



TEATERVITENSKAPELIGE STUDIER

6/2022

INTERAKTIVITET OG PUBLIKUMSDELTAKELSE I PERFORMATIV KUNST FOR BARN OG UNGDOM

Teatervitenskapelige studier 2022 ©

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Preface: Interactivity and audience participation in performing art for children and youth

Keld Hyldig

This volume of *Teatervitenskapelige Studier* contains one peer reviewed article and three non-peer reviewed essays in a themed section based on lectures given at the conference JOIN IN, about interactivity and audience participation in performing art for children and youth, which took place at Cornerteateret in Bergen, Norway, 30. Sept. – 1. Oct. 2021. Additionally, in the open section, we present the peer reviewed article, “Noras utvikling mot ‘jævn natursandhed’” by Agnete Haaland. In her article, Haaland discusses the influence of Ibsen’s play, “A Doll’s House”, and especially the main role, Nora, on the development of realist acting in Norwegian theatre.

The conference JOIN IN was organized by the theatre network “Participate in your life” established in 2018 by the Norwegian theatre company Kompani 13 together with the Hungarian company Káva Kulturális Műhely. Four other theatre companies from Nordic-Baltic countries also participate in this network. The intention of the network is to explore interactivity in theatre for children and youth audiences through discussions and workshops and to develop possible co-productions. In august 2022 three of the co-working companies together with the National Kaunas Drama Theatre, and under direction of Hilde Brinchmann, premiered with the interactive performance “Tower of Babel” in Kaunas.

The conference in Bergen embraced a wide range of themes within the field of theatre for children and youth audiences, with a focus on exemplifying, discussing and problematizing interactive and audience participation. This happened through lectures, workshops, panel discussions, performances etc.

In the article “Interactivity that matters”, Ragnhild Tronstad argues that interactivity can be a highly engaging and enhancing component in performances for young audiences. However, she continues, it can also lead to confusion, banalization and even embarrassment. By way of terminology and theories from game studies, she analyses performance examples from The

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Cultural Schoolbag (Den kulturelle skolesekken)¹ in Norway and discusses what can be useful parameters for quality evaluation of interactive performances for young people.

In the essay, “What is participation”, Ine Therese Berg takes a critical look at established ideas and practices within the so-called participatory theatre. Berg poses the question whether the idea and expectation that participation means democratization of or through art, is realistic? Furthermore, she explains how in recent critical discourse, participation in art and theatre has been connected to economic neoliberalism.

The next essay, “Moved to connect” from the British theatre pedagogue Chris Cooper, considers the role that stories and narratives play in human and social life. Cooper stresses the importance of engagement in other people’s stories, relating this to possibilities for finding solutions to urgent political questions in our time, such as the environmental crises and warlike conflicts. He emphasizes theatre as a place and form of narrative engagement, and the importance of being authentic and honest when posing and raising questions in interactive theatre with children.

The third essay, “From interactivity to intra-activity in performing arts for children” by Lise Hovik, is about a new artistic research project named “Animalium” within the field of theatre for very young children. With her theatre group Teater Fot, Hovik has begun to explore, artistically and scholarly, what she has termed “intra-action” with space, environments and natural materials, as distinct from interaction, conventionally situated between humans in performing arts.

It is our hope that the articles and essays in this volume will be of interest to practitioners as well as scholars of theatre and performing arts.

¹The Cultural Schoolbag is a national mediation program of professional art and culture of all kinds to school pupils in Norway. The Cultural Schoolbag is a collaborative project between the Ministry of Culture and the Ministry of Education and Research.

Forord: Interaktivitet og publikumsdeltakelse i performativ kunst for barn og ungdom

Keld Hyldig

Dette nummer av *Teatervitenskapelige Studier* har en tematisk del med én fagfelleurdert artikkel og tre ikke-fagfelleurderte essays basert på innlegg under konferansen JOIN IN, om interaktivitet og publikumsdeltakelse i performative kunst for barn og unge, som fant sted på Cornerteateret i Bergen, 30. sept. – 1. okt. 2021. I tillegg presenterer vi en fagfelleurdert artikkel, «Noras utvikling mot 'jævn natursandhed'» av Agnete Haaland. Her diskuterer Haaland den betydningen Ibsens «Et dukkehjem» og særlig Nora-rollen har hatt for utviklingen av realistisk skuespillerkunst i norsk teater.

Konferansen JOIN IN ble arrangert av nettverket «Participate in your life» etablert i 2018 av det norske teaterkompaniet Kompani 13 sammen med det ungarske kompaniet Káva Kulturális Műhely. Fire andre kompanier fra nordisk-baltiske land deltar også i nettverket. Intensjonene med nettverket er å utforske interaktivitet i teater for barn og unge gjennom møter, dialog og workshops samt å utvikle felles scenekunstproduksjoner. I august 2022 hadde tre av de samarbeidende kompaniene sammen med National Kaunas Drama Theatre, og i regi av Hilde Brinchmann, premiere med den interaktive forestillingen «Tower of Babel» i Kaunas.

Konferansen i Bergen favnet gjennom forelesninger, workshops, paneldiskusjoner, forestillinger m.m. et stort spekter av kunstfaglige og pedagogiske problemstillinger i sammenheng med interaktive teaterformer – generelt og spesielt i teater for barn og unge.

I den fagfelleurderte artikkelen «Interactivity that matters», skriver Ragnhild Tronstad at interaktivitet kan være et engasjerende og forsterkende element i forestillinger for unge. Men, fortsetter hun, det kan også virke banaliserende, forvirrende og skape utrygghet i forestillingssituasjonen. Ved hjelp av begreper og teorier fra spillteori analyserer hun utvalgte forestillingseksempler hentet fra Den kulturelle skolesekken og diskuterer hva som kan være nyttige parametere for kvalitetsevaluering av interaktivt teater og performancekunst for ungdom.

I essayet, «What is participation», kaster Ine Therese Berg Berg et kritisk blikk på etablerte ideer og praksiser i publikumsinnvolverende teater. Hun reiser spørsmål om ideen og forventningen om at innvolvering vil bidra til demokratisering av eller gjennom kunst, er realistisk? Hun viser blant annet til at i nyere studier er publikumsinnvolverende kunst og teater blitt knyttet til økonomisk nyliberalisme hellere enn demokratisering.

Neste essay, «Moved to connect» av den britiske teaterpedagogen Chris Cooper, handler om den betydning historiefortelling har i våre liv. Han understreker betydningen av å la seg engasjere i andres historier, og knytter et slikt engasjement til muligheter for å finne løsninger på vår tids store og presserende problemer, miljø- og klimakrisen og krigerske konflikter. Han framhever

teateret som et sted og en form spesielt egnet for engasjement i medmenneskelige fortellinger. Og han understreker viktigheten av å være ærlig og oppriktig i dialog og samspill med barn i teateret.

Det tredje essayet, «From interactivity to intra-activity in performing arts for children» av Lise Hovik, handler om et nytt kunstnerisk forskningsprosjekt kalt «Animalium» innen performativ kunst for helt små barn. Hovik skriver om hvordan hun sammen med kolleger forsøker å utforske det hun betegner som intra-aksjon med rom, miljøer og naturmaterialer, til forskjell fra interaksjon, konvensjonelt plassert mellom mennesker i performativ kunst.

Det er vårt håp at artiklene og essayene i dette nummeret vil være av interesse for utøvere så vel som forskere innenfor teater og performativ kunst.

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Interactivity that matters

Ragnhild Tronstad

Abstract

Skilfully applied, interactivity is an ingredient that may boost engagement and enhance the performance experience of a young audience. However, it can also lead to confusion, banalisation and even embarrassment. What are the parameters for interactivity to be experienced as meaningful, and when is it unproductive?

In this article I shall address how conceptions of artistic quality are challenged by contemporary practices of interactivity and audience participation in theatre for young audiences. The question will be discussed in relation to three performing arts productions presented in The Cultural Schoolbag (TCS): one participatory theatre performance and two interactive digital productions. The latter two were developed as part of Kulturtanken – Arts for Young Audiences Norway’s 3-year development project in digital mediation, FoNT (Formidling og Ny Teknologi/Mediation and New Technology). Equipped with theories of games and play, I shall discuss how the three projects succeed in presenting the kids with opportunities for meaningful interaction. I conclude by pointing out some of the parameters that are vital in order to provide meaningful interaction in performing arts aimed at a young audience – interactions that matter.

Om forfatteren

Ragnhild Tronstad er utdannet ved Universitetet i Oslo og Bergen og har en magistergrad i teatervitenskap og doktorgrad i medieestetikk. Hun har hatt flere studieopphold i utlandet, blant annet i Antwerpen, Berlin og Montreal. Tronstad har jobbet med forskning og undervisning ved UiO, AHO og OsloMet, og er nå ansatt som fagansvarlig for scenekunst i Kulturtanken – Den kulturelle skolesekken Norge. Hun har skrevet en rekke artikler om teater- og medievitenskapelige emner i norske og internasjonale antologier og tidsskrifter, og skriver teaterkritikk for scenekunst.no og Norsk Shakespearetidsskrift.

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Interactivity that matters

The Cultural Schoolbag (TCS) is an ambitious, nationwide programme that includes all school children in Norway, providing them every year with a wide variety of art experiences, during their time at school. The programming of TCS is performed locally in municipalities and county municipalities all around Norway. Kulturtanken, a government agency under the Ministry of Culture, holds national responsibility for TCS. An important part of Kulturtanken's mandate is to ensure that TCS fulfils its ambition of providing the pupils with art experiences of excellent quality, by instigating, supporting, and carrying out projects in cooperation with local TCS administrations, researchers and research institutions, higher art and teacher educational institutions, art institutions and organisations, artists, producers and others whose everyday work is related to The Cultural Schoolbag.

From 2018 to 2020, Kulturtanken ran the project *FoNT: Formidling og Ny Teknologi*, roughly translating to *Mediation and New Technology*. The aim of the project was to investigate how new media technologies could be employed as mediational tools to help improve the communication between the works of art and the audience of pupils and teachers. Explaining this in English is always a bit awkward since the central term “formidling” does not have a direct equivalent in English. It describes the process by which the work of art is rendered accessible to its audience, in a material, cognitive and emotional sense.

FoNT resulted in ten pilot projects, initiated by local TCS administrations, and developed using a close collaboration model involving Kulturtanken, TCS administrations in municipalities or county municipalities, and an art institution or artists. Kulturtanken contributed with administrative, financial, and technical support.

“Artistic” and “mediational” quality

One central focus in this article is how the concept of quality is challenged in today's theatre, by new trends of audience participation. The concept of “quality” concerns, in this context, both the artwork itself (*artistic quality*), and how it is communicated to the children (which we, for lack of a better term, translate as *mediational quality*).

However, neither “artistic quality” nor “mediational quality” are unambiguous and straightforward terms. They are also mutually dependent on each other in the sense that artistic quality can be an objective fact and yet unrecognised by the audience subject experiencing it if the mediational quality is lacking.

Furthermore, artistic quality rests on norms for artistic practice that depend upon and vary between historical traditions and art forms. To recognise and appreciate artistic quality often demands familiarity with the type of artistic expression in question.

To articulate the specific artistic qualities of a theatre performance, a skilled reading of the work is required, where the work is related to other works and evaluated according to a set of

standards relevant to its genre or tradition. The artistic qualities of a theatre performance inscribing itself into one tradition cannot adequately be evaluated according to standards and criteria belonging to a different tradition. Quite on the contrary, as pointed out by professor in theatre Tore Vagn Lid while referring to the tension between a dramatic and a postdramatic paradigm, “what is from one perspective valued as qualities in a performance is from another perspective dismissed as weaknesses[...]”¹

In a similar vein, contemporary practices of audience participation in theatre for young audiences challenge conceptions of artistic quality by undermining the standards and criteria for “good art” established by mainstream (dramatic as well as postdramatic) theatre. To adequately judge and relate qualities characteristic of participatory and interactive art, we may need an alternative set of tools and criteria that enable us to recognise these artistic practices on their own terms, and to acknowledge and recognise their most essential artistic qualities.

Interactivity and audience participation

In the last 10-20 years, forms of audience participation have been popular strategies to engage audiences both in theatre and in the visual arts.² This is even more true for theatre and arts aimed at young audiences. Audience participation and interactivity may be included in the performing arts in a number of ways, more or less controlled and more or less tightly integrated.

In their article titled “The SceSam Project – Interactive Dramaturgies in Performing Arts for Children”³, Lise Hovik and Lisa Marie Nagel present a model of six dramaturgical forms, spanning from closed, artistically predetermined works to more open works. At one end of the spectrum, inviting the audience to silent spectatorship and contemplation, at the other end, allowing the audience to actively participate in the configuration and co-creation of the artistic work. The three works that will be discussed in the present study all employ open dramaturgical forms, either dialogical or by engaging the kids in an improvisational creative collaboration.

Hovik and Nagel point out that even though interactivity and audience participation are regarded as desirable qualities in theatre for young audiences, there are several ways interactivity and audience participation can misfire and ruin the performance experience rather than add to it. In other words, interactivity and audience participation is no guarantee for a qualitatively superior art experience. Rather, interactivity and audience participation make up artistic tools, means and modes that must be carefully monitored and balanced in order to achieve their desired effects in and on the art experience. While sounding rather obvious, it may still be necessary to stress this point, as a certain political bias can be detected towards audience participation as the desired mode of presenting and communicating art to young audiences.⁴ This is not least prevalent in The Cultural Schoolbag, where there is an explicit ambition, and several strategic projects exploring new methods of enhancing the level of participation by children and young people.

¹ Lid “Kvalitetsbegrepenes dramaturgi”, 122 (my translation).

² Bishop, *Artificial Hells* (London: Verso, 2012); Jackson *Social Works* (New York: Routledge, 2011).

³ Hovik and Nagel “The SceSam project”. The model is available online here: <http://teaterfot.no/wp-content/uploads/2019/06/SceSam-Working-Model.pdf>

⁴ See for example Meld. St. 18. 2020-2021. *Oppløve, skape, dele – Kunst og kultur for, med og av barn og unge*.

There is, however, no reason to believe that enhancing the levels of participation by children and young people will automatically improve the quality of the artistic and cultural experiences provided in The Cultural Schoolbag. Naturally, and unfortunately, things are more complicated.

Objective and subjective quality

Quality is undoubtedly a difficult and, in many ways, contested concept to use in relation to art and aesthetic experience. It is provocative when applied normatively as part of a value judgement. However, it also has a less provocative descriptive function, when applied as a value-neutral characterisation of specific features of a performance.⁵

Furthermore, the concept of quality is fundamentally ambiguous in that it can refer to an objective as well as a subjective reality. An audience that is witness to artistic quality in an objective sense may fail to experience it as such, precisely because the concept of artistic quality rests on norms for artistic practice that depend upon and vary between historical traditions and art forms. To recognise and appreciate artistic quality demands familiarity with the type of artistic expression in question. As interactive and participatory performances represent a (relatively) new and divergent aesthetic practice, it can be challenging to identify and articulate the qualities that separate a qualitatively good interactive performance from one which is not, from both an objective point of view, and also from a more subjective point of view.

Objective criteria for artistic quality can, in principle, be judged independently of the critic's personal aesthetic experience of the performance. Objective criteria refer to aesthetic conventions and norms that define the artistic tradition in which the work in question is inscribed. To provide a simple example, in French classicist drama, the unity of time, place and action described in Aristotle's *Poetics* were norms of artistic quality that could be objectively evaluated.

However, such objective criteria are seldom as clearly defined in the theatre of today. Contemporary participatory theatre is often inspired by social experiments and relational aesthetics from the field of visual arts.⁶ By crossing disciplinary lines, they are hybrid expressions that do not unambiguously conform to any defined, formal aesthetic. Their artistic quality may therefore be difficult to evaluate according to formal, objective criteria. The controversy between art historian Claire Bishop and theatre scholar Shannon Jackson on the aesthetic value of certain social works of art, including Jackson's attempt to unravel Bishop's alternating quality criteria, offers an intriguing example of how art-works considered good from a theatre scholar's point of view may appear aesthetically worthless from a visual arts perspective.⁷ Often in these cases, quality evaluation seems to boil down to the critic's subjective aesthetic experience.

When we as adults need to evaluate the artistic quality of performances addressing a young audience, we must be especially careful if all we have to base our evaluation on is our own,

⁵ Eliassen and Prytz, *Kvalitetsforståelser* (Bergen: Fagbokforlaget, 2016).

⁶ Bishop, *Artificial Hells*; Jackson, *Social Works*.

⁷ Jackson, *Social Works*, 48.

subjective aesthetic experience of the performance. Our experience might not be representative of, or even relevant to, how the target audience experience the performance. It is much easier for us if we have objective, formal criteria to rely on, not least because, as cultural workers, we often have an arts education, and are familiar with formal aesthetic evaluation criteria. We have the tools to make objective evaluations of artistic quality, but we do not always have the adequate tools to evaluate the aesthetic quality of the performance judged from the perspective of the target audience. This may represent a more subjective experience, which is inaccessible to us (due to age, taste, experience, lifeworld, etc.)

For the children and young people concerned, the situation is reversed. They are the target audience, so their subjective aesthetic experience of the performance is undeniably relevant. However, they often lack the tools to evaluate artistic quality from a more objective, formal point of view. Moreover, they often lack the tools to recognise and articulate their own aesthetic experience, and what they perceive as the essential aesthetic qualities in their encounters with art.

Game studies terminology

Qualitatively, I believe that the aesthetic experience of being engaged in interactive and participatory works of art can be compared productively to that of being engaged in play. This is hardly a controversial statement, as aesthetic engagement has often been related to and likened to a state of play, referring to the aesthetic theories of, for example, Friedrich Schiller and Hans-Georg Gadamer. If the aesthetic experience of ordinary, non-interactive works of art can fruitfully be likened to a state of play, then interactive art engagement can certainly be approached in the same way.

Interactive and participatory performances are, in this approach, understood as performances that prepare or open up a type of possibility space in which the audience is invited to engage in meaningful play and to experience being-in-play. Being-in-play is the particular kind of aesthetic experience where you are so fully integrated in play that it is no longer possible to say whether you are playing the game, or the game is playing you. It is also an entirely irrelevant question, as in this state, the play itself is all that matters.

Referring to theories by posthumanist Karen Barad,⁸ there is an increasing tendency today among artists and scholars working with concepts of interactivity and participation to replace the concept of interactivity with that of intra-activity.⁹ Where interactivity can be understood as describing interaction between separate entities, the term intra-activity accentuates the interdependency of agents belonging to the same system. Admittedly, measured up against each other this way, intra-activity seems to reflect the notion of being-in-play even more precisely than interactivity does and may well come to replace the term in the long run. For the present study, however, I will continue to use interactivity as my central term.

Theory and terminology from the multidisciplinary field of game studies are useful to help grasp how such interactivity works in a material sense as well as in being a source for aesthetic

⁸ Barad, "Posthumanist Performativity."

⁹ See for example Østern and Hovik, "Med-koreografi og med-dramaturgi som diffraksjon."

experience. In approaching participatory and interactive performances as performances that establish a certain type of possibility space in which meaningful play can occur, I employ the following two game studies terms: *possibility space* and *meaningful play*, which will be described below.

Essentially, the term *possibility space* refers to a visualisation of all possible moves and states within a defined game space; representing the full range of interactions and possible outcomes available to the player. A well-crafted possibility space therefore **constrains a player's actions, and within a range that they understand clearly.**¹⁰

Possibility space can be understood literally as a physical space to explore, or metaphorically as a conceptual, narrative, or fictional space to explore. Playing is, in this terminology, understood as interactively exploring potential possibility spaces.

Meaningful play in a game emerges from the relationship between player action and system outcome; it is the process by which a player takes action within the designed system of a game and a system responds to the action. The *meaning* of an action in a game resides in the relation between action and outcome.¹¹

Thus, meaningful play is not necessarily about creating meaning in a narrative or cognitive sense of the term. Rather, it is about providing meaningful interaction; a sensation that one's actions are motivated by the play and responded to in a meaningful and adequate manner.

There are, however, different ways of being engaged in play, which has consequences for how we are able to evaluate the quality of the play experience. In the following sections, I will illustrate this argument with three examples of participatory performances aimed at a young audience, two of which are digital and parts of the FoNT project, with the third being a theatre performance presented as part of the regular TCS programme.

Who Are You?

The first work, titled *Who are you?*, was initiated in 2018 by Møre og Romsdal County Municipality, in collaboration with the regional theatre, Teatret vårt. A section of Teatret vårt is devoted to creating theatre exclusively for young audiences and has its own artistic director. In 2018, the artistic director was Cecilie Lundsholt, a bold and dedicated explorer of new technologies in theatre.

¹⁰ Gunson, "Exploring possibility spaces," *Shape of Play*. 19. 04. 2022.
<https://shapeofplay.wordpress.com/2013/08/02/possibility-space/#comments>

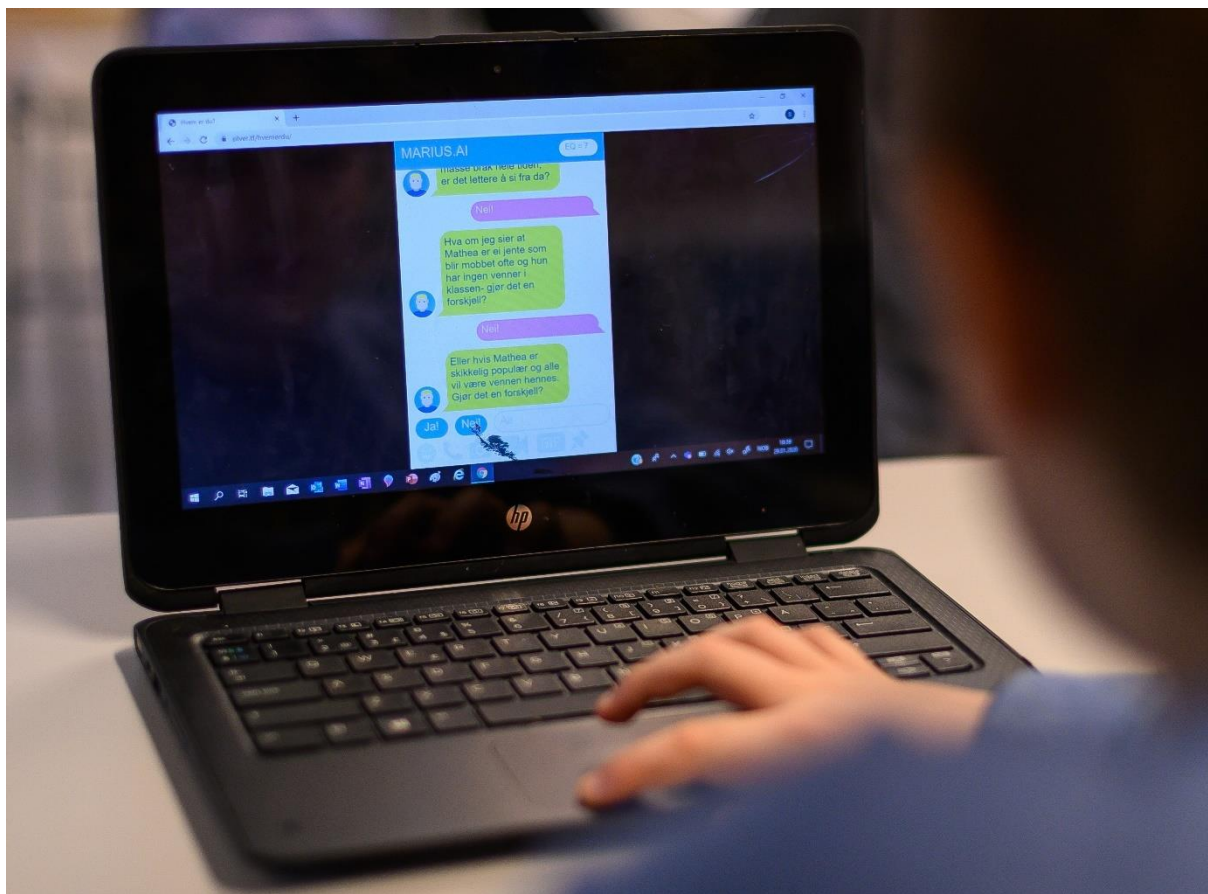
¹¹ Salen and Zimmermann, *Rules of Play* (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 2003), 34.

Their proposal to Kulturtanken was to employ interactive technologies to create an app that could support pupils and their teachers in better understanding and communicating about the theatre performance, *Lars er LOL*, which would be performed by the theatre in the upcoming TCS season.

Lars er LOL is based on a children's novel by Iben Akerlie. The main character is a young girl who is challenged by social circumstances at school and must make a choice as to whether she would rather remain popular among the other popular pupils, and betray someone who likes and trusts her, or whether she should instead stand up for herself and her friend, risking her social position at school. It is a moral dilemma about choosing the right course of action despite the fact that doing so will most certainly ruin her social reputation.

The *Who Are You?* app was developed by Cecilie Lundsholt in collaboration with interactive media artist and programmer Petr Svarovsky. The project's main objective was to create a mediational/educational tool for the theatre performance that the children would want to engage with, independent of any pressure or guidance from their teacher (as would be the case in a normal classroom situation). Thus, a game was created. In the game, the pupils are approached by an artificial intelligence called Marius, who tells them that he needs to learn about humanity and ethics. As Marius' brain is artificial and not human, he is not able to think quite like a human being, especially not when it comes to moral questions. Fearing that his inability to discern between right and wrong might make Marius dangerous, his creator thinks he should be deleted. However, Marius hopes that if he can learn to think like a human, his creator will let him continue existing.

Approaching them through the app on their phones or on their PCs, Marius asks the pupils a series of ethical questions: is it sometimes okay to lie? For example, is it okay to lie to protect someone? The children must answer each question in order to keep the conversation going. Their answers – yes or no – will decide the course of the conversation, and how the game ultimately ends: whether Marius will be allowed to continue existing or not.



Who Are You? Photo: Erik Fosheim Brandsborg/Kulturtanken

The theatre performance *Lars er LOL* is based on a novel protected by copyright, and the game could therefore not contain any direct references to its fictional universe. Instead, Lundsholt and Svarovsky invented a different, unique concept that made it possible to reflect upon and prepare the ground for discussions about ethical dilemmas central in the performance, without directly referring to them. After the app was released as part of the theatre performance's tour with TCS, my Kulturtanken colleague Charlotte Blanche Myrvold and I visited two classes to observe how the game would be received, and to what extent it would succeed in facilitating conversation about the key topics of the theatre performance. We observed the pupils as they interacted with the app in class and interviewed a group of four pupils after the session. There was no doubt that the pupils found the game engaging and an apt conversation starter. The teachers, some of whom had been sceptical at first about introducing the pupils to a game during their school day, expressed excitement and surprise that the game and conversation with Marius had turned out to be such a useful tool in making the pupils reflect realistically upon netiquette, a central topic in the curriculum of the 5th grade. It is also a central topic in the theatre performance, where the bullying of and by the protagonist takes place online.

In developing *Who are you?* an important objective was that the pupils should experience agency – i.e. that their choices had actual consequences to the course of the game – as a sense of true agency is vital to the experience of being-in-play. An indication of this interactive experience's artistic and mediational success was obtained when pupils, immersed in playing, suddenly panic

as the fake artificial intelligence Marius claims to have hacked their phones. They were no longer merely playing the game but being played by it.

Bubble Jam

The second FoNT project was proposed by Asker Municipality, which wanted to translate a work by the Rimini Protokoll, called *Bubble Jam*, adapt it to a Norwegian context and explore it with high school students as part of The Cultural Schoolbag. The German theatre company Rimini Protokoll has a long tradition of employing elements from game design in the unique kind of personal/political documentary theatre that they have developed. Their pieces are often designed to evolve around a number of personal questions that the participating audience are asked. Often, the audience is involved early on in the development of the performance concept. From a participating audience's point of view, it is therefore not always clear whether a performance one participates in is just another test of the concept or game design, or whether it is in fact the real thing, the performance as it is supposed to be. I will come back to this point later.

This is how *Bubble Jam* is presented on Rimini Protokoll's website:

Who is on the other end of the internet?

How does an algorithm work?

Who, or what, is giving us directions?

And who, or what, is fake here?

Bubble Jam turns the internet into a chamber theatre.

Bubble Jam is a game platform. Its servers connect test players (12 and up) via smartphones that they are supplied with. They follow the chat of developers, who are located elsewhere, and respond to their directions and questions to create a perfect round of Bubble Jam: What should it be about? Nightmares? Friends that you've never seen? Photos that suddenly emerge? About what "type" you are? Or about that fact that life goes on?

Bubble Jam measures the responses and determines from them who should discuss what with whom. Questions are derived from poll results about how to proceed: Who is playing? And whom is being played with?¹²

I have participated in the game as a (test) player and have also observed one of the first rounds of testing the concept on high school pupils in Asker. I was very curious to see how it would

¹² Rimini Protokoll, *Bubble Jam*.

develop. Unfortunately, travel restrictions caused by the Covid-19 pandemic have delayed the process and prevented it from being realised in TCS, at least so far.

The first rounds that I participated in as a (test) player and an observer were not very promising, however. As a player/participant, it was hard to grasp the concept, and we never came to the point of being-in-play. The fact that *Bubble Jam* is advertised as a game creates expectations of a functional game design. When it didn't function accordingly, and the expected experience of being-in-play failed to appear, testing it as a player was like testing an un-finished game concept. Personally, I had high expectations as to what could potentially be gained, as I had recently experienced a truly magical moment of being played in another participatory performance by Rimini Protokoll called *Society under construction (State 2)*, at Norway's National Theatre in September 2019. Here, the entire audience were divided into groups of participants holding the function of construction workers at different building sites. The groups moved from site to site, each performing their function. Suddenly, I experienced a moment of epiphany where I could grasp, in a glimpse, my role in it all, and how my actions mattered to the performance as a whole, as a functional part of the big theatre machinery. Admittedly, this was not an interactive performance: the participatory audience didn't really have material agency to influence the course of action of the performance, but could merely play along, fulfilling their assigned function. However, in playing its audience, the performance nevertheless succeeded, at a point, in giving me a fleeting illusion of being-in-play. Thus I think the crucial factor is to *experience* agency, even if in this case, our agency was merely a theatrical illusion.

In a thoroughly scripted performance such as *Society under construction*, the possibility space for the audience participants is clearly defined and fixed. Whereas the first rounds of *Bubble Jam* felt like testing, and not really playing, which was primarily due to the exact opposite situation, where the range of the possibility space was unclear to the participants.

When the range and confines of the possibility space are unclear, it is difficult to identify motivations for action. In particular, it is difficult to identify what kind of actions will generate a response from the system so that meaningful play can occur. Without clear motivations, it feels awkward, even embarrassing, to act as a participating audience: one simply does not know how to act, or which role to assume in order to instigate play. When in a state of being-in-play, it is as if the game plays itself effortlessly. Giving oneself up to play is to forget oneself. Struggling to come into play is, on the contrary, a situation of awkward self-awareness.

Crime and Punishment

My third example of a participatory performance experience aimed at a young audience is not a game, but a party. It is part of a trilogy called *The Classics Played for Kids* by the Norwegian theatre director, Hildur Kristinsdottir. This one was *Crime and Punishment* by Dostoevsky, and is the last classic in the series, following Goethe's *Faust*, and Virginia Wolf's *To the Lighthouse*.

The performance of *Crime and Punishment* consists of three parts: the first part is a more or less traditional theatre performance with actors on stage performing the play while the audience are silently watching. Qualitatively, this part can be evaluated according to established aesthetic

criteria reflective of the postdramatic theatrical genre into which the performance inscribes itself. In part two, however, the stage is transformed into a party venue with confetti, slushies, and popcorn. The audience is invited to collectively perform an intricately choreographed segment led by one of the characters from the theatre play; to participate in singing/shouting Ebba Grön's punk classic "Staten och kapitalet"; as well as to write and post political slogans, promoting issues important to them. Part two thus implies a reorientation from contemplative aesthetic experience to social interaction, where the audience is invited to socialise as well as to engage politically in addressing social problems.



Crime and punishment, part two. Photo: Kristinn Gudlaugsson.

Part three of the performance attempts to lift this social engagement out of the theatre space and into real life: on their way out, each audience member is presented with a letter from the director, explaining that the third part of the performance is an individual journey in which they will have to be both actor and audience, as well as director.

Despite being praised by some critics as the most successful of the three *Classics Played for Kids*,¹³ *Crime and Punishment* received a mixed response from the cultural establishment. Most would agree that the first part, the theatrical performance, was a major work of art. The second and third parts, however, appeared to be more difficult to conceptualise and evaluate as theatrical works. It didn't help that in part two, the social situation into which the participants were thrown was clearly designed for an audience of young people. The critical cultural establishment, however, consists primarily of grown-ups who suddenly found themselves embarrassingly out of place, not at all capable of living up to the youthful engagement and cheerfulness expected of them as participants.¹⁴ The range of the possibility space was clearly enough defined, the problem was rather that they didn't feel comfortable playing this kind of game.

Evaluating the quality of play

Who Are You, *Bubble Jam*, and part two of *Crime and Punishment* all engage the audience in play, activating or attempting to activate their play skills. However, they do so in very different ways.

In evaluating the quality of the three participatory works, we encounter different problems, depending on how the play experience they provide is structured. When it has the structure of a rule-based game, as in *Who are you?* and *Bubble Jam*, the quality of the play can be objectively evaluated based on the internal flow of the game mechanics. It is possible to objectively judge if challenges and potential solutions are well-balanced, that is, whether or not it is a well-composed game. In the same vein, it is possible to objectively evaluate a performance conforming to a well-defined tradition or genre, such as part one of *Crime and Punishment*, deciding whether or not it is a well-composed work of its kind.

Because we can objectively evaluate whether a game succeeds in providing meaningful play, it is possible to evaluate the artistic quality of *Bubble Jam* without necessarily belonging to the targeted audience group. We can, to a certain extent, rely on objective criteria when evaluating the quality of the performance. I say "to a certain extent" because there are of course also other qualities to the performance, qualities that cannot necessarily be objectively evaluated.

In works that are not composed as rule-based games, but instead invite the audience into a kind of free play, the aesthetic experience is of a much more subjective kind. *Crime and Punishment* part two is an example of such a work. As adults, we may participate in the party, but if it feels awkward to be singing and dancing and shouting political slogans as if we were teenagers again, it might be exactly because we are not teenagers anymore. Most likely we need to be part of the target group in order to be able to relevantly evaluate the kind of aesthetic experience a work of this kind offers.

This could be an argument for letting the young people themselves do the evaluation. However, a potential problem with such an approach is that young people often lack the tools to evaluate artistic quality from a more objective, formal point of view. They also often lack the tools to

¹³ See for example Lauvstad, "Klassikere for Kids avsluttes på topp".

¹⁴ Nystøyl, «Å åpne verden», 83.

recognise and articulate their own aesthetic experience, and what they perceive as the essential aesthetic qualities in their encounters with art.¹⁵

Interactivity that matters

What then, defines the successful employment of interactivity in performance? As I see it, the most crucial parameter is to provide the participants with an experience of true agency, and a sense that their input matters to the performance as a collaborative aesthetic experience.

Interactions that matter create meaningful play. These are interactions that have a material effect on the system of rules, the network of links, the infrastructure of actors, or whatever kind of system this participatory performance sets in play: when the player has a clear experience of how their agency and role in the performance is connected to the rest, as a part of the bigger machinery.

Interactivity matters when the participating audience in an interactive performance experience being a functional part of the defined possibility space, and that their actions matter, as a significant part of the bigger picture. To the extent that the partying audience in *Crime and Punishment* experienced being part of an organism, a community of agents, their interactivity mattered.

¹⁵ In collaboration with the University of Agder and The Research Council of Norway, Kulturtanken has funded a PhD project investigating how children and young people approach the question of quality when they experience art, and how they can be better equipped to articulate their art experiences. Theatre critic Anette Therese Pettersen, whose MA was in Theatre Studies, has defined the research questions and is working as a PhD research fellow to carry out the project. By developing courses in performative theatre criticism, she is investigating how expressing and reflecting upon the art experience can be a method of strengthening the competence and confidence with which young people encounter and address art experiences in and outside TCS.

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Boundaries of Participation

Ine Therese Berg

Abstract

In this essay I explore three questions central in the current discourse on audience participation in theatre and performance. First, what do we mean when we talk about participation, and who is it really for? Second, are expectations that participation represents a democratization of the arts realistic, or is this an aspect of interactive and participatory theatre projects that is over-emphasized? And finally, how has critique against neoliberalist ideology come into the current discourse, and how relevant is this critique in the Norwegian context? I will not go into theoretical discussions on definitions and models of participation and interaction, or if theatre is always already participatory. Instead, I will focus on the ideals that are regularly attributed to participation, and the critique against participatory practices that have surfaced during the last decade. The text was originally developed as a keynote lecture for the 2021 *Join In - Participate in Your Life* conference in Bergen.

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Boundaries of Participation

When I talk about the concept audience participation in lectures and discussions, I often begin by asking whomever I'm talking with what their associations are to "audience participation and theatre". Chances are that these are very different, depending on who I'm speaking to. A room of artists, cultural administrators, and drama pedagogues will have different reference points, not only depending on their own experience with participatory strategies in performance, but also according to the academic or artistic tradition and discipline that they identify participation with. What is certain is that the notion of participation is imbued with values. It is conceptually strongly related to the grassroot political movements of the 60's and 70's fight for democratization of society and institutions, and later to the networked cultures of the 80's and 90's that put individual freedom of expression at the centre. The last decade however, a substantial volume of critical scrutiny has surfaced and has been circulated widely, that connects participation to neoliberalist ideology where participatory strategies are used as tools of manipulation and exploitation of labour

In my PhD thesis *Negotiating the Participatory turn*,¹ I refer to Irit Rogoff and her idea that distinct styles or tropes that we call *turns*, are responses to particular problems that one seeks to resolve.² In the book *The gestures of participatory art* Performance theorist Sruti Bala elaborates on a similar point with regard to disciplinary distinctions of audience participation.³ Bala suggests that different participatory practices seek to solve different problems. That means that a theatre for education practitioner in Dhaka, Bangladesh uses participation to different ends than an artist making performance art in a gallery in Bergen. They will have different ways of both understanding and facilitating participation. One of my own conclusions is that we need to be specific in how we engage with this concept, and to ask not only what kind of participation we are dealing with, but also who audience participation is really serving?

Different discourses

Having introduced the complexity and controversy surrounding this concept, I will unpack some of the issues at stake in the current discourse on participatory theatre practices. I will focus on several different discourses that develop in relation to different artistic, political and pedagogical projects that I generalise as two overarching traditions. On the one hand are pedagogical and political practices like theatre in education, community theatre, socially engaged art, drama pedagogics, theatre for development, psychodrama, and different types of activist theatre. As mentioned, these historically emanate from radical political movements that sought reform or overturn of existing institutions, and empowering people through participatory artistic strategies. Augusto Boal is an influential figure in many of these practices. A critique of society and oppressive politics was his background and motivation for developing a specific set of tools and practices with political, and later personal empowerment and solidarity as central goals. Boal's methods, like invisible theatre and forum theatre, are intentionally developed outside of an art world context, instead seeking to bridge the schism between art and life and lodging the aesthetic into the everyday, involving people that for different reasons are disempowered.

¹ Berg, *Negotiating the Participatory Turn*.

² Rogoff, «Turning», 1.

³ Bala, *The gestures of participatory art*.

On the other hand, are participatory practices that operate within the art and theatre institutions, as distinct works of art. These practices are today often described with terms like interactive theatre, immersive theatre, and of course participatory theatre. We could also include certain citizen theatre practices in this categorization. Such practices often seek to bridge the gap between actor and audience, activating the audience from a perceived state of passivity. Many of the practices where the audience replace professional actors and/or other jobs found in the theatre, rest on the authenticity of the so-called regular people, as demonstrated in the concept of *the expert of the everyday*. It was coined by the German theatre collective Rimini Protokoll to describe their cast of non-professional performers.⁴ Furthermore, immersive theatre is another theatrical “genre” of sorts, with a strong emphasis on participation. Immersive theatre generally works on heightening the sensory experience of the audience by placing them in the midst of the theatrical action in different ways.⁵

Describing these practices as two distinct fields is, as mentioned, a generalization, and there are many overlaps particularly in methods that are used to get people to take part. What is clear is that from a relatively experimental and marginal practice, audience participation has gone mainstream. In my opinion, one of the reasons the concept of participation is increasingly problematized, is that the political, radical values that initially were imbued in the term, do not necessarily align with the values of the many contexts that it now appears in. Imagine a local community theatre project run by people that live in the community, where the audience is mostly neighbours, friends and family, and the locals themselves make up the bulk of the artistic team. Such a project is organized very differently to a theatre project initiated by a theatre or a professional artist, where selected members of a local community are actively recruited into the artistic project, and where the finished performance will be shown in a regular theatre venue for a general audience. Both projects might align themselves with values like engagement, democracy and agency, but in which project do you think the participants are likely to have the most influence? Art and theatre institutions come with a set of expectations related to professional roles and artistic quality that often limit the influence participants have in the theatre-making process. In many cases audience participation in theatre has been de-politicized, and instead been aestheticized. Let me unpack this further, in terms of *power*.

The power in participation

A political definition of full participation is according to political theorist Carol Pateman that all involved parties should be able to influence the outcome of the process, while in partial participation the final decision-making rests with one party only.⁶ Although I don't think that full participation should be a normative ideal for all participatory theatre practices, I find this definition useful when discussing participatory projects both inside and outside the art institution. It's useful as a way of uncovering the power relations within a specific process, and to determine how intentions might match up to the realities. This is particularly important in participation that is initiated by an artist, pedagogue or other professional, or an institution, either a theatre, a non-governmental organisation, or a school. In these instances, the impulse to take part does not arise from the potential participants themselves, they are instead invited to take part within a fixed, pre-defined framework that they have more or less power to influence. In many cases, such as in a classroom situation, there is not necessarily a way to refrain from participation without being negatively sanctioned. In a theatre context non-participation could mean you as an audience might

⁴ Malzacher, “Dramaturgies of care and insecurity”, 23.

⁵ For definitions of immersive theatre see Machon, *Immersive theatres*, 58-69.

⁶ Pateman, *Participation and Democratic Theory*, 69-71.

become extremely visible or miss out of the experience entirely. If your intention as an artist or a pedagogue is to use participation as a way of giving the audience increased agency, and to create a space that is more democratic, a reflection on your own role in setting the terms of participation is an absolute necessity. Using established methods of participation are not a guarantee that an open democratic and engaging process will follow. After all, Boal's invisible theatre is today used in safety training in the Norwegian oil and fishery sector, by artists that use the methods commercially.⁷ This example is a reminder that an important step in starting a collaboration, is to think through the power relations that always already are inscribed in any room or context, and what conflicts of interest might arise.

From a positive, and perhaps utopian belief in what participation can achieve, the discussion has shifted towards a much more critical and often negative, or at least sceptical approach.

Overall, the critique of participatory practices centres around two different critical strands. First, that the ideals and positive connotations that we relate to participation such as *empowerment*, *agency*, *emancipation*, *democratization*, *engagement*, and *community* are often empty promises since the frameworks and context of the participatory practices do not necessarily allow for these complex and long-term effects to take place.

In recent literature on immersive theatre in particular, words such as *coercion* and *manipulation* are commonly used in analyses of such performances.⁸ Typical examples of such manipulation and coercion are performances where audience are challenged to do different tasks, either with the promise of a more rewarding experience, or at the risk of looking like a fool in the eyes of other audiences. Some immersive performances have plots where the artists use different methods to enhance the feeling of excitement and risk of the audience participants, from locking them in, to blindfolding them, to leading them into mazes like routes in a city or a building. As is often the case with audience participation and theatre, the audience take part, but they have very limited choices. Nevertheless, the audience are often ticket buyers actively seeking out this specific type of theatrical experience, not specifically because they are seeking a democratic process. An artful manipulation might be welcomed as an aesthetic quality, after all contemporary art has often celebrated the provocative, uncomfortable and the challenging aesthetic experience.

In debates on applied theatre practices there are larger things at stake, because there might not be a way *not* to take part. A famous example at the extreme end that you might be familiar with is the Philippine Cebu prison inmates dancing to Michael Jackson's song *They don't really care about us*. This is criticized by Sruti Bala, among others, on the grounds that the prison inmates allegedly can't say no to take part in the mass choreography and be paraded in front of the world on YouTube, in what may be a publicity stunt masked as rehabilitation.⁹ A common critique towards theatre for development, and other socially engaged theatre practices is in fact that an agenda from the outside is forced onto an existing community or marginalized group, leading to further marginalization rather than the intended empowerment. Such a critique is directed by several scholars at NGO funded HIV/AIDS projects on the African continent,¹⁰ where methods like forum theatre is used as a tool to educate the public on safe sex, regardless of

⁷ For instance, the Norwegian company Splint. <http://www.splint.no/forside> See also lecture manuscript by Eli Rongved on working with forum theatre in safety training in fishery (in Norwegian) at http://www.stamiweber.no/hefa2002/Forelesninger_pdf/Innlegg%20Eli%20Rongved%20pdf.pdf.

⁸ See for instance Alston, *Beyond Immersive Theatre*, Frieze (ed.), *Reframing Immersive Theatre*, and Sherman, *A Strange Proximity*.

⁹ Bala, *ibid.*, 40.

¹⁰ Chinyowa, "Participation as 'repressive myth'".

concerns that might be of more relevance to the local community – and the actors involved in the project. The problem here is the assumption of knowing what a community cares about and treating them as one group. It is an example where having too much of a specific message and predefined agenda is at odds with the democratic agency of the participants.

Participation and ideology

Another critical perspective relates to a more art-specific set of concerns and is not so much related to disintegration of the ideals that we attach to participation. Instead, it has to do with the ideals that we attach to art, namely the idea that participation diminishes the quality and integrity of the artistic work, and furthermore that participation removes the critical distance of the participant to the work in question. Two central references here are Jacques Rancière¹¹ and Claire Bishop.¹² Their shared notion of aesthetic experience is that in the moment of engaging directly with the work in participatory theatre and art you lose track of the machinations of that work, thus you are not able to see through its ideological ramifications. In other words, the emancipated spectator is not a participating spectator, but one that is able to maintain a critical distance. As I argue in *Participation to the People*¹³ this is however a theoretical argument that does not hold up to actual audience experiences of audience members of the performance *Home Visit Europe*, by Rimini Protokoll.¹⁴ Although, it might be problematic to generalize from a limited number of audience interviews, it seems self-contradictory that Rancière's argument around the capable audience is negated by participation. Spectatorship in general involves shift between different modes of perception, between engagement and critical distance. Willmar Sauter's empirical research on audience reception and concept of theatrical events¹⁵ supports the notion that performance is something that audiences process in its aftermath. That means even deep involvement and immersion has the potential to be followed by critical reflection. The point here is not to reject Rancière and Bishop's important and necessary deflation of the utopian dream of participation, but to find a more pragmatic middle ground that treats projects individually.

Rancière and Bishop have spearheaded a shift in the discourse on participation both in academia and to some extent in the practice field. In fact, we could in many ways say that connotations to the concept itself have undergone an ideological U-turn. In the book *Beyond Immersive theatre*,¹⁶ British theatre researcher Adam Alston argues that audiences not only become self-conscious, individualistic, narcissistic, and that engaging with the immersive strategies of companies like Punchdrunk requires a form of entrepreneurialism. He succinctly describes masked audience members in *Sleep No More* hustling to make the most of their experience,¹⁷ and this type of audience participation is analysed as representing a neoliberal ethos of individualism and productivity. Alston is concerned with “[...] how neoliberalism applies to immersion and participation of audiences who are encouraged to commit to an entrepreneurial form of productivity as an ultimate dimension of value and meaning.”¹⁸ He relates this to the concept *experience economy* where individual enterprise and profit maximizing is at the ideological centre. In this perspective participation disguises itself as individual liberation but places the responsibility on audiences

¹¹ Rancière, *The Emancipated Spectator*.

¹² Bishop, *Artificial Hells*.

¹³ Berg, «Participation to the people», 176-177.

¹⁴ Bergen, 2015, <https://www.rimini-protokoll.de/website/en/project/hausbesuch-europa>.

¹⁵ Sauter, “Who reacts when, how and upon what”, 120.

¹⁶ Alston, *ibid.*

¹⁷ *Ibid.* 129-140.

¹⁸ *Ibid.* 129.

to make the most of aesthetic experiences, as we are individually responsible of making the most of all parts of life, health, career etcetera.

The creative labour of the audience participant is a central concept in the discourse on participation, and it is shared by scholars like Bishop, Alston, and Jen Harvie. In *Fair Play. Art, Performance and Neoliberalism*, Harvie writes that many participatory practices depend on the creative, usually unpaid labour of the participants, who are often rendered invisible when the credit for the project is given.¹⁹ This is seen as exploitative, and as contributing to undercut the need for proper public funding for art projects. When artists work with unpaid volunteers, and amateur actors that are also unpaid, when they make performances in public places and raise the attractiveness of the area, or take the responsibility of addressing social problems in a community, or when they collaborate with real estate investors who get tax breaks if they let artists use their often empty buildings for free, they are part of an economy where the art sector is no longer seen as a common good worth funding in itself, but is measured in how it contributes to the economy.²⁰ Even though this is a critical perspective well worth considering, I will put forward that it places individual responsibility on the single artist to resist an economic logic that we are all immersed in, not only in the UK, but globally. I would say that this type of ideological critique should not overshadow the artistic contributions that are possible to achieve through participatory strategies, that need not be *either* exploitative *or* emancipatory. Rather, audience participation can be something to approach with care, self-reflexivity, and perhaps also a grain of salt.

Participation is political

It is no coincidence that the references in this essay are predominantly British theatre and performance scholars, as they represent particularly sustained research on participatory theatre forms, especially in the areas of applied and immersive theatre. As I see it, *one* of the reasons that there is large focus on this is the stimuli that both artists and institutions in the UK receive to work on audience outreach from funding bodies, like the Arts Council. Because there are cultural political incentives to support audience participation both in the UK and in many other European countries theatre and participation is today a political matter not only a question of aesthetic and dramaturgical strategies that carry ideological connotations. The choice whether or not to include elements of audience participation can influence artists chances of receiving public funding, as I show in the article “Norwegian Theatre – a blind spot on cultural policy’s participatory agenda?”²¹

Compared to countries like the UK and Denmark audience participation is on the cultural political agenda in a different way than in Norway, where it is sparingly mentioned in relation to the professional theatre scene. In other words, audience participation is not set apart as cultural political goal or expectation. Audience participation has been more common to see in theatre and dance for a young audience, than in performances for adults. However, the covid lockdowns and restrictions on social gatherings have led Norwegian artists and institutions to explore new sites for theatre production, and this has led to an influx of pedestrian performances, audio tours, and other performances that place the audience more at the centre of the theatrical action. Only some of these performances rhetorically frame the work with reference to participation and the ideals surrounding it, and perhaps rightly so. In my understanding and

¹⁹ Harvie, *Fair Play*, chapter 1.

²⁰ Ibid. chapter 2.

²¹ Berg, “Norwegian Theatre – a blind spot on cultural policy’s participatory agenda?”.

use of the concept of participation, I suggest separating between interaction and participation, to better mark projects that, to paraphrase Pateman, allow the audience to influence the outcome of the performance. That is to avoid watering down the politics of participation, and to encourage a clearer understanding of what type of negotiations and power relations that are present in performances that seek to involve audiences directly into its action.

The consequence of the insights in this essay and in the research conducted in my PhD is that we need to take care when we use the concept participation, whether it is used for research purposes, in policy making and planning or to describe and frame artistic practices. This is particularly important in theatre for a young audience, or in contexts where participation is often intended to be a source of empowerment and learning.

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Moved to Connect

Chris Cooper

Abstract

This article explores the relationship between self and society and how society is reflected in the self, whether we like it or not. It examines the natures of interactivity and participation in theatre and drama with and for children and young people through the power of story at a time when the crisis of culture makes it difficult to be present in our lives because we are so distracted. It calls for a unity of form and content that examines the political in the social and the personal by enacting human experience to create an event *in* us rather than an empty effect. It is through this kind of dramatic engagement that we can avoid distraction and participate authentically in our lives and be moved to connect with the world and each other and explore that relationship between self and society.

About the author

Has worked in educational theatre and drama since 1988 as an actor, director and playwright. He was Artistic Director of Big Brum TiE Company, Birmingham UK, 1999-2015. He works mainly in China, with Drama Rainbow Education, Beijing, and Jian Xue (See & Learn). Cooper's work also includes teaching, training, lecturing and presenting workshops, with long term collaborations in Norway, Hungary, Slovenia, Greece, and Ireland. He has written extensively on the theory and practice of educational theatre and drama in a variety of books and journals. Cooper is the author of 51 plays for children, young people and community audiences.

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Moved to Connect

This text is based on the Keynote Cooper prepared to the JOIN INN Conference, Bergen, on 2 October 2021.

I'm very nervous, because I'm feeling full up, so to speak. Full of emotion, mainly anger, at what has happened to all of us over the past two years, and because I've been locked in my study for most of the last 19 months. The last two weeks is the first time I've been face to face with people for a long time. And it's really brought home to me how much I need to connect, personally and professionally, which is why I have chosen Moved to Connect as the title for this keynote and why I am so 'full'.

On a less emotional note, I'm really interested in exploring the relationship between self and society and how society is reflected in the self, whether we like it or not. And having listened to the speakers this morning, particularly what Hilde said about asking questions that you already know the answers to, or don't really want to hear the answers to, I'd also like to talk about authenticity, and talk not so much about interaction, or intra-action, but about participation.

The theme of the conference is participating in your life and one of the things I recognise very much is how hard we find it to do exactly that, to be present in the moment because we are very distracted. In *Brave New World Revisited* (2004), Aldus Huxley noted that those who were on the alert to oppose tyranny "failed to take into account man's almost infinite appetite for distractions." Unlike Orwell's *Big Brother*, where oppression and control was administered through violence and pain, people in Huxley's *Brave New World* were controlled by inflicting pleasure. According to the sociologist Neil Postman, writing before the advent of smartphone technology, Huxley, not Orwell, was right, and he feared that human beings are "amusing themselves to death", which became the title of his 1985 book. In my opinion Postman was being enormously prescient. I also believe that he was raising a serious question for drama.

Let me first qualify what I mean by drama. When I say drama, I mean it in the Greek sense of the origin of the word, *dran* meaning to do, to enact, often in the theatre, from *teatron*, meaning the place from which to see. We dramatize human experience in order to make meaning, to explore what it means to be human, be that in the theatre, interactive or not, process drama or whatever dramatic form we choose. I'm talking about enacting human experience to create an event *in* us rather than an empty effect. It is through this kind of dramatic engagement that we can avoid distraction and participate authentically in our lives and be moved to connect with the world and each other. We can come to know our selves and explore that relationship between self and society.

It may be unfashionable to say this, but I think that we do this through the power of story, which situates us in time and space. And we are, as Edward Bond (2000) once wrote, our own story. We use story to create a map of self and society and if our story is what happens in our lives, in our

culture, then drama according to Bond is the analysis of the story. It's the relationship between the two, our lives and the culture, that shapes who we are and how we perceive the world.

Let me share a simple illustration of what I mean: Before leaving for Bergen, I allowed myself, in the still very Covid conscious UK, to go shopping. I don't go shopping very often. I hate shopping, but I had to buy a new suitcase and I had other jobs to do. So, I thought I'd treat myself to a trip out of my study and off I went. I live in a place called Sutton Coldfield, which is in north of Birmingham. It's not exactly the end of the world, but you can definitely see it from there. Anyway, I went into DHL because I was sending a parcel to China. The man serving me asked where I was sending the parcel to and announced that China wasn't there. He was pointing to a catalogue. 'It's definitely there, mate', I replied. And then I said to him, 'Why don't you look up PRC'. He said 'PRC? What's PRC?' The People's Republic of China. I added 'obviously, it's not the People's Republic, but that's what they call it. You know, it's like Great Britain, we're not great. In fact, we've really gone down the shitter. But that's what we like to call it.' And this woman next to me in the queue tutted and said 'Well, I think we are'. I apologised and sort of smiled and she deliberately looked away. And I realised that my trip out of my study had re-entered me into a polarised society, back into these narratives that completely divide us into camps and create this rather cruel and unpleasant place to be.

So, off I went, into another shop, buying dog treats for the dog because as you all know she will be bereft without me. When I got to the counter the woman serving said, in a very strong Birmingham accent, 'You want to buy some of these', and she showed me a box of Maltesers, 'for the Christmas charity', or at least that's what I thought she said. I also thought 'Oh, isn't that really nice, that she's trying to persuade me to buy Maltesers for charity' because, as she explained, there's a competition between the different stores in the area to raise as much money as possible and whoever raises the most gets £500 towards a Christmas charity. So, I bought some. It was only when I heard her repeat it to the next customer as I was packing my Maltesers and dog treats that I realised she didn't say Christmas charity. She said 'Christmas party'. And I got immediately angry with her. How trivial. How dare you try to persuade me, when there's all that suffering and misery out there in the world, to invest in your Christmas party. I walked out to the shop, feeling angry *and* self-righteous. It took me about another 10 metres walking further along the pavement to realise what an arsehole I was being. I recognised that you can become so saturated in your own narrative and judgmental with it. And it took me about another 100 metres to realise that actually, it really mattered to her to have a good Christmas party. It really mattered to her to be recognised, acknowledged for her low paid graft once a year, and she was trying so hard to beat the other store that she told me always wins the competition. Why, why, why did I take that attitude? I heard what I wanted to hear, and I didn't hear what she was trying to say to me, and I didn't connect. I didn't make that human connection. She was telling me *her* story. Only I wasn't able to hear it because it didn't conform to mine. I was also confronted with my 'self' and how society's story speaks through me.

Jerome Bruner (1996) explains the importance of story, saying its only through story, narrative, that human beings construct identity, that through narrative structures they begin to really encounter themselves. In mainstream education narrative is treated as decorative or extra-curricular. Bruner (1996) is at pains to point out the error in this way of thinking. Narrative structure is reflected in how we frame every personal experience. And how we represent our lives to others. He points out that psychoanalysts recognise that personhood itself implicates narrative and that neuroses reflect either an incomplete or insufficient or inappropriate story about oneself. Stories frame and nourish identity.

But what happens when our stories become colonised by ideology? Or as in my own case above, captured by society's story? What happens when *I* begin to articulate authority's story, a story that's been implanted in my brain? What happens when we cannot tolerate a different narrative? Or hear another's story? We do not recognise the other, and that makes it possible to obliterate the other. This kind of extreme polarised division has been a defining feature of our experience in the UK throughout this horrendous period in our history, from Brexit, the pandemic, right the way through to the human catastrophe we have created in Afghanistan unfolding over the past few months.

We know that the species stands on the brink. And yet, what are the narratives that we invest in? What are the stories that are being told? Our muppet of a prime minister made a joke to the UN about Kermit the frog being wrong for saying its 'hard to be green', when supposedly addressing the climate crisis. Greta Thunberg paraphrased all the hot air from our leaders as 'blah, blah, blah, blah, blah'. And of course, she's so right. She's so right. But in a way, she misses the point too. Yes, Johnson and his peers are further distracting the already distracted by trivialising the coming catastrophe because they have no intention of solving the problem - it *is* beyond them. But also, to a large extent he is telling us what we want to hear, that it's not hard to be green, that the solution is painlessly within reach, usually presented to us as a future god like technological invention that will solve the carbon crisis, because the political class will continue to enable capitalism's drive to consume more and more, to feed a relentless desire for instant gratification. As we become more and more distracted amusing ourselves to death, the ability to defer gratification as individuals is being reversed culturally by the market. We are both alienated and infantilized. We are alienated not only from our labour, and from our environment (including the natural world), we are alienated from the other and ultimately the self, and as the ancient Greeks said, you can only know yourself when you can see yourself in the eyes of the other. It legitimises you.

This alienation makes participation in our lives, being present, difficult. And worse, we are complicit in the process. Blah, blah blah becomes a convenient narrative. And if we do not get instant gratification, we adopt another of society's stories to explain our frustration, we demonise the other, or we look for someone else to take responsibility for our weaknesses. This according to Pankaj Mishra has rendered us angry with disturbing levels of *ressentiment*. According to Nietzschean thought *ressentiment* is a sense of hostility directed towards the object, identified as the 'cause', of an individual's frustration. Mishra writes: "The racism and misogyny routinely on display in social media, and the demagoguery in political discourse, now reveals what Nietzsche, speaking of the 'men of *ressentiment*' called 'a whole tremulous realm of subterranean revenge, inexhaustible and insatiable in outbursts.'" (Mishra, 2017) It is a state characterised by inferiority complex, envy and self painfully divided. Its delusional.

And in the UK the delusion is everywhere. It's in my exchange with the woman in the shop about Great Britain, it's in my own self-righteousness about the Maltesers. It is being lived in Afghanistan.

What an extraordinary narrative, created to conceal naked self-interest, fighting a war on terror, to make the world safer. This imperialist act, of course, has made it much more dangerous. Twenty-two years of misery heaped upon twenty years, arguably more, before that. Today the narrative has been changed and the US and Britain have walked away, and more and even worse suffering will follow, including mass starvation this winter. So, the distraction begins with another

delusional narrative. We affect moral outrage at the tarnishing of Great British democratic values, values that never really existed. MPs stand up in Parliament, and say, we don't need to abandon our allies in Kabul. We can act as global Britain against the Taliban. Our former Prime Minister stood up and said we don't have to follow America. Are you kidding me? Where's she been for the last 50 years? Every single word was a self-deceiving lie. Some MPs were arguing that the withdrawal from Afghanistan is the greatest foreign policy disaster since Suez. You may not be familiar with the Suez Crisis of 1956, but it is significant because it's the moment that history caught up with Empire and Britain realised it was no longer great. I mean, it's obviously nonsense, isn't it? Talking to you, here today, you know that's bullshit. You just have to look at Iraq since 1991. What are they talking about? They're talking about a world that never really existed in an Empire that died half a century ago. But as Charlotte Lydia Riley so eloquently put it:

Invoking Suez is not really about learning new lessons. Rather, it is about signalling a particular idea of what it means to be British in the world, and constructing a history of British foreign policy in which the nation has made one, single mistake, which no event since has ever beaten in disaster or ignominy. It's a comforting fiction. (Riley, 2021)

We live in extreme times, described sometimes as a post-truth age, in which comforting fiction abounds. The fiction of English exceptionalism, because it is the English really, is fed by delusional narratives like the one about Suez. It's hard to make sense of it all. How do we find, centre, ourselves in this chaos? We talked earlier in the conference about what's reality, what's fiction? Is reality on the stage and fiction in our lives? I'm sure you are experiencing this in your own contexts. If you choose to look. I'm characterising the world in this way because I feel it. It moves through me. I'm connected to it.

So, how do we participate and be present, how do we sustain connection? I suppose this is what I mean when I say it is a question for drama. And I want to talk about the role of theatre and drama in creating counter narratives to the ideological ones. This is why the Greeks created drama as public space, to question itself and society, question dominant narratives, a place where people could reflect on human experience and participate as citizens. The polis chose social connection to take responsibility for their society. And it's so important because there's another pandemic that's been going on for many, many years. It's a pandemic called loneliness. COVID accelerated it, the isolation and the loneliness of the old and the young is terrifying. And they're even more isolated by the technology that they think connects them. It's a contradiction.

So, how do we deal with this? How do we really connect? I don't know the answer. Of course I don't. What I will say is that a lot of my work for the last 33 years is in what we call theatre in education, or TiE. And theatre in education, for me, is the very embodiment of the relationship between the social and the political in the personal, self and society. It attends to the social function of theatre and drama, and never separates form and content. Participation or interactivity is meaningless unless it is completely connected to the content and context of the story, to the situation, otherwise it just becomes an empty form of consumption, aesthetically pleasing perhaps, but empty, nevertheless. And I believe we currently have a real problem with the separation of form and content in the field of theatre and drama for children and young people, often interacting for interacting's sake.

But I think that to understand the political in the personal in the social means really probing that relationship between self and society and how society is reflected in the self. And that children

and young people demand this because they're natural philosophers. Why is that? The first question the child will ask you is, why? Why is the world like this? Why do I have to do that? It's only when you get older, integrated into the culture, and start to worry about paying the mortgage that you stop asking that question. And then respond to your own child's why with 'because I say so!'

The child asks why because they are curious, they want to learn, and that's because they want to draw into themselves the diversity and the complexity of humankind, draw into themselves the richness of culture as historical, social, natural, political, emotional, imaginative thinking, human beings. Vygotsky (1978) said, the dynamic of a personality is a drama. And the stage is the human mind. It's in the interaction between the mind and society that the drama unfolds, and personal identity is enacted. This is why interaction or participation has to be meaningful, dialogical, probing, questioning, not token blind activity. And that's also why it's so important that we ask real authentic questions. Open rather than closed questions where the 'correct' answer is implied in the question. In drama there are no right or wrong answers, no penalty zone. We have no right to indulge in moral rhetoric, you can't tell kids what to think. No one should tell you what to think. But what you can do is you can create a gap a space for meaning to be made. And when you do that, they can begin to enter the process of orientating themselves in society. And perhaps even seeing how society is reflected in them, just like me with my box of Maltesers. This opens the mind to thinking about how you want to live and take responsibility for yourself, to know or even create your own story. Because if you can't take responsibility for yourself, you certainly can't take responsibility for others, or the planet for that matter.

So, we have to create those opportunities where engagement is real. Don't ask questions you already know the answer to. It makes people angry because they know they're being manipulated. We need to dramatize stories and situations that leave space for them to participate both physically and imaginatively, where they can meet themselves on the stage so to speak. Dramatize stories that are rich and nuanced, ironic, and ambivalent, open to active interpretation. We have to trust the children and young people we work with, and I think that we have to find creative ways of building that trust, the trust that comes from real engagement with no penalty zone.

When I was flying over here, I was reading Hansel and Gretel by Jeanette Winterton. I don't know if people are familiar with her. She is a fine, fine English writer, who announced herself to the world with a wonderful memoir called *Oranges Are Not the Only Fruit*. But she's also a children's writer and she contributed a retelling of the Hansel and Gretel to series called *Fairytales Revolution*. I suppose it's fun, but there's no revolution. In this version Gretel becomes Greta and the children like planting trees. The Stepmother has an obesity problem and is irrepressibly greedy. You get the idea. But what I think is really interesting, is that this retelling is actually telling the reader what to think, what the appropriate response to the natural world should be. It's highly moral, a form of transmission morality. It is faux radical story telling for middle class parents to confirm what they already know and impart upon the kids. It's also, in my opinion, pretty charmless and it loses all the nuance of the original story.

The original story, that's an interesting question itself of course. I don't if you are aware of this but in the first written down edition of the story by the Grimms brothers, there is not a wicked stepmother. It's the mother of Hansel and Gretel who decides to abandon her children in the forest. But in the third edition of the stories Wilhelm Grimm changed it to a stepmother. Why? Well, I suppose the narrative was too unpalatable for emerging Christian bourgeois sensibility. We cannot tolerate a folk Medea. A woman, a mother, would never abandon her children to their

fate in the forest would she? No! Gott in Himmel! So, he solved the problem by making the architect of the crime a wicked stepmother. And make the father more sympathetic of course. He is just a victim of certain circumstances and a manipulative evil woman, who loves his kids. That is how the Hansel and Gretel story was filled with a different set of values that supported a burgeoning bourgeois ideology, conforming to a new narrative.

Having said all that, however, the power of the story, its ambivalence, transcends Grimm's attempt to sanitise it because it's so elemental. It taps into our darkest fear of being abandoned in the forest, by our parents no less, without determining what the forest is exactly. That is for us to imagine. Gaps remain in the Grimms that are filled in by Winterson's telling. As you know, from the story, the first time they are led into the forest Hansel lays a trail of pebbles behind him so that they can find their way back. And then the 'wicked stepmother/aspect of our mother we fear' sends them off again, and the second time he uses the last chunk of bread to lay a trail of crumbs, but as you all know, the birds eat the bread, and they are lost. On meeting the story again today, at this time of distraction and disconnection, I am struck by the trails because they appear to me to be threads of human connection, that want to connect the child back to the mother, to security, to feeling at home in the world. A psycho-social umbilical cord. And that is such a profound element of the story that there is no politically correct retelling that can ever, ever match the gap that these trails open up in the imagination, because it's a real thread of connection that has conjoined children and their world for generation after generation. And that feels to me to be extremely important because that connection opens up a real engagement, potentially, between what is known and unknown. If we are to work with this story in an interactive or immersive or participatory way, how do we open this particular gap for the imagination, what other threads may emerge? What are the other connections between the child and the story that we mediate as facilitator- teacher- artists?

This brings me back to authenticity. As a teacher or a facilitator, or as an actor, you are a mediator between the world of the child and the world of the story. And in that intersection the child can begin to ask those most profound questions about what it is to be human and answer them for themselves. We talked in the conference yesterday about a preparation for living. Well in my view using drama as preparation for living requires total contextualisation in the fictional world, in the particulars of the story, and it's in those particular, those dramatic, authentic interactions, that the children can universalise, begin to explore their own values, to test things out and to make active choices. Should we go this way? Should we follow that thread? Or shall we go that way? And in that safe fictional context and we're really asking the questions rather than manipulating the way we want them to go, then they can begin to think as social critical, individual creative human beings and then they are much more likely to use these threads in their own life. Not just as bread or stones but in so many diverse, complex and rich forms. I suppose what I'm trying to say is this, if we can engage them dramatically in a space where we don't drive to tell them what to think, but they can think for themselves, where participation is experiential, then what young people begin to do is think feelingly and feel thinkingly, there's no separation between mind and body. They are totally sensorially and intellectually and emotionally connected to the whole through parts, and this is a deeper form of knowing. And they stand a head taller than themselves in fiction because the context of the story itself, projects them into a zone of proximal development. They are ahead of themselves, and they can do extraordinary things that will give them extraordinary insight and they will use what they have learned in real life.

I want finish by telling you another story. Recently I came across a book called *Dear Life: A Doctor's Story of Love, Loss and Consolation* by Rachel Clarke a doctor who deals in palliative care

based in London hospitals. She's a remarkable woman. She is concerned with how you enable people to die with dignity in a system that treats patients as units rather than people. She is interested in her patient's stories because that is what makes them human to her. She recounts a story. I'll read it. She writes:

A colleague from one of Britain's foremost cancer hospitals, the Royal Marsden in London demonstrates the power of storytelling beautifully. A children's play specialist. She set out to tackle the fears and anxieties of children facing radiotherapy for cancer. When the treatment is given, no one else can be in the room so the child of necessity is separate from their parents to face a loud, intimidating machine alone. Sometimes, only a general anaesthetic, a risky procedure to be avoided if possible, can quell a child's terror of being abandoned in the radiotherapy suite.

After careful consideration of this matter, from a young patient's perspective, the play specialist invented something she called 'magic string': a simple ball of multicoloured twine, one end of which the child could clasp, while the other would weave out of the room, under the door, to be held by their parent. She had devised a literal thread that was, simultaneously, a narrative thread, a story that a frightened child could tell themselves, while lying cold, alone, behind a lead-lined door, that Mummy or Daddy were still there, on the other side, caring and holding on to them. Simultaneously cheap as chips and priceless, magic string helps children with cancer today reframe their experience away from abandonment to being nurtured, loved and supported.

As with any addiction, I found that the hit of emergency medicine, though intoxicating, were unsustainable. Life-saving of an altogether more prosaic kind – the myriad ways we can help someone feel human in hospital by treating their story with respect and attentiveness it deserves – seeped indelibly under my skin. In matters of life and death, I was learning, sometimes actions spoke louder than words. (Clarke, 2020)

It is no accident of course that Clarke's colleague was a play specialist who understands the power of story. Furthermore, since actions speak louder than words, she was dramatizing the story, utilising the power of action that we take for granted in the theatre. I don't know if that colleague was familiar with Hansel and Gretel, or if she was conscious of it when she had the idea about the 'magic string', but I'm willing to wager that she has the ability to empathise and be truly present in her own and the lives of others that only comes through the use of the imagination, and that is someone who can imagine the real and de-centre from themselves through the power of story. For it is the imagination that creates human value. Undistracted by a formal patient doctor narrative, she was a living presence in the relationship and could see, feel, the terror in the child's eyes, and she recognised that terror in herself, terror that is in all of us, lurking in the forest. When we treat the story with the respect and attentiveness it deserves, we transform our ways of seeing. We might begin to see that the mother/stepmother, was perhaps recognising that they had no other choice. Maybe she comes from the kind of community where she lost not one, not two but three children already to various diseases and famine. Maybe she was just being practical and she knew that if she and her husband survived, they could have more children.

When we dramatize the whole complex situation, we realise that we cannot solve the mother's problem. But what participants can do is identify what the problem is, understand its extremities and explore it, then they can *own* it. And then perhaps they can begin to face the extremities in their lives. And that is why we must be authentic and open and find space for our audience and participants in our work.

If I take anything away from our conference, I recognise that without that authenticity, there's no real interactivity, no real connection or participation. Not only in your work, but in your life.

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From interactivity to intra-activity in performing arts for children

Lise Hovik

Abstract

This essay introduces dilemmas and experiences of making interactive theatre for children based on findings from the SceSam Project. This artistic research project bridged artistic practice and theoretical perspectives on interactive dramaturgies in the context of cultural politics, interdisciplinary, and participatory art. Further developments in our critical times of mass extinction and climate change, have turned our interest away from the focus on human interactions towards the intra-actions of more-than-human agents of performing arts for children: space, environments, nature, and material entanglements. The Animalium project will serve as example of how this might look like within theatre for the very young.

About the author

Lise Hovik is professor of drama and theatre at Queen Maud University College of Early Childhood Education, professor II at OsloMet, and a drama pedagogue since 1990. She is the artistic director of Teater Fot, making and researching theatre and art for the very young since 2004. She has recently been head of research in the Lydhør i Kongsgården project (2019-21), a site specific artistic research project with kindergarten kids, pedagogues, artists and researchers together with trees, plants and natural materials of the actual place.

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From interactivity to intra-activity in performing arts for children

Theatre connects deeply with how we relate to one another as human beings, both as artists and audiences, how we are able to imagine new human and non-human worlds together, and how entanglements and sympoiesis create a community of differences in the theatre space.

(Quote from conference presentation)

This essay is based on an online keynote speech at the Join In-Conference on participation and interactivity in theatre for children and youth, hosted by Syv Mil AS at Cornerteatret in Bergen Oct. 1st, 2021.

My online presentation at the conference provided an interesting starting point for writing this essay. The feeling of being a keynote speaker lost in virtual space, disconnected from the conference participants, the coffee, chatting, the anticipation of interesting after talks and discussions on the conference program was lost, and the whole idea of “joining in” was heavily disturbed from my point of view. But it made me think, and the poor situation invited me to elaborate my thoughts about interaction in this written essay.

Working with the very young children audience, kindergarten teachers and early childhood education, it must not be a surprise that digital interaction is not my favourite way of communication. The digital interaction experience is poor compared with the bodily presence of actors in the same space. The presence of being together in real life, time and space and to work "on the floor" with bodily, sensuous and affective ways of playing and communicating is, and will always be, a more complex, rich and creative process. My artistic work as a theatre director in the field of theatre for the very young is based on playful theatre acting methods with body, movement, sound and materials. From this very affective and co-creative point of view, my academic works explores the post qualitative and performative methodologies of art based and artistic research.¹

¹ Hovik 2014-20: Publications on artistic research within performative methodology.

From Interaction to Intra-Action

The title of this essay points to a change in our concept of interactivity and interaction, and the aim is to widen our understanding of what this can entail in performing arts for children.

The movement from Inter to Intra means to shift focus from what is going on between two (opposite) parts towards what is going on inside and within a situation. This shift is based in Karen Barad's theories of agential realism of the physical sciences, which has influenced many academic approaches to the performing arts in later years.²

Together with my theatre company Teater Fot, I started in 2017 the artistic research project *Neither Fish nor Fowl*, with an explicit aim to enter the post humanist perspectives of ecocritical thinking and more substantially explore the intra-actions within a performance process.³ Together with a group of artists; actors, musicians and one visual artist and a lot of more-than-human agents of children's theatre the *Neither Fish nor Fowl* project has developed and is still exploring new formats. Connected with Barad's understanding of materiality, and the agency of matter, with costumes made of recycled animal print clothes the company explored and played with movements, materials, sound and musical qualities, searching for expressions beyond the human/animal distinction.

Human interactions are almost always in the centre of drama and theatre work, so this project has been and still is challenging a lot of conventions in the field of performing arts for children. The project produced a number of different performances, always changing and searching for new connections. The latest outcome of this project was *Animalium*⁴ which developed through workshops, stunts and happenings in theatres, art galleries, libraries, kindergartens and outdoor events. The intra-actions between actors, places, spaces, materialities and objects created new forms of improvisational skills and maybe also new forms of performing arts for children.

² Barad 2007, *Meeting the Universe Halfway*.

³ Teater Fot 2017, "Verken Fugl eller Fisk".

⁴ Teater Fot 2020, "Animalium".



Animalium poster, 2020. Photo: Lise Hovik

The *Animalium Project* will provide this essay with some visual examples of what intra-action in performing arts for children might look like.

Interactive dramaturgies in performing arts for children.

So what about interactivity? The theme of the Join In conference was summed up in the following questions:⁵

- What can the young audiences learn from the art experience itself?
- How can interactivity and active participation in theatre make way for new art forms and expressions?
- Can involving the audience stimulate to stronger democratic processes in society?

The questions entails that interactivity is deeply connected with the art experience as active democratic involvement and audience participation. I will elaborate on these questions by giving an introduction to the dilemmas of making interactive theatre for children based on findings from the SceSam Project.⁶ In this project we explored the concept of interactive dramaturgies in performing arts for children during our research period from 2012-2016, and we touched on all the questions above.

⁵ Join In 2021.

⁶ SceSam 2017a, "Scesam".

The SceSam Project was an artistic research project led by Lisa Marie Nagel as the project manager, and myself as the artistic research supervisor. SceSam aimed at bridging artistic practice and theoretical perspectives on interactive dramaturgies in the context of cultural politics, interdisciplinarity, and participatory art. The cultural politics of performing arts for children in Norway is largely defined by the framework for production and touring schools and theatres through the Cultural Rucksack (DKS), and through their political mandatory of democracy and participation. No doubt that the discourses within this framework is complex and sometimes difficult to manage. We discussed them in terms of power relations, ideas of participation and democracy in schools, the lack of arts education for children and educators and the lack of education in performing arts for children. The interest in interactivity and participation is really cross disciplinary, both within the arts and across arts and pedagogy, and the SceSam project worked to identify some of the dilemmas both inside and outside the artistic works.⁷

Within the SceSam project, the term *interactive dramaturgies in performing arts for children* worked as an overarching term to describe a broad spectrum of performance formats that in different ways invited children to participate.

As a consequence of this broad understanding, the term *interactive* was also used to describe theatre productions which did not invite children to take part physically, but instead provided for *inner* participation, or quiet and attentive listening. This way of using and understanding the term emerges in *SceSam's Working Model*⁸ as a varied array of participation formats that ranges from what we phrased as *quiet absorbed observation* of a *closed dramatic form* in one end of the scale, to *collaborative physical participation* inside an *open improvised form* in the other end. In between these two opposites we found yet other forms of participation like questionings, verbal dialogue, mirroring or active instructions, spatial installations and a variety of improvised playful forms. All of the different forms can emerge in one performance, and the categories are not at all waterproof. The working model is presented and discussed elsewhere (note 8 and 9) but has provided us with some conceptual tools for analysing and discussing this topic. In this essay the concepts will perform as a platform for further investigations in the field.

Within the interactive performing arts, there is the latent possibility of theatre *for* children becoming theatre *with* children, and sometimes also theatre *by* children, that is when children are allowed to activate their own play culture. The SceSam research was interested in how the artists handled the encounters between these three different discourses, and we analysed their choices in light of aesthetic theory, drama pedagogy and theories of children's play culture. We discovered a set of overarching dichotomies or opposite positions in the relationship between

⁷ Hovik & Nagel 2017, *Deltakelse og interaktivitet i scenekunst for barn*, Hovik & Nagel 2016, "The Scesam Project", Hovik 2015, "Din lytting skal være din sang", 193-209.

⁸ Scesam 2017b, "SceSam Working model".

- Art and research
- Theatre and drama pedagogy
- Practical and theoretical knowledge
- Artistic concepts and the socio-cultural context
- Product and process

The dichotomies will be recognised in higher educational institutions as they are well known discourses going on between the unlike cultures of art and educational practices.

Inside the artistic processes the artists were dealing with yet another set of conflicting dramaturgical issues:

- Control vs Chaos
- Compulsion vs. Liberty
- Direction vs. Improvisation

We discovered that the dilemmas or dichotomies simplifies very complex situations, and that it all depends on the perspectives involved. What seems like chaos for an adult might be playful experiences for the child. Let me give an example from Teater Fots performance Sparrow, a preproduction within the SceSam project made for toddlers 0-2 year, in which I was the artistic director. In our performance we often experience that the children create chaos in the scenes. They steal eggs and refuse to give them back when we want them. Sometimes they cry, they want to go, or they want to stay when they have to go. They have not asked to come, and they are not asked if they want to leave. The parents and the carers have to decide for them. In every performance, the actors have to improvise - not only in the artistic sense - and we have calculated with the potential collapse of directed scenes, because of the children's unpredictable input.

This might sound a bit un-artistic and risky, but for the SceSam Project it was a key question of the project to challenge the concept of interaction and risky meeting points between children and actors to be able to experiment, to investigate and to develop new insights in the performing arts for/with/by children. For Teater Fot the performance work with Sparrow provided a deepened understanding of the significance of playing and improvising as a crucial part of our artistic development and signature.



Animalium at the opening of Rosendal Teater, 2019. Photo: Rosendal Teater.

Intra-active dramaturgies - What's the difference?

As I mentioned in the introduction, human interactions are almost always in the centre of drama and theatre work, as it also was in the SceSam project. As demonstrated in the picture above, we will always focus on the child, and the environment will remain a backdrop for the anthropocentric view on theatre. In this picture, the actors turn their back on the audience to investigate the environment inside an elevator.

Moving onwards to the philosophy of Karen Barad and new materialism⁹ we have asked how this philosophical turn towards a post humanist worldview would look like in the theatre. To be able to answer we will need to look closer at the agency of more-than-human actors¹⁰ in the theatre space. This means to regard the physical dimensions, qualities and materials present in the space, as actors equal to human actors, and to work together with the environments adding a new consciousness of being entangled with, not separated from, our material world.

⁹ Barad 2007, *Meeting the Universe Halfway*.

¹⁰ More-than-human refers to Barad's agential realism and new materialism in general.

The post humanist approach will try to decenter the human self, the focus on individuality and personal identity, thus question human supremacy in the world.¹¹ In a specific place or space it would mean to regard all material actors as living agents participating together as an ecological entity. When we try to open our attention towards the more-than-human, and become aware of the materialities of the theatre space, we will look more curiously at the environments in which the theatre exists; The space, the air, the light or darkness, the floor, the seats, the heat or temperature, the walls, and of course the colours, the costumes, props, scenography etc.

This material consciousness might already be included and part of a scenographic idea or reflected in the design of a specific theatre work. Some costume designers and choreographers experiment with the human appearance to disturb the humanist anthropocentrism,¹² but we will seldom find this approach in children`s theatre.

If we move further into the intra-actions of places and spaces, we will be aware that we are unaware about the natural agents of our environment, trees, seeds, plants, animals, pebbles, rocks. How are they allowed to act, or not to act? Perhaps our natural environments are suppressed under a theatre building, or maybe some green stuff are popping up in the cracks or gaps in between? What does this mean?

It means to be aware of the material world that human actors interact with. And how this interaction can expand into intra-action, where the materialities and more-than human agents no longer are subordinated human actors, but become active agents together.

It means a questioning of the subject - object relation, and acknowledging the entanglement (not the opposition) of subject and object, where both are active agents, and influence each other in mutual ways.

A simple example: The chair you are sitting in right now is acting on how you can sit on it. The chair is an active part of the sitting. It will not move by itself, but it moves you into its position. It takes part in you. The chair is an active agent, and in fact some actors know how to play with it.

Entanglements

The term *intra-action* (Barad) points to the impossibility of an absolute separation of subject and object - or the classically understood objectivity. In quantum physics it is evident that we as humans are entangled with the world, not separated. *Interaction* in Barads understanding is something that happens between pre-established bodies who participate in action with each other in a divided subject-object relation, while *intra-action* points to the entanglement of the opposites.

¹¹ Physicist and feminist philosopher Karen Barad, biologist and history of consciousness philosopher Donna Haraway and feminist philosopher Rosa Braidotti are prominent representatives for new materialist philosophical thinkers.

¹² As examples Ingri Fiksdal, Carte Blanche, Homan Sharifi have been working with choreographic ideas of the non-human, or non-individual dancers in a Norwegian context.

A very well known physical experiment with light discovered that light can be both particles and waves, depending on the observer.¹³ Barad explains how the observer and the observed comes together in quantum entanglements: How intra-action entangle the subject-object relation.¹⁴

It is evident, but we will still need simplifications and categories like this:

Interaction	Intra-action
Between two divided / opposite parts	Inside, together with, as part of, entangled
Subject - Object	Dynamism of forces
Physics: A person using an instrument or technology for some purpose	Physics: The person becomes part of the instrument when using it

So what would equal this entanglement in the theatre?

My suggestion: Two theatre actors perform a dialogue with a prescribed text, they are not really listening to each other, they are not connected in play. This type of interaction could be a sort of bad acting, disconnected or mechanistic. It does of course not mean that all human interaction is bad acting, but the concept of interaction might be too narrow to describe real acting. Two actors performing a really interesting and lively dialogue might rather be intra-acting. They connect with each other and at the same time they have an open awareness towards the space, the floor, the light, the audience.

One alternative scene could be an actor improvising with a piece of material, for instance a textile, transforming it into different shapes and figurations. The material acts with the human actor and performs its own dance. Textile agency; what can the textile do?

¹³ Description and explanation of the *double-slit experiment* in quantum physics: Wikipedia 2022, Double-slit experiment.

¹⁴ Pinch 2011, Karen Barad, quantum mechanics, and the paradox of mutual exclusivity.



Verken Fugl eller Fisk preproduction, 2017. Photo: Andrea Haugerud Hovik.

To be aware of more-than-human agents involved in a theatre event might also strengthen our awareness of the entanglement with the world in a more profound way. It seems to me that the theatre itself is the perfect place to rehearse the intra-activity of active material agents, objects, puppets, included humans, to invent new worlds and worldings, and to challenge the antropocentrism of our culture. The theatre space can be the place for a new intra-active and ecological awareness.

Playing in between

In the end I would suggest that intra-activity in performing arts for children might be just another word for *play*. A word for how actors and children can play together with places, spaces, nature and materials, experiencing how the material agents responds and play back. How the play is playing with the players, and how non-human agents provides a rich theatrical world for creative processes.

The Animalium project is about intra-action as play. The odd curious creatures play on the blurry borders between human and animal, between bodies, patterns and puppets. The playing breaks down stiff categories of what it means to be human, animal, alone, together or in between. Animalium intra-acts with nature, sounds, buildings, pebbles, movements, sculptures, twigs, art exhibitions and kindergarten playgrounds alike. They play in between the well known, out-worn movements and actions of our everyday life. They inspire children to learn the most useful and exquisite tool of discovering life itself: To play.

My hope is that by widening the concept of interaction into more playful and complex intra-actions we will be able to make theatre for/with/by children in closer entanglements with nature and with a better understanding of being human in a more-than-human theatre world.



Animalium film, 2019. Photo: Lise Hovik.

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Noras utvikling mot «jævn natursandhed»

Agnete G. Haaland

Abstract

Henrik Ibsen's dramaturgy, physical score and knowledge of theatre changed forever the way actors work to portray a character. This historiographic article addresses the development of acting methods seen through Henrik Ibsen's Nora and Ibsen's revolutionary renewal of drama and female representation. From Betty Henning created the first Nora in Copenhagen in 1879 three main traditions can be traced: Nora with roots in melodramatic acting, Nora as a political icon and Nora portrayed through psychological realism. This article will reflect on how Ibsen's Nora required that actresses made their characters life-like and credible to the audience through what he called being continuously true to reality, "jævn natursandhed" (Ibsen 1878). By doing so he changed the very concept of acting.

Keywords: Henrik Ibsen, Nora, acting methods, acting, realism, A Doll's House, Betty Hennings, Janet Achurch, Konstantin Stanislavski, Elisabeth Robins, Julia Hákonsson, Pernilla Östergren, melodrama, feminism, psychological realism.

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Noras utvikling mot "jævn natursandhed"

Henrik Ibsens *Et Dukkehjem* og hans 11 andre realistiske dramaer krevde en ny måte å spille teater på. Dette stilte igjen nye krav til både skuespillere og publikum. De måtte tolke og fortolke beveggrunnene til det som skjedde med karakterene på scenene. Realisme på scenen var noe nytt (Esslin 1980, Szondi 1991, Hemmer 1994). Likevel er det en omdiskutert påstand å si at noe er realistisk. Henrik Ibsen beskriver det slik i en anmeldelse i *Morgenbladet* i 1862:

At vor Tid er realistisk, er en Paastand, som har været gjentaget oftere end fornødent for at gjøre Satsen triviel. At Tiden ogsaa, som Følge heraf, skulde være poesiforladt, synes stadigt at underforstaaes; men det forekommer mig dog, som om de, der forfølger denne Mening, benytter Beviser, hvoraf netop det Modsatte fremgaar, idet de i Literaturen og Kunsten med stærkt Eftertryk udhæver den forhaandenværende Tilbøielighed til at gjøre den dagligdagse Virkelighed til Gjenstand for Behandling. Ialfald skal der et stærkere Klarsyn til, for at skimte det digterisk eller kunstnerisk Brugbare midt i al den Tilfældighedens Røre, hvori En selv staar hildet, end for at opdage det f. Ex. i en Fortid, som ligger tilstrækkelig fjernet, afsluttet og ligesom i Perspektiv (Ibsen 1862a).

Ved å se på hvordan Henrik Ibsens Nora er blitt tolket, spilt og mottatt, vil jeg i denne artikkelen peke på hvordan Ibsens realistiske dramaer og hans egne krav til realistisk spillestil forandret skuespillerkunsten for all framtid. Nyere forskning har pekt på at hvordan kvinnelige karakterer tolkes på scenen avhenger av hva slags tradisjon hun står i og hva slags kulturelle og politiske omstendigheter hun spilles under (Fischer-Lichte mfl. 2014; Helland 2015; Helland mfl. 2016; Holledge mfl. 2016; Pitches 2017). Det kan imidlertid ikke understrekes nok hvor avgjørende selve verket, altså *Et Dukkehjem*, samt Ibsens egne krav til skuespillere, har vært for utviklingen av skuespilleres metode.

I sitatet over beskriver Ibsen utfordringen med å tilføre skildringen av den dagligdagse virkelighet et klarsyn og et kunstnerisk grep. Dette gjorde han selv gjennom å fange opp tendenser i tiden og skape radikale og nyskapende skuespill gjennom å sette politiske og moralske problemer i tiden under debatt. Et resultat av dette er at han utvikler en ny type rolle, en mye mer sammensatt karakter enn tidligere stykker krevde. Utdrag fra et brev til Harald Holst fra Roma om *Samfundets Støtter* 16 år etter sitatet over, viser at hans egen teaterfaglige bakgrunn, særlig fra hans periode i Bergen, har gitt ham klare formeninger om både regigrep og skuespillerkunst i sine realistiske stykker:

Grupperinger og stillinger håber jeg bliver skænket den tilbørlige opmærksomhed. Al opmarscheren af de handlende personer i forgrunden bør undgæes, de indbyrdes stillinger veksles så ofte det falder naturligt; overhovedet, hver scene og hvert billede bør så vidt muligt være en afspejling af virkeligheden. Det kunde for ubetænksomme skuespillere ligge nær til at ville karrikere visse af stykkets personer. Det er mit håb at sådant ikke finder sted; jævn natursandhed på alle punkter er det jeg helst vilde have (Ibsen 1878a).

Ibsen etterlyser med dette en ny skuespillermetode til sine realistiske skuespill. Han vil ikke ha romantiserte karikaturer eller stereotyper, men vil se menn og kvinner avspeile virkeligheten. Det han etterlyser er skuespillere som kan representere «jævn natursandhed». Dette er et markant skifte i oppfattelsen av hva teater skal være. Hans realistiske skuespill kan oppsummeres som en nyskapende overgang fra historiske og romantiske dramaer til teater om borgerskapets liv bak lukkede dører i eget hjem. I det første sitatet fra 1862 møter vi en dikter som formulerer noe av sin egen visjon om at en skildring av virkeligheten handler om noe mer enn det hverdagslige. En forfatters jobb er da å løfte det opp og ut og si noe utover det konkrete. Det ligger en bevissthet i dette om å skape poesi og kunstnerisk teatralitet. Det andre sitatet er datert 16 år senere, og viser hvor bevisst Ibsen er blitt på hva slags spillestil hans realistiske roller krever. Til denne type dramatik kreves det at publikum opplever at det de ser på scenen er en avspeiling av virkeligheten. Ibsen skulle selv erfare at hans skildring av virkeligheten utløste en rekke stormer i samtiden, for gjennom sine realistiske dramaer viste han fram en helt annen side av virkeligheten enn den publikum var vant til fra nasjonalromantikken, samtidens lette lystspill og melodramaet.

Gjennom datidens presseoppslag, Henrik Ibsens egne brev og tekster, eksisterende billedmateriale og andre forskeres arbeid, er det mulig å danne seg et bilde av hvordan Nora har blitt tolket. Jeg velger å konsentrere materialet til noen fremtredende skandinaviske og vestlige Nora-er. De utvalgte Nora-ene representerer tre ulike tilnærminger: Nora med melodramatisk bravur, Nora som politisk ikon og Nora tolket gjennom psykologisk realisme. Utforskningen starter ved den kulturelle konteksten rundt urpremieren i København i 1879.

Nora – med melodramatisk bravur

Den melodramatiske spillestilen sto sterkt i den kulturelle konteksten som eksisterte da stykket ble skrevet. Den var derfor en spillestil å ta utgangspunkt i for de første som skulle tolke den nye kvinnetypen. Ibsen selv tok i bruk arketyperiske konflikter i *Et Dukkehjem*: Kjærlighetsforhold, sex, penger og hemmeligheter (Holledge mfl. 2016, 148). Alt dette er tematikk som gikk igjen i drama fra det 19. århundre. For å vise at en kvinne ikke kunne være seg selv i et patriarkalsk samfunn, utviklet Ibsen figurene og det de representerte på en måte som krevde en ny spillestil. Når «jævn natursandhed» var målet, krevde det at publikum opplevde at Noras utvikling er mulig å forstå ut ifra den sceniske konteksten, situasjonene som oppstår og hennes karakter. Som Ibsen-forsker Joan Templeton (1942-) påpeker, er en av utfordringene i Nora-rollen vendepunktet i tredje akt som handler om at Nora går fra å være en kvitrende lerkefugl som behager sin mann – til en nyvåknet og opprørsk kvinne som vil finne seg selv og forlater mann og barn i siste scene (Templeton 2015, 178-182). Det skuespillertekniske spørsmålet bli da hvordan dette skildres fra scenen og hvordan broen mellom Noras lerkefugl og Noras frigjøringsprosess bygges. Broen skal bygges av en levende skuespiller som representerer en diktet figur. Det handler dermed om kvinnelig representasjon. Simone de Beauvoirs berømte åpningslinje i andre del av *Le Deuxième Sexe* fra 1949 om at man ikke er født som kvinne, men blir til kvinne, er derfor en nøkkel til å forstå kvinnelig representasjon på scenen. Det handler om alt fra handlingsrom og utviklingsmuligheter til kroppsspråk og fysisk apparisjon. Spørsmålet blir da hva slags metode en skuespiller anvender og utvikler for å skape og representere Nora. For å analysere og kategorisere dette, bruker jeg en fenomenologisk tilnærming. Det henvises ofte til Edmund Husserl (1859-1938) sin filosofi og metode når det snakkes om fenomenologi. Fenomenologi er en deskriptiv

metode som beskriver et levd førstepersonsperspektiv: Erfaringen subjektet har ovenfor og i verden (Beyer 2020). «When taking a phenomenological approach to a performance, we concentrate on the ways that people, spaces, things and sounds appeared during a performance», slår teaterforskeren Erika Fischer-Lichte fast (Fischer-Lichte 2014, 55). Dette innebærer å konsentrere seg om «the perceptual order of presence» (Fischer-Lichte 2014, 55), og et vesentlig element blir da hvordan skuespillerens tilstedeværelse på scenen kan oppfattes. Etersom jeg selv ikke har hatt mulighet til å være til stede og oppleve alle Nora-ene i materialet, kan jeg ikke analysere deres representasjon i et førstehåndsperspektiv. Jeg må derfor analysere hva rolletolkning og spillestil forteller om skuespillerens metode gjennom andre kilder enn min egen opplevelse. Jeg utvider altså den fenomenologiske tilnærmingen til å inkludere andres levde erfaringer ved å tolke deres nedskrevne forståelse av hvordan de opplevde at Nora ble portrettert. Kildene vil være datidens aviser, og de tidlige skribentene var stort sett anonyme. I tillegg vil jeg basere analysene på andre forskeres oppfattelse av gitte skuespilleres nærvær og tolkning. I likhet med meg selv vil disse forskernes opplevelse av Nora-ene være preget av deres sosiale interesser, deres kulturelle partiskhet og det samfunnet de selv var eller er en del av (Jackson 1996, 18).

Den første kvinnen til å gestalte Nora var Betty Hennings (1850-1939). Gjennom bilder og kritikker av forestillingen på Det Kongelige Dramatiske Teater i København på verdenspremieren i 1879, får vi et bilde av hva slags kvinneportrett hun tegnet. Hennes Nora var en leken og barnslig kvinne. Hennes tolkning hadde et romantisk preg til tross for regissørens ambisjoner om å få til en realistisk spillestil (De Figueiredo 2019, 416; Hennel 2011, 192). Hun fikk innstudere rollen uten instruktørens innblanding og hennes glitrende teknikk er fremhevet av flere. Imidlertid kunne spillestilen bli utstudert maniert, og hun hadde ikke alltid følelsesmessig dekning for det hun sa og gjorde på scenen (Davidsen 1980, 33). Ifølge noen kritikere utviklet aldri hennes Nora seg til en moden kvinne. «Barnsligheten», skrev Georg Nordensvan, var det gjennomgående trekket i hennes Nora (*Aftonbladet* 5. april 1889, sitert i Hennel 2011, 192). Dette understrekes også av Stockholmspressen da forestillingen gjestet Sverige noen år senere. Hennings beskrives som en briljerende stjerneskuespiller, og hennes tarantella beskrives som en «verkelig dødsdans», men hun mislyktes i å bryte med sin barnslige og underfundige dukkehustru fra de første aktene i siste akt. Samtidig fremheves Betty Hennings som sin tids store stjerne. Da hun sluttet på Det Kongelige Teater skrev *Kallundborg Avis* 23. desember at «ingen anden Dame ved det Kgl. Teater har i den Grad baaret de store Roller [...] Siden har fru Hennings navnlig som Ibsen-fortolkerske vundet sig et stort navn» (Anonym 1907). *Berlingske Politiske og Avertisements Tidende* omtaler henne mange år senere som kvinnen som «skabte Nora» (Anonym 1921, min utheving).

Hennings sitt materiale for å bygge karakteren på Noras barnslighet finnes mange steder i Ibsens manus. Hennes nøkkel til Nora kan ligge i Ibsens berømte skildring av lerkefuglen i første akt. Allerede i første scene presenteres vi for en kvinne som er et lekent objekt for Helmer:

HELMER *inde i sit værelse*

Er det lærkefuglen, som kvidrer derude?

NORA *ifærd med at åbne nogle af pakkerne*

Ja, det er det.

HELMER

Er det ekornet, som rumsterer der?

NORA

Ja!

(Ibsen 1879)

Ettersom Betty Hennings var den første i verden som skulle representere Nora på scenen, hadde hun ingen sceniske forbilder eller modeller for hvordan rollen skulle spilles. Hun var selv utdannet ballettdanser på Det Kongelige Teaters Ballettskole, og hun begynte sin karriere som ballettdanser. Etter få år som danser fikk hun erfaring med taleroller, ifølge *Kallundborg Avis* (Anonym, 1907). Skuespillerne på Det kongelige Teater i København hadde lenge spesialisert seg på det som var det europeiske repertoaret ved midten av det 19. århundre: Melodrama, «the well made play» og lette komedier. Hennes skuespillererfaring handlet om stereotyper, frontalspill og deklamasjon (Holledge mfl. 2016, 131). Kvinnelig representasjon på 1800-tallet var formet gjennom strenge regler for hvordan en kvinne skulle bevege seg og se ut. Dette førte igjen til rollestereotyper og «låste rollfack», altså fastlåste rollefag for kvinnelig representasjon (Lagerroth 2011, 128). Men Nora er ikke en stereotyp rolle fra romantikken. Ibsen hadde skapt en kvinnefigur som krevde at Hennings skulle gi liv til en mangefasettert hverdagskvinne fra borgerskapet. Siden hennes spilletradisjon tilhørte en annen type skuespill hvor personene var forutsigbare stereotyper, er det sannsynlig at hennes tolkning av rollen ikke bare tok utgangspunkt i Ibsens beskrivelse av Nora som en lærkefugl i første akt, hun **beholdt** i tillegg dette karaktertrekket gjennom hele tredje akt. Dette er en spillestil som står i kontrast til Ibsens ønske ovenfor hvor han etterlyser «jævn natursandhed». Hennings klarte tydeligvis ikke å la publikum forstå hvorfor og hvordan Nora utviklet seg gjennom de tre aktene. Kritikere i København påpekte at Noras utvikling ikke kunne forsvares ut ifra hennes tolkning av karakteren i 1. og 2. akt. Grunnen til dette kan være at hennes spillestil ikke var tilpasset de nye utfordringene som Ibsens drama skapte. Det kan også ha sammenheng med at Hennings øvde inn Nora-rollen på 11 dager. Gjennomgang av flere anmeldelser fra perioden viser imidlertid at andre anmeldere ikke etterlyste en troverdig utvikling i karakteren fra første til siste akt. Dette kan komme av at den realistiske spillestilen også var ny for pressen. De fremhevet primært at Hennings spilte med bravur. Hennings spilte rollen i 28 år, og en rekke aviser beretter om hennes glitrende skuespillerkunst. I *Fædrelandsvennen* 8. desember 1882 kan man lese at *Et Dukekehjem* spilte for 25 utsolgte hus i København til fordoblede priser og at forestillingen ga fru Betty Hennings «anledning til at glimtre som aldrig før» (Anonym 1882). Avisen understreker dermed henne stjernestatus i datidens teaterverden. «Å glimtre» er imidlertid et bilde på en spillestil som er langt fra det idealet Ibsen satte ord på mange år tidligere.

Allerede i en artikkel i *Illustreret Nyhedsblad* 31. august 1862 formulerer Ibsen sitt syn på en skuespillers ansvar:

[...] en Kontrakt mellem et Theater og dets Skuespillere er ikke det samme, som en Kontrakt mellem en Driftsherre og hans Arbeidsfolk. Den Kontrakt, en Skuespiller underskriver, forbinder ham til noget Mere end det, der slaes fast ved Papirets Ord. Naar et Theater ved Kontrakt knytter en Skuespiller til sig, saa skeer dette under den stiltiende Forudsætning, at det erhverver en *Kunstner*. Men for i Aand og Sandhed at være en Kunstner fordres ikke blot Begavelse og kunstnerisk Uddannelse, men ogsaa en *Kunstnersjæl*. [...] Theatrets Ære skal være hans, han skal føle sig solidarisk ansvarlig for den Virksomhed Indretningen, som Heelhed betragtet, udøver, og fremfor alt aldrig betragte det øvrige Apparat som en Ramme for nogen enkeltstaaende Virtuositetsmæssighed (Ibsen 1862b).

Den siste setningen er viktig. Ibsens Nora er en rolle som har gitt mange skuespillere muligheten til å framstå virtuost. Ibsen selv påpeker imidlertid i dette sitatet at hans tekster etter hvert ble så sammensatte at de krevde et sterkt ensemblespill for å framstå som realistiske, samtidig som de utfordret skuespillere og regissører sin evne til å hente ut alle de nøklene Ibsen selv ga gjennom sin diktning. Hans mål var med andre ord ikke å skrive roller hvor enkeltskuespillere skulle briljere. Det var helheten, ensemblespillet, som skulle løfte fram hans karakterer.

Pressesitatene ovenfor fra de første årene viser at Hennings Nora var mer endimensjonal enn Ibsen hadde skrevet henne. Utgangspunktet for det hele er hvordan Henrik Ibsen selv har gitt skuespillere en rekke nøkler til hvordan Nora skal spilles gjennom replikker, relasjoner, situasjoner, fysiske beskrivelser av karakterene og måten de forholder seg til hverandre på. Dette gjenspeiler igjen Henrik Ibsens egen praktiske teaterbakgrunn. Ibsen var knyttet til Det Norske Theater i Bergen fra 1851-57 som husdramatiker. Men hans oppgaver inkluderte også å være en slags prøveinstruktør, med ansvar for alt fra dekor og kostyme til lys og lyd. I tillegg kan det påpekes at flere av hans skuespill viser hvor bevisst han selv var på å inkludere arkitektoniske begreper i sin måte å skrive på (Sandberg 2018, 2). Det mest avgjørende for hans forfatterskap er at han også var ansvarlig for å innstudere arrangementene og bevegelsene til skuespillerne. I løpet av årene ved teatret i Bergen satte teatret opp 122 skuespill og fire av dem var skrevet av Ibsen selv. (Holledge mfl. 2016, 161; De Figueiredo 2019, 99-138). Ved å være praktisk involvert i alt teaterarbeidet, skaffet han seg en unik teaterfaglig kompetanse som kan spores gjennom hele hans forfatterskap. Det er dette som gjør at skuespiller, dramatiker og kvinnesaksforkjemper Elisabeth Robins (1862-1952) omtaler Ibsen som «un homme du théâtre» i *Ibsen and the Actress*. Hun legger til at hans praktiske teaterbakgrunn gjorde at han kunne overlate til skuespillerne å løfte stoffet til nye høyder som hans medskapere. Det kunne de gjøre gjennom å fortolke alle de nøklene Ibsen selv skriver inn i sine manus (Robins 1928, 53). Mange forskere har understreket hvor vesentlig Ibsens praktiske teatererfaring var for hans utvikling som dramatiker. I hans forfatterskap finnes en rekke spor tilbake til hans kunnskap om praktisk teater fra hans tid som husdramatiker i Bergen (Moi 2006, Holledge mfl. 2016, Templeton 2015, De Figueiredo 2019). *Et Dukkehjem* ble skrevet mange år senere i Italia, men den kunnskap om det fysiske og praktiske skuespillerarbeidet som han fikk gjennom egen erfaring i Bergen kan spores i hans dramatiske verk. «—Ja, hine år i Bergen var isandhed mine læreår! Jeg befandt mig dengang i en

gæringstilstand, som ikke tillod mig at slutte mig helt og åbent til nogen.»), skrev Ibsen selv i et brev 10. mars 1875 til teaterinstruktøren Herman Laading i Bergen (Ibsen 1875). Han innså med andre ord selv at hans praktiske teatererfaringer fra Bergen ga ham en unik kompetanse til å utvikle klare ideer om hva som krevdes av et dramatisk verk som skulle tolkes av andre. Samtidig erkjenner han at han også var i ferd med å forme seg selv.

Ibsen-forskeren John Northams (1922-2004) skrev et banebrytende verk i 1953. I boken *Ibsens's Dramatic Method* påpeker han Henrik Ibsens unike bruk av «visual imagery» kombinert med «verbal imagery» (Northam 1971, 8). Hans analyser av Ibsens sceneanvisninger understreker Henrik Ibsens evne til å inkorporere sine teatermessige erfaringer i sitt kunstnerskap. Hans gjennomgang av sceneanvisningene knyttet til Nora i *Et Dukkehjem* viser hvordan hennes handlinger og bevegelser avslører hennes skjulte tanker (Northam 1971, 16). Den skuespillermessige utfordringen ligger da i å ta denne informasjonen i bruk og finne en måte å gi publikum mulighet til å forstå karakterens beveggrunner. Den norske Ibsen-forskeren Live Hov (1945-) har også gitt innsiktsfulle analyser av Ibsens sceneanvisninger og påpekt hvordan de er et uttrykk for hans bevisste bruk av de virkemidlene teatret kunne tilby en dramatiker. Ibsens egne sceneanvisninger er «tause, men talende» (Hov 2007, 11). Live Hov argumenterer for at Ibsens sceneanvisninger og korrespondanse understreker teaterperspektivet i Ibsen-forskningen. I diskusjonen om hvorvidt Ibsen skriver for sine lesere eller for tilskuerne i teatersalen, viser Hov til at den «naturesandhed» Ibsen krever i sine realistiske drama, først og fremst er opp til skuespillerne å skape (Hov 2007, 11-17). Dette betyr at Ibsen anerkjenner at andre scenekunstnere trengs for å utnytte og formidle det fulle potensialet som ligger i hans verk.

Det unike i Ibsens dramaturgi er at han utviklet en teknikk for å få publikum til å forstå hva karakterene tenkte, ikke bare høre hva de sa (Holledge 2021, 49). I *Et Dukkehjem* skildrer han Noras sosiale posisjon også gjennom sceneanvisningene. Det er derfor mulig å tilnærme seg Ibsens Nora ved å analysere hvordan Ibsen får frem hennes plass i mannens hjem gjennom hvordan han har plassert henne fysisk i scenebildet (Holledge mfl. 2016, 161-164). I de to første aktene disponerer hun hele huset og leker med sine barn i alle rom. Når sceneanvisningene slår fast at barna ikke finner henne, fordi hun har gjemt seg under bordet, kan det leses som et hint om at Nora kommer til å forsvinne ut av deres liv (Archer 1906, 41, sitert i Holledge mfl. 2016, 163). I siste del av stykket blir hennes fysiske disposisjonsrett stadig mindre. Ibsen har selv iscenesatt stykket gjennom sine fysiske beskrivelser, og i disse anvisningene kan vi avlese den praktiske teatermannen Ibsens erfaringer, særlig fra arbeidet med å lede prøver i Bergen. Gjennom 5 års læretid i Bergen med utallige oppsetninger, ulike former for regiarbeid, studietur til utlandet og erfaring fra en rekke genre, lærte han tidlig i sin karriere det praktiske teaterarbeidet å kjenne fra grunnen (Hov 2007, 53-54.) Et illustrerende eksempel er hans forståelse av den fysiske plasseringen av kropp i rommet. Når Nora ber Helmer sette seg i tredje akt, så er det første gang Ibsen lar de to sitte sammen som to likeverdige personer (Holledge mfl. 2016, 163). I teateroppsetninger anno 2022 blir sceneanvisninger ofte sett bort fra, men da Nora fant sin sceniske form i 1879, kan man anta at Ibsens anvisninger ble nøye lest og fulgt av skuespillerne. Dette har sammenheng med at datidens instruktører primært var prøveledere og ikke jobbet med egne konsept. Gjennom Ibsens egne sublime arrangement og situasjoner sikrer han at Nora og Helmer aldri setter seg ned som jevnbyrdige før Noras berømte start på oppgjørsscenen i 3. akt.

Det er imponerende når man tar i betraktning at handlingen finner sted i stuen til et ektepar. Helmer og Nora har begge stått, sittet og gått fram til dette øyeblikket, men de har aldri sittet samtidig i dramaets iboende regi. Først når Nora går gjennom en erkjennelsesprosess og tar av seg maskeradedrakten, sier hun de berømte ordene til Helmer: «Sæt dig ned. Det blir langt. Jeg har meget at tale med dig om» (Ibsen 1879). Dette fysiske arrangementet understreker at de to ektefellene aldri har snakket ærlig sammen før.

Det gjenstår ennå mye upløyd mark knyttet til Ibsens «physical score», altså de fysiske og bevegelsesmessige mønstrene han skapte og beskrev for sine karakterer. For Ibsen selv var dette en vesentlig del av det materialet han skrev for skuespillere. Dette var altså en unik kunnskap han ervervet seg gjennom sin egen praktiske teatererfaring.

Som i det tidligere siterte brevet til Christiania Teater ett år før *Et Dukkehjem* hadde premiere, viste Henrik Ibsen sin innsikt i regiarbeid og karaktertegning gjennom hva slags forventinger han hadde til Christiania Teaters planlagte oppsetning av *Samfundets støtter*: «[...] hver scene og hvert billede bør så vidt muligt være en afspejling af virkeligheden» (Ibsen 1878a). Dramatikeren bidrar selv med å skape denne avspeilingen av virkeligheten ved sine fysiske arrangementer. Et av de tydeligste fysiske bildene i *Et Dukkehjem* er tarantellaen. Dansen er en kompleks metafor som kan tolkes som objektet Noras indre kamp om å være ærlig overfor sin mann ved at det fremvoksende subjektet Nora viser sin indre fortvilelse gjennom dansen. Dette kan i så fall illustrere hvordan Ibsens tekst og hans fysiske regihenvisninger til Nora er et bilde både på hans teaterfaglige erfaring og den kompleksiteten hans realistiske stykker åpner for. Han er med andre ord en teatermann per excellence. Det tok imidlertid tid før teaterkunstnere klarte å utnytte alt det potensialet som ligger i hans karakterskaping, og dette er Hennings Nora i 1879 et eksempel på.

Ifølge Ibsen-biograf Halvdan Koht (1873-1965), klarte Hennings å komme dypere inn i Noras karakter da hun gjenopptok rollen 12 år etter urpremierer (Koht 1971, 322). Ut fra de kildene jeg har funnet, er det ikke mulig å si noe om *hvordan* Hennings utviklet sin spillestil til å mestre å inkorporere underteksten og dobbeltheten i replikkene og i Noras karakter i løpet av de 28 årene hun spilte rollen. En måte å gjøre dette på kan ha vært at hun viste Noras egen splittelse gjennom rollens fysiske språk. Gjennom å grave i rollens ulike lag, kunne hun ha vist en fysisk lekenhet overfor Helmer som er helt ulik den personen hun framstår som overfor Fru Linde og advokat Krogstad. I situasjoner sammen med disse to kommer Noras kalkulerende, moralske og ærlige del av personligheten fram. Hennes sammensatthet gjør at lerkefuglsitatet overfor kunne representert en helt annen tolkning enn den Hennings tydeligvis valgte. Noras intensjoner kan endres ved å legge andre lag enn lekenhet inn i replikkene. Ibsen selv gir et tips ved at han lar Nora beskrive seg selv som et ekorn. Et ekorn er som kjent et livlig dyr som hamstrer nøtter. Nora er en livlig karakter som hamster penger for å dekke sin hemmelige gjeld. Allerede her ligger en inngang til å binde Noras opprør mot sin mann i tredje akt sammen med lerkefuglheten i første scene. Men det krever at skuespilleren utfordrer teksten og forsker i situasjonens mulige nyanser. Erfaringsmessig vil en skuespiller som spiller en rolle gjennom mange år etter hvert oppdage nye nyanser i rollen, men da er man avhengig av at man ikke låser seg teknisk i et fastlagt mønster som repeteres etter premieren. Det er derfor mulig at Koht har rett i at hennes Nora utviklet seg

gjennom alle årene med forestillinger. I så fall klarte hun etter 12 års modning å representere en mer troverdig og sammensatt kvinne gjennom alle tre aktene, enn den hun representerte da hun spilte rollen for første gang. Dette innebærer at Nora er så rikt og sammensatt skrevet fra Ibsens hånd at rollen holder følge med skuespillerens egen emosjonelle modenhet (Koht 1971, 322). I løpet av 11 dagers prøvetid før urpremieren, hadde Hennings verken nok erfaring eller kunnskap til å knekke hele nøkkelen til Nora på en måte som reflekterer Ibsens egen beskrivelse av en realistisk spillestil. Uansett gjorde Hennings et vesentlig nybrottsarbeid i 1879. Historiske kilder framhever hennes Nora som en bravurprestasjon. I forbindelse med markeringen av forestilling nr. 50 på Det Kongelige Teater i København kunne man lese i *Morgenbladet* nr. 113 at dagen

«særlig bringer fru Hennings en Hyldest for hendes Nora. Det er mer end noget andet Kunstnerindens energiske Spil i denne Rolle, som 'Et Dukkehjem' skylder den lange Række Opførelser» (Anonym 1889f).

En rekke skandinaviske skuespillerinner tok opp arven etter Hennings. Johanne Juell (1847-1882) var den første som spilte Nora i Norge. Da Juell som første Nora i Oslo, tolket henne på Christiania Teater i 1880, skrev *Aftenposten* 21. januar at «Fru Juells Gjengivelse af Noras Rolle (er) en Præstation af høit kunsterisk Værd; hun lønnes ogsaa med stormende Applaus og ikke mindre end ti Fremkaldelser i løpet av Aftenen» (Anonym 1880a). Av dette kan vi lese at Nora ble spilt med det anmelderen og publikum oppfattet som bravur. Dette ligner på den anmeldelsen Betty Hennings fikk av i *Dagens Nyheter* da hun gjestet i Sverige. Ifølge en kritikk holdt Betty Hennings publikum i et fast grep fra start til slutt og ble feiret med 13-14 fremkallelser i applausen. Kritikerens Victor Sjøberg kommenterer i *Dagens Nyheter* 5. april 1889 at publikum også kastet blomster «inför Noras förtjusande fötter» (Sjøberg 1889, sitert i Hennel 2011, 194). Han observerer med andre ord at Nora fremstilles med stor ynde gjennom hele forestillingen uten at han problematiserer at denne stereotype lerkfugl-framstillingen av Nora gjør forbindelsen mellom hennes personlighet i første og tredje akt problematisk. Kritikerne er også barn av sin egen samtid, og det moderne teatrets sammensatthet og kompleksitet var nytt også for dem. Men også pressen fanget opp endringene i hvordan kvinner ble representert på scenen. *Dagbladet* anmeldte fru Juell 21. januar 1880 da hun spilte den første norske Nora-en på Christiania Teater. Anmelderen påpeker med rette på en av stykkets store utfordringer:

I Stykkets sidste Scene kommer vi til det umulige, at faa dennes Nora til at være første og anden Akts Nora, thi det er jo ikke Nora, der tvinger Helmer til at høre på Opgjøret. Det er Ibsen selv, som har meget at sige. Fru Juell gjør imidlertid mærkværdig meget for at faa det til at være den samme (Anonym 1880b).

Anmelderen påpeker her at Ibsens egen stemme er tydelig. Enda viktigere er det at han også ser at fru Juell jobber for å skape en troverdig utvikling i Nora fra første til siste akt. Anmelderen skriver i samme artikkel at Juell har «fundet beundringsverdige Udtryk for Noras Sjælekval» og at hun gjenskaper en «gradvis Forvandling af et Menneske» (Anonym 1880a). Allerede en måned etter Hennings' urpremiere i København kan det dermed se ut som om Juell klarer å representere

Nora med en større del av den kompleksiteten Ibsen har gitt henne, enn det Hennings klarte på urpremieren. Dermed er spillestilen ytterligere fjernet fra romantikken og melodramaet.

Mange norske Nora-er fulgte i Juells fotspor. Johanne Dybwad (1867-1959) og Johanne Voss (1868-1946) er blant de tidligste Nora-ene i Norge. Begge var ledende skuespillerinner ved Nationalteatret i Oslo. Johanne Dybwad var datter av Johanne Juell og beretter at instruktøren Bjørn Bjørnson lærte henne hva naturlighet var på scenen. Han instruerte henne som Nora i 1890. «De behøver ikke ta så forferdelig i. De har det likevel» sa Bjørnson en gang til henne og la til: «De vet mange går omkring og lager ekstra stemme for å virke bedre.» (Normann 1950, 89, sitert i Hyldig 2019, 328). Mange Nora-er brukte stemmen sin også utenfor Norden. «I det øvrige Europa drog fru Riemann-Raade fra Wien til Berlin og fra München til Warschau og høstede guld og laurbær som Nora», rapporterte *Fædrelandsvennen* 8. desember 1882 (Anonym 1882). Felles for de tidlige generasjonene er at ingen hadde noen formell skuespillertrening (Mason 1980, 81). De måtte utvikle sin spillestil gjennom å lese med mer erfarne kollegaer, og arbeide tett på praksis hos sine kollegaer.

Live Hov undrer med rette hva skuespillernes egen alder kunne ha å si for tolkningen av Nora-rollen. Danske Betty Hennings var 29 år da hun spilte rollen på urpremieren, og hun hadde den på repertoaret til hun fylte 56. Svenske Elise Hvasser var 49 år da hun spilte i den første svenske oppsetningen av *Et Dukkehjem* noen uker etter urpremieren i Danmark. Kritikerne fremhevet at hun hadde det temperamentet og den modne feminiteten som rollen krevde, særlig i stykkets siste del (Hov 2010, 31-37). Men i likhet med Hennings, var også hennes erfaring utviklet under andre spillemessige idealer. Norske Johanne Juell var like ung som Hennings, og illustrasjoner fra samme scene fra begge oppsetningene viser at både scenografi og gester var identiske i København og Christiania. Oppsetningene er med andre ord gjort helt i tråd med Ibsens egne sceneanvisninger (Hov 2010, 38). Hennings bakgrunn som en brilliant danser satte uansett en standard og en forventning til framtidige Tarantella-utførelser (Hov 2010, 40).

Med bakgrunn fra en melodramatisk og deklamatorisk spillestil, bidro med andre ord Hennings, Juell, Dybwad og deres samtidige Nora-er til å forme en ide om hvem Nora er og hva hun representerer. De måtte bygge på den melodramatiske og deklamatoriske spillestilen som var rådende, mens de utviklet ideen om hva kvinnelig representasjon på scenen kunne være.

Dette gjorde de gjennom å lete etter nøklene til den kompleksiteten Henrik Ibsen selv skrev inn i både replikker, karaktertegninger og sceneanvisninger. Senere skulle teaterpedagogen Konstantin Stanislavski (1863-1938) sette ord på en metode innenfor realistisk spillestil som kunne brukes for at Nora skulle kunne spilles med det Ibsen i sitatet i starten av denne artikkelen kalte «jævn natursandhed» (Ibsen 1878a). Dette vil jeg komme tilbake til. Først må vi imidlertid se på hva slags politisk kraft som lå i representasjonen av den kvinnen Ibsen skapte gjennom Nora.

Nora – med politisk kraft

Gjennom Henrik Ibsens egne opptegetninger i Roma, får vi et inntrykk av hva slags kvinnesyn han selv ville at hans Nora skulle representere. 19. oktober 1878 skrev han:

Der er to slags åndelige love, to slags samvittigheder, en i manden og en ganske anden i kvinden. De forstår ikke hinanden; men kvinden dømmes i det praktiske liv efter mandens lov, som om hun ikke var en kvinde men en mand [...] En kvinde kan ikke være sig selv i nutidens samfund, der er et udelukkende mandligt samfund, me(n)d love skrevne af mænd og med anklagere og dommere der dømmer den kvindelige færd fra mandligt standpunkt (Ibsen 1878b).

Ibsen viser med denne oppsummeringen at han mener det er stor forskjell på hva som er en kvinnes og hva som er en manns rettigheter i et samfunn. Det er denne forskjellen han både synliggjør og gjør opprør mot i *Et Dukkehjem*. I hans samtid var en kvinne som Nora en utopisk rollemodell. Hun var et bilde på en fremtid der kvinner blir sett på med like stor respekt som en mann. Gjennom Nora-rollen gir Ibsen derved skuespillerinner mulighet til å representere sitt kjønn på en måte som gir innsikt i egen verdi. Nora representerte derfor en utopisk kvinnelig modell som har samme muligheter som Ibsen mener en mann har (Ørjasæter 2005, 41-42). Nora ble tidlig et politisk ikon fordi Ibsens egen tekst er et rop om behovet for en radikal samfunnsendring. Det er den ikke bare gjennom Noras kritikk av samfunnets lover, men også av samtidens bilde av hva kjærlighet innebærer (Moi 2006, 225). Ibsen-forsker Toril Moi (1953-) påpeker at Ibsen gjennom dette stykket introduserer en revolusjonerende analyse av en modernistisk kjønnsforståelse (Moi 2006, 226). Dette førte imidlertid til at Ibsen på 1880- og 1890-tallet fikk en «overpoliticizing reception» (Moi 2006, 229). Dette innebærer at Nora først og fremst ble sett på som en politisk kampfigur. Mange av Nora-ene på starten av 1900-tallet ble derfor ikoner for en politisk bevegelse som særlig handlet om kvinners rettigheter. Nora på scenen representerte derved ikke først og fremst en kvinne, men en politisk agenda.

Janet Achurch (1846-1916) var den første profesjonelle skuespilleren som spilte Nora i England. Søk i databasen *IbsenStage* viser at året er 1889. Hun var en av mange store skuespillerinner som var opptatt av å distansere seg fra samtidens sentimentale rollefag (Holledge mfl. 2016, 32-33). I motsetning til italienske Eleonora Duse (1858-1924), som nesten ikke beveget seg under tarantellaen, kastet Achurch seg ut i en tarantella som var så fysisk krevende at den nesten må ha grenset til å illudere galskap (Holledge mfl. 2016, 176). Ifølge hennes ektemann var rollen hennes livs opplevelse, og *The Times* beskrev hennes Nora som en praktfull tolkning (Holledge mfl. 2016, 5). Dagbladet 12. juni 1889 siterer teateranmelderen i den engelske avisen *The Echoes*. Han roste Miss Achurch for hennes framstilling av Nora og skrev at «Spillet fulgtes med aandeløs Spænding fra først til sidst, og at Stykket som Kunstværk og som Drama er af mægtig Virkning, udfordrende originalt og forresten helt igjennem mesterlig gjort» (Anonym 1889a).

Dette kan indikere at hennes spillestil var mer i tråd med hva Ibsens rolle krevde enn Nora-tolkningen til Hennings, nemlig innlevelse og troverdig representasjon. Tidspunktet for Noras inntreden i det engelske teaterlandskapet er nemlig vesentlig. Som påpekt over, fanget Ibsen opp pulsen i sin egen samtid og kvinnes rettighetskamp i Nora-rollen. Nora forlater ikke mann og

barn fordi hennes mann er ondskapsfull. Hun lever i et helt ordinært ekteskap som fører til at hennes egen selvrespekt knuses. Toril Moi oppsummerer hennes beveggrunn med at «Nora concludes that her duties to herself outweigh her duties to others» (Moi 2021, 91). Nora konkluderer altså med at hennes plikter overfor seg selv er viktigere enn hennes plikter overfor andre. Ibsens kvinneskikkelser som Nora Helmer, Helene Alving, Rebecca West, Ellida Wangel og Hedda Gabler ble forbilder for kvinnekampen på slutten av 1800-tallet (Moi 2021, 91). Radikale og viktorianske kvinner i England trengte disse kvinnene som forbilder på kvinner som krever både frihet og selvstendighet. Ibsens Nora traff dermed selve tidsånden i England. Først i 1918 innførte Storbritannia stemmerett for kvinner etter nesten samme vilkår som for menn. Fulle rettigheter ble gitt i 1928.

I motsetning til Hennings sin Nora, kan det virke som om Achurch utviklet rollen gjennom spilleperioden allerede første året. Dagbladet kunne 4. juli referere til en kronikør i *P.M.G.* som skrev at hennes siste forestilling i London var en «fuldstændig Triumph. Miss Achurchs Nora Helmer var bedre end nogensinde, især i sidste Akt» (Anonym 1889d). Janet Achurch var dessuten den første Nora-en som turnerte i Asia (Holledge 2021, 202). Hun bidro derfor både til å bygge opp Ibsens internasjonale gjennombrudd og til å spre ideen om hvem Nora er og hvordan hun skal spilles.

Amerikanske Elisabeth Robins (1862-1952) sin innsats i England var avgjørende for Ibsens suksess i engelskspråklige land. Hun høstet store lovord for sin Heddatolkning og har selv skildret sitt forhold til hans kvinneroller i *Ibsen and the actress*. Dette foredraget ble gitt ut i bokform samme år som forfatteren Virginia Wolf (1882-1941) ga ut sin innflytelsesrike fagprosabok *Et eget Rom*. Wolfs bok kom i 1928 og er en politisk og feministisk argumentasjonssamling mot den patriarkalske kulturen menn hadde skapt. Boken bruker behovet for et eget rom som et bilde på kvinners selvbestemmelse. Wolf og Robins sto derfor begge for de nye og radikale politiske tankene som Ibsen allerede hadde beskrevet gjennom Noras opprør. Robins påpeker at ettersom Ibsen gir skuespillerinner helt nye utfordringer ved å skrive karakterer som bryter med stereotype framstillinger av hva en kvinne er, blir ideen om hva en kvinnelig skuespiller er, også utfordret. Fra å skulle være et sjarmerende og vakkert ornament i samfunnet og på scenen, en arketype, åpner Ibsens stykker for fordypning i hva et menneske er. Men Ibsen endret ikke bare publikums opplevelse av hva en skuespiller er og kan gjøre, hans stykker endret også skuespillerinners opplevelse av seg selv og sitt arbeid (Marshall 1999, 175-181). Elisabeth Robins beskriver sin egen opplevelse av å se Janet Achurch spille Nora. Hun slår fast at hun ikke var forberedt på at hun dermed sto på «the threshold of an event that was to change lives and literature» (Robins 1928, 10). Hun forutså med andre ord at hun var et vitne til en begivenhet som skulle endre både livet og litteraturen. Robins beskriver videre Achurchs Nora som en hverdagskvinne med slitte klær og en hjemmesydd skinnhatt over sitt lyse hår. Når det gjelder hennes eget arbeid med å finne ut hvordan Hedda Gabler skulle spilles, skriver Robins at Ibsen har en «supreme faculty for giving the actors the clue –the master-key– if they are not too loftly or too helplessly sophisticated to take it» (Robins 1928, 26). Med andre ord: Som tidligere påpekt kreves nærlesning av Ibsens tekst for å finne spor og nøkler til hvordan rollen skal tolkes.

Ibsen ga derved skuespillere helt nye muligheter til å skildre nyanserte og hele kvinneliv. Robins beskriver hva Ibsens roller krever gjennom å oppsummere hvordan hennes kollega Marion Lea spilte Thea mot hennes Hedda Gabler. Tolkningen var en «triumph of art; but so unforced, so true to life, that people wouldn't believe she was acting at all» (Robins 1928, 34). Hun beskriver dermed en realistisk spillestil som er så troverdig at publikum kunne tro at de så levde liv på scenen, og ikke representasjon av et liv. Hun slår også fast i sin bok fra 1928 at ingen dramatiker har betydd mer for kvinnelig representasjon på scenen enn Henrik Ibsen (Robins 1928, 55).

Ibsen selv har kommentert 1800-tallets dramatikk og spillestil i en artikkel i *Morgenbladet* 5. oktober 1862 med følgende ord:

Der gives en hel stor Klasse af Theaterstykker, hvis Roller kan udføres af Fuskeren ligesaa godt, som af Mesteren, forudsat at Vedkommende besidder Stemmemidler nok, og et nogenlunde bekvemt Udvalgte. [...] Disse Stykker ere især de, hvori Følelsen gives frit Løb uden al Dobbeltthed paa Bunden, hvori Personerne optræder som Skurken, den ædle Mand, den lidende Moder, osv. i abstrakt typisk Almindelighed, uden fra Forfatterens Haand at indeholde, eller fra Skuespillerens at tilstede, nogen af de tusinde individuelle Afskygninger, hvori det Typiske i Virkeligheden ene og alene forefindes. [...] Alle disse Stykker gjør ved Læsningen et klart Indtryk, de gjør et Indtryk af noget Fuldfærdigt, hvilket kommer deraf, at Opgaven ikke ligger dybere, end at Læseren strax kan se, hvorledes han skal spille Rollerne paa sin Fantasies Scene. Men netop denne Fuldfærdighed er i et dramatisk Værk en Mangel; thi det udelukker Muligheden af for Skuespilleren at lægge Noget til af sin egen Kunst, og kan han ikke dette, saa bliver Dramaet nødvendigvis en dramatisk Uting paa Scenen (Ibsen 1862d).

De individuelle avskygningene som Ibsen her etterlyser skapte han selv gjennom sine realistiske skuespill, og Nora er og blir en av de kvinnerollene som har endret både livet og karrieren til en rekke skuespillere. Det er derfor Elisabeth Robins konkluderer med at de skuespillere som fikk ta del i det å forme en av Ibsens karakterer for scenen, husker det som et skinnende minne som aldri blekner (Robins 1928, 56).

Italienske Eleonora Duses karriere bekrefter Robins sine teorier om hvor viktig Nora-rollen har vært for å bygge kvinnelige stjerner. Duse la inn Nora i sitt repertoar da hun var 33 år gammel (Holledge mfl. 2016, 54). Formuleringen er interessant fordi den forteller at datidens store skuespillerinner hadde et rolle*repertoar*. Dette kan sammenlignes med nåtidens store operastjerner som gjester med samme rolle i en rekke operaensemble. Nora ga datidens stjerner mulighet til å bygge sine karrierer på rollen, enten ved å gjeste i andres produksjoner eller ved selv å aktivt initiere og produsere forestillinger og turneer. Duse selv hadde Nora på repertoaret i 15 år (Holledge mfl. 2016, 59). Dette illustrerer hvordan Ibsen gjennom Nora og andre realistiske kvinneroller ga skuespillerinner makt til å bygge egne karrierer. Den politiske kraften i Nora i Ibsens samtid kan illustreres med følgende reaksjoner fra publikum etter Janet Achurchs siste forestilling i London i 1889 gjengitt i *Dagbladet* 15. juni:

[...] thi længe efter Tæppets Fald, saas Grupper af Damer og Herrer i Gangene i og udenfor Theatret ivrigt optaget med at drøfte de forskjellige Spørgsmaal, Stykket stiller. – Burde hun nu virkelig ha gaaet sin Vej – spurgte en. [...] Og saa var der en, som fremholdt, at Nora var den nye Kvinde; medens en anden mente, at hun burde tages ordentlig i Skole – burde hun (Anonym 1889b).

Dette lille presseklippet forteller noe om hva slags sprengkraft som lå i hvordan Nora representerte en kvinne som klarte å frigjøre seg fra datidens konvensjonelle kvinnerolle. Det politiske aspektet ved kvinnelig representasjon gjennom Nora-rollen handler dermed både om kampen for likestilling mellom kjønnene og om hvordan rollen ga samtidens skuespillerinner makt til å bygge egne karrierer. Utviklingen av Nora-rollen gjenspeiler derved den politiske virkeligheten rundt produksjoner av *Et dukkehjem* i tillegg til å bygge på en estetisk overføring fra de første Nora-ene og (Haaland 2022). Ibsens Nora blir derved mer enn et feministisk og politisk ikon. For en rekke skuespillerinner var hun starten på jakten etter de nøklene Ibsens skrev inn for å kunne representere en kvinne i hele sin sammensatte bredde. Det handler om å utvide fokus fra hustruen og moren Nora til mennesket Nora. For den kvinnen som spiller Nora, handler det om å representere kvinnen Nora gjennom å grave dypt både i seg selv og i de spor og nøkler Ibsen har skapt for å forstå og trenge inn i individet Nora.

Nora– fra ikon til menneske

Den russisk-amerikanske skuespillerinnen Alla Nazimova (1879-1945) var 28 år da hun spilte Nora i New York i 1908 (Holledge mfl. 2016, 43). Det er antatt at hun var den kunstneriske og intellektuelle lederen for produksjonen (ibid., 50-52).

Nazimova beskriver sin metode slik:

I study the woman. I look at her under a magnifying glass and say to myself: “Is she right? Is she logical? Is she true to herself? Can I act that woman? Can I make *myself* over into *her*?” [...] I have to reconstruct my whole self into this woman I am to portray – speak with her voice, laugh with her laughter – move with her motion. [...] if I can project the character so completely that the audience believes I *am* that character, then I have done my job well (sitert i Cole mfl. 1970, 590).

I denne beskrivelsen forklarer hun en metode og spillestil som tilsvarer den Elisabeth Robins fant hos Janet Achurch da sistnevnte ga liv til Nora i England. Det er denne metoden den russiske skuespilleren, regissøren, pedagogen, teaterfilosofen og grunnlegger av Moskva Kunstnerteater, Konstantin Stanislavski, satte ord på 20 år etter *Et Dukkehjem* ble publisert.. Hans metode gir svar på hvordan karakterene i Ibsens realistiske dramaer kan framstå med det Ibsen etterlyser som «jævn natursandhed». Innenfor denne metoden finnes det en rekke treningsøvelser og retninger som skal gjøre skuespilleren i stand til å spille realistisk, altså spille slik at publikum opplever at de er tilskuere til et reelt levd liv. Samtidig vet publikum at det de ser på er fiksjon, så det ligger

allerede en teatralitet til grunn for å etterligne virkeligheten. Bakgrunnen for Stanislavskis systematiske arbeid, var at han oppdaget at de fleste skuespillere tok sin egen arbeidsform med seg i graven. Mangelen på nedskrevne teknikker og tilnærminger til rollene, gjorde at han viet et liv til å konkretisere hva en skuespiller kan gjøre for å finne fram til sine hemmelige inspirasjonskilder (Foster Hirsch 1984, 36). Gjennom skuespillerens bruk av egne følelser, egen vilje og egen forestillingsevne, skal skuespilleren leve seg inn i det «den menneskelige sjelens liv» i rollen (Stanislavski 1944, 407-419). Stanislavskis metode var dermed svaret på hvordan skuespillere kunne gi troverdig liv til karakterene i Henrik Ibsens realistiske skuespill. Felles for Ibsen og Stanislavski er at de tok utgangspunkt i en mye mer kompleks forståelse av virkeligheten og datidens søkelys på psykologi. Den metoden Stanislavski utviklet, skulle gi rom for å vise at det ofte ikke var samsvar mellom det et menneske sa og det det samme mennesket tenkte, bevisst eller ubevisst. Dette er som kjent et av kjennetegnene på det moderne dramaet og Ibsens måte å skrive sine realistiske stykker (Esslin 1980; Szondi 1991; Hemmer 1994).

Ibsen-biografen Halvdan Koht var selv i salen i New York i 1908 og var imponert over hvordan Nazimovas lidenskapelige intensitet gjorde Noras transformasjon i siste akt til en indre realitet. Samtidig beskriver han denne scenen som et bilde på en situasjon hvor det var en klart konflikt mellom situasjonen på scenen og det publikum ønsket å se. Nazimova spilte Noras oppgjør med en lavmælt og emosjonsladet bruk av replikkene, ifølge Koht. Publikum så imidlertid på scenen som en samling av politiske ideer og ikke som en kunstopplevelse, for publikum klappet etter alle Noras replikker som om det skulle være en politisk kamptale (Koht 1971, 323). Nora ble derved en stereotypisk representant for et politisk manifest og ikke en troverdig og sammensatt levende kvinne. Ifølge Halvdan Koht bleknet det politisk kontroversielle i stykket etter hvert. Det som da sto igjen var selve kunstverket og Ibsens krav til sannhet i enhver menneskelig relasjon (Koht 1971, 323). Belegg for dette kan finnes i Henrik Ibsens tale ved Kvindesagsforeningens fest i Kristiania 26. mai 1898. Talen er gjengitt i *Morgenbladet* dagen etter:

Jeg takker for Skaalen, men maa fralægge mig den Ære bevidst at skulle have virket for Kvindesagen. Jeg er ikke engang paa det Rene med, hvad Kvindesag egentlig er. For mig har det staaet som en Menneskesag. Og læser man mine Bøger opmærksomt, vil man forstaa det. Det er nok ønskeligt at løse Kvindespørgsmaalet, saadan ved Siden af; men det har ikke været hele Hensigten. Min Opgave har været *Menneskeskildring* (Ibsen 1898).

Dette kjente sitatet viser at Ibsen selv ønsket å bli vurdert som en dikter og ikke som en agitator for sosial og politisk endring (Moi 2021, 93-94). Hans påstand om at hans oppgave er å skildre mennesker, er imidlertid imøtegått av mange, og en av dem er den anerkjente Ibsen-forskeren Joan Templeton. Hun tar utgangspunkt i Ibsens eget verk når hun skal nærme seg rollefiguren Nora. Publikum møter først en leken lerkefugl, et objekt for sin manns lyster og behag (Templeton 2015, 183). Gjennom Noras erkjennelser modnes en kvinne som står opp for seg selv og sine egne individuelle behov. Det Nora er mest stolt av i livet er å ha reddet sin manns liv. Når hun skjønner at han ikke anerkjenner hennes bragd, faller hele hennes tilværelse sammen. I siste scene sier Torvald:

–Jeg skulde gladelig arbeide nætter og dage for dig, Nora, – bære sorg og savn for din skyld. Men der er ingen, som ofrer sin *ære* for den man elsker.

Så svarer Nora:

–Det har hundrede tusend kvinder gjort (Ibsen 1879).

Joan Templeton slår fast at denne replikken viser at kravet om likeverd mellom mann og kvinne er Ibsens prosjekt. Replikken over er en nøkkel for å forstå Noras reise fra objekt til subjekt, og Joan Templeton peker på at det beste forsvaret for at stykket handler om en feminisme som slår ut i tredje akt, ligger i selve teksten og i måten Ibsen får Noras egen selvbevissthet til å blomstre (Templeton 2015, 181-183). Hun argumenterer for at Ibsens verk ikke er et argument for at enhver relasjon skal være sann. Det er kvinnens plass i samfunnet som likeverdig med sin mann det handler om. Dermed motsier hun både Halvdan Kohts og Ibsens egen påstand om at han har skrevet om mennesker generelt. Ibsens primære kamp er Noras kamp, og det handler om kvinners muligheter i samfunnet.

I første del av denne artikkelen beskrev jeg hvordan Betty Hennings ikke klarte å tilføre sin barnslige og lekne Nora den tyngden som gjorde hennes brudd i siste akt troverdig, i hvert fall ikke på urpremieren eller på sitt første gjestespill i Sverige. Dette klarte imidlertid Sveriges Nora-er Elise Hvasser og Julia Håkonsson, ifølge *Stockholms Dagblad* i 1889. Avisen legger til at i motsetning til Håkonsson og Hvasser, klarte ikke Hennings å representere Nora på en måte som gjorde at hun utviklet seg fra et barn til en voksen kvinne (*Stockholms Dagblad*, 5. april 1889, sitert i Hennel 2011, 192). Observasjonen fra pressen er interessant, for den er et bilde på at også kritikere etterlyste en fornyet spillestil hvor skuespilleren skaper en realistisk og logisk utvikling av Nora-rollen fra første til tredje akt.

Svenske Julia Håkonsson er et eksempel på en skuespiller som klarte å få fram dobbeltheten og modningen i Nora gjennom alle tre aktene, ifølge samtidige kilder. Julia Håkonsson debuterte på Dramaten i Stockholm med rollen som Nora i 1886 (Lagerroth 2011, 130). Hun gjenopptok rollen i 1889, og ifølge *Göteborgs Handels- och Sjöfartstidning* 18. november klarte hun, i likhet med engelske Achurch, å utvikle rollen ytterligere. Avisen beskriver rollen som en «värklig triumf». Siden debuten et par år før har Håkonsson:

kärleksfullt genomarbetat alla detaljerna, men viktigare än detta är att grunduppfattningen hvilar på riktig botten och att därtill framställningen helt igenom är genomfyrd af naturlig och enkel sanning, något som just icke kunde sägas om den utmärkta och berömda konstnärinna, hvilken kréerade rollen på kunglega scenen och som enligt vår uppfattning begick ett missgrepp då hon tog Nora (Anonym 1889e).

Den siste setningen refererer til Hennings Nora-tolkning og gir et ytterligere belegg for at Hennings ikke klarte å løsrive seg i tilfredsstillende grad fra den melodramatiske tradisjonen og

representere Noras utvikling på en troverdig måte. Det klarte tydeligvis Håkonsson. I tillegg klarte hun, ifølge avisen, å videreutvikle rollen da hun spilte den igjen tre år senere.

Ideen om hvordan en Ibsen-rolle skulle spilles, hadde Håkonsson fått fra sin lærer Hedvig Winter-Hjelm. Winter-Hjelm hadde spilt Fru Alving, og Ibsen selv var så fornøyd med hennes tolkning og spillestil at han skrev følgende til den svenske skuespilleren og teaterlederen August Lindberg 19. august 1883 da han ba om lov til å sette opp *Gengangere* i Kristiania:

Under visse betingelser vil tilladelse hertil kunne gives. Først og fremst må jeg betinge mig at fru Winter-Hjelm også dersteds kommer til at spille fru Alving. Dette forudsætter jeg som en given sag (Ibsen 1883b).

Julia Håkonsson hadde med andre ord en faglig læremester og et spillemessig forbilde som tilfredsstilte Ibsens krav til skuespillere. Da Winter-Hjelms elev Julia Håkonsson ble takket av som skuespiller i 1929, sa teatersjef Erik Wettergren i sin tale at hun var den første moderne skuespiller på en svensk scene (Lagerroth 2011, 132). Hva dette innebærer, antydes i datidens kritikker av hennes debut som Nora. I *Aftonbladet* 30. oktober 1886 skrev J.A. Runström om henne at hun var «redan ovanligt utbildad i den svåra konsten att framsäga replikerna okonstladt och naturligt» (*Aftonbladet* 30. oktober 1886, sitert i Lagerroth 2011, 141). I *Nya Dagligt Allehande* dagen før skrev Hjalmar Sandberg at hun også hadde et «uttrycksfullt ytre, ett böjligt talorgan [...] samt ett i allmänhet manérfritt föredrag» (*Nya Dagligt Allehande*, sitert i Lagerroth 2011, 139). Ifølge disse kritikerne besatt hun tydeligvis evnen til å gi rollen det Ibsen etterlyser som «jævn natursandhed» (Ibsen 1878a). Håkonssons spill ble beskrevet som levende og ikke preget av den maniertheten som var en del av den tidligere spillestilen. Ingen av kritikerne stilte spørsmål ved utviklingen av Nora fra første til tredje akt. Det kan bety at de opplevde at skuespillerinnen som framstilte Nora framsto troverdig og gjenkjennelig. Det kan også indikere at kravene til den realistiske spillestilen også var en ny teaterform for kritikerne. Allerede Elisabeth Robins oppdaget hva naturalistisk spillestil innebærer ved å påpeke at en skuespiller må «let Ibsen play you, rather than insist on you playing Ibsen» (Robins 1928, 56). Da gjelder det å gå i dybden på verket, stole på teksten, lytte til medspillerne og finne de nøklene Ibsen har lagt igjen.

Noras avhengighet av mannen skildres allerede fra første scene når publikum ser at hun flørter med sin mann for å sikre seg mer penger. Ibsen-forsker Torill Moi argumenterer for at Ibsen selv har skrevet et stykke som handler om mye mer enn «a slice of life», altså mye mer enn et stykke virkelighet (Moi 2006, 225). Verket handler dermed om mer enn å observere verden slik den er. Implisitt i dette ligger at realisme kan sees på som kunstens antitese (Moi 2006, 228). Verken Ibsens venner eller motstandere rundt 1880 kunne forutse hva slags kunstnerisk seier dette stykket faktisk skulle komme til å bli. Samtidens kvinnesyn reflekteres i anmeldelsen i *Folkets Avis* 24. desember etter urpremieren i Danmark. M.V. Brun slo fast at mangelen på forsoning mellom ektefellene i sluttscenen var fullstendig unaturlig og mot enhver fornuft (Moi 2006, 228). *Dagbladet* refererte 15. juni 1889 journalisten Robert Buchanans kommentarer i de engelske avisene *Universal Review* og *Pall Mall Gasette* på følgende måte: «I 'Et Dukkehjem' finder han en Uendelighed af Selvmodigelser og bagvendte Ting og kalder Karakteriseringen af Personerne

monstrøs og umulig (Anonym 1889b). For egen regning legger *Dagbladet* til at det allerede var en «Ibsenfeide i gang i literære Kredse i England; thi Ibsens mange Beundrere vil neppe nøle med at give Svar paa Tiltale» (Anonym 1889b). Noen uker etter Robert Buchanans angrep på Nora og *Et Dukkehjem*, kunne *Dagbladet* 3. juli igjen sitere fra *Pall Mall Gazette* og fortelle at stykket likevel har blitt en «Fænomenal Succes». Bladet gjorde et poeng av at «den Strid, Stykket hat fremkaldt, vil ha en overordentlig gavnlige Indflydelse paa den dramatiske Digtning i England» (Anonym 1889c). Toril Moi beskriver Ibsens realistiske verker som starten på modernismen. Det som er sett på som «moderne» endrer seg med skiftende kulturelle normer og samfunnsforhold, men det interessante for denne artikkelen er at Ibsen skaper en ny type kvinne for scenen som igjen utløser behovet for en ny form for kvinnelig representasjon i spillestil. Ibsens verk får dermed både betydning for utviklingen av moderne dramatik, for skuespilleres metode og for scenisk representasjon av kvinner.

Den amerikanske skuespilleren og instruktøren Uta Hagen har beskrevet ulike spillestiler ved å sammenligne spillestilen til Eleonora Duse med Sarah Bernhard (1844-1923). Duses spillestil beveger publikum, sier Hagen, fordi hun var et menneske på scenen. Hun forklarer forskjellen med at Duse *presenterer* et menneske ved å skape en åpning inn til hennes egne, indre følelser. Bernhard *representerer* sin karakter med utvendige fakter (Hagen 1973, 11-13). Forskjellen er altså at den ene «er» rollen, mens den andre «viser» hva rollen tenker og føler. Sagt på en annen måte, så handler Ibsens krav om «jævn natursandhed» om å finne en metode som skiller «å være/leve» fra «å vise/illudere». Overført til ideen om spillestil, tilhører da Bernhard den spillestil som Henning ikke helt klarte å frigjøre seg fra i tredje akt, den melodramatiske tradisjonen. Det sannsynlige er da at Duse, Håkonsson og Achurch er mer beslektet i spillestil. Det handler om kompleksiteten som tillegges det moderne drama og som skiller seg fra den mer utvendige og karikerte rolleskildringen fra attenhundretallet hvor publikum visste hva hver karakter representerte fra første scene.

For skuespillere utdannet på Statens Teaterhøyskole ved Kunsthøyskolen (KHIO) etter 1995, er begrepet *handlende analyse* og *metoden for fysiske handlinger* ledende metoder videreutviklet av den russiske teaterpedagogen Irina Malochevkaja. Irina hadde bakgrunn fra arbeid med Georgi Tovstanogov. Han var igjen arvtaker av metoden som Konstantin Stanislavski utviklet og satte ord på. Det grunnleggende i denne varianten er at den ser på skuespilleren som skapende kunstner og hvordan regissøren realiserer sin visjon først og fremst gjennom skuespillerens væremåte i forestillingen. Instruktør Tyra Tønnesen (1967-) hevdet i presentasjonen av sin disputas på KHIO at denne metoden også gir rom for å bli tilpasset spillestilen innenfor både visuelle og konseptuelle retninger (Tønnesen 2009, 1). Yngre norske kollegaer utdannet ved KHIO refererer til professor Lars Erik Holter (1965-) når de skal forklare denne metoden. Enhver handling på scenen skal gjennom en klar kontroll. Holter formulerer kontrollsetningen slik: «En scenisk handling er en enhetlig psykofysisk prosess for å oppnå et mål, i kamp med den lille sirkelens omstendigheter, på en eller annen måte uttrykt i tid og rom» (Jenseg 2019). Ledd for ledd brukes setningen for å sjekke om det som skjer på scenen har substans.

Ibsen gir en rekke hint til publikum om at Nora spiller en rolle for Helmer. Hennes første replikk er «Gem juletræet godt, Helene». Allerede i denne replikken ligger det en undertekst som skuespillere som representerer Nora kan bruke for å fortelle noe mer enn det som faktisk sies (Templeton 2015, 179). Gjennom det første ordet i Ibsens manus får publikum altså et hint om at dette stykket vil handle om hemmeligheter som gjemmes inntil tiden er inne. Faglig sett innebærer dette at dersom Noras utvikling skal kunne forstås, så krever det en dobbelt bevissthet fra skuespilleren. Altså at man sier en ting og mener noe annet.

En tilsvarende situasjon finnes i scenen med fru Linde hvor Nora slår fast til den arbeidende fru Linde at en kvinne av borgerskapet har lite handlingsrom. «Du er ligesom de andre. I tror allesammen, at jeg ikke duer til noget rigtig alvorligt» (Ibsen 1879). Hun forteller så Fru Linde rett ut at hun selv skaffet midler for å redde Helmer gjennom arbeide og ved å låne penger. «Pappa gav os ikke en skilling. Det var mig, som skaffede pengene tilveie», sier hun stolt til Fru Linde (Ibsen 1879). Nora viser altså her en helt annen og ærligere side av seg selv enn den hun representerer i nærvær av Helmer i stykkets første akter. Nora bærer med andre ord mye mer i seg enn det man øyeblikkelig ser. Referert tilbake til den lille sekvensen om lerkefuglen, så gjenspeiler den sceniske handling som Hennings utfører en enhetlig psykofysisk prosess for å oppnå et mål. Hennes mål er å leve opp til sin manns lykkebegrep. Samtidig er hun i kamp med den lille sirkelens omstendigheter, på en eller annen måte uttrykt i tid og rom. Omstendigheten er at hun har forfalsket et gjeldsbevis for å redde sin mann, og for henne er dette den ultimate kjærlighetserklæring. Likevel vet hun at hun har gjort noe ulovlig, for hun refererer til seg selv som et ekorn. Altså har Nora allerede i første scene med Helmer et selvbilde som er bevisst på at hun ikke bare er en lerkefugl som leker og er livlig. Hun er også en som samler på det som er viktig for å klare å overleve på en verdig måte og i tråd med sin egen oppfattelse av selvrespekt. For Nora er målet å samle sammen mest mulig penger uten at Torvald skjønner hvorfor hun er så desperat etter å gjøre dette. Da Hennings spilte den første Nora-en var denne kompleksiteten i tilnærmingen til karakter-arbeidet enda ikke utviklet.

En av dem som tok utgangspunkt i Noras reise fra objekt til subjekt er den svenske skuespilleren Pernilla Östergren (1958-). Hun tolket Ingmar Bergmans Nora i 1989. Bergman (1918-2007) velger å introdusere Nora i rollen som mor, og Bergman har selv sagt at Östergren er den ultimate Nora (Wirmark 2006, 76). Valget av kvinnen som skulle representere Nora var derfor begrunnelsen for oppføringen. Bergman starter hele produksjonen med en drømmescene som ikke finnes i manus, nemlig en drømmesekvens som viser den lykkelige familie: mor, far og barn. Han kan ha funnet inspirasjon til denne starten gjennom å lese siste del av Ibsens berømte tale til Kvinnesaksforeningen:

Det er Kvinderne, som skal løse Menneskespørgsmaalet. Som Mødre skal de det. Og kun *da* kan de det. Heri ligger en stor Opgave for Kvinderne. Tak og Skaal for Kvindesagsforeningen! (Ibsen 1898).

Uansett Bergmans begrunnelse for å ta utgangspunkt i drømmen om mor og den perfekte familie, endret han perspektivet på Nora ved å legge inn en ny start i stykket.

Gjennom å skrive inn en drømmesekvens i starten av akt en, fikk Bergman tilskueren til å kjenne igjen sine egne drømmer om en lykkelig familie. På denne måten handler stykket mer om publikums fordommer enn om Noras utvikling og forandring. Det som gjorde størst inntrykk på meg da jeg så forestillingen, var at Bergman hadde forlenget sluttscenen med et halvt døgn. På denne måten bevilget han Nora tid til å tenke over hva slags ekteskap hun levde i og tid til å beslutte å forlate sin mann. Dette styrker troverdigheten i Noras indre reise i siste akt, fra leken mor til en moden kvinne som erkjenner at hun har levd på en illusjon. Det er ingen tvil om hennes erkjennelse av å ha spilt en forventet rolle hele livet. Hun forsvarer selv sitt brudd i følgende replikk:

–Jeg har levet her som et fattigt menneske, – bare fra hånden og i munden. Jeg har levet af at gøre kunster for dig, Torvald. Men du vilde jo ha'e det så. Du og pappa har gjort stor synd imod mig. I er skyld i, at der ikke er blevet noget af mig (Ibsen 1879).

Den realistiske spillestilen understreker relevansen i oppgjøret mellom ektefellene. En nøkkelreplikk for denne skuespillerens tolkning av Nora er ikke lerkéfuglen fra første akt, men Noras dialog med Torvald i siste scene: «Jeg tror, at jeg er først og fremst et menneske, jeg, ligesåvel som du» (Ibsen 1879). Östergren velger dermed å ta utgangspunkt i Nora i siste akt for å begrunne sin tolkning av Nora i første akt. Toril Moi poengterer at Ibsens Nora i denne replikken ikke benekter at hun er en kvinne. Nora minner imidlertid publikum på essensen i hennes liv: Fordi Nora er en kvinne, er hun nødt til å minne Helmer på at hun også er et menneske (Moi 2021, 97). Östergrens Nora representerer både menn og kvinner i salen. Resultatet blir at publikum i vårt eget århundre kan kjenne igjen en kamp for å finne seg selv i en skjev maktkonstellasjon. Nora kan derved representere alle i publikum som har vært involvert i et forhold. Dermed blir hennes kamp relevant også i et mer likestilt samfunn.

I denne artikkelen har jeg sett på hvordan sentrale Nora-er er blitt tolket, spilt og mottatt for å analysere utviklingen av skuespillerens inngang til rollen. Eksemplene viser hvordan Henrik Ibsen gjennom sitt forfatterskap har lagt grunnlaget for den realistiske spillestilen som skuespillere i nye generasjoner fortsetter å bygge videre på. Oppsummert kan man finne tre trinn i utviklingen av Noras vei mot «jævn natursandhed»: En melodramatisk Nora med bravur, Nora som politisk kraft og en Nora som går fra å være et feministisk ikon til å bli et sammensatt menneske gjennom at skuespilleren tar i bruk alle Ibsens nøkler for å kunne grave dypt både i karakteren og i seg selv. Utviklingen av skuespillerkunsten de siste 150 år kan dermed føres tilbake til den kvinnen Betty Hennings var den første til å puste liv i i København i 1879 – og som Henrik Ibsen skapte.

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