WHAT COMES TO MIND WHEN YOU HEAR THE WORD “PERFORMANCE”?
LEARNING SPACES.

AN INTRODUCTION TO PERFORMATIVE PEDAGOGY.

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TEACHERS ARE PERFORMERS
STUDENTS ARE PERFORMERS
ALL THE WORLD IS A STAGE.

- We all perform in our daily lives.
- We have multiple roles.
- There are close/controlled scripts and there are semi-open and open scripts.
- We all improvise in our roles to a greater or lesser extent.
- We don’t usually think about it.
THINK ABOUT IT.

• Which roles do you feel most comfortable with?
• Which roles do you perform best?
• Which roles bore you?
• Which roles make you anxious?
THOUGHTS ON ROLES

- We are most comfortable if we know what our role is.
- We feel secure if we can inhabit that role without anxiety.
- We are most intrigued if we do not know what’s happening next.
- We are most engaged if we feel we can make a difference.
TEXT BOOK ROLE PLAY

• Hey Dan, I’m looking for my newspaper. Any idea where it is?
  ○ Your newspaper? I’m sorry, but I’m reading it at the moment.

• That’s okay. What are you reading?
  ○ I’m reading an article about our school.
ROLE-TAKING: PROBLEMS

1. The role has nothing to do with me.

2. If I don’t do it right, I get a bad grade.

3. I know exactly what’s happening in the dialogue.

4. Whether I or someone else plays the role, it will be exactly the same words.
ROLE-CREATING

1. Choose a character and invent a short role biography about him/her.
2. Take the dialogue as a blueprint and invent a problem.
3. Together, work out a solution to the problem.
4. Bring the scene to an end.
5. Practice your dialogue together and perform it to the other students.
6. Audience: Tell the performers what you liked about the scene.
THOUGHTS ON ROLE-CREATING

1. Your own ideas are important for the development of the scene.
2. With the dialogue from the course book you have a secure base and can go on from there.
3. You work collaboratively.
4. You come to your very own results.
5. You make your own scene public.
6. You get positive feedback.
7. The audience is interested because it’s new and unforeseen.
THOUGHTS ON ROLE-CREATING

1. Own ideas.
2. Secure base to start from.
4. Own results.
5. Performance.
7. Audience interest.
ROLE-CREATING TECHNIQUES

- Empathy Questions
- Still Image
- Thought-Tapping
- Doubling
- Hotseating
EMPATHY QUESTIONS

Ruck-Pauquet (1960: 37)
EMPATHY QUESTIONS

- Where are you sitting?
- Have you been sitting there for a while?
- How are you feeling? Relaxed or tense?
- What are you seeing?
- What are you hearing?
- What are you smelling?
- Are you warm or cold?
- What are you thinking?
- Are you going to stay there for a while or are you about to go?
- What are you going to do next?
THOUGHT-TAPPING

Ruck-Pauquet 1960: 15
DOUBLING

Ruck-Pauquet
1960: 15
THE CONTEXT

• Gina Ruck-Pauquet 1960: *Der Floh im Sauerkraut*
• Place: Blumenhausen, a tiny village with only 13 inhabitants: the mayor, the policeman, several farmers, housewives, three children
• Exposition: arrival of a stranger – Mr Floh.
• First reaction: surprise, delight.
• Second reaction: disappointment, rejection (adults), friendship (children)
• Action: attempts to get rid of Mr Floh
• Climax: Mr Floh saves the people
• Denouement: Mr Floh is welcome
TEACHER IN ROLE

Ruck-Pauquet
1960: 43, 39
HOTSEATING

Ruck-Pauquet
1960: 44
HOTSEATING

- What is your first name?
- How old are you?
- Have you lived in Blumenhausen all your life?
- How long have you been a farmer?
- Do you enjoy farming?
- How many acres do you own?
- Do you farm them all by yourself?
- How do you get on with your son?
- Where is your wife?
- What do you do after a long day of farming?
- What do you think of Mr Floh?
- What do you dream about?
In order for an improvised scene to be successful, the improvisers involved must work together responsively to define the parameters and action of the scene, in a process of *co-creation*. With each spoken word or action in the scene, an improviser makes an *offer*, meaning that he or she defines some element of the reality of the improvised scene. It is the responsibility of the other improvisers to *accept* the offers that their fellow performers make; to not do so is known as *blocking*, negation, or denial, which usually prevents the scene from developing. Accepting an offer is usually accompanied by adding a new offer, often building on the earlier one; this can be considered the cornerstone of improvisational technique.
CLASSROOM THEATER

- In order for a lesson to be successful, the teachers and students involved must work together responsively to define the contents and action of the lesson, in a process of co-creation. With each spoken word or action in the lesson, a participant makes an offer, meaning that he or she defines some element of the reality of the learning process. It is the responsibility of the teachers to accept the offers that their students make; to not do so is known as blocking, negation, or denial, which usually prevents the lesson from developing. Accepting an offer is usually accompanied by adding a new offer, often building on the earlier one; this can be considered the cornerstone of successful teaching.
“Performative as a larger concept means a complete rethinking of education, and you could apply elements of theater aesthetics. If you look at theater aesthetics, one factor is physicality. We need more of that. We have the factor of emergence, meaning that teachers are open to what is emerging in a lesson. So it’s not all pre-packaged, pre-planned. Something happens in the classroom; [let’s say you have] a student response ... why not build on that and have the competence to improvise, and then teach on the basis of what actually happens in the classroom. Theater means to be present [...], the teacher has to be in the space, with full concentration, and has to be able to relate to the students.”

Manfred Schewe (2014)
TEACHING IS PERFORMANCE

- Performative teaching means letting scenes, situations unfold.
- It means listening to your students, going with the flow.
- It also means letting go of rigid teaching plans.
- It requires flexibility and courage.
- It also requires balancing conflicting demands (limited time, lack of space, syllabus, etc).
FINAL THOUGHTS

• Each lesson is like a small play with different actors.
• Take the stage and make it your and your students’ own.
• Make sure that there is space for the students’ own voices.
• While there is a script (the lesson plan), leave room for the unexpected.
• Don’t be too hard on yourselves if things do not turn out the way they were planned. You are human. And so are your students.