

PERFORMANCE AS RESEARCH AND THE PAST: Histories, practices and 'lived lineages'

Performance as Research Working Group

IFTR STOCKHOLM UNIVERSITY, 13-17 JUNE 2016

'PRESENTING THE THEATRICAL PAST:

Interplays of Artefacts, Discourses and Practices'

Harm's Way Revisited:

Reflections At The Crossroads of Theatre-Making and Pedagogical Practices

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Note: This research project is in its initial stages. The findings to date, will be presented in late April, at the Society of Artistic Research conference in The Hague. Therefore, for the purposes of the IFTR conference, this sharing of material to the Performance as Research Working Group, is incomplete, fragmentary, broad in scope, and at times, tangential, in an attempt to explore different registers, tones, and formats for writing reflectively through practice-led research practices.

Identifying the Rationale and Stimulus for A Proposed Book

In June 2007 I was hired by Vital Theatre Company to help form Brooklyn Theater Arts High School (BTAHS), a new 'small-school' conceived around a mission of theatre arts integration. At that time, in response to the "epidemic" of large high schools in NYC,

Mayor Michael Bloomberg and his chancellor Joel Klein, applied business principles to overhaul the nation's largest school system... They reorganized the management of the schools, battled the teacher's union, granted large pay increases to teachers and principals, pressed for merit pay, opened scores of charter schools, broke up large high schools into small ones, emphasized frequent practice for state tests, gave every school a letter grade, closed dozens of low performing schools, and institutionalized the ideas of choice and competition (Ravitch, 2010: 69).

The 'small-school movement' was predicated on the belief that large urban high schools were to blame for the decline of the public education system. The solution was to divide these large school buildings into several small mission-based schools. BTAHS was part of this movement. During my four years teaching and developing curriculum on the fringe of the NYC public school system, I began to imagine and develop a play that would critique public education in America through satire. That play, *Rumi High*, became the centre-piece for my practice-led doctoral research, which located me in London, England, where my

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teaching portfolio expanded into the U.K. Higher Education system. Ironically, as I completed both the play and the research project, my experiences working within UK Higher Education began to mirror, and perhaps heighten the Kafka-esque world that I was satirizing in *Rumi High*, where bureaucracy, corporate 'lingo' and cookie-cutter approaches to management steadily began to supersede all pedagogical principles, perhaps most drastically in contrast with approaches to teaching and developing skills in the creative arts.

The relationship between artistic practice and writing, in the context of academic research, is a challenging and much debated topic. Increasingly, academics whose methodology involves practice, are required to produce a surplus of documentation-as-data, in order to legitimize a form of knowledge production which is experiential, multisensory and not always best articulated through traditional academic writing formats. Considering Patrice Pavis' Postmodern notion of "*contamination of practice by theory*," where "theory generates practice," my doctoral thesis presented itself as a model for practice-led researchers, exhibiting how critical reflection intertwines creative practice and theory (Pavis, 1992: 71-72). The structure of the written thesis demonstrates an approach to critical reflection that emphasizes the interrelationship between case studies and practice, expressed through a detailed discussion of decisions and choices in relation to practice, at both micro and macro levels.

This paper emerges from an introductory overview and outline for a proposed book, which explores the relationship between practice-led research and pedagogy, related to theatre-making practices. In an attempt to reactivate my own personal performance archive, the book will survey and reflect on fifteen years of performance documents: production

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books, journal entries, reviews, lesson plans, teaching archives and academic papers combined with personal memory and interviews with relevant collaborators, to explore and formalize the notion of a critical reflective practice towards a meaningful set of outcomes in practice-led research. Mark Fleishman describes practice-led research as "a series of embodied repetitions in time, on both micro and macro levels, in search of a difference" (2012: 30). Geoffrey H. Hartman describes Jacques Derrida's 'scene of writing' as a "multi-ring but intersecting circus leading to one intense, ongoing act of reading" (1981: 4). This research project, in some respects, reverses Fleishman's 'search of a difference,' positioning the artist-researcher in an 'ongoing act of reading' of his/her own work in search for similarities, trends and coincidences within his/her own practice, in the interest of developing and articulating pedagogical approaches in the field of Theatre.

While it may be too soon to historicize, archive and re-perform the 'practice turn' in Theatre and Performance Studies, the proposed book responds to trends in 21st century academia, where a surplus of documentation-as-data is deployed in an effort to legitimize a form of knowledge production which is experiential, multisensory and not always best articulated through traditional academic writing formats. Considering the current state of academia in the UK, it appears that the notion of reflection, where close analysis and critical thinking, requires substantial time devoted to serious thinking and considering, is a radical position to take. A formalized approach to a critical reflective practice, will be necessary, not only to legitimize the work that we do as artists, but to deepen and develop the work and the practice itself alongside cultural trends in 21st century.

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The proposed book will offer a blueprint for connecting theatre practice, vis-à-vis the residue from both process and product, to a reflective writing practice that provides an approach to articulating practice-led research to practitioners and non-practitioners alike. The book will explore various approaches and writing styles for critically reflecting on artistic practice in order to suggest that critical reflection can be achieved in a writing practice that artfully combines different registers: personal anecdotes, interviews and close analysis of documentation materials from both process and product. Through the book's theoretical underpinnings, a series of exercises, tasks and teaching tools emerge, with the aim to provoke artists to borrow, steal and adapt the proposed methodologies to their needs. The key ingredients of theatre-making practice, which forms the pedagogical spine that will guide the reader through a mixture of critical theory and practical exercises are:

- Resisting Your Comfort Zone: Risk & Resilience
- Wearing the Detective Hat: Problem-Solving & De-Puzzling
- Culling Context: (Re)Searching & Knowing the History-of-Your-Medium
- Artful Thievery: Take, Borrow, Steal, Sample & Re-Invent
- Multi-Lingual Models of Collaboration: Tone, Pitch, Language & Musicality
- Planning the Party: Preparation & Foresight
- Rep & Rev: Investment & Commitment
- Ensemble-building: Trust, Vulnerability & Empathy

Through these strands, (which will likely assume their own chapter across a variety of case studies), I will consider my own relationship and development as a theatre-maker and educator, via my own theatre history; producing an autobiographical canon of past projects. Here, I will be highlighting how an on-going reflective practice that engages the residue from both process and product can help to establish the work as a model of reflective practice and a teaching tool. I will be using newFangled theatReR's 2007 production of Mac Wellman's *Harm's Way*, for which I was the director.

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A Case Study

Mac Wellman's 1978 play, *Harm's Way*, is the story of Santouche's anti-heroic journey through a world plagued by anger and impulsiveness. newFangled theatReR initially produced the play as part of the FRIGID NY festival. The production was honoured with the FRIGID Audience Choice Award, which led HorseTRADE Theatre Group, the producing organization for the festival, to partner with the ensemble in a revival co-production, for a month-long run later that year. We engaged in a summer 'lab,' consisting of eight exploratory workshops that allowed us to deepen our work and refine the aesthetics of the piece. The 'lab' culminated in a public staged reading, where the actors traded roles, improvised the staging of the play, book-in-hand, as the constructing of and running of technical design elements were 'performed' as 'part of the show.' Following the 'lab,' the ensemble entered into a period of rehearsals to re-envision the staging, leading up to a run in October 2007.

The reason that I have selected this particular work to begin this research project is due to a fortuitous moment of synchronicity where my teaching, my artistic practice and my research forged a crossroads. At the University of Bedfordshire, *Staging New Writing* is an optional unit for Third-Year Theatre and Performing Arts students, focused on studying the work of contemporary playwrights, and developing strategies for directing, performing and designing 'non-traditional' playtexts. Mac Wellman is one of the playwrights studied on the syllabus. The final project requires students to form companies around common interests in writers and styles, and to select a one-act play to fully produce, (within specific guidelines and creative limitations). One of the companies, Group X, chose to work on *Harm's Way*.

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After approving their project proposal I told the students: *'You've picked some delicious poison. If you engage deeply with the process of analysing and staging this play, my experience working on Harm's Way will be an asset to your process. If you don't put the work in, it will be far too easy for me to call you out on your negligence.'* I wondered if that comment was a bit too blunt, and fraught with falsehoods. That evening I returned home, and began gathering various archival documents from the newFangled productions, most notably the video archive of the second version. I began to view this material, not for nostalgic purposes (although such sentiments will inevitably creep in at times), but to investigate how my archives from almost ten years ago, might be of use to my students. How might my own personal archives of past projects become teaching tools?

Re-Activating the Archive

The archival documents from the newFangled productions of *Harm's Way* included the following:

- Video from the revival production
- Photographs from both productions, and the 'Lab'
- Two Director's Production Notebooks (each including Prompt Script, research materials, rehearsal plans, notes and reports, schedules, ground plans, marketing materials, reviews, etc.)
- Journal entries spanning both processes

While the photographs and video were an obvious first point of entry, and easy to access and share with my students, they were predominantly product-oriented and lacked the contextual details that help to understand how we produced the work. The students were hesitant to view the video footage, as it would risk the temptation to copy what their tutor had produced. The Production Notebooks, however, included insight into the structuring of

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the process, as the schedules, rehearsal plans and notes proved to be a curious residue, to be de-coded and analysed in new contexts.

The Production Notebooks offered many pathways; information to access additional materials such as specific journal entries. For example, the schedule enabled me to identify specific periods of time that I was likely to be writing in my journals. My journal writing practice is marked by a 'stream-of-conscious' style of writing, which manifests into a variety of forms of writing from poetry to memoir, reportage to list-making, songs to letters. As a discipline, I aim to write a minimum of thirty minutes daily, which to date, spans seventy journals dating back to 1997. These journals exist as a set of composition notebooks which combine to form an on-going work titled, *Cranology*. These books exist in two forms: in their original state, a set of black-and-white marble composition notebooks with handwritten passages marked with date and time, and a 'copied' state, each page digitally archived as scanned images.

De-Puzzling My Own Scribbles

I recalled having met with Mac Wellman prior to the start of rehearsals for *Harm's Way*. I had a vivid memory of where we met, and some of the things we discussed. I was certain I would have taken notes at this meeting, but there was no evidence of this. The rehearsal schedule indicated a date when Wellman had met with the company in rehearsal, but I knew that I met with him prior to this. The scope of the search narrowed. I consulted my iCal, and scrolled back to 2007 at the start of the rehearsal process, hoping that I might have entered my meeting with the playwright. There it was: 23 February 2007 / Mac Wellman. This led me to skim through *Cranology Book #26*, but there was no entry on that

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date specific date, or the following dates. I returned to the Production Notebook, looking more closely at the rehearsal notes which were in chronological order. There they were: notes written on scraps of paper from a scratchpad, folded behind the rehearsal notes from that week. I had missed them on the first survey of the book. On the fourth panel in Figure 1, the notes read: "Anger Emotion in Search of an Idea Angry Confused." I recalled that one of the key pieces of information from that meeting, was Mac's advice to "work against the violence of the piece," and to play it as "softly, slowly and gently as possible." I will return to the importance of this advice in a later section.

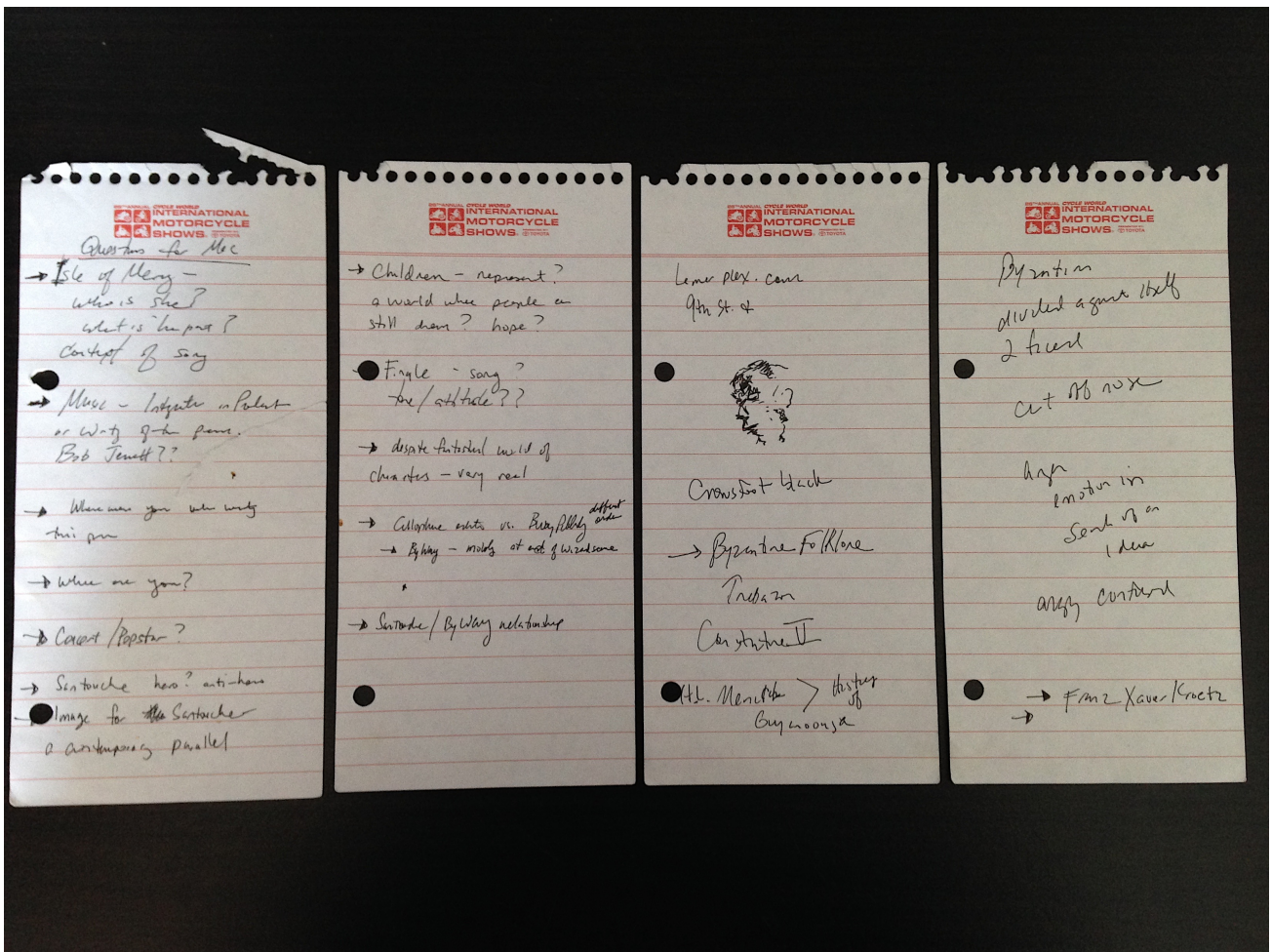


Figure 1. Notes from February 2007 meeting with Mac Wellman

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In this next section, I will walk the reader through some of the prevailing discoveries that emerged from this multi-modal reflective process, which led to a rediscovery and re-articulation of aspects of the teaching and learning that have been embedded in my designing of the curriculum for the *Staging New Writing* unit. The archive opened new pathways to how I might anchor their learning through staging *Harm's Way* to specific lessons and exercises that highlight the core principles of the unit. I will discuss how the Director's Programme Note, the company's 'Post-Mortem' notes, *Cranology* and a review of the production activated my pedagogical approach to guiding the students on their project and more broadly, in the unit. As a supplement to this paper, I will include a glossary of exercises, a format that I intend to establish as segues out of and into chapters. These practical exercises are intended to be provocations particular to directing and theatre-making, linking the theoretical and reflective writing passages, by including annotations with specific reflective moments to that chapter's case study.

Pathways Through the Archive

The Director's Note

The Director's Note that I included in the FRIGID NY festival programme begins with the following statement: "*I find our society to be in a dangerous place or situation. I am angry. Anger is a product of confusion. Anger is an emotion in search of an idea.*" I was struck by how personal this note to the audience was, as well as its declarative tone. Having already reviewed sections of the Production Notebook, I was aware of the direct reference I was making to my meeting with Mac Wellman. I recalled the inherent anger that

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the play contained, but I had forgotten my own personal state of mind at the time. I began reading through my journal entries in *Cranology* during this period, which helped to contextualize the period when I had decided to and begun to direct *Harm's Way*. In addition to reflections on rehearsals with newFangled, the writing included expressions of my early forays into teaching (through a Kaplan tutoring programme for low income families), while juggling other odd-jobs (temporary convention staffing). *Cranology* offered a snapshot view of a young struggling artist in NYC, jumping sporadically from tensions and passions surrounding love relationships, family matters, and scattered references to the news, current events and pop culture. What was it about this play that grabbed me, and incited me to bring the newFangled ensemble on a journey that ultimately led to a yearlong exploration of this 1978 play, almost thirty years later?

In the *Staging New Writing* unit, I place a great emphasis on the director's ability to make decisions. Choosing a play to direct is a major commitment: a director will typically be devoting at least two months of his/her life to investigating, exploring and staging this work. This is why, although there are particular frames and limitations for the students in choosing the plays to work on, there is great emphasis on making an informed decision, with consideration with a particular consideration of what drives and excites them, and why. In the past, I have had students propose to produce plays without reading the full text, if not little more than a synopsis found the Internet. This common classroom occurrence led me to develop the '*Tinder Analogy*,' in order to impress upon students the importance of selecting work to produce. *Tinder* is a popular online dating app where the user swipes right or left to accept or reject potential dating partners. These sweeping 'swiping' actions are

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quick decisions made from somewhat superficial means; mostly based on a mixture of photographs posted by the individual, and some other basic information, such as age, job and university. A swipe to the right acknowledges a potential, as does a quick Google search, a visit to Wikipedia or browse on Amazon.com when searching for a play. The interest is perhaps one of intrigue, but the swipe right, or the click, is rather surface.

Drawing out the analogy, I explain to students that, 'You might go on a date with a 'Match,' but you wouldn't necessarily commit to a two month long relationship based on a quick glance and swipe.' The comparison is rather simple, but proves effective in impressing upon students the importance of deeply considering what type of play they want to work on; as they will be involved in a relationship with this particular work for the next two to three months. I then suggest the following criteria: To Choose A Play That...

- excites and interests you thematically, and in tone (*you're pulled in*)
- puzzles and challenges you, (*you're confused, but curious*)
- connects to today's social and/or political landscape (*you've got a hunch that it has a larger meaning that connects to the larger world*)
- you will be able to inspire and rally others creatives around (*you can't stop thinking and talking about it*)
- you can imagine yourself in a room with for several hours, days, weeks, and months at a time (*you won't get sick of it*)

Hayley Bloodworth, the student director for Group X, admitted that she chose to direct *Harm's Way* because "it scared her. She had no idea what was going on when she read it."

Once the student director and his/her company has selected the play, they are encouraged to read the text multiple times, perhaps to a point of exhaustion: read the play once through for a focus on each character, and then for each design element. This exhaustive reading task leads to the next part of the process: to identify the play's 'Inherent Themes.' Through various readings of the text, the director will create a running laundry list

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of every possible thematic idea that is contained within the play. There is no right or wrong here, and students are encouraged to jot down whatever word or phrase comes to mind. Some phrases may come up multiple times, or overlap with stronger or weaker terms. The list will seem endless. Once the list is compiled, a 'boil down' process takes route, and the aim is to select five 'inherent' themes that will become the foundation from which to build and develop the production concept. These five themes will stimulate the research process, the collaboration with actors on their specific roles, and initial dialogues with designers. In consulting the Production Notebook, I located my initial laundry list (Fig. 2), and the rehearsal notes indicate the themes I had identified to form the vision for this particular staging of *Harm's Way*:

- Anger, (Rage & Violence)
- Confusion
- Impulsiveness
- Carrying 'Baggage'
- Transformation

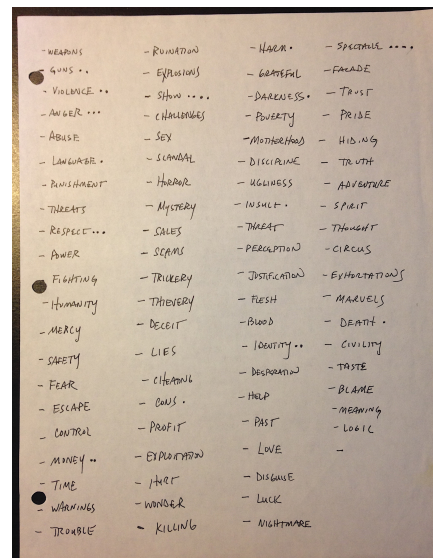


Figure 2. Theme List from FRIGID production

The Post-Mortem Report

Post-mortem meetings were a standing part of the process for all student productions at Emerson College, where I received my bachelor's degree in Theatre Studies. This was a practice that I carried into my professional practice. It is a conscientious and structured effort to reflect on both process and product, which allows each individual to

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consider their own growth, struggles and triumphs in the process. The teaching staff guided the process, but they were also participants in the process, considering how to deepen student learning, while also having the opportunity to reflect on their own theatre-making practice in relation to their particular role. In my experiences within UK higher education, I have yet to see such a practice, nor have I been successful in implementing such a strategy. On some practical units that I've taught, there is either a reflective writing assignment or a group Viva, attached to a performance assessment, which reaches briefly into the realm of a critical reflective practice. Today, in UK higher education, there is little time for reflection, and little emphasis on understanding the learning process. A meeting after the fact detracts from data-crunching and form-filling.

The Post-Mortem notes for *Harm's Way* includes reflections from company members reflect on the process and product in the weeks following each production, give insight into how we worked and developed as an ensemble, and the challenges that we faced in staging this particular play, with acknowledgment of the aspects of the production that we would have liked to have taken further. Some of the reflections from company members resonated with other archival materials and information reclaimed.

Situating the Audience

Justin Sturges, who both designed lights and performed in the productions, insisted that as a company, 'We should keep each other off-balanced;' and Megan Carter, dramaturge for the productions, echoed this notion, stating: "We are off-balanced." Ross Chappell's NYTheatre.com review of the FRIGID production states: "Mac Wellman uses a mix of heightened language and colloquialisms from different periods to give the entire play

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a slightly off-balanced feel... The story is also designed to keep the audience off-balance, so that they are never quite sure of where reality stops and fantasy begins.” I find no evidence in the archive that I was aware of this off-balanced quality at the time of directing the piece. Perhaps, when you yourself are off-balanced (as perhaps evident in the writings in *Cranology*), you cannot notice the imbalance. However, I found it curious when my students first presented their initial production concepts, that they spoke at length at the idea of the play being off-balanced and wanting to somehow situate the audience in a way that would make them feel off-balanced. This led to in-depth discussions specific to the use of space, scenography and the importance of situating the audience. This inherent quality of the play, which newFangled only recognized in reflection as a subconscious design aesthetic, was front-and-center for Group X, who were now actively exploring the notion of off-balanced staging. Bloodworth admits that she had read the Chappell review, and that the reference to the play being off-balance “had struck a chord that resonated,” and helped to establish her directorial vision for the play. Alternatively, my directorial vision for situating the audience was connected to the repeated phrase: “it’s all part of the show,” placing the audience as consummate spectators who are all ‘part of the show.’

The Show within the Show

It is my position that all plays when produced as performance, are in some fashion, plays within plays. The audience, even if spectating through a fourth wall, is some way manner, participating through the act of reading and interpreting. In *Harm’s Way* several characters, most notably the quintessential snake oil salesman, Crowsfoot, utters the phrase: “It’s all part of the show.” This continuing blurring of lines of reality and fantasy was

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a guiding concept for me, in situating the audience. I close the director's note with: "*I thank you for being part of the show,*" suggesting to the audience that they are a participant in this experience. Chappell's review also tapped into this: "Wellman's running theme of 'it's all part of the show' begs us to question much of what we take for granted in human society and culture." The concept of the 'show within the show' emerged from the idea of presenting the play as presented by band of traveling gypsies. The entire show could be packed into a few suitcases. The ensemble were costumed in matching worn-out tramp-like suits; and prior to each performance they would march through the streets playing music from the show, in an effort to lead an impromptu parade of followers into the theatre space, to join in the experience. Sturges remarked in the Post-Mortem, how this approach establishes an approach to cheap and quick aesthetics reminiscent of Peter Brook's 'Immediate' theatre and evokes a sense of Bread and Puppet Theatre. The Post-Mortem notes also reflect unease with how well this was executed. Ashleigh Beyer (who played BY WAY OF BEING HIDDEN, and developed the marketing strategy for the production) expressed that she would have liked more exploration of the gypsy concept and I myself, admitted a lack of clarity on the parade concept, as well as oversight of the practical challenges, considering the festival was in early-March, which in NYC, could experience frigid temperatures. As I guide students through a series of practical exercises that explore the selected themes physically, I begin to raise questions around potential production frames. There needs to be a frame from which to place your audience and situate them. How are they entering the space? How are they addressed? How do you bring them into this world? How does the use of space and movement help to specify the experience?

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Figure 3. Cast of *Harm's Way*

At the time of this writing submission: My students have expressed interest in using found objects and researching circus aesthetics to stimulate their process. Initially, their engagement with 'found objects' is low, as they are discussing objects they've seen or have, but they are not bringing these objects into rehearsals to experiment with. Their references to circus are vague, and I am pushing them to engage more deeply with the research process, to truly find what it might mean to stage a piece within a circus aesthetic. At the moment, circus and found objects are being used as loose umbrella phrases for a host of potential ideas that they might have. I will be observing an hour-long rehearsal next week. Their performance is on 12th May.

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Slow, Soft and Gentle

When I first accessed the video documentation of the 2nd version, I was perplexed as to why I could not locate documentation of the FRIGID production. I still have not located one, if it exists. In viewing video of the revival production, I was struck by the gentle quality that pervaded and strung together the piece, particularly the transitions in and out of scenes, where the gypsies transform the stage set, with a mixture of singing and dancing that brings us from one extreme to another. My memory had held onto the FRIGID production, which was a bit more rushed and raucous, and pressurized by the circumstances of performing within a tightly scheduled festival. This reminded me of the advice from Wellman; to work against the violence of the piece. My reading of *Cranology* led me to find the plans and notes from the 'lab' sessions which were designed precisely around this advice. The second version of *Harm's Way* was clearly an investigation and exploration of the playwright's 'slow, soft and gentle' advice. I also found rehearsal notes in *Cranology* where I was writing candidly about the struggles I was having working the actors on particular scenes. I described strategies that I used in rehearsal, that I can tie back to the 'soft, slow and gentle' advice, which I include in the practical exercises section with snapshot excerpts of the journal entries as contextual annotations: The Silent Rehearsal, The Whispering Run, Playing Opposites, The Superimposed Physical Action (exercises which I intend to articulate in the practical section).

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Digital Dialogues

After my initial explorations through the archive, I decided to expand the reflective process beyond my own directorial process, and began to reach out to the members of newFangled to invite them on this reflective journey. I set up a forum, using a private Facebook Group Page as a digital platform for company members to recollect and share their memories from the process. This enabled me to post and share the documents that I was reflecting on. I also held *Skype* video-conferences with individual members who were interested in engaging in a more in-depth conversation around the work. This began with Niluka Hotaling, who was both scenographic designer and performer for the piece. As I shared my findings from the Production Notebook, she introduced her own notebook, full of design concepts, sketches, renderings and research materials specific to her roles. Both of these methods, the 'forum' and 'video-conference' stem from my doctoral research project where, in developing *Rumi High*, I maintained a network of international collabowrighters who contributed to the 'wrighting' of the work.

In the Post-Mortem notes, Megan Raye Manzi (played ISLE OF MERCY): expressed her struggles with the role and admitted that in rehearsal, she "wanted more specificity from JM and less freedom to explore." Manzi was one of the first members to respond to prompts on the Facebook Forum. She states: "Now that I'm a mother, I finally understand the ferocious, protective nature you wanted to see come out in Isle of Mercy. Now, I get it. #MamaLionROAR." In this dialogue, I ask her to offer advice to my student, Kate Radley, who is currently grappling with the role. Manzi offers:

I remember feeling a bit perplexed at the seeming contradictions in Isle of Mercy. So I worked to find the "character." I wondered, how does she walk, talk, and feel? What

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discoveries could I make about her that would somehow connect these vastly different traits all within her?? Skip all that work outside of yourself. Instead, work inward. There is no "character" to be found or made sense of. She is all of us. We are all extreme walking contradictions. She is both the most delicate piece of your heart and the angriest pit of your soul. Play both. Live both. In perfect, messy harmony.

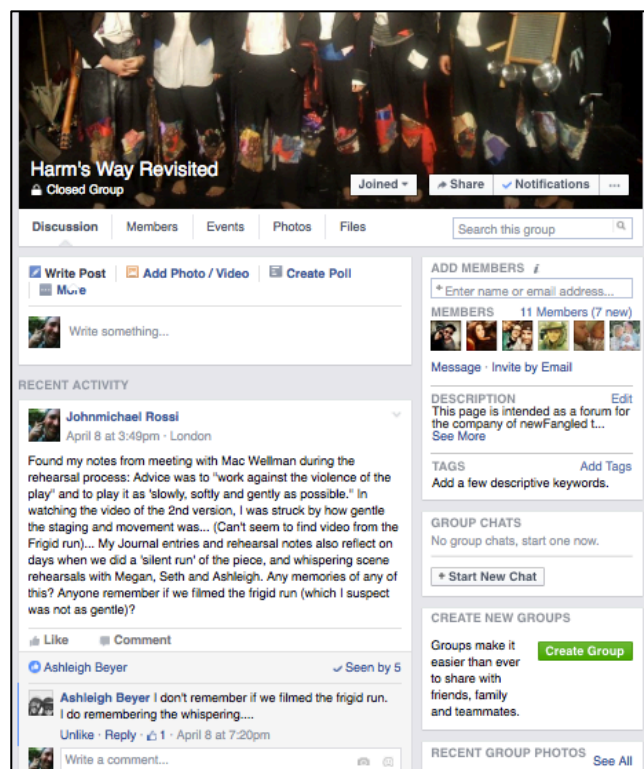


Figure 4. *Harm's Way Revisited* Facebook Group Page

When I first accessed the Production Notebooks of *Harm's Way* I had no idea how many reflective directions it would off-set, nor the newer initiatives that would be inspired. Needless to say, the field of research, from reaching out to the company members, re-reflecting, and searching for lost archives (the video of the first version, and a *NYTheatre.com* podcast interview with the company) is time consuming; Apropos for a research project that, as I said at the start, is an act of radical defiance in the face of today's current state of affairs: Critical Reflective Practices, as a deliberate 'slowdown,' in the name of rich art-making processes and meaningful teaching and learning experiences.

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AT THE CROSSROADS:

Practical Exercises for Early Career Directors

Note: This supplemental sheet is intended as a model structure where following each chapter/case study, a series of practical exercises is offered, and annotated with residue from the archive. This particular case study would suggest: Exercises related to Directing and Stimulating an Aesthetic Vision around Themes and Script Analysis. The details of the form have not been fully articulated here, as this an exploration of structure and layout.

ARTFULLY MAKING DECISIONS SKILL-BUILDER:

THE EARLY PHASES OF THE DIRECTING PROCESS

- **Inherent Themes Laundry List & The 'Boil Down' Process**

[Referencing the process described in the paper, a series of steps are provided for guiding the practitioner to brainstorm around possible themes, and tasks that will aid him/her in the 'boil down' process.]

Include images from *Harm's Way*
Production Books.

- **Ensemble-Building Exercises Tied to Theme**

[Include a list of movement and improvisational exercises to be adapted and shaped according to selected themes, in the interest of simultaneously building ensemble and exploring the themes physically and through other performative utterances.]

- **Image-Based Research Character Hybrids: Pop Culture, Literature and History**

Once themes have been identified, *[discuss an approach to character analysis, based around image research, as a tool for collaborating with actors and designers].*

Include images from *Harm's Way* process
as examples, with anecdotes and
commentary from the actors who played
the role.

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GENTLE, SOFT & SLOW REHEARSAL STRATEGIES

- **The Silent Rehearsal**

[Describe the approach and set up of the exercise.]

Include excerpts from Rehearsal Notes in *Cranology* describing a silent rehearsal with the cast.

- **The Whispering Run**

[Describe the approach and set up of the exercise.]

Include excerpts from Rehearsal Notes in *Cranology* describing a rehearsal with Seth Reich, Ashleigh Beyer and Megan Manzi, exploring the beats, and urgency and impulsiveness of the scene through whispering.

- **Playing Opposites**

[Describe the approach and set up of the exercise.]

- **Super-Imposed Physical Action**

[Describe the approach and set up of the exercise, which draw on the same skills as the Theme exercises]

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