou et al as "mobilizing questions" (40-46). We find ourselves aligned with some of their principles: for example, moving the intention of questioning away from the finding of a resolution, as well as scrutinising the assumption of questioning as being "inherently good" (43). However, in our experiment 'togethering' is different from Georgelou et al's "togetherness", as we do not aim towards attempting to "start thinking together" (41). Instead of the sense of moving forwards, with or towards a shared idea, implied by the idea of "mobilizing questions" (44), we found ourselves moving in multiple directions and dimensions, by unfolding thought through being attentive to one another's thoughts-in-unfolding. The scope of this article does not allow for an extensive discussion, but in the future we would like to further investigate the parallels between their "state of questioning" (42-3, citing Cvejić 2015) and slow togethering as a 'state of dialogue'.
- 15 "One of the difficulties in defining the dramaturg is that the outcome of his or her work is hard to see. The world of the dramaturg literally dissolves into the production, it melts and becomes invisible" (Van Imschoot 57), referencing Marianne Van Kerkhoven (1994).
- 16 "In dramaturgy as 'co-collaboration, imagining takes place not alongside the creation of an artwork but at the very core of the collaboration itself" (Scholts 114).
- 17 See Peeters. Compare also with Rancière: "the third thing, that is owned by no one, whose meaning is owned by no one, but which subsists between them" (15).