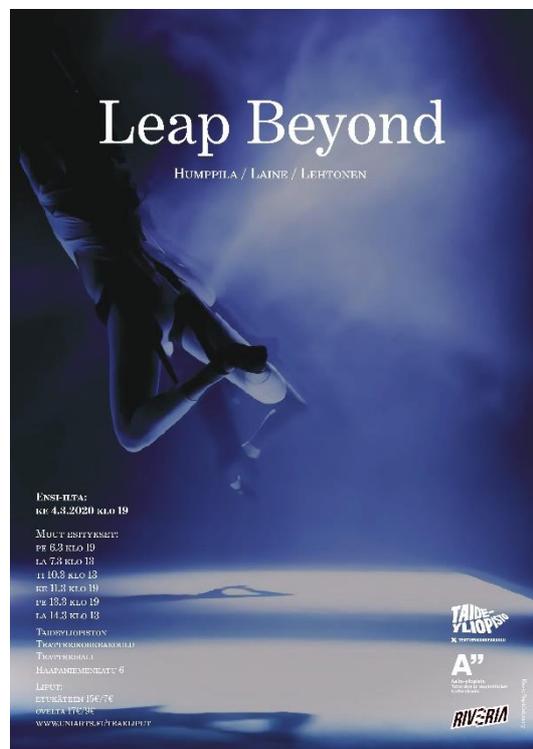


Leap of Faith in Leap Beyond

An artistic-pedagogical enquiry:

How do I as an art pedagogue implement ideas of
'Leap of Faith' in a rehearsal process for a
performance?

VERNA LAINE



ABSTRACT

DATE:

AUTHOR Verna Laine		MASTER'S OR OTHER DEGREE PROGRAMME Master's Degree Programme in Theatre Pedagogy	
TITLE OF THE WRITTEN SECTION/THESIS Leap of Faith in Leap Beyond		NUMBER OF PAGES + APPENDICES IN THE WRITTEN SECTION 45 pages + 3 pages of appendices	
TITLE OF THE ARTISTIC/ ARTISTIC AND PEDAGOGICAL SECTION Leap Beyond (by Humpilla, Laine, Lehtonen). Premiere 04/03/2020 at 7pm in Teatterisali, Theatre Academy The artistic section is produced by the Theatre Academy. <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> The artistic section is not produced by the Theatre Academy (copyright issues have been resolved). <input type="checkbox"/> No record exists of the artistic section. <input type="checkbox"/>			
The final project can be published online. This permission is granted for an unlimited duration.	Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>	The abstract of the final project can be published online. This permission is granted for an unlimited duration.	Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>
<p>In this thesis the author introduces a concept (<i>leap of faith</i>) and traces back its practical application as an artistic-pedagogical premise and method in the making of a performance (<i>Leap Beyond</i>). The central concept and the concepts surrounding it have been explored by the author previously in another artistic research context (wherein the author theorised a possible approach to actor movement training based on the concept of a <i>leap of faith</i>) and have been expanded and explored further in this thesis. The thesis focuses around two questions:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) How do I (the author) as an art pedagogue implement ideas of Leap of Faith in a rehearsal process for a performance? 2) What kind of pedagogy does this call forth? <p>The first question allows the author to map out the training and rehearsal process towards the performance <i>Leap Beyond</i> in the light of the concept of a <i>leap of faith</i> and relate them with the surrounding concepts of anxiety, the unknown and that-which-is-not-yet. The surrounding concepts enable the author to contextualise and place the work within a larger discourse on art practice, art pedagogy and learning. The author presents and outlines the practical application and means with which the implementation of ideas of a <i>leap of faith</i> was made, with specific focus on the aerial work and the developments towards it.</p> <p>The second question acts as a follow-up question that opens up possibilities for further investigation in the future. It allows the author to reflect on the pedagogical choices that were made before and during the process. Through the second question it also becomes possible for the author to reflect on features about the work that have clarified their meaning to the author only after the official part of the production process had come to an end.</p> <p>The author concludes the thesis by proposing potential future developments and prospects.</p>			
KEYWORDS leap of faith, qualitative leap, anxiety, the unknown, art practice, art pedagogy, theatre pedagogy, disobedient pedagogy, aerial work, aerial theatre, aerial dance, skills training, movement, movement pedagogy, body practices, risk, trust			

TABLE OF CONTENTS

1. INTRODUCTION	4
1.1. <i>Background and aims</i>	5
1.2. <i>Leap of Faith</i>	7
1.3. <i>Leap Beyond</i>	9

2. NOTES ON LITERATURE AND KEY CONCEPTS	12
3. RESEARCH QUESTION AND RESEARCH METHOD	17
4. RESEARCH ANALYSIS AND FINDINGS	20
4.1. <i>Primary means of Implementing ideas of Leap of Faith</i>	23
4.1.1. <i>Body Practices</i>	25
4.1.2. <i>Devising and Dramaturgy</i>	34
4.2. <i>Disobedient Pedagogy</i>	44
4.2.1. <i>Risk-taking</i>	46
4.2.2. <i>Trust</i>	47

5. CONCLUSIONS	49
----------------	----

References

Appendices

1. INTRODUCTION

This thesis research is part of an on-going research process around the connection between the philosophical concept of a *leap of faith* and the practice of aerial dance. The research has begun to form its perimeters in and around 2010 while I studied in the United Kingdom at Royal Central School of Speech and Drama (RCSSD, University of London) on a Master of Arts in Movement Studies degree, which is a degree focusing on the movement training of actors. It originated from my interest in and experiences of aerial dance as an actor-performer (artistic endeavours), that created a thirst for more and a desire for deeper investigation (research), which then led me to pose questions on how knowledge formation is considered to occur and what learning is and could be (pedagogy). As the perimeters mentioned earlier are relatively vast and ever-expanding, for the purposes of this Master Thesis, I have strived to focus on a specific area – the training and rehearsal process towards the performance *Leap Beyond* in which aerial dance was used as one of the performance forms – which can be seen directly in line with my previous degree’s research work. It can be seen as a development or as a pursuit towards a practical application of the ideas presented previously, followed by the descriptive analysis of how this application unfolded. I will introduce the previous degree’s work in the following chapters.

This Master Thesis is the concluding part of my studies in the Master’s Degree Programme in Theatre Pedagogy at Theatre Academy, University of the Arts Helsinki. It is an artistic-pedagogical thesis that includes both a written and a practical part, both of which are evaluated and examined. The practical part consisted of Teaching Practice 2 (autumn 2019), which is a compulsory module for the students of the MA Programme in Theatre Pedagogy, and the production period of *Leap Beyond*¹ in Teatterisali at Theatre Academy, University of the Arts Helsinki (spring 2020). Seven performances were planned and scheduled, but only five of them actually took place due to the cancellations caused by the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic. The Finnish government instructed all gatherings of more than 500 people to be cancelled from Thursday 12th of March and recommended to take precautions in all group gatherings. The University of the Arts advisory team advised our Friday the 13th and Saturday the 14th of March performances to be cancelled.

¹ See Appendix A: Leap Beyond brochure

1.1. Background and aims

My research interest began to build itself around an experience of suddenly seeing the surroundings in a completely new light. This particular experience took place while I was on my third and final year of my Bachelor of Arts degree in Acting, when I attended a workshop in bungee-assisted dance and vertical wall dance with Wired Aerial Theatre at the Higher Space aerial centre in Liverpool, United Kingdom. I use the word 'seeing' in a very broad sense, not solely meaning seeing with the physical organ that is the eyes but rather experiencing with the entire body. I suddenly felt more able, more capable in my body, and the world around me had more possibilities and less (or no) insurmountable obstacles. A stone wall that I walked next to in Liverpool in 2010 after one of the days in the Higher Space seemed more like a surface of possibilities (something to bounce off from, lean on, use as a support for balance etc.) rather than an obstacle stopping me from entering whatever was behind it. This experience stuck with me intensely, and it seemed to transform something in me in a very profound way. This experience of transformation inspired the research journey I am still on and led me to the concept of the leap, my initial source being the philosophical and theological writings of the Danish philosopher Soren Kierkegaard (1813-1855), who can be considered as one of the first existentialists and a precursor of phenomenology.

In my previous research entitled *Leap of Faith: Aerial Dance in Actor Movement - a new angle to educating the body on risk-taking and trust* (2011)² I traced back my journey towards aerial dance (and the leap), looking at the development of aerial dance as a movement form and analysing different movement systems that may have similarities in their fundamentals (of qualitative leaps, new routes and realms, change in the ontological state of the human being). The central concept used, of a qualitative leap, comes from Kierkegaard's *Concept of Anxiety* (originally published in 1844). Kierkegaard's writings I ended up finding after experiencing aerial dance and reflecting on spiritual struggles and anxiety I had had before stepping in to the unknown on the path of life, or in other words, taking a *leap of faith*. I began to develop and theorise an idea of possible methods and approaches to movement training and body practices

² Conducted as a Sustained Independent Project (SIP) on the Master of Arts in Movement Studies programme at RCSSD, University of London, United Kingdom in 2010-2011.

within the performing arts education system based on the idea of a *leap of faith*³. I identified similarities in the Feldenkrais method, Meierhold's Biomechanics and Contact Improvisation (developed by Steve Paxton) and acknowledged that there may be several other practices with these similarities, but I chose to use and have a closer look at the three mentioned here. I will elaborate on some of them later in this text. I outlined the main focus and aims in my previous work this way:

[...] I sought to investigate an approach to actor movement training based on an idea of the educational value of anxiety as freedom's possibility and the leap made through faith from dread to discovery of new. As well as exploring this leap from a concrete point of view as a literal movement of throwing oneself as a means of exponentially and experientially informing the actor of his or her body's endless potential abilities, increasing the skills of physical risk-taking (the leap⁴) and trust (of faith⁵), a similar internal process was acknowledged and explored. (Laine 2011, 18)

As in this previous research I investigated a potential approach to actor movement training, in this Master Thesis work I sought to open it to consider a wider spectrum of performing artists' training; to test this theorised approach in practice; and to apply it in a specific rehearsal process context. As I consider myself both a working artist and a pedagogue within the performing arts field, and think that pedagogy is inherently present in all endeavours that involve working in groups with other beings, I sought to, while co-directing this performance, investigate how I as an art pedagogue implemented these ideas of *leap of faith* within the rehearsal process for the performance. Overall, I stand by the aims I laid out in my previous research – with some modifications to the

³ See Appendix B for a plan laid out for the entry examinations for the MA in Theatre Pedagogy course in 2018 (in Finnish)

⁴ 'Leap' sb.

1. An act of leaping; a bound, jump, spring. An abrupt movement or change. 2. A leaping-place; something to be leaped over or from. Also the place or distance leaped.

'Leap' v.

1. To run, rush, 'throw oneself' 2. To rise with both (or all) feet suddenly from a standing place and pass through the air to some other position; to jump, spring. 3. To spring or jump (with joy, mirth, etc.). 5. transf. To move with a leap or bound; b. Of the heart (or pulse): To beat vigorously, throb. 6. fig. To pass abruptly (from one condition or position to another) 7. trans. To pass from one side of (a thing) to the other by leaping.

⁵ 'Faith' I.

1. Confidence, reliance, trust. III. 1. The duty of fulfilling one's trust; fealty. 2. The quality of fulfilling one's trust; fidelity; loyalty

(Definitions from The Shorter Oxford English Dictionary Vol. I 1959)

And from faith to a synonym and a word often equated with faith:

'Trust' n 1. a. A firm belief in the reliability or truth or strength etc. of a person or a thing. 2. A confident expectation. 5. Reliance on the truth of a statement etc. without examination

'Trust' v 1. place trust in; believe in; rely on the character or behaviour of. 3. have faith or confidence or hope that a thing will take place.

(Definitions from The Concise Oxford Dictionary 1995) (Laine 2011,18)

wording: I investigated, in practice, during the training and rehearsal period of *Leap Beyond* an approach to movement training in the performing arts context based on the idea of the educational value of anxiety as freedom's possibility and the leap made through faith from anxiety over the unknown to the discovery of new. As well as exploring this leap from a concrete (ie. not abstract) point of view as a literal movement of 'throwing oneself' (as it is possible to do in aerial dance) as a means of corporeally and experientially informing the participant of his or her body's endless potential abilities, increasing the skills of physical risk-taking (the leap, see fn. 4) and trust (of faith, see fn. 5), the parallel internal processes were acknowledged, explored and discussed.

1.2. Leap of Faith

This section I will use as a general introduction to areas of interest stemming from the idea of a *leap of faith*. As mentioned earlier, I was able to identify something specific concerning this particular experience after having done the bungee-assisted dance and vertical wall dance workshop and was only then able to begin to attempt at verbalising and conceptualising the said phenomenon. Nonetheless, I had had a long-standing fascination for what I would call the art of physical cultures (sports, exercise, dance, acrobatics, somatics, physical theatre, all sorts of practices that required some sort of movement of the body), philosophy and learning, yet struggled to define what exactly was the specific thing that fascinated me in them and what linked them together.

I have also had an interest in and an easy-going personal relationship with Christianity and having faith for most of my life, since I had grown in a relatively liberal Free Evangelical Church-going family with four siblings and had noticed that this affiliation had vastly contributed positively to my ability to empathise, show compassion, learn and reflect on my actions and life in general. I was fortunate in experiencing next to none of the oppressive aspects that can easily be found in close-knit religious (or any other) communities. I was fortunate in witnessing the transforming power of grace and mercy and the acknowledging of common humanity *among people*. But I had also noticed during my school years that the very same things instigated negative responses, resistance and ridicule, so presenting a concept (of a *leap of faith*), which had somewhat obvious connotations to religion and this Christianity specifically was initially an

anxiety-ridden journey. To my genuine surprise, my supervisors and mentors (Ayse Tashkiran and Efrosini Protopapa) at RCSSD were very supportive of the idea and even called it pioneering in the context where I presented it (context: university, academia; arts, performing arts, theatre, movement, actor training, movement pedagogy, theatre pedagogy). I also strongly felt that the concept was something that made it very clear that there was an interrelating connection between the body and mind, each continuously informing the other (I was introduced with this idea of interconnectedness initially as the term *psycho-physicality* came up while studying Konstantin Stanislavsky's acting technique) and that it somehow seemed to have the potential to expand from one realm to another (from making art to making life for example). As the Cartesian dualist idea of a separation between the mind and the body began to feel less and less relevant, I discovered that for a while I had already been applying a *holistic approach* to learning, and that was precisely why movement, physical cultures and embodiment felt not so far removed from philosophy and learning.

From early on I likened the word *faith* to *trust* and considered a *leap of faith* equal to trusting the unknown, that is always uncertain. This thought became ever clearer when I pondered upon the experiences of being on the bungee and learned about the philosopher Emmanuel Levinas's philosophy on ethics and responsibility: he speaks of the asymmetry of the responsibility between the 'I' and the 'Other'. "[Th]e I is always at the Other's mercy; Levinas writes about the I being held hostage (l' hostage) by the Other. The I leans on and has to trust the Other's mercy, which is always uncertain." (Tuohimaa 2001, 11. Translated from Finnish by Riku Saastamoinen). A *leap of faith* to me was essentially trusting that something that you cannot be certain of or something outside of you or your perception shows mercy and grace towards you when you take the leap.

1.3. Leap Beyond

The practical and artistic part of my thesis, *Leap Beyond*, was a performance event initiated by three MA Programme in Theatre Pedagogy students: Laura Humppila, Anna Lehtonen and myself. If viewed in the traditional sense, we worked as directors, choreographers and dramaturgs of this performance that consisted of three different parts:

I – *Centre of Mind Flying* (directed by Laura Humppila)

II – *Leap of Faith* (directed by Verna Laine)

III – *Playground of Flying* (directed by Anna Lehtonen)

that together created a whole. Each part examined and explored ideas of flying and taking a leap from a different perspective and through different means; the first one via physical theatre methods, the second one through bungee-assisted dance and vertical wall dance (ie. aerial theatre⁶), and the third part made use of experiential theatre making methods. It becomes evident now, that the title of this writing is two-fold: it refers both to the part I directed in the *Leap Beyond* performance as well as to the central concept used and explored in the process towards building and devising the performance.

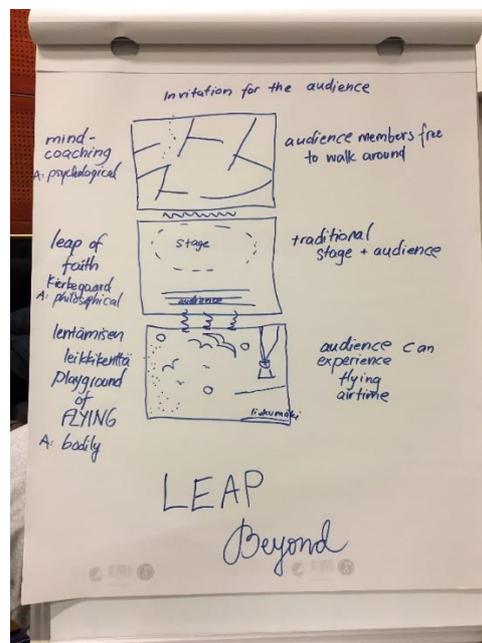


Fig. 1. How *Leap Beyond*'s basic structure was initially introduced to the participants

⁶ I use the term aerial *theatre* here to differentiate from the more circus-affiliated aerial *acrobatics* and dance-affiliated aerial *dance*, as I identify myself mostly as a movement-based theatre maker and a performer with actor training and some dance and circus acrobatics experience. An umbrella term for all these would be aerial *arts* and aerial *work*.

All of us three directors shared the notion that all artistic work includes pedagogic work, and we strived to consider what kind of pedagogical questions would arise in the process towards and making of a performance such as this. Questions of visibility, agency, power structures, hierarchies, transparency, ethical practice and responsibility have permeated the planning and running of the process and were in my opinion at the very core of our performance's subject area and the topic of this research. Developing and practicing sustainable and constructive ways in art making and re-negotiating how things are done, all the while maintaining a dialogue between all participants involved, have been our main ambitions. Elusive as these ambitions may currently seem, I suggest that beginning from something, however small, is vital.

Anna and I knew each other from aerial rope training at Circus Helsinki, a circus arts association that offers classes and training in varying disciplines in Helsinki, Finland. When we found out we had both applied for the same programme at Theatre Academy we began to discuss what had led us to practising aerial arts in the first place, and why. I spoke of the leap and Anna spoke of flying and we both spoke of learning to let go. We came to realise that coincidentally, we had both seen the same production of Peter Pan at Turku City Theatre in 1995, where Peter flew on a bungee-like apparatus, and that that had somehow stayed in both of our memories very vividly. Eventually, we made a light-hearted pact: if we both got in onto the course, we would make a piece with aerial at Theatre Academy one way or another during our studies.

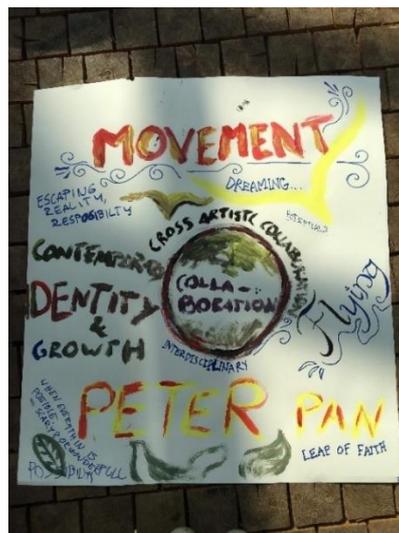


Fig. 2. On our first orientation day with all first-year students at Theatre Academy in 2018 we were given a playful task to depict a dream project we would like to take on during our studies. We made this collage with Humpilla, Lehtonen and me.

For the viewer, my role in *Leap Beyond* may have seemed like that of a choreographer, as a lot of the work I did has been either choreographic or setting a score for movement. However, my preferred title would be a movement director specialising in aerial work, due to my movement-oriented theatre background and strong interest in all forms of physical culture (also see fn. 2 and 3).

The participants of *Leap Beyond* were cast mainly via an open call arranged by Laura Humppila. All of them were over 18-years old in varying ages and from very different backgrounds. For the part I directed (II – *Leap of Faith*), we concluded that participants with relatively strong performance and movement background were desirable as less focus was placed upon the expression during the first training period in the autumn 2019. Altogether there ended up being eight performers in II – *Leap of Faith*; four performers on the bungees, two performers on the vertical wall and two performers on a static single-point dance trapeze. All the performers in the aerial part had performer backgrounds and only one had no acrobatic (neither floor nor aerial) experience whatsoever.



Fig. 3. Photo by Bogizlefactory

2. NOTES ON LITERATURE AND KEY CONCEPTS

In this part I will take an introductory look at the literature and concepts that I consider to be essential in terms of this research as they have supported the practice and I will be referring to some of them on several occasions over the course of this writing.

The main literary sources for this research have been the following:

Kierkegaard, S. *Concept of Anxiety* (originally published 1844, the translation used in 1980);

Atkinson, D. *Art, Disobedience and Ethics – the Adventure of Pedagogy* (2018);

Spatz, B. *What a Body Can Do – Technique as Knowledge, Practice as Research* (2015);

Varto, J. *Artistic Research – What is it? Who does it? Why?* (2018)

The first, Kierkegaard's work, is a philosophical contemplation on theological and psychological issues revolving around the concept of anxiety – I have used this writing as a source of inspiration rather liberally in both my artistic work and pedagogic approach, but wished not to delve too deep into it in this particular research.

Nevertheless, it introduces the idea of a qualitative leap or a transformation, which I identified as a fundamental element in deep learning already in my previous research.

Atkinson's writing provided even more support to this identification as his work is concerned with learning and art education and he speaks of "*real learning [as] conceived as a leap into a new or modified ontological state whose effects and relations produce an expansion of acting and thinking*" (Atkinson 2018, 2). Both Atkinson and Spatz are concerned with the philosopher Benedictus (Baruch) de Spinoza's⁷ statements that indicate that we do not know what a body is capable of or what a mind is capable of thinking. These statements suggest "*that learning involves the human and the non-human, in the sense of that which lies beyond how we understand the human, and that the process and practice of learning engages the domains of finitude and infinitude*". (Atkinson 2018, 2). Spatz's work attempts at theorising embodied knowledge, dealing with divergent ideas of knowledge, practice and embodiment (Spatz 2015, 1). I saw an inherent connection in these to one of Varto's most recent books on artistic research which has not only worked as a guide in developing my own artistic research, but also as a source of information on the subject matter of the research itself.

⁷ Benedictus (Baruch) de Spinoza (1632-1677), his main literary work *Ethics* was published in 1670

I have chosen this collection of materials for I see them intrinsically tied to each other – I endeavoured at finding as recent sources as possible to add along with that of Kierkegaard's. Even though Kierkegaard wrote *Concept of Anxiety* nearly 200 years ago, behind his poetic contemplations that can be positioned within the field of existential philosophy there are issues that humans deal with to this day. The same notions echo in many contexts and I have chosen to apply these to the learning of a physical skill in the context of artistic practice and performing arts education. Atkinson's book brings in the pedagogic viewpoints and possibilities and Spatz looks more from or brings in the bodily perspective and the body as a gatherer of knowledge in particular. Varto puts into words the many implicit observations I've made over the course of delving into the leap and enables me to contextualise the work I have done even more. Below I take a look on key concepts that have so far arisen during this on-going research work:

Leap of Faith, the main concept I have built my research around arises from the Danish philosopher Soren Kierkegaard's philosophical writings, featuring mainly in his work entitled *The Concept of Anxiety: A Simple Psychologically Orienting Deliberation on the Dogmatic Issue of Hereditary Sin* (in Danish *Begrebet Angest*, originally published in 1844). Kierkegaard himself never uses the exact phrase in his writings but speaks instead of a 'qualitative transition [passage, crossing] from non-believing to believing' (McKinnon 1993, 108). As mentioned earlier I myself liken the word faith in this context to *trust* (and therefore to confidence, conviction, hopefulness and belief), which is important for the reader to consider, as many may associate the word faith with religion(s). Although I do not deny my personal affiliation with Christianity and its impact on my initial impulse to begin theorising around this subject, I am most interested in faith as a phenomenon of not-knowing. Like Kierkegaard, I am interested in how one lives as an individual and give priority to the importance of personal choice and commitment; what is it that an individual may experience when faced with choices. Ultimately, my statement is that if an individual resorts to faith instead of not facing their anxiety, they will be far more educated on the lightness of actuality as opposed to the weightiness of infinite possibility. The individual can become aware of the infinite possibilities and their own ability to endlessly explore them in actuality, if the individual takes a leap from the anxiety to trusting themselves into the 'hands' of

something else. Therefore, taking a *leap of faith* can function so that anxiety is turned into “*a serving spirit that against its will leads [the individual] where [the individual] wishes to go*” (Kierkegaard 1980, 159). Thus, when anxiety returns again in some new form (as I am certain it will), the individual – instead of holding the anxiety off – can welcome the new challenge and “*as a patient would say to the surgeon [before a] painful operation, [the individual can say]: ‘Now I am ready’*” (Kierkegaard 1980, 159), (Laine 2011, 13.) In conclusion, a *leap of faith* is a qualitative leap; a movement to something new, altered or previously unknown.

Concept of Anxiety, which is the title of Kierkegaard’s work, is a concept that plays a significant part in understanding the idea of a *leap of faith*. Having said that, I would like to make a clear distinction between this concept and that of psychological conditions and mental disorders, such as anxiety disorders and phobias. “*Therefore, I must point out that [anxiety] is altogether different from fear and similar concepts that refer to something definite, whereas anxiety is freedom’s actuality as the possibility of possibility.*” (Kierkegaard 1980, 42). I consider this anxiety to be the uncertain or sometimes uncomfortable itch before entering something new or unknown. “*It is in The Concept of Anxiety that Kierkegaard deals for the first time with “anxiety over nothing” – that pregnant anxiety that is directed toward the future and that is a pristine element in every human being.*” (Anderson in Kierkegaard 1980, xiii). In terms of the *leap of faith*, this concept becomes essential as I consider it to be something that must precede any kind of transition that could be considered a leap. This anxiety can serve as a way for the individual to become aware of their potential and possibilities; that they themselves have the power to make choices and decisions for themselves.

Infinitude – finitude and ***virtual/possible – actual*** are both used in some shape or form in Kierkegaard’s text and that of Atkinson’s. They both refer to attributes of the human being and learning: “*Anxiety is freedom’s possibility, and only such anxiety is through faith absolutely educative, because it consumes all finite ends and discovers all their deceptiveness.*” (Kierkegaard 1980, 155) I abide to the notion of a human being being both limited and limitless. Interestingly, Juha Varto says in his book *Artistic Research – What is it? Who does it? Why?* (2018) that “[t]he value of skill lies in its flexibility, mobility, fearlessness, and infinity. Learning one skill makes learning other skills

easier” (Varto 2018, 30). Atkinson talks about this as “*the notion of subjectivity as a process of becoming involving finite and infinite processes*”. He continues to speak of the virtual and actual creative power of becoming, the immanent process of building a life, and of that which is yet to arrive. (Atkinson 2018, 155)

The ***unknown*** and ***that-which-is-not-yet*** I consider to be the so-called destinations or realms to which one enters after taking a leap – places where one has not been before, things one has not done and events one has not yet experienced. The unknown is a fundamental and key element when considering the *leap of faith*. Atkinson says that:

[The idea of “that which is not yet”] can be used to unpack the ontologies of learning. If we conceive of learning as a movement into a new ontological state, that is to say, where learning opens up new possibilities, new ways of seeing things, new ways of making sense of what is presented to us in our different modes of existence, then this movement involves, “that which is not yet”. Accepting such new states involves accepting new states of existence as learners. This idea would indicate *a space of potential*. (Atkinson 2011, 14)

I will touch upon the idea of ***Pedagogy that is disobedient*** further on in this writing but wish to mention it as a frame of reference to the pedagogic approach I have so far developed while looking into the idea of a *leap of faith*. In essence, what is meant with this pedagogic approach is that in it disobedience is not acting awkwardly or being rebellious for the sake of it, but in fact it is an event of non-compliance that opens up new ways of thinking and acting (Atkinson 2018, 195).

Embodied practice and the theory of ***embodied knowledge*** or what Ben Spatz in their book *What a Body can Do* (published in 2015) calls *epistemology of practice* has largely influenced my work and thinking. Embodied practice is a domain that extends from physical culture to performing arts and to everyday life. (Spatz 2015, 1) I suggest that Spatz’s idea of knowledge in the form of technique is an elemental idea tied to my thinking of aerial work as a means of creating space for ideas of a *leap of faith*. The notion of embodied knowledge permeates through my work consistently if not explicitly.

Why ***aerial theatre***?

I have touched upon this earlier (in ch. 1.3) but wish to reiterate that my background and training in acting, actor movement and dance have greatly influenced my approach

to aerial work and aerial arts. I feel I owe it especially to the circus community to acknowledge from where I look at the disciplines (of bungee-assisted dance, vertical wall dance and the other more traditional forms of aerial I have used during this research process) and their potential. I take that this acknowledging will form a more comprehensive picture of my work and extend the potential of transdisciplinary discourse. This somewhat avant-gardist attitude towards artistic practice has been an underlying principle in the planning and facilitating of the performance *Leap Beyond*. Varto notes that as the boundaries between different fields of art have begun to disappear, the skills that they have provided can be tested outside their original source; *“a skill in a restricted area is used in other contexts so artistic practice leads tools and materials to places in which they assume unexpected meanings. The practitioner is, again, a pioneer, who takes the reins, trusts, and acts”* (Varto 2018, 30).

3. RESEARCH QUESTION AND RESEARCH METHOD

In this chapter, I will introduce my research question, how I formulated it and what method I used in conducting my research. After pondering upon several versions for a suitable title, question and writing structure I decided to use the title as an introduction to the central concept and the context of this work:

“Leap of Faith in Leap Beyond”.

and in terms of the research question, arrived at this:

“How do I as an art pedagogue implement ideas of Leap of Faith in a rehearsal process for a performance?”

Over the course of the process and in part due to the discussions with the participants of *Leap Beyond*, I arrived at a follow-up question which will feature in this research as well:

“What kind of pedagogy does this call forth?”

How did I then formulate the research question(s) and plan for this research?

According to Juha Varto, the following are essential things to consider regarding research:

1. Context – to what debate does my research contribute?
2. Motives – how do I plan to formulate my research?
3. Credibility – what rhetorical techniques should I use to convince my readers?
(Varto 2018, 21-23)

As I wish to be as transparent as possible, in this particular part I will provide the reader with answers to the above questions which will hopefully shed more light upon the background of this research:

1. The questions that have arisen in this research are particularly pertinent in the context of art education and training – more specifically I have focused on the training of performing arts professionals. Are there any paradigms in how body practices and skills training in particular are taught and approached in the university level training of performing artists and/or artists in general? What kind of artists are the artists of tomorrow? What current conventions and norms have I been able to identify in the education and training of artists, that I could challenge and question? The largest and most ubiquitous convention, or almost an unquestioned norm is the idea that the artist or artist-in-the-making must be made to test their limits or boundaries and must somehow be liberated from the

slavery of those boundaries to be a real artist or a better artist. I think the emphasising of breaking boundaries and testing limits is a narrow and futile effort and serves to promote inequality. The sheer idea of limits, lines and boundaries that should be crossed to be something (better, more successful etc.) strengthens a mentality of competition (which to me seems like a very capitalist notion) and is limiting itself. I wish to question the rhetoric that sets pedagogic work and artistic work somehow separate ends of a binary scale and that they inherently exclude each other; as in that ‘real art’ or ‘great art’ could somehow be threatened or its value diminished by it being pedagogically well thought-through. The writers of *Taiteen jälki – Taidepedagogiikan polkuja ja risteyksiä*, (engl. *The Trace of Art – Pathways and Crossroads in Art Pedagogy*, nb. the author’s own translation) contemplate on this issue in the introduction of the book like this:

The union between art and pedagogy is about cutting loose from the canons that education, teaching and artistic practice unnecessarily carry within them. Questions of power and authority, the foundations of knowledge and knowing, and of art as a basic human need and its meaning-making function for humanity emerge as key themes and areas of research in art pedagogy. From this perspective art pedagogy is not an isolated island in no man’s land, but a bridge which brings art into pedagogy and pedagogy into art. (Writers 2011, 11 – nb. the author’s own translation from Finnish)⁸

2. This question provides me with an opportunity to outline how this research was formulated. In terms of methodology, this research can be placed within qualitative research: I chose to use a working method of journaling during the process and it proved to be a beneficial way of collecting data for this research. I used the thesis journal for making observations: to document my own discoveries and insights as well as for documenting some of the actual practice and plans for training and rehearsals and therefore was able to map out and trace back the route I took with all its twists and turns. This mapping out and tracing back has now provided me with information on my method of describing my practice that involved participants, performance and pedagogy. I, along with my co-directors informed the participants of *Leap Beyond* that it was a part of our studies and that we would conduct our Master Thesis research during it and that

⁸ Taiteen ja pedagogiikan liitossa on kysymys irrottautumisesta kaanoneista, joita kasvatusta, opetus ja taiteellinen toiminta kantavat tarpeettomasti mukanaan. Kysymykset vallasta ja auktoriteeteista, tiedon ja tietämisen perustasta, taiteesta jokaisen ihmisen perustarpeena ja inhimillisen merkityksen antajana nousevat esiin taidepedagogiikan keskeisinä teemoina ja tutkimuksen kohteina. Taidepedagogiikka ei tästä näkökulmasta ole irrallinen saareke eikenenkään-maalla, vaan silta, joka tuo taiteen pedagogiikkaan ja pedagogiikan taiteeseen. (Kirjoittajat 2011, 11)

the performance was the artistic-pedagogical part of said research. All our participants were over 18-year-olds, and we gained oral consent from all of them at the beginning of the process. One of the primary motives for this research was to challenge conventional ways of thinking and acting in the performing arts training and performance-making context in particular – I will refer more to this in ch. 4.2.

3. As the research I am and have been conducting is qualitative but new research and I am not applying a specific recognised research method, to gain credibility I wish to describe the research as conclusively as is possible to gain enough verisimilitude to verify it (Varto 2018, 23). I have used Varto's comprehensive and thorough book on artistic research as a guideline-forming source.

Consequently, I place my research in the field of artistic research, (artistic) practice-as-research or researching artistic practice (Anttila 2006, 11 & Varto), and it can also be seen to have some aspects of autoethnography in it. The research stems and originates from practicing and making art and the learning experiences one may (or may not) experience while making it.

4. RESEARCH ANALYSIS AND FINDINGS

The main body of this written part of the research will be a description of what actually took place in the practical part of it and it will work much like a discussion where I use the texts of the four authors (Kierkegaard, Atkinson, Varto and Spatz) for reflecting on the thoughts that have emerged in the mapping-out and tracing back of my own practice with the participants during the whole process leading to the performances of *Leap Beyond*. In this part I intend to tie the analysis and findings mainly to what I did and what I thought and what took place during the training and rehearsal process towards *Leap Beyond* with particular focus on the practice of bungee-assisted dance and attempt to frame out other considerations based on this framing to contain this writing in its given perimeters. These other and further considerations I wish to be able to pursue later in my academic career.

Initially, I set up a goal to attempt to introduce in practice an artistic-pedagogical method or an approach to physical skills training that would be relevant and beneficial in the training of performing arts professionals, and that was based on the ideas developed in the previous research (that I have discussed earlier in this thesis). I set out to figure out what the challenges in this would be, and what would seem to work? What could emerge from equipping the participants with a new equipment-based skill and presenting them with a possibility to (physically) enter where they have not necessarily been before? What could their experience of a *leap of faith* be? And further on, when questions of trust and risk-taking arise – what can I provide them with in order to equip them with something that gives them the assurance of their ability to make those leaps and decide for themselves? So that the ensuing result or outcome would not be in a binary scale of ‘success’ or ‘failure’ and would not be attributed to the pedagogue or the teacher, but to themselves. Thus, especially but not exclusively in the case of the often circus-affiliated physical skills training, the objective would move from succeeding or failing to perform a ‘trick’ correctly to seeing, realising and exploring possibilities and building towards a skill through bodily awareness. I wished to develop an approach that would offer a way to shift thinking from binary opposites to all the possibilities. When my motives and ethics about conducting this research were questioned by a visiting professor in our thesis seminar I wrote in my journal:

[I]n my plan I had laid out my goals at finding an approach based on ethics alone and the respect towards my participants, the aim of equipping them with something that would enable them to distinguish and recognise their own leaps for themselves (and therefore knowing for themselves what kind of risks are they able and/or willing to take and what to them constitutes a “risk”), and not attributing their ventures into these new realms to the pedagogue/teacher. In this attributing, if it is considered as something on a scale of success-failure, there is a danger (almost inevitable), [I feel], that if pushed by the pedagogue/teacher ‘to the limit or over’ and the attempt somehow fails, the student can end up being traumatised. In the case of ‘success’, the student may be left without the empowerment and autonomy over their learning and may end up taking on a belief that they need to be pushed by someone else to reach their best or to ‘succeed’. I want to flip this around, or rather change the focus - I want to develop ways of equipping and ways of facilitating that can create room for and develop personal motivation towards learning, and my chosen way of approaching this is through the physical, through aerial dance, that can be deemed a rather strenuous form of using/training the body due to its close affiliation to aerial acrobatics and circus. (Journal entry 08.11.2019)

I liken the expression *pushed by the pedagogue/teacher ‘to the limit or over’* to what Atkinson talks about as *forcing*:

Forcing [...] is concerned with a future state which is already anticipated and brought about by a driving hypothesis; thus the outcome of enquiry ‘will always have been.’ This logic of future-anterior constitutes the logic of forcing and it is not uncommon in artistic practice, indeed it is central to it. (Atkinson 2011, 69)

*

The research is based on my experience, observations and findings as an artist, facilitator, pedagogue and a human being participating in collaborative artistic practice and performance-making. My status in this artistic practice and performance-making was multi-layered (I was both a performer directed by others and a director and facilitator in charge of several things, where others relied on me and my decisions and skill) and therefore I wish to declare, that everything in this research has filtered through my perception of the reality around me, and my consideration of and reflection on how my actions affect this reality around me.

Why then did I consider the idea of a *leap of faith* relevant in this context?

At first, I struggled to put into words why I thought and felt that this idea of a leap was fundamental, not only to me and not only in terms of the practice that brought me to it, but more generally in learning and making a life as a whole as well. Could this be applicable to others and if so, how? In my previous research (see ch. 1.1) I had already

identified how including aerial dance in the movement curriculum of actor (and other performing arts) students could be beneficial in ‘*educating the body in risk-taking and trust*’. This I gathered could be important to the student as a learning experience that could re-orientate how the student looked at any given situation that required creativity and making choices. I wished to be able to create an opportunity for others (in this case the potential students) to experience a similar opening of the world as a scene of possibilities rather than a scene of obstacles limiting what could be chosen. According to Kierkegaard, after a leap, the change is irreversible, and one cannot go back to what was before. The philosophical contemplation and deeper exploration of the leap and its constitutions is something I have revolved around for quite some time and would like to elaborate on it and continue further later in my academic career. For the purposes of this thesis, I am focusing on the action of the practice and tie the writing to the events surrounding the training and rehearsal process.

What is the significance of the *concept of anxiety* then? In short, I determine it to be the conscious decision, making a choice for oneself, agency, autonomy – each individual has their own personal news and unknowns and therefore each individual’s leaps are different and it is only through anxiety that the individual may become aware of the infinitude of possibilities and their own potential. I liken the anxiety to the risk-taking that Atkinson speaks about:

The interesting point [...] about the risky practices [...] is that they prioritise the learner being challenged to direct his or her learning. Thus the emphasis is not upon knowledge (though obviously this has importance) but upon supporting pathways of learning that lead to knowledge and practice relations and also to a critical and reflexive awareness and interrogation of these processes. (Atkinson 2011, 95)

None of the participants had ever tried anything even similar with bungee-assisted dance or vertical wall dance (but some had experience of other more traditional aerial circus disciplines), which set them all on the same proverbial page, or at a threshold of something new and unknown. None of them could imagine or expect what the performative part of the process would look and be like, and neither could I. This gave us all an opportunity to question what kind of aesthetic would these two movement forms, with these particular human beings, call forth. I hoped not to impose any particular aesthetic requirements on the performers, but to enable the performers to

create the autonomous aesthetic of the performance by how they interact and become comfortable or familiar with the equipment or apparatus and each other.

4.1. Primary means of Implementing ideas of Leap of Faith

A promise I made myself before the practical part of this research began:

[M]y strategy [is] solidarity, kindness and consideration, no matter how much ridicule is thrown upon me. I will critically reflect on my work, my actions and my attitudes and want to always remain unfinished, in-development, ready to learn new things. (Journal entry, 08.11.2019)

As I set the idea of a ‘*leap of faith*’ as a core concept and principle in my approach (both artistic and pedagogic) to making a performance, I had to consider what means to use to communicate this and how. Despite the fact, that in this particular process we aimed towards a performance, I wanted to emphasise that I did not consider the performance to be a closure for the learning processes of the participants or that of mine. I would like to advocate, like Atkinson says in his book *Art, Disobedience and Ethics*:

[...][T]he importance of the force of art to transform and expand ways of seeing, thinking, acting and feeling. This force [...] has pedagogic potential to effect new onto-epistemic phases. It is not concerned with the closure of knowledge, with those forms and frameworks that hold us (and which of course are important), but with events of disclosure; a disclosure of seeing, knowing and feeling [...] (Atkinson 2018, 56-57)

I came across an essay of Atkinson’s⁹ over the course of our studies and his use of the word ‘risk’, ‘unknown’ and ‘leap’ caught my attention. He spoke of “*Real learning involving a leap into a new ontological space, where the event of learning precipitates a new order of becoming [...]*” (Atkinson 2014, 4), which is essentially what I considered a *leap of faith* to be – a move to a new or yet unknown realm, that could happen both visibly, physically, concretely as well as in the individual’s thinking and experiencing of the world. Atkinson mentions in his essay that this requires a risk, both from the learner and the teacher (Atkinson 2014, 3).

At this point I wish to reiterate yet again what I mean by risk-taking and a risk and what I think its function is in a pedagogic context. I do not wish to repeat this set-up where

⁹ This essay can be found online from https://www.kettlesyard.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2014/12/onn_atkinson.pdf

the teacher pushes the student towards their boundaries or limits and crosses them nor do I believe that the forcing of this by the teacher would in any way be beneficial to the learner. As mentioned in the earlier part of this chapter I see the being *pushed by the pedagogue/teacher 'to the limit or over'* (see ch. 4, p. 20) as forcing the learner towards a prescribed learning outcome, which only serves to accentuate a hierarchical teacher-learner set-up. This does not provide the learner with an opportunity to take responsibility and autonomy over their learning and thus develop their own motivation towards learning and discovery. The risk is precisely this: cultivating an environment, where I as a pedagogue do not know what the discoveries are that each learner makes; we all – teachers and learners, directors and participants – take a *leap of faith* and venture the unknown.

In the following two sub-chapters I will present more in detail the means which I chose to use, and the ideas with which I wished to communicate a holistic understanding of a *leap of faith*. The first sub-chapter focuses mainly on the body practices which I used in the initial training period in the autumn of 2019. This training period was focused on my part on building towards and developing fundamental new movement skills and readiness, generating material and building trust in one's own body and encountering and becoming accustomed to and trusting other, previously unknown 'bodies' (including those of the other participants and equipment). The second sub-chapter describes how the devising process towards the performance unfolded; what kind of dramaturgical decisions were made and how I used and navigated my position as a facilitator and what part did a *leap of faith* play in this all.

4.1.1. Body Practices

The chosen approach and methods used in my work were built around my own experience and reflection on what could be the most suitable movement-based techniques that would enable the participants to build up embodied knowledge and get an experiential reference point to *leap of faith*. I will describe what conclusions I came to in my previous research on each and attempt at pointing out how I applied them in practice in the training and rehearsal process towards Leap Beyond. In each section I endeavour at clarifying the key aspects that have led me to include them in this part. Varto says (2018, 28): “*The key result of training [in the arts] is experiential skill, which is not the same as the knowledge of facts or mechanical processes. [...] Experiential skill [,] requires a qualitative leap.*” From this arises the notion that in order to seek and discover something new, an individual must experience anxiety over the unknown before the taking of this *qualitative leap* – to which I refer as a *leap of faith* – may take place. An individual must therefore experience it themselves, it must be knowledge that is based on first-hand experience.

In my previous research I distinguished a slight quality difference between ‘internal leaps’ and ‘literal leaps’, dividing the body practices in two categories based on how visible the possible leap was to the outside eye (and somewhat unbeknown to me still promoting some sort of body-mind separation). After pondering on the pedagogical aspects of the previous approach, I decided to change the perspective to the one experiencing the leap, ie. the student or the participant: what kind of an unknown realm could a certain given movement form or body practice offer for exploration?

In terms of these movement forms and body practices and for the purposes of this written part of my thesis, I have formulated my approach to implementing ideas of *leap of faith* into the **Method of Three Fs**, where in brackets I have placed the potential and possible aspects of the new and the unknown:

METHOD OF THREE Fs: Feldenkreis, Floorwork and Flying

Feldenkrais (the new or the unknown within oneself)

The First F stands for the method established by Moshe Feldenkrais. Experiencing and dwelling with the unknown is one of the main functions of this method. Feldenkrais as a technique deals with the unknown, but from a somewhat softer starting point as opposed to such movement forms as bungee-assisted dance or other areas of aerial which strain the muscles in a more strenuous way. My aim was to somehow develop a similar level of attunement to the body, movement and fundamentals of the movement and exploration in actuality when developing the aerial skills.

Alan S. Questel says in his essay “*The Feldenkrais Method*” (Questel, A.S. in Potter, N. (edit.) *Movement for Actors*, 2002) that:

[The Feldenkrais Method based] Awareness Through Movement lessons parallel the creative process. In the creative process, we spend a great deal of time in the **unknown** and engaging in a process that unfolds unto itself. While we may know this, it is something difficult to **trust**. When we are faced with the **unknown**, our tendency is to find something known [...] What we need is a safe place to let this happen. A large part of the structure of many ATMs is that we don’t know where we are going to end up or how we are going to get there. This puts us in the **unknown** and gives us time to get accustomed to ourselves in this experience. The more we place ourselves in this type of environment, the more we can find increasing comfort in not knowing and all the feelings that accompany it. (Questel 2002, 59. Words in bold marked by the author)

Somatics or “*the body as perceived from within*”, (Spatz 2015, 96) functioned as the starting point for beginning introducing what a *leap of faith* could possibly be. My first session with the participants began with a Feldenkrais-exercise that developed into somatic movement creation and exploration, which formed the basis for the improvisatory tasks and parts of performance that followed later on. In my previous research work I also argued that as Feldenkrais-based exercises gently invited the individual into an exploration of unused or perhaps discarded and forgotten pathways of movement, it would guide away from defaulting to the known or habitual movements (Laine 2011, 38). This would offer a platform for a change of orientation: there were countless of ways of doing things and no need to seek for the only ‘correct’ way of performing a movement. The Feldenkrais method as a somatic practice provided a suitable channel for approaching the unknown, those things that the individual is not yet aware of within oneself; it offers an opportunity to observe and explore and thus

increase or widen the awareness without judgement from within, it can offer an internalised bodily experience of a *leap of faith*.

Floorwork (the new or the unknown routes on the ground)

The Second F, standing for floorwork is a mixture of practices collected during the actor and movement training I had in the United Kingdom, United States as well as in Finland. This floorwork is characterised by exploration and experiencing that is ground-based, meaning there is no external apparatus or equipment lifting or enabling the individual off the ground, but which is outward-oriented. The practice has been very much influenced by Meierhold's Biomechanics¹⁰, contemporary dance (mainly influenced by the techniques of Martha Graham¹¹ and Rudolf Laban¹²) and Contact Improvisation (CI), developed by Steve Paxton.

In this floorwork I incorporated a lot of moving and tasks with acrobatic aspects, which are often prominent in Meierhold's Biomechanics, but I wished not to present it as such, but instead approach it as exploration of the mechanics of movement, of possible routes and pathways that the body and its varying parts could take – focusing on concepts such as weight, gravity and breath. In this, I wished to somehow enable the participants to, yet again, shift their thinking from 'succeeding' to perform a certain trick – such as a cartwheel – to exploring how the shifting of the weight of certain body parts travelling through the space in a certain manner or arrangement might manifest in their bodies. Each of the sessions that took place in Circus Helsinki's training space began with individual floorwork that were followed by some partnering tasks. This allowed the introduction of another aspect of the unknown – negotiating new routes and realms on surfaces outside the individual's body. When facilitating the negotiation and exploration of these new routes and realms I invited the participants to observe their breath and the quality of the movement, and – where possible – to explore different versions. I found

¹⁰ Meierhold's Biomechanics is a rigorous physical actor training technique with acrobatic and gymnastic elements developed by the Russian theatrical director, producer and actor Vsevolod Meierhold (1874-1940)

¹¹ Martha Graham (1894-1991) was an American dancer and choreographer for modern dance. The technique created by her is considered as the first alternative to classical ballet and is characterised by forceful, angular movements originating in spasms of muscular contraction and release; the technique is considered to express intensely felt human emotion.

¹² Rudolf Laban was a European dance theorist whose studies on human movement and motion can be considered to have contributed vastly to the development of central European modern dance. He is particularly known for his movement quality system, the Eight Basic Efforts that relate to Space, Time and Weight.

the idea of a child's play a useful analogy to this exploring, which links the work again to Kierkegaard's philosophy on anxiety:

In observing children, one will discover this anxiety intimated more particularly as a seeking for the adventurous, the monstrous, and the enigmatic [...] This anxiety belongs so essentially to the child that he cannot do without it. Though it causes him anxiety, it captivates him by its pleasing anxiousness [*Beaengstelse*]. (Kierkegaard 1980, 42)

Adventure is when you embark on a journey without knowing the destination, I would say. I wanted to emphasise this wonder and curiosity; as I noted its power and potential already in my previous research work, which included an observation from a devising session with Highgate Youth Theatre in 2011 (at Jackson's Lane in London, UK). In the devising session, where I facilitated CI-based falling exercises, the young participants who had varying levels of concentration displayed a sudden intensified sense of presence and focus when we devised a section where two participants had to fall backwards to be caught by another two participants. I observed from their bodies that there was uncertainty (or anxiety) in letting the body fall backwards (to the unknown) and how that anxiety turned through the taken leap into wonder and joy and almost disbelief. They were able to enjoy being caught by the others and bouncing back up from the momentum caused by the co-operating receptive other bodies. In the previous research, I quoted Cynthia Novack, who was a dancer, teacher and anthropologist: “[e]xperiencing contact improvisation can teach an enjoyment of disorientation and a reconsideration of spatial associations” (Novack 1990, 155 in *Sharing the Dance: Contact Improvisation and American Culture*, in Laine 2011, 41.) In CI and other partnering work the trust between individuals enables equal interaction and weight-sharing, which could give birth to new moves and new routes that the individuals might not have found or come up with separately. This was something I wished to be able to offer to the participants of *Leap Beyond* as well as I was certain it would function ideally as preparation for the aerial work ahead.

Flying (the new or the unknown off the ground)

The Third F is for Flying, a central theme in the making of *Leap Beyond*, and it was in my part approached in practice through aerial work and as a high-flying idea of reaching towards life (getting off the ground and resisting and using the pull of gravity, taking a *leap of faith*), away from death and destruction and “shrinking back”¹³ (inactively giving in to the pull of gravity). Also the idea of accepting versus avoiding was prominent – or as Kierkegaard expressed it “*turning anxiety into a serving spirit..*” instead of not facing anxiety. This work I considered to be the most intensified physical manifestation of a *leap of faith*, where the individual could choose to take actual leaps towards a new way of being and moving: in the realm off the ground, airborne.

In this work I wanted to introduce elements and fundamentals of aerial work and build up confidence to trust the equipment in a similar way that in Floorwork was aimed at building trust towards the surfaces in the surrounding space and the other participants, and in Feldenkrais towards the self. This I consider a fruitful ground for any risk-taking to take place – to have enough trust for a given aspect so that letting go (of any preconceptions, knowledge of facts) becomes possible. For the purposes of clarity, I will describe each aerial discipline that was used and their function in the training process and performance. I will also touch upon questions of relevance and accessibility that were considered during the process.

Aerial hoop I chose to use as the first introductory step towards aerial work and flying. It is fundamentally a round metal hoop usually covered with dance or insulation tape to ensure better grip and avoid friction burns; it is a round-shaped trapeze. I chose to use it first, as the main part of the apparatus has a solid structure which attaches to a single-point rigging (as opposed to traditional trapeze attaching to two points, or a dance trapeze attaching to one but only having a single horizontal rod as a solid structure), and allows horizontal gripping and therefore requires less effort to hold on to. If rigged with a swivel it also allows turning around the vertical axis without the rigging ropes getting strained from twisting. Aerial hoop can also be rigged as close to the floor as is needed where basic moves are still possible. First I introduced basic mounts, hangs and

¹³ An expression borrowed from Hebrews 10:39 “*But we do not belong to those who shrink back and are destroyed, but to those who have faith and are saved.*” (Holy Bible, New International Version)

balancing: straddle and tuck mounts to knee hangs, sitting up inside the hoop, as well as coiling up to a front balance (balancing on the anterior surface of the body, ie. abdominals and front side of the hips) and then small sequences, drops and twirling (fast turning around the vertical axis). In these the major challenges and thus the major leaps took place when navigating the movements of different body parts when upside down or balancing on a narrow surface above the ground; adjusting to the sudden changes in orientation and weight distribution, and trusting one's weight on an unusual body part.

Aerial rope I chose to use even though it is considerably more difficult to grab hold of as it requires vertical grip (in which gravity does not aid in a similar way as it does with the horizontal grip on hoop) of a relatively yielding apparatus. On the other hand, as the participants noted, due to the vertical nature of the hanging rope it bore most resemblance as an aerial discipline to bungee-assisted dance which was going to be used in the performance. I introduced basic climbs, straddle inverting and static poses, with the emphasis on 'listening' to the apparatus as happens between partners in CI (and ideally in other contact-based practices). As we had been exploring such things as mechanics of movement, gravity and breath in the Floorwork, I wished to offer the participants an experience of sensing the new possibilities when they explored the same elements with the equipment. What could happen when they lean away from the vertical axis of the rigging point while still gripping the rope? What kind of routes, momentum and qualities of movement would their bodies together with the apparatus create?

Bungee-assisted dance – which is a dance form I have been lucky to encounter and explore, and now adapt and apply in the unique setting of Theatre Academy – was my own personal groundbreaking, earth-shaking *leap of faith*-discovery. It graced me with such an experience of revelation, empowerment and bewildering enjoyment and excitement that I could not help wanting to share it. Wired Aerial Theatre¹⁴ in Liverpool, United Kingdom offered me my first touch to aerial work and the founders of the company claimed to have had only one aim when they began to develop the dance form: to be able to fly. These aerial dance forms I was introduced with are about

¹⁴ Wired Aerial Theatre is a company that offers both aerial education and consulting as well as creates aerial performances. <https://www.wiredaerialtheatre.com/>

giving one's weight and trusting that the equipment will co-operate and enhance and expand the movement. For me they opened up a new world which I wanted to investigate – it felt as if moving at the other end of a rope was an extended, expanded and amplified fleshing out of an elusive something, a phenomenon I had been looking for to grasp. It provided a means of applying life philosophy to the movement of human beings and this was what I eventually identified as a *leap of faith*. (Laine 2011, 42)

In bungee-assisted dance the dancer or mover wears a specific belt-like harness with leg loops that is attached to an elastic bungee cord at the back. The bungee cords can vary in length and strength and depending on the height of the space where the practice takes place, they may attach to static climbing rope or other types of rope up until the rigging point.

As we were originally planning to collaborate with Wired Aerial Theatre (which would have included them providing us with the equipment) but this plan did not work out, I had to devise within quite a short notice makeshift equipment that would at least imitate the actual equipment for the initial training period in the autumn 2019. This makeshift arrangement meant I was going to get more time to figure out an alternative solution while still making it possible for the participants to begin their aerial exploration; and where else could we get the equipment that could be used during the rehearsal period and performances in the spring 2020. This figuring out an alternative solution proved to be one of the biggest *leaps of faith* I personally made, as at first it felt impossible to gather together from different sources all those things (harnesses, ropes, bungees, rigging) we were initially going to get from one single source. I suddenly had to trust my own resourcefulness and expertise, dig deep in the corners of my memory and literally pick up the phone and ask (and this was how I found all the know-how that existed in Finland and tips on the best places to look for equipment) and just trust that things would turn out well. I had been testing and trying out various versions of makeshift bungee set-ups from bits and pieces I could get a hold of at Circus Helsinki, and ended up – through trial and error – using acrobatic lunge belts with slings as leg loops (to keep the belt from riding up below the ribcage where it presses against the diaphragm and easily causes nausea). The headmaster of Circus Helsinki had kindly informed me that there was a set of loosely strung bungee cords we could try out, and we ended up dividing them in two, so that we could have two participants working on

the bungee at a time. As the lunge belts only had pick points on both sides of the hips (instead of one at the back), it actually turned out to be a useful stage of development since the two pick points made the movement on the bungee more easily balanced and less effort needed to be made in controlling the equipment. For introducing most of the basic movement vocabulary the two pick point version worked well – only moves that were based on moving a full circle around the horizontal axis were not possible on the actual equipment that only attached at the back.

Fundamentals and basic movement vocabulary of bungee-assisted dance I wanted to introduce so that we could begin to devise a common language of our own with the participants. I tried to emphasise again the mechanics of each movement rather than show what it should look like¹⁵. I felt that the fundamentals and basic movement vocabulary were elemental for the equipment-based skills training to not turn into an unsafe practice of anarchy – a framework to ensure and carefully take care of the well-being of all the participants and allow the more improvisatory work to take place.

I wish to finish this bungee-assisted dance part by describing what I call lift-off – give an example movement where I have experienced a manifestation of a *leap of faith*. I would say I have identified the process of learning to co-operate with the apparatus as a *leap of faith* and as letting go of trying to be in control of movement. Instead, having the understanding of the physics behind suspended movement, on how to work with and against gravity, one must take the leap from knowing (hearing the instruction or seeing it done) to believing it can be done with one's own body and into the experiential knowing in the body, to gain embodied knowledge, to experience it first-hand.

I will describe a movement called a **Star**:

This particular movement requires the person on the bungee to run from their *anchor point* (which is the point directly underneath the rigging point) towards their *stable point* (which is the furthest point where the person on the bungee can walk and lean away from the anchor point leading with the hips without the bungee pulling them back) in any given direction on the circumference reach from the anchor point. In the Star, once the person runs past their stable point, they should allow the bungee to lift them off the floor, then spread their limbs in the air to form an X-shape (a lighting star), then return to their anchor point while gathering the limbs back towards the centre of the

¹⁵ For examples of these see notes in Appendix C

body. The challenge in the Star is that the person on the bungee must trust the equipment to ‘do the work’ for them; they must continue running towards the unknown (beyond the stable point) despite feeling that it is illogical. In order for the person to experience the lift-off, they must resist the urge to default to the known, which in the case of the Star would be jumping in the air with their own strength solely. For me, the discovery of accessing the vastness of the previously only observed space, discovering the uplifting effect after trusting my weight entirely in the ‘hands’ of this apparatus was a turning point. The more I trusted, the more I discovered, and the easier it became to face each new anxiety.

Vertical wall dance (see Fig. 4) is another dance form that I became familiar with while training with Wired Aerial Theatre. I will touch upon it somewhat briefly as it was introduced relatively late in the process for the participants. It was not until the beginning of the rehearsal period in February 2020 that we got suitable rigging in the actual performance space for vertical wall dance to be possible. In vertical wall dance, the dancer or mover is wearing a harness similar to ones used in climbing – it attaches at the front to a static climbing rope that in indoor spaces ideally attaches to a rigging point where a vertical and horizontal surface meet. I applied a similar idea that had initially helped me take the leap from struggling to hang on the rope and maintain some sort of control over what I was doing. I instructed the participants that were supposed to perform on the wall to begin to think that they were setting the soles of their feet on a new ground (the wall) looking down the street (towards the ceiling), to distract from focusing on all the muscles they had to use to maintain the positions and resist their righting reactions¹⁶.



Fig. 4. Photo by Bogizlefactory

¹⁶ The righting reactions are important in establishing a vertical or upright posture against gravity and a continuous head-torso axis. Righting reactions are one of the key areas explored for example in Body-Mind Centering and other areas that take interest in developmental movement patterns.

I will close this section with some final notes on challenges and accessibility – relevance, safety and rigging aspects. Some of the participants questioned why aerial hoop was used at all as they did not see it similar to or paralleling bungee-assisted dance as a movement form. I realised that I had not shared enough information with the participants on why I had chosen to use it, which was a useful learning experience. After reflecting on the feedback I realised something perhaps even more meaningful: the participants trusted me enough to bring their concern up and question things. Furthermore, speaking of sharing information, I made a conscious effort to create an atmosphere of accessibility especially when the training and rehearsal sessions took place at a circus training space; I had noticed previously that not knowing how to operate, handle and set up equipment often prevented individuals from trying aerial arts – or even entering a space where it was possible. During our first session (and in each session thereafter) I instructed on how to tie a double-8 knot (the most common knot used in aerial rigging) and reminded to always check whether carabiners were safely locked. I believed this small effort gave the participants more autonomy over what they were doing and on its own part made working around the aspects of unknown around the *leap of faith* safer.

4.1.2. Devising and Dramaturgy

As well as introducing the participants with the body practices mentioned in the previous chapter, I hoped I could create an environment, where each participant could feel they were an active agent in their learning and in the making of the performance. This I wished to realise by promoting an ethos of sharing in everything we did: we were all learning together, we were all creating together, we were all human together. I shared some of the literature of Kierkegaard and Atkinson with the participants and we discussed the texts, the guiding principles, motivations and themes beneath the work. I had written in my thesis journal:

An ethos of sharing: someone has made [aerial dance] possible for me and I have thought it has been an important/meaningful experience. If I have the ability and capability to do the same to others, then why wouldn't I do it? This I call unmerited grace – I didn't have to do anything (other than be born into this world) to deserve joy/happiness/something good and still, someone has made it possible for me. If I have

the means or something someone else might find joy from, then why wouldn't I pass it on? I don't have to do it, but I can choose to do it. (Journal notes, 05.12.2019)

Also, I wanted to begin to think of the artistic-pedagogical work that I was involved in beyond established and prescriptive entities of teacher-learner (and I apply this to director-performer), knowledge, art practice and so on, as those “*tend to impose a form of onto-epistemic invalidation on those ways of knowing a learner evolves from his or her experiential relations and which are different or at odds with official or dominant knowledge forms.*” (Atkinson 2018, 33)

I found these initial guidelines resounding with the aims I had in my artistic-pedagogical practice, where I wished:

1. to set up *learning encounters* rather than prescribed pathways of learning.
2. to work *attentively* with learners and the relevance of their ways of learning.
3. not to allow transcendent enunciators (criteria, established knowledge) to dominate how we respond.
4. to be alive to the unexpected. (Atkinson 2018, 33)

The learning encounters mentioned in the first guideline I would apply or even equal to setting up encounters or events for creation or art making and prescribed pathways of learning I deem to be close to prescribed outcomes of creation.

Below I will describe under two titles (in *Structure and framework of the performance* and in *Methods of creating material*) the practice leading to the construction of the second part (II – *Leap of Faith*) of the *Leap Beyond* performance. To illustrate the process, I have attached pictures of the mind-maps made by the participants to support their discussions, which will enable me to further illuminate the journey of creation that took place.

Structure and framework of the performance

In accordance with the ethos of sharing I mentioned earlier, I wanted to keep the participants as informed on all developments regarding *Leap Beyond* as possible. I also wished to make the making of the second part of the performance a shared effort, and not to anticipate something particular – I wanted to actively resist what Atkinson spoke of as ‘forcing’ (see ch. 4, p. 20). I wished to navigate between directing and helping the participants to find ideas from the practice itself, so that I would not impose something on them but the outcome would be an organic development in the process. From our discussions with the participants I deduced that most of them expected me to tell how the second part was going to be realised: some expressed their concerns on not knowing whether the part was going to be fully choreographed, based on a score or aiming towards some unified aesthetic. I assured them (trying to use my status and position for reassurance) of the performance already existing within them in all the ideas, tasks, movements, inventions and explorations that had taken place during the training – we just had to frame and structure it. Some premises were set already by the space we were going to perform in and by the locations of the rigging points of the equipment – this information too was relayed to the participants. After a discussion with my thesis supervisor (where the supervisor posed a question: what then as a movement constitutes this *leap of faith*?) I facilitated a discussion with the participants based on two pieces of text (Kierkegaard’s *Anxiety as Saving through Faith*, the fifth and final chapter in *Concept of Anxiety*, and Atkinson’s *Introduction: The Pragmatics and Ethics of the Suddenly Possible*, the first chapter of *Art, Disobedience and Ethics*). I suggested to the participants that they reflect on the work and the texts together with the following ideas:

What happens (or is experienced)

before (Fig. 6),

during (Fig. 7) and

after (Fig. 8) a *leap of faith*?

This idea stemmed from Meierhold’s cycle¹⁷ and developed into a suggestion of a three-part structure of a leap transcending to the structure of the performance:

¹⁷ According to Meierhold, each movement has a cyclical structure: essentially, something happens before *otkaz*, during *posyl* and after *tormoz* a movement, and understanding this makes the artist more aware and precise in their expression (Kubik 2002, 6-9; Paavolainen 2011, 83 in Laine 2019, 8)

What could happen (or be expressed) in the

beginning – alku (Fig. 9)

middle – keskikohta (Fig. 10) and

end – loppu (Fig. 11) of the second part, II – *Leap of Faith, in Leap Beyond?*

Discussion stemmed about conventional and unconventional ideas of the dramaturgical structure (ranging from Aristotelian ideals of beginning, middle and end to contemporary dance performances that some of the participants had experienced where repetition, lengthening and prolonging had been intentionally used to challenge or make visible these conventions) and whether we should consider the part as a theatrical, circus or dance piece. This proved to be an interesting enquiry as I then had to consider the framing of the performance more specifically – I had already laid out my aim to find an approach to equipment-based skills training which deviated from the conventions of circus training that often emphasise the significance of executing a trick correctly (and are characterised by the effect they have on the audience) and the virtuosity of the individual performing them. Hence I gave no definitive answer to the query, but shared a notion of not having to abide with any particular convention, as we came from various different backgrounds (some from dance, some from circus and some from physical theatre); we could treat the harness-based techniques as a platform or common ground where individuals from different disciplines could come together to create something that could let go of strict categorising. I considered the idea of letting go as a form of a *leap of faith*: we had the unique opportunity to see all these possibilities and we were able to decide and choose an entirely new or modified approach; we could dream up a new way of being on the stage that defied categorisations.

I saw all these discussions and questions as fruitful ground for leaps to take place – both for me and the participants – I chose to not know what the performance was going to be and thus offered the participants an opportunity to join me in letting go of the known and venturing the un-knowing: taking a *leap of faith*.

Methods of creating material

When we had discussed the structure and framework of the part and came up with a skeleton-score for it, we delved back to the creative and exploratory work that was described in the chapter on body practices (see ch. 4.1.1).

We had worked on fundamentals and basic vocabulary of bungee-assisted dance and used improvisation tasks to explore possibilities. I had introduced a three-part creation exercise, **speaking, doing, writing**,¹⁸ and we had devised different developments and variations of it to generate material that ‘nobody but all owned’. The exercise functions so, that one participant is moving (in this case on the bungee), one is speaking (usually around a given topic, either by describing the movement of the mover or instructing the mover, telling a story etc.) and one writes down their observations (either by writing down what the speaker is saying, how the mover is moving or any other observations). Each may take impulses and be inspired by another and the three are in a continuous interaction with each other, and at some point they switch roles so that each gets an experience to play each part. For setting up what was going to take place in the aerial part of the performance we used the written observations of these exercises and the mind-maps shown in the previous section (*Structure and framework of the performance*). In pairs, the participants did tasks where one was reading the notes from the observations or the mind-maps to the other who was creating improvisatory movement on the bungee. This way of working formed the basis of the aerial part, the second part of the performance (II – *Leap of Faith*), which in turn consisted of three parts (**before, during** and **after** or, **beginning, middle** and **end**). It proved to be a surprisingly smooth process to set and write a score for the beginning part and the end part, but when it came time to set up what the **during** part was going to include, I run in to some trouble. The depicting of what took place during a leap was a challenge as it required most choreography and set movement – both the participants and I thought that in order to create the desired dramaturgical arch and structure (and not to mention maintaining the well-being of all the participants) the movement had to have momentum, unifying aspects and clear directions. With this in mind, I created some movement sequences.

¹⁸ This exercise was devised from and improvisation task introduced by Susanna Hast in Body Practices III, a writing course for the master students of Dance Pedagogy and Theatre Pedagogy at Theatre Academy in 2019

The participants discussed of their struggle to relate to the set movement. From my own experience I assumed that choreography and set movement brought in the challenge to implement the leap due to what could be associated with set sequences. Succeeding, nailing it, doing it ‘correctly’, echoes of connotations to more classical practices with a very specific aesthetic (such as ballet), or as previously mentioned, the circus ‘trick’ – these were inherently associations that affected my ability to implement ideas of *leap of faith* to the work, and could evoke negative feelings and memories in the participants. I discussed with my peers about repetition and how to still maintain or enable exploration despite working through a specific set of movements. At first I felt I had failed and completely let the participants down, but then noticed a mutual effort: I wished to provide perspectives and opportunities to explore the sequences and the participants worked to make the material their own.

It made me think of an analogy to product prototype: I suggested some choreographed movement sequences, they were tested and worked on to develop them into material that the participants could feel they owned. We discussed what could be done with these given set of movements, how could they be used. I was also reminded of the prologue written by Riku Saastamoinen in *Taiteen jälki – Taidepedagogiikan polkuja ja risteyksiä*, (engl. *The Trace of Art – Pathways and Crossroads in Art Pedagogy*) where the writer speaks of a fault, error, mistake or a deviation that can form into a pathway for creating new and through which the context and the culture in which the deviation takes place can become visible (Saastamoinen in Anttila 2011, 13, 15).

What I first perceived as a fault or a failure turned into discoveries and new insights – we decided on using a selection of movement qualities (where I took inspiration from Laban’s effort actions) for each section, whether they were based on improvised or choreographed movement to allow constant exploration to take place, even until the very last performance. Each section that was based on improvisatory work was also assigned a selection of possible actions, qualities and efforts and these were left open-ended, so that suggestions and ideas were considered all the way through. In Fig. 12a & 12b is shown one stage of development of the work in written form.

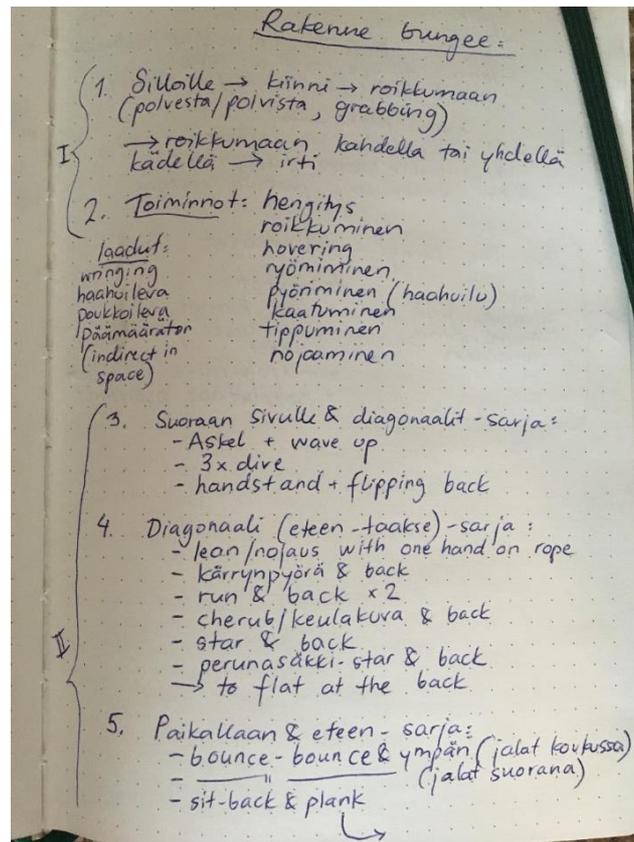


Fig. 12a

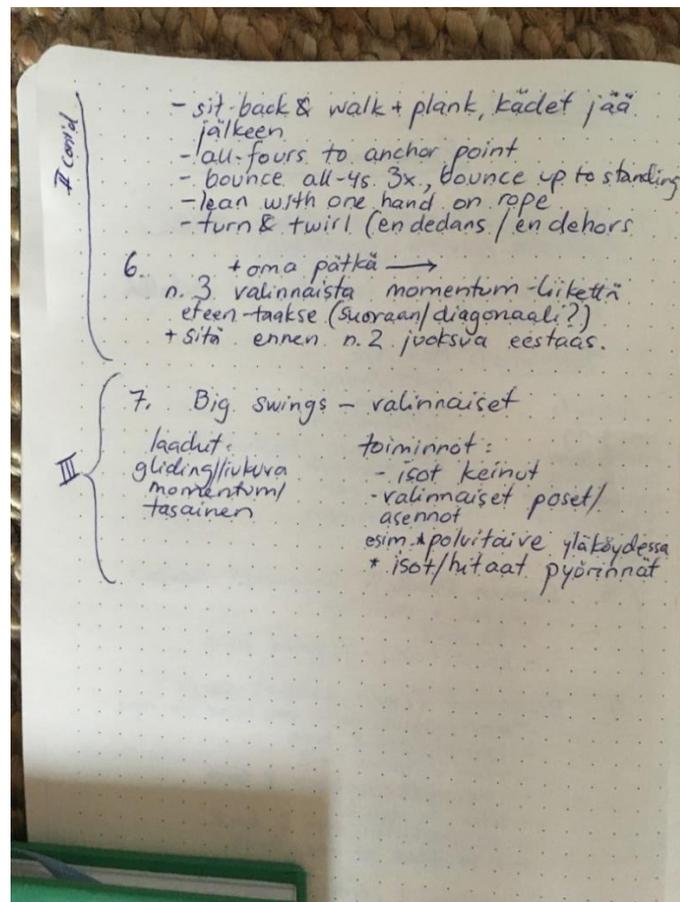


Fig. 12b

4.2. Disobedient Pedagogy

In this chapter I will somewhat briefly approach the follow-up question, that will likely form one of the research strands I would like to continue in:

What kind of pedagogy does the idea of a Leap of Faith call forth?

I discuss what disobedience (or disobedient pedagogy) is to me and how it has been described in my chosen literature. A significant role is played by risk-taking and trust which again brings me back to my core concept – *leap of faith*.

Disobedience may function internally by crossing the thresholds of an individual's established ways of knowing and externally by challenging established forms of knowledge. [...] We [as pedagogues and teachers] can think of disobedience in terms of a *disposition*, a moving away from established positions or patterns of being. (Atkinson, 2018: 194-195)

In terms of pedagogy, the idea of a *leap of faith* in my opinion calls forth what Atkinson calls disobedience. Not abiding to conventional ways of being and acting, and being open to the unknown have been significant and defining factors in the planning and running of the whole process for the *Leap Beyond* performance. Disobedience manifested in many forms: three female-identifying directors at the helm of a 'main stage' production, re-negotiated audience perspective, re-negotiation of who gets to be on the stage in a performance space at the Theatre Academy, what skills and/or techniques are put on display as well as a re-negotiation of how the performance space is used. Where disobedient pedagogy manifested most, I thought, was how the 'director-ship' was distributed, shared and the position re-negotiated in relation to the performers and designers with an attempt to collaborate in a dialogue where each party is both affecting the others and being affected by the others.

According to Alma Lehmuskallio's survey for STOD (The Finnish Theatre Directors and Dramaturgs) on the gender equality in the Finnish state subsidised theatres only 38,7% of plays (or performances) on average were directed by female-identifying persons between the years 2014-2019. Lehmuskallio also notes that the tendency is that male-identifying directors direct for the main stages while female-identifying directors direct for the smaller stages (in 2015 69% of all main stage productions were directed by male directors and in 2016 66%). We also considered the dramaturgy of the performance from the audience member's perspective – what kind of an experience do we wish the audience to have and do we abide with the conventions of what the

audience's role in a performance is? As I already mentioned that we were able to direct for the largest (and perhaps most sought-after) performance space at Theatre Academy, we felt it was important to consider who gets the opportunity to be and be seen on that stage and doing what – the norm tends to be that the stage space of Teatterisali at Theatre Academy is only accessible for mainly the acting and dance students or professionals in either field. We wanted to raise a question: what about all that creative potential that exists outside the walls of this educational institution and all those performance and/or art forms that do not enjoy the privileged position of being represented at and recognised by the University of the Arts?

As peculiar as it may sound, I find these words that Atkinson has written resonating so deeply within in me that they could be my own:

I am interested in exploring pedagogic strategies that might be able to respond effectively to the 'unknown' in learning processes, suggested by the notion of the suddenly possible, which emerges as the ontogenesis of the learning evolves. The idea of the pragmatics of the suddenly possible resonates for me with Deleuze's¹⁹ distinction between the actual and the virtual, a kind of dual ontology in which an infinitely differentiated domain, the virtual, (unknown) precipitates processes of actualisation. Learning therefore is not conceived solely as a process migrating towards established identities of learners and teachers or even established bodies of knowledge but as a process characterised by the idea of the not-known and that-which-is-not-yet; it is a process of adventure. (Atkinson, 2018: 2)

In my previous research, where I did not have the opportunity to apply in practice – with participants in a performance-making context – this possible approach to movement training, I was only able to theorise and make hypothetical propositions of something that could potentially and possibly work in practice. When I began to develop the notions further, I considered the aspects of the unknown in terms of movement (considerations which in this work have produced 'the **Method of Three Fs**', see ch. 4.1.1) as well as the ethics of the delivery of such notions.

To me, the unknowns that I cannot grasp on my own, but can somehow reach towards *with others* (whether the other is another human being or an apparatus or something else completely) are at the core of my disobedience. I am interested in making things possible and providing a platform where individuals with versatile backgrounds are enabled to come together, share something and find personal motivation towards and

¹⁹ Gilles Deleuze (1925-1995) was a French philosopher who conceived of philosophy as the production of concepts

autonomy over what they are and what they are doing. I gravitate towards wonder and adventure both in my work and life and see this already as a disobedient act from a female-identifying person. Supporting pathways of learning – or un-learning – through artistic practices and considering human beings as processes of becoming rather than entities of some fixed definition allow me to navigate in the riptide of forces and power structures that have been embedded in the reality that surrounds me. Eeva Anttila speaks of Inkeri Sava’s artistic learning model – which I parallel with learning through artistic practice – that it involves active combining, experimenting with, and making choices based on sensory, experiential, imaginary, and conceptual knowledge, and that it focuses on the learner’s inner, mental activity (Anttila 2017, 4.3). The idea that human beings are processes of becoming resonates with Lauri Rauhala’s holistic conception of human beings (Kauppila 2017, 4.4) and Maija Lehtovaara’s situated conception of learning, which I would like to further investigate.

4.2.1. Risk-taking

Disobedient pedagogy requires risk-taking but is not equal to recklessness or anarchy. It suggests that the risk-taking falls on both the learner and the teacher, and while I investigated mainly how I could equip the participants with an ability to take risks in a safe and constructive environment by enabling them to acquire new skills, I found that this aim itself required me to take risks. I took a risk in revealing these goals and aims and thoughts I had around things that were very meaningful to me because I set myself in the vulnerable position where my words and actions could be misconstrued. I faced rather demeaning resistance for the whole project by an established authoritative figure in the academic world. Despite this unexpectedly discouraging incident I took a risk in choosing not to know (or not to envision) what the performance would be like, but instead chose to trust that the performance would reveal itself along the process through the individuals that participated, and I was responsible for facilitating the process and collecting or harnessing that which would appear or reveal itself.

As a challenge I initially saw the navigating between this notion of disobedient pedagogy and the institutional requirements set by the Theatre Academy and their established production structures and support system. Choosing an open-ended theme (*leap of faith*, flying) and a performance-making method (devising) where so much is unknown and literally that-which-is-not-yet in such a relatively large-scale production

was a risk me and my co-directors were willing and excited to take. We knew there were going to be challenges especially with the production support system provided by Theatre Academy, but I deemed we needed to navigate this by harnessing the open-endedness and aspects of unknown with something tangible: in terms of the whole production we set up clear timetables and dates as early as possible and tried to turn ideas into something tangible as soon as they emerged. I knew from early on that I had the techniques and equipment of bungee-assisted dance and vertical wall dance as a reference point I could always turn to, and this allowed many other aspects of the work to remain open-ended.

4.2.2. Trust

Disobedient pedagogy also requires trust, by which I don't mean the sheep-ish kind of blind trust towards, say, an authority figure's words. As I wished that an ethos of sharing and unmerited grace would breathe through the whole process leading to *Leap Beyond*, I noted that this required mutual trust; trust from both the participants and me. Therefore, disobedient pedagogy at least in my case could be paralleled with dialogical pedagogy.

I got much support from peers, mentors and supervisors that increased my ability to not lose faith in what I was doing. After the incident I mentioned in 4.2.1. a particularly meaningful learning event took place for me: one of my mentors, our lecturer in Theatre Pedagogy suggested me to treat the whole process as a *leap of faith*, and this allowed me to apply everything I had learned about the concept to the facing of these challenges and resistance. And as touched on earlier, I found that trust was fundamental for risk-taking – creating an environment where it is 'safe' to trust the unknown and the risk-taking is non-violent and not forced by an entity outside the individual. I had previously had a great opportunity to explore this in an unspoken piece entitled *An Unknown Realm*, (at Theatre Academy in 2019) where I welcomed the audience members (or participants) one at a time to a dark performance space. I had to think of ways for the participants to feel safe to just take in, without feeling intimidated or uncomfortable, what the performance had to offer. It became clear that by establishing the 'rules' of the space (no matter how open-ended) and ensuring the participants have clear references as to where they can be and what they can do (or what 'role' they play) created an

environment where the enigmatic darkness did not distress but awakened the creative imagination.

5. CONCLUSIONS

In this part I present some conclusions, mention things that were left out or framed out on purpose and consider how this research could be expanded or developed further. I see that the work I have done for this thesis is some kind of a prologue towards both my future artistic endeavours as well as my future research. Although I do not necessarily see them as separate strands but I find it important to lay out what aspects my future prospects include. In this thesis I have presented my journey of approaching a rehearsal process from a particular perspective, applying in practice a method deriving from the concept of a *leap of faith* and have hopefully shed light on why I have made the choices I have and how I have reflected on the unfolding of the events. There were a lot of areas of interest that arose during this thesis process and to a lot of it I would like to dive deeper; the further philosophical contemplations on the leap and the work of the numerous other philosophers mentioned in this research, questions arising from the body practices, skills training and physical culture to name a few. There were also questions arising from the discussions with the participants, one of the major ones being gender representations in physical culture. I had an endeavour to challenge some norms by setting both female-identifying and male-identifying individuals on the stage to perform in physically rigorous movement forms that present a strong physicality, which may differ from the perceived traditional norms of femininity and masculinity. Spatz speaks of this in great depth and discusses the ideas of somaticism and athleticism; I wanted to act on making this differentiating between ‘traditionally masculine’ and ‘traditionally feminine’ movement forms obsolete. Spatz suggests that traditionally masculine physical culture is that which is considered highly athletic – some of its defining features being muscularity, physical strength and speed, resistance to fatigue and spectacular visual display. Most of these featured in bungee-assisted dance, vertical wall dance and the movement done on the dance trapeze, albeit they featured other types of movement as well. Spatz questions what the technical name for the ‘other’ – that which is traditionally considered feminine – physical culture could be and suggests the term somaticism, which can be characterised by features such as body awareness, somatic experience and non-violence. (Spatz 2015, 96) These – somaticism and athleticism – and female representations are things I would like to expand on in the future. I still, on this day, see it as a rebellious act of disobedience.

I was also aware of John Dewey's idea of learning by doing, but regretfully did not have resources to collate it with my own practice. I see potential for further investigation in his thinking so I can perhaps better place myself within the discourses of art pedagogy and art practice.

All in all, I have enjoyed the unfolding of this artistic-pedagogical research process and consider it equally as an artistic process. I look forward to exploring how I could develop my work further. I would like to close with the encouraging word of Juha Varto:

'To boldly go where no man [or woman or any other – in fact, it should just say human]²⁰ has gone before' is still a valid guideline for both scientific and artistic practice. It is characteristic of our times that both the sciences and the arts reward the contrary [...]. Skill, however, is the best incentive: all new skills push or pull the practitioner towards new realms [...]. Artistic research encourages practitioners to explore and exceed the boundaries of skill so that the peculiar but universal human habit of asking and answering becomes more appreciated. (Varto 2018, 41)

So, let us boldly go and leap beyond.

²⁰ Nb. the text in the brackets is the author's own, not Varto's

REFERENCES

- Anttila, E., & Anttila, E. (2011). *Taiteen jälki : Taidepedagogiikan polkuja ja risteyksiä*. Helsinki: Teatterikorkeakoulu. Retrieved from <https://uniarts.finna.fi/Record/arsca.421022>
- Anttila, E. & al (2017) *Conceptions of human development and learning in art education*. Theatre Academy of the University of the Arts Helsinki 2004 Theatre Academy, Virtual University Initiative. The publication series of the Theatre Academy 58
- Anttila, P. (2006). *Tutkiva toiminta ja ilmaisu, teos, tekeminen* (2. p. ed.). Hamina: Akatiimi. Retrieved from <https://uniarts.finna.fi/Record/arsca.361778>
- Atkinson, D. (2011). *Art, equality and learning : Pedagogies against the state*. Rotterdam ; Boston: Sense. Retrieved from <https://uniarts.finna.fi/Record/arsca.512634>
- Atkinson, D. (2014). *Pedagogy of the Event*. Essay retrieved from https://www.kettlesyard.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2014/12/onn_atkinson.pdf
- Atkinson, D. (2018). *Art, disobedience, and ethics* Springer International Publishing. Retrieved from <https://uniarts.finna.fi/Record/nelli31.410000000587731>
- Kierkegaard, S. A., Anderson, A. B., & Thomte, R. (1980). [*Kierkegaard's writings*]. [8], *The Concept of Anxiety : A simple psychologically orienting deliberation on the dogmatic issue of hereditary sin*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press. Retrieved from <https://helka.finna.fi/Record/helka.660513>
- Laine, V. (2011). *'Leap of Faith' Aerial Dance in Actor Movement – a new angle to educating the body on risk-taking and trust*, a Master's SIP (equivalent of a thesis). Central School of Speech and Drama (University of London)
- Laine, V. (2019). *Ensimmäisistä harjoitteista näyttämölle saakka*. An action research on movement directing for a play in an educational context, essay. Theatre Academy, Helsinki
- Lehmuskallio, A. Teatteri- ja mediatyöntekijöiden liitto <https://www.teme.fi/fi/ajankohtaista-stod/teatteriohjaajan-ammattikentta-on-miehinen/?fbclid=IwAR0pCZXwG2qkLWFyr43q0jkMJBO6OOhcE9MXbmM67KenwMsjivqFdFXfhEg>
- Lehmuskallio, A. YLE news interview <https://yle.fi/uutiset/3-11146550>
- McKinnon, A. (1993). Kierkegaard and "The Leap of Faith". *KIERKEGAARDIANA*, 16. Retrieved from <https://tidsskrift.dk/kierkegaardiana/article/view/31284>
- Questel, A. S. in *Movement for actors* (2002). Retrieved from <https://uniarts.finna.fi/Record/nelli31.111087028228220>
- Spatz, B. (2015). *What a body can do : Technique as knowledge, practice as research*. Abingdon: Routledge. Retrieved from <https://uniarts.finna.fi/Record/arsca.478809>
- Tuohimaa, M. (2001). *Emmanuel Levinas and Responsibility for the Other*. Translation from an article retrieved from <https://netn.fi/sites/www.netn.fi/files/netn013-09.pdf>
- Varto, J. (2018). *Artistic research : What is it? who does it? why*. AALTO: Aalto Arts Books. Retrieved from <https://uniarts.finna.fi/Record/arsca.512803>

INFORMATION IN FOOTNOTES (IF NOT OTHERWISE STATED):

Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy on Spinoza <https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/spinoza/#Biog>

Britannica Encyclopedia on Meierhold <https://www.britannica.com/biography/Vsevolod-Yemilyevich-Meyerhold>

Britannica Encyclopedia on Graham <https://www.britannica.com/biography/Martha-Graham/Maturity#ref2809>

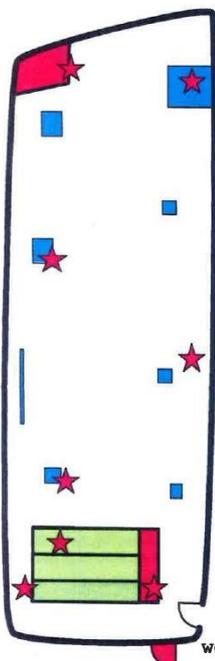
Newlove, J. (2004). *Laban for all*. London: Nick Hern Books. Retrieved from <https://uniarts.finna.fi/Record/arsca.287663>

The Body-Mind Centering website on righting reactions <https://www.bodymindcentering.com/course/primitive-reflexes-righting-reactions-and-equilibrium-responses-rrr/>

Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy on Deleuze <https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/deleuze/>

APPENDICES

Appendix A: Leap Beyond brochure



**LEAP BEYOND
THE MAP & GUIDE
TO THE PERFORMANCE**

The performance consists of three parts that follow each other chronologically.

1. THE CENTRE OF MIND FLYING ■

You may follow and explore the event.
You can sit, stand or move in the space.
Follow the coaching and other preparations to take flight.
On the map: blue boxes.

2. LEAP OF FAITH ■

Sit back and enjoy the flying.
On the map: green area.

3. THE PLAYGROUND OF FLYING ★

You may move freely between the stations.
You can watch, try, play and fly.
You may also just observe what takes place in the playground.
On the map: stations marked with pink stars.

Leap Beyond



DIRECTORS WORD

The idea for this performance was born on the first day of our studies at Theatre Academy. We noticed we all had a common interest in the thematics around flying, and each had our own specific angle to it.

Laura

The initial impulse for *The Centre of Mind Flying* was to explore the coaching phenomena: the versatility of it, reasons and effects, the emotions and needs vibrating around it. How can coaching, exceeding one self, or a change-like flying - be simultaneously exciting and eye opening and untempering and raise anxiety. Why would one want to, and what does it mean to fly? The hope was to find a form, which would allow the audience to also look at the performance and its theme from different points of view.

Verna

The initial impulse for *Leap of Faith* comes from Søren Kierkegaard's philosophical concept of a qualitative leap to something new, which has been approached in this part of the performance through bodily means by exploring a new movement form.

Anna

The initial impulse for *Playground of Flying* has been my dream to fly in the theatre - because there it is possible! And not just to fly myself, but invite the audience in also. To not just watch a performance, but instead experience it with the performers.

The performance is a three-part co-production of the three directors, a result of a devising process. A physical theatre course was offered to the performers as part of the process, and most of the performers were cast through an open call. This stemmed from a wish to have a heterogeneous group of performers with varying backgrounds.

INTRODUCTION

- on flying, through psychology, philosophy and experience

A spatial, physical and experiential exploration of a leap into the unknown. The performance consists of three separate but intertwining units that create a whole, through which the audience can travel.

I - part Centre of Mind Flying

II - part Leap of Faith

III - part Playground of Flying

"Ready to take a Leap?"

Concept, directing & dramaturgy:

Laura Humpilla (TEO, tait. opinnäyte, TeM), Verna Laine (TEO, tait. opinnäyte, TeM), Anna Lehtonen (TEO, tait. opinnäyte, TeM)

Costume design: Csilla Szlovák (Aalto ARTS, tait. opinnäyte, TaM)

Light design: Essi Santala (visitor)

Sound design: Petteri Rajanti (Äma), Iida Viljanen (Äma)

Set design: Ruusa Johansson (Aalto ARTS),

Anastasia Paretskoi (Aalto ARTS)

Performers:

Salvador Ikonen (Riveria), Matti Paivaiainen (Riveria), Petra Koitila, Auli Laine, Annukka Lindqvist, Heikki Mahlamäki, Evita Matiyas, Katrin Monikainen, Kerttu Mättö, Tuukka Palonen, Sanni Reilin, Maarit Salminen, Betu Sopanen (all visitors)

Premiere: Wed 4.3.2020 at 19

Other performances:

Fri 6.3 klo 19, Sat 7.3 at 13, Tue 10.3 at 13, Wed 11.3 at 19,

Fri 13.3 at 19 and Sat 14.3 at 13

On Tue 10.3 at 13 after performance audience discussion

facilitated by Salla Hakapää

THANKS**Supervisors:**

Laura Frösen, Irene Kajo, Teemu Määttäinen (Aalto ARTS), Riku Saastamoinen, Ville Sandqvist, Maria Sirén (Aalto ARTS), Susanna Suurla (Aalto ARTS), Yuko Takeda, Katarina Vähäkallio (Riveria)

Examiners:

Laura Frösen, Maiju Loukola, Jenni Nikolajeff, Liisa Pesonen, Riku Saastamoinen, Taneli Tuovinen

Stage Vesa, Eemeli, Heli, Marja. Technical support Janne, Kaj, Jyrki, Riikka.

Costume Kati, Nina, Anne, Sirpa, Arja, Johannes. Props Heli, Tarja and Janika.

Salla Hakapää for Aerial Consulting, Jouni Kivimäki rigging and

Aerial magics, Ilmari Kortelainen for discussions and the lecture recordings,

Henri Sareskivi for the technomagicals, Bambu for photos

Lotta Taarasti, Liisa Ikonen, Taru Aho, Oscar Dempsey, Vimma -poodle,

Marski -cat, Teak Info, Alex Barkovics, Liikkeellisen Esittävän Taiteen ry,

Riveria, Circus Helsinki, Vantaan Tanssipiisto, All our test audiences,

All Family members and Friends who asked good questions, shared

their thoughts and supported in many other ways!

Verna Laine
TEO 2018 Taiteellis-pedagoginen projekti

Mahdollisuuksien maailma (tai 'Leap of Faith')

eli luonnon näyttelijän riskinottokyvyn ja luottamuksen kehittämiseen suuntautuvasta kehollisesta projektista

Taustalla aikaisempi omaan kokemukseen perustuva kirjallinen ja teoreettisempi tutkimustyö ilma-akrobatian vaikutuksista ja hyödyistä näyttelijälle/näyttelijäopiskelijalle.

- Sören Kierkegaardin filosofiset kirjoitukset ja niiden soveltaminen keholliseen työskentelyyn (mm. käsitteet Concept of Anxiety ja dizziness of freedom)
- peruseriaatteena käsitys ihmisestä psykofyysisenä kokonaisuutena, jossa keho ja mieli ovat erottamattomassa yhteydessä ja vaikuttaval/informoivat toisiaan

(Esimerkki: altaan reunalla/benji-hyppytorissa/tms. juuri ennen hyppyä)

Tavoitteena se, että näyttelijä omaksuisi oppimistavan ja ajattelumallin kehollisen työskentelyn kautta; sellaisen, jossa rajoitteet vähenevät ja mahdollisuudet laajenevat: määrällisten harppausten (keho) kautta laadullisiin harppauksiin (mieli). Hänelle kehittyisi rohkeus tai uskallus luottaa ja astua tuntemattomaan, toisin sanoen antaa itsensä jonkun muun/uuden/tms varaan, päästää irti – ja siten löytää uusia reittejä, joita totuttuja reittejä kulkemalla/yksin/ottamatta ratkaisevaa askelta/luottamatta ei löytäisi. On opittava antamaan itsensä tuntemattoman varaan löytääkseen uutta, asetettava itsensä jonkun muun armoille/kannateltavaksi. Tämä informoisi näyttelijän kaikkea tekemistä kokonaisvaltaisesti.

Käytännössä jakaisin prosessin kolmeen osaan, joka etenee systemaattisesti:

Riskinottokyky ja luottamus

- I) Itseen (kehotietoisuus, oman kehon potentiaali)
- II) Toiseen (painon jakaminen, yhteistyöllä uusia reittejä)
- III) Ympäristöön/tilaan/välineeseen (ilma-akrobatia; tilan ja välineiden käyttö)

Jokaisessa haastetaan totutut reitit ja tutkitaan uusia mahdollisuuksia, oivalletaan oman kehon potentiaali suhteessa omiin ennakkokäsityksiin itsestä, suhteessa muihin ja suhteessa välineisiin/ympäristöön/tilaan →

"Me emme ole kuitenkaan niitä, jotka vetäytyvät pois ja joutuvat kadotukseen, vaan niitä, jotka uskovat sielunsa pelastukseksi" (Hepr. 10:39). Engl. "But we do not belong to those who shrink back and are destroyed, but to those who have faith and are saved" →

Shrink back – paikallaan pysyminen, ei uskallusta

Destroyed – paikallan jääminen, ei oppimista, ei mahdollisuuksia

Faith – luottamus tuntemattomaan, uskallus, rohkeus

Saved – oppiminen, eteenpäin liikkuminen, uusi ymmärrys, uusi kokemus

