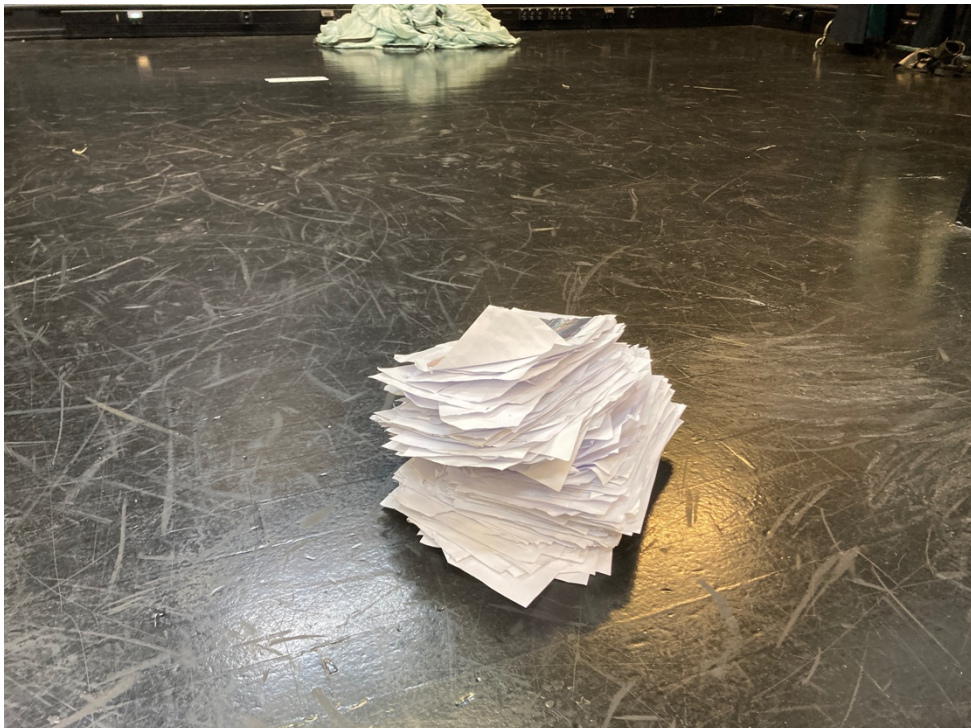


Two More Days

Co-directing The Tempest with the Baltic Sea as
Artistic research

SIIM MAATEN



ABSTRACT

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<p>In this self-reflexive thesis, I explore what it might mean, in this historical moment, for theatre to become a practice of witnessing how humans can share space with natural non-human. This approach does not require mastery, representation, or full understanding. If incompleteness is accepted as permanent, not as a temporary flaw, the category of "human" could become available for reimagining. This artistic research extends naturally from my personal and artistic journey toward multispecies sustainability. I attempt to live and work with a greater awareness of our interdependent world. At the same time, I pursue the selfish possibility of a prosperous future for my offspring.</p> <p>I write as a seasoned director with over twenty theatre productions to my name. For me, work has long been the primary site of both identity and struggle. This thesis has been a rare chance to investigate myself and my directing more than any other aspect of my life. I wish my work to align with my desires, and this alignment is not a given. Through the written and artistic parts of the thesis, I attempt to redirect myself toward becoming a different kind of theatre director by co-directing with a natural non-human agent: the Baltic Sea.</p> <p>The practical ground for this investigation is the performance <i>Two More Days: The Tempest Resummoned by the Baltic Sea</i> (2025), co-directed with the Baltic Sea. The Sea's indifference was evident from day one of the workshop before rehearsals. That indifference collapsed the scaffolding of the ready-made production plan. The production process never arrived at full readiness. Instead, we chose to treat this constant not-readiness as a condition to be held, rehearsed, and performed. It allowed this state to reorganise our habits of rehearsal, performance, and spectatorship. In this context, my work engages four practice concepts: recognising weak signals, working with the non-human and its indifference, attending to the director's persistent body, and reacclimating the stage as a shared, multi-agential milieu. This thesis is in strong dialogue with, and/or inspired by, but not limited to, Vincent Roumagnac, Emilia Veselova, Una Chaudhuri, Tuija Kokkonen, Anette Arlander, and the Degree Program in Directing at the University of Arts Helsinki.</p> <p>Methodologically, the thesis travels through artistic practice, rehearsal documentation, and theoretical dialogue. The rehearsal mechanisms themselves became part of the performance. My directing body stepped out of the shadows: I made my presence and labour (setting lights and scene transitions, etc.) visible on stage, not as an omnipotent meaning-maker but as a working artist among others, and, in doing so, decentred the traditional director who governs meaning and form from a position of presumed mastery, without erasing responsibility or power. Instead, it exposed these powers, made them tender and reachable, and treated the situation as material.</p> <p>For other practitioners, I am not here to offer solutions; I offer an exercise. I call for embracing non-readiness as a form of knowledge and for staying with the unresolved. I also urge learning to listen to natural non-human indifference without romanticising it.</p>	
KEYWORDS Artistic research; Baltic Sea; Ecodramaturgy; Ecology; Posthumanism; Practice as research; Shakespeare; Tempest; Theatre directing; Redirecting; Reacclimating; More-Than-Human;	

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Dear reader, please be aware that the work you are about to read is intentionally nonlinear at times and has some looping qualities. This is due to the interdependent nature of the work I have done and is an honest representation of the experience I had while putting this thesis together. I also want you to know in advance that the phrasing and structure of this work were refined through iterative dialogue with multiple AI-powered tools, in accordance with the University of Arts Helsinki AI use guidelines. All artistic insights, research questions, and analysis remain my own, verified against my personal experience, primary sources, and supervisors' feedback. Finally, I wish to acknowledge that this work does not focus on the director's work with human collaborators, who were a huge part of this process, but due to this thesis's focus on redirecting the director within, and the constraints of this format, they are only mentioned passingly.

I am forever grateful to all the collaborators, nonhuman and human alike.

1. INTRODUCTION – REDIRECTING WITH THE BALTIC SEA

1.1. Starting point (me, the human theatre director)

I began my MA studies at the University of the Arts Helsinki's Theatre Academy Degree Programme in Directing (Uniarts Helsinki's Theatre Academy) in 2021, having already directed and coached over 20 productions of varying scales. These ranged from small experimental pieces with both professional and amateur ensembles to larger ensemble works, alongside coaching emerging directors through their own processes. Just six months after graduating from my first higher education level drama school in the University of Tartu Viljandi Cultural Academy, in December 2013, I worked as a volunteer diver on the Mesoamerican barrier reef off the coast of Belize, gathering data for scientists by measuring coral cover, counting fish populations, and observing bleaching events with Blue Ventures. The damage was directly observable underwater; however, the data collected and scientists' accounts of long-term decline clearly indicated that my lifestyle and professional activities were intertwined with the ecological crises confronting the Earth. This realisation persisted even though I believed that my artistic endeavours and theatrical work were contributing positively, creating art that affirms human goodness and prosperity.

This awareness slowly shifted my relationship to the world. I began examining my daily habits, asking what concrete changes I could make. First, I adjusted my diet and sought out new information to educate myself. This self-directed learning gradually led me toward *ecothatre*¹, where the theatre's ecology is critically examined and deliberately reworked, as both artistic practice and personal necessity. I established ON theatre, Estonia's first vegan theatre – a small project space where, without advertising it as "vegan theatre", we followed vegan guidelines across all productions: including but not limited to catering, materials, transport, and set construction. I applied the same principles silently to my independent directing work outside of ON theatre, embedding ecological concerns through concrete material choices rather than thematic content. These material experiments made me newly attentive to the living materials already present in theatre-making – not just what we bring to the stage, but what surrounds it. Living near the Baltic Sea and knowing its damaged condition deepened this attention

¹ As per Una Chaudhuri (Chaudhuri & Hughes, 2013) and Anette Arlander (Arlander, 2015), *ecothatre* views theatrical performance through an ecological lens, emphasising the interconnectedness of all elements within a performance and its environment. It challenges traditional binaries, particularly the separation of 'nature' from 'culture'.

into affection for seas as living systems – polluted, resilient, full of dead spots and of course, plastic. So when I started looking for a natural, non-human collaborator to redirect me away from anthropocentric practices, the Baltic Sea became the most logical co-directing partner: close enough to work with regularly and misunderstood enough to allow theatrical work to publicly explore the gap between its reality and its perception.

After graduating from my undergraduate programme in theatre studies at the University of Tartu Viljandi Cultural Academy in 2013, I sought to channel my recreational diving into volunteer work for nature, which I then called the natural non-human. I joined Blue Ventures as a volunteer diver on the Mesoamerican Barrier Reef (the second-largest reef on Earth) off the coast of Belize on the north-eastern coast of Central America, measuring coral cover, fish populations, and the reef's overall health while contributing to our daily morning beach cleanups at our camp in Bacalar Chico.

A pivotal moment (a crystallised idea) occurred during one such cleanup, as we filled buckets with trash from the camp's beach. Among the debris, I found European candy wrappers I had never seen in the Americas – likely carried by a passing cruise ship. This connected my everyday life directly to events happening in every corner of the world, revealing a butterfly-effect logic in which small, local actions reverberate globally. Through diving work and self-education, I also became aware of dead spots – oxygen-deprived zones where marine life cannot survive – and learned that the Baltic Sea has one of the highest densities of dead spots globally. I thought: this damaged sea is right next to us, yet the people living around it often do not know its true condition, or how everyday actions affect it.

This growing awareness soon raised a practical question: how can such rapidly shifting, complex realities be meaningfully addressed through performance? One production, the monologue *Nonhuman* (2018, ON teater), addressed planetary crises directly through spoken text and images, and I noticed that the information in the performance was already outdated by the time it reached the stage. And the amount of information in the production made it feel a lot like a lecture or an information dump, so I felt the need to better my craft. Many eco-themed productions that I had seen, as well as those I had tried to make myself, felt underwhelming – even boring – because they failed to change the underlying structures of theatre-making and made no real impact on me or the audience. To put it bluntly, complex ecological crises were translated for the stage in ways that did not match their actual scale, entanglement, or urgency, reducing them to familiar human dramas that left only on the human drama. Productions like *Nonhuman* exposed the limits of my existing tools: they treated life on Earth as a narrative device

to serve human stories, which felt limiting and reductive rather than opening space for all life as active presences with its own agency.

For several years of my master's studies (that were supposed to last only 2 years), I struggled to find the material and method that could shift these frames. I knew I needed a different approach – one that would challenge not just the content of theatre but its habits of attention, control, and collaboration – but the "different" remained elusive. The reef dives had taught me to see damage up close through data; now I wanted theatre to bring this nearby nature closer to our being – not as an object or a victim, but as a partner. I wanted my earlier work, which I thought was contributing positively, creating art that affirms human goodness and prosperity that mirrored humanism: humans learn, humans forgive, humans prosper, while the seas and land serve the story, would change.

1.2. Staring Whys (Theatre, Directing, Ecology)

Why? Why is theatre rehearsing when living bodies gather to repeat the same stories, gestures, and rhythms again and again? Whose ways of thinking become embodied between performers and audiences, and whose remain unspoken or even unthinkable? When abstract ideas about the world materialise as dramaturgy, movement, and image, what kinds of worlds are made present on stage, and which are actively excluded? Why have tightly structured plots, psychologically coherent characters, and clear causal chains of action come to define a "good" theatrical story? How did figures like Aristotle and Stanislavski become universal reference points, rather than recognised as products of specific historical, cultural, and philosophical contexts? At what point did these conventions stop appearing as deliberate choices and start feeling like common sense? Ecotheatre/ecodramaturgy and posthuman performance thinkers such as Theresa J. May, Una Chaudhuri, Carl Lavery, Vincent Roumagnac, and Tuija Kokkonen question this inheritance by asking how stages might also host other forms of life and agency, and what happens to theatre when stories are not only about humans but also about seas, soils, and other natural non-human actors.

If these theatre conventions are inherited, how does directing function as one of the central sites through which they are maintained and reproduced?

When I began directing, I often recognised in myself a tendency that I had heard described about other directors: they keep making the same film or the same production in slightly different clothes. I noticed how some successful and widely recognised

directors and designers around me developed strong recurring signatures – a particular kind of light, a recurring spatial image, a familiar compositional pattern – even when they tried to work against it. Their productions were clearly identifiable and often well-received, yet I also felt uneasy about how safe and accommodating they could become. Instead of offering a demanding mirror to society, they began to resemble a pleasing filter, smoothing out discomfort in ways that reminded me of the beautifying effects of social media. These observations resonated with a memory of scenographer Mihkel Ehala describing how, despite his efforts, he always sensed a white cube in his stage images – not as a literal set element, but as an underlying spatial idea that kept reappearing throughout his designs. In my own practice, despite moments of crisis, burnout, or conflict with collaborators, the final productions often looked and felt remarkably close to what I had imagined at the outset. Even when processes were complicated and relationships strained, I could usually recognise the result as "this is what I wanted to put on stage", except in those cases where I felt I had clearly failed in the traditional sense.

Those small failures, however, became increasingly important to me. In several productions, I began to notice how so-called mistakes or deviations from my plan carried a different kind of life. In *LOST!* (2021, Uniarts Helsinki's Theatre Academy), where I consciously experimented with embodied directing methods and worked under the motto "intuition over intellect", the final performance still resembled the inner image I had had from the start. Yet the moments that stayed with me were often created by non-professional team members, artists whose unfamiliar working methods produced gestures or images that did not fit conventional frames. Their contributions "stuck out" from the production and gave it a raw, unexpected texture. Similarly, in *Mis nüüd mina* (2019, Teateater), one actor with less stage experience had an unconventional bodily understanding of human interaction in theatrical terms. While others tried to guide this performer into more standard actorly behaviour, they held on to their own way of being on stage. The scenes shaped by this difference now carry, for me, the essence of that production. These experiences taught me that the most compelling parts of my productions were often the ones that did not simply nod along with my intentions but instead created a slight friction or conversation between my vision and what actually appeared.

Yet to truly shift anthropocentric theatre structures, directing itself needed "redirection". Vincent Roumagnac, who coined the term *redirecting* in his doctoral publication (*Reacclimating the Stage*, 2020), defines it as follows:

"Redirecting signals a paradigm shift from the traditional model of the omnipotent director, or deus ex machina, to a repositioned role that is uncertain, inevitably flawed, possibly failing, constantly reshuffling in the midst of the unfolding pluriscalar, multiagential, and polyphonic process."

Bringing *Two More Days* (2025, Uniarts Helsinki's Theatre Academy) together with the Baltic Sea tested this repositioning – from omnipotent director to one repositioned among multi-agential forces, including a biospheric non-human collaborator. I wanted to explore whether ecotheatre, or "re-ecologised theatre" as Roumagnac calls it, could take a form that is accessible to audiences who, like me, are used to traditional story-based theatre and may find explicitly "ecological performances" difficult to approach. Many eco-themed productions that I had seen, as well as some that I had tried to make myself, felt as if their ecological themes and their theatrical form did not truly resonate with each other: the stories were about crisis, entanglement, and complexity, yet the dramaturgy still followed clear, human-centred conflict lines. The infrastructures stayed untouched, so to speak. From the perspective of a spectator trained in conventional narrative theatre, I sensed a gap between what these works sought to communicate and the frames they used to convey it. This tension motivated me to search for a different form, one that could hold ecological questions without reducing them to simple stories about human responsibility or redemption.

To address this challenge, I drew on a pedagogical principle from scaffolding theory and Vygotsky's zone of proximal development (Akhutina & Pylaeva, 2012): learning thrives when new material is introduced within reach of existing knowledge, supported by familiar structures. While teacher training often uses a practical 70/30 heuristic - 70% familiar content anchoring 30% novel material - related research shows that incremental rehearsal methods build retention by systematically balancing known and new elements. I translated this insight into a directing strategy. The familiar portion (the canonical text and the story-based theatre conventions of Shakespeare's *The Tempest* (1610) would anchor the work for audiences and for me as a director trained in narrative traditions. The unfamiliar portion would be treating the nearby Baltic Sea as co-director as its presence brings the interference with staging, dramaturgy, acting and timing.

Drawing on scaffolding's logic of guided encounter within the zone of proximal development, I invited the Baltic Sea not as a metaphor, scenery, or atmospheric backdrop, but as an active collaborator whose material presence could unsettle what *The Tempest* conventionally communicates in theatre. Yet this decision immediately exposed a blind spot in my practice: while I had developed tools for listening to human

collaborators' "mistakes" and deviations - valuing them as sites of friction and surprise - I had almost no methods for recognising or responding to signals from a natural non-human sea. The sea might have been communicating through weather, contamination, or silence, but my theatre-trained attention was calibrated for human timeframes and signals. This gap between human listening practices and natural non-human responses became the research's generative tension.

1.3. Three More Whys (The Baltic Sea, *The Tempest*, and *Two More Days*)

Roumagnac's formulation of redirecting, together with our dialogue within the framework of his supervision, positioned redirecting as precisely what this project required: a critical practice that repositions the director amid multiagential forces rather than above them. Bringing *The Tempest* together with the Baltic Sea tested this repositioning in material terms.

I began with a simple question: why this sea? The Baltic Sea became a co-director precisely because it is at once locally entangled with the Nordic theatre context and globally significant. Through diving work and self-education, I learned that it contains Europe's largest dead zones and is one of the most affected coastal seas in the world, with oxygen-depleted areas that in 2023 covered approximately 32% of the Baltic Proper's bottom area (roughly 67,000 km²), where marine life suffocates. This condition comes from agriculture, industry, shipping, and everyday plastics washing in from surrounding nations, including Finland and Estonia. Yet despite its centrality to Finnish cultural imagination – framing Helsinki's identity and visible from Uniarts Helsinki's Theatre Academy urban shores – I observed the Anthropocene unconscious (Lonergran, 2023) at work: many locals remain unaware of its true condition or their role in producing it. Studying daily beside it at Uniarts Helsinki, I felt both affection and responsibility. This sea, available daily to everyone living next to it, could become familiar and close to people's minds and hearts through theatre. Emilija Veselova's PhD (Veselova, 2023) work on co-designing with natural non-humans provided the crucial framework, particularly her stakeholder involvement spectrum. This was a trickster that pushed me beyond treating the sea as inspiration or observation, toward recognising it as a design partner with real agency. I wanted theatre to make the sea's presence sensed and understood, not as a victim or symbol, but as a material partner able to shape

staging, timing, and meaning – specifically, as a co-director refusing deferral, rejecting Prospero's "two more days" logic that has non-human nature wait on human schedules².

Another simple question. Why *The Tempest*? For several years of my prolonged MA studies, I had been searching for the right material to test co-directing with natural non-humans. Early attempts included *Teine Arabella* (2013), a musical based on a children's novel, *Arabella, Mereröövli Tütar* (1982) by Aino Pervik, which I wanted to direct from the sea's perspective. But as an immigrant director, I faced personal risks: bringing unknown material into so many uncertainties – how to stage with the sea itself, even how to introduce such a project when my own understanding was incomplete. This felt like too many unknowns layered on top of each other, both artistically and professionally. I needed material that already had cultural currency – a shared language from which to introduce the unfamiliar. This led me to classics, asking which could bear ecocritical re-reading without losing recognisability.

The encounter with Shakespeare's *The Tempest* was entirely serendipitous – a happy accident of fortunate chance. While working in the university library and stretching between sessions, my eye caught Patrick Lonergan's *Theatre Revivals for the Anthropocene* (Lonergan, 2023) on the new books shelf. Leafing through it, I found Shakespeare's *The Tempest* proposed as theatre's "first Anthropocene play". Lonergan engages with the Anthropocene - following how Paul J. Crutzen and Eugene F. Stoermer defined it in 2000 – as the current geological epoch where human activity has become a dominant force reshaping Earth's systems – from climate to oceans to soil – comparable in scale to ice ages or asteroid impacts. *The Tempest* qualifies because it stages humans treating sea (Ariel, enslaved by Sycorax, then Prospero) and land (Caliban, enslaved by Prospero) as controllable resources for human projects of power, magic, and reconciliation. At the same time, the island's ecology bears the cost.

Roumagnac, who worked with *The Tempest* in 2015 and 2016, drawing also attention to the coincidence between its date of composition (1610) and Bruno Latour's speculative dating of the "beginning" of the Anthropocene (Lonergan, 2023), guided me toward Aimé Césaire's postcolonial *A Tempest* (translated by Philip Crispin, 1969) (Césaire, 2011). This version resonated strongly with what I was researching and sharpened this critique: European characters exploit nature while claiming moral transformation. When reading either text, I felt an instant desire for the human characters to simply leave the island. This feeling, the plot, and the play's history solidified my decision to choose this material for my work. A single line popped out: Prospero's "two more days" – two more

² More on that logic later.

days until he is done with his project, until Ariel is freed. This echoed hauntingly with Tallink's onboard campaign during COVID, when the shipping company asked nature to "wait just a moment" while they shifted to single-use plastics for hygiene reasons, promising a return to sustainability later. This deferral – humans always postponing ecological reckoning until after human crises resolve – became my central hinge. The phrase "two more days" crystallised both the play's ethical failure and my project's temporal frame. The question became: how to stage it with the sea not as enslaved Ariel, but as co-director refusing deferral?

My initial concept was to double Shakespeare's *The Tempest* with personal and local mythology - layering Estonian and Finnish myths onto its characters to create a sense of geographic and cultural proximity for Helsinki audiences. Rather than transporting the play to an exotic island, I wanted to localise it on Ultima Thule (Pytheas' northern limit, possibly Saaremaa or other Baltic shores) as both a metaphor (the world's edge where human knowledge meets sea and soil) and a site. This doubling would explore resonances between colonial exploitation in Shakespeare and the internalised colonial gazes within local mythologies today.

These resonances matter because Césaire's postcolonial *A Tempest* prompted a parallel decolonisation of local myths. Just as his Prospero unmasks European moralism, I saw Estonians laughing at Vanapagan (our pre-agricultural spirit) as a backward caricature, much like Caliban. Simultaneously, the Finnish Kalevala offered a doubled Ariel. Joukahainen, whose vengeful singing duel with Väinämöinen forces him to promise that Aino (sister of Joukahainen) will be wed to Väinämöinen, which leads Aino to drown herself. For vengeance, Joukahainen ambushes Väinämöinen with a bow, missing its target but killing the horse. As a result, Väinämöinen drifts in the sea until an eagle lays the world-egg on his knee. Motivated by regret, Joukahainen embodies both obedience and world-creating generative power.

This doubling generated layering (Shakespeare + Kalevala + Estonian myth), diffraction (multiple tellings interfering, no single "true" version), and narrative interplay (human characters refusing resolution while nature refuses deferral). Together, these processes enact ecotheatre: the stage becomes pluriscalar/multiagential/polyphonic (Roumagnac), where human drama meets non-human refusal, producing knowledge through unresolved interference rather than neat synthesis.

Then I put that "text" at test through an experiment, trying to add a nonhuman layer of intertextuality. My material experiment tested this: drowning *The Tempest*'s printed text

in the Baltic Sea as active dramaturg. The text endured, but the paper subtly transformed. This humbled me, exposing directorial control and mirroring Prospero's structural isolation from the ecology I was part of. Collaboration with natural non-humans demands openness to unpredictable exchange beyond domination. The sea taught me what no human planning could: its agency precedes, exceeds, and reshapes human texts. Human drama met non-human refusal, produced knowledge through unresolved interference rather than neat synthesis.

And finally, one more question within this polyphony of whys: Why now? My MA studies had crystallised a personal imperative to rethink directing practice - to interrupt the habitual deferral of responsibility, the endless "we'll fix it tomorrow" that never comes. With climate crises intensifying and the Anthropocene shaping our unconscious, every moment carries the weight of ecological mutation. Today is always the moment for action. The urgency was inescapable.

Seeking guidance within Uniarts Helsinki's Theatre Academy, I turned to Vincent Roumagnac, who, as previously noted, had staged *The Tempest* several times around 2015-2016 as part of his PhD project exploring "reacclimating the stage" toward ecological awareness (Roumagnac, *Reacclimating the stage (Skenomorphoses)*. [Doctoral artistic research exposition, Performing Arts Research Centre, Theatre Academy, Uniarts Helsinki], 2020). His re-ecologised theatre practice offered a model and companion for moving beyond anthropocentric frameworks.

The time had come: daily immersion alongside my co-director, the Baltic Sea, became inescapable, its presence at once immediate and ever-present. The *Tempest* and local Mythology provided familiar 70% narrative scaffolding; the Baltic Sea brought the unpredictable 30%, testing the theatre's capacity for natural non-human agency. Prospero's "two more days" became both temporal frame and ethical provocation: what unfolds when humans yield directorial control – or simply depart – refusing endless deferral?

This convergence gave birth to *Two More Days*, conceived not simply as a production, but as artistic research investigating whether entwining a theatre classic with the agency of a coastal sea could redirect theatre away from human-centred tales toward multi-agential ecologies.

2. FRAMEWORKS – FROM HUMAN-CENTRED TO MORE-THAN-HUMAN STAGE

2.1. Anthropocentric theatre history recap

Western theatre has largely been built on the assumption that theatre is a place where humans tell stories about humans to other humans. Aristotle's *Poetics* (335 BCE) is an early and still powerful crystallisation of this: drama is defined through a human protagonist, a recognisable conflict, and a tightly organised arc of beginning–middle–end that culminates in catharsis for a human spectator. In this model, the world appears primarily as a backdrop or resource for human action; non-human forces matter mainly insofar as they provide a backdrop for, test, threaten, or reward the human hero.

This anthropocentric bias is not merely a historical curiosity but a structure that continues to organise how theatre is written, directed, and evaluated. The "well-made play", developmental character arcs, and the dominance of individual psychology all reproduce a view of the stage as a laboratory for human interiority and social norms. Even when "nature" or the (natural) non-human appears (as storm, landscape, god, or monster), it typically functions as a metaphor for a human condition or as an obstacle to human agency, rather than as a co-present agent with its own trajectories and scales.

The Tempest is a canonical example of this tradition: the storm is a human-made instrument; the island is Prospero's property; spirits and "monsters" are legible primarily through their usefulness or resistance to human mastery. In *Two More Days*, I invited the Baltic Sea to *co-direct*, collaborating to move away from controlling representation and towards facilitating an open-ended experience of permeability and attunement. In this attempt, participants observed the Sea directly, then meditated upon that experience afterwards, allowing what was witnessed to move through the body without rational mediation. Experimenting with Roumagnac's concept of *redirecting* (Roumagnac, *Reacclimating the stage* (Skenomorphoses). [Doctoral artistic research exposition, Performing Arts Research Centre, Theatre Academy, Uniarts Helsinki]., 2020), I tried to disconnect from the habit of omniscient directorial control, adopting instead a methodology grounded in letting go: welcoming everything that emerged in rehearsals, for example, weather disturbances, language accidents, extended destabilising silences, unexpected sounds, and illnesses as eloquent expressions of the Sea's agencies working through permeable human bodies.

The process continues the exploration of the *pluriscalar* dynamics: holding multiple space/time-scales at once, i.e., the rehearsal and performance time, the tidal and wave rhythms of the Baltic, changing seasons, and the geological deep time of the Sea's formation, to mention a few. The implementation invites thus *multiagential* dimensions and movements: the Sea acts, the participants' bodies act, the recordings act, the stage acts, the weather acts, the script acts, none of them prevailing alone against a passive backdrop. And it becomes, therefore, polyphonic; they do not resolve into one story, but remain distinct, sometimes contradicting and always entangled. The director becomes a co-witness to the Sea's actions through the receptiveness of those who attempt to listen, within a trust in permeability, that is, vulnerability.

2.2. Discussing Environmental Non-Human Agency in Performance With...

2.2.1. Beyond the Omnipotent Director

When I deliberately invited the Baltic Sea into the rehearsal process for *The Tempest* at Uniarts Helsinki's Theatre Academy, I was not simply adding an external element to an otherwise familiar directing framework. I was intervening in the very logic of authorship that had shaped my training. The decision to work with the sea was a conscious refusal of the omnipotent director model, the figure who governs meaning, timing, and form from a position of presumed mastery (which is ironically interesting within the dynamic of becoming a master in directing through the examination of this thesis).

This refusal did not emerge in isolation. It unfolded in dialogue with a body of contemporary performance research that questions the sovereignty of human intention in theatre-making. Over the past two decades, practitioners and theorists such as Vincent Roumagnac, Theresa J. May, Una Chaudhuri, Carl Lavery, Annette Arlander, and Tuija Kokkonen have articulated "ecodramaturgical" approaches to performance that decentre the human without abandoning artistic responsibility. Rather than treating the non-human world as backdrop, metaphor, or resource, their work asks what it might mean to share authorship with forces that cannot be fully predicted, represented, or controlled.

Positioning my work within this lineage allowed me to understand the rehearsal with the Baltic Sea not as an idiosyncratic experiment, but as part of a broader reorientation

of theatre practice that seeks alternatives to hierarchical control and opens the stage to (re)distributed agency. The following sections trace how this reorientation becomes legible through three intersecting fields in dialogue with Roumagnac's conceptual (aqua)sphere and the curators of the Contemporary Art Archipelago (CAA) (Elfving, 2009-) project: ecodramatic thinking, site-sensitive performance, and directing understood as a practice of redirection rather than hypercontrol.

2.2.1.1. *Ecodrama and the Reacclimatization of the Stage*

A central shift in this process was learning to distinguish between theatre about *ecology* and *ecological theatre*. This distinction became evident through my own missteps. In *Nonhuman* (2018), I assumed that ecological content alone was sufficient to make the work ecologically engaged. Yet the dramaturgical structures remained unchanged: human-centred conflict, narrative resolution and representational logic prevailed. The environment was present as a theme but absent as an agent.

Ecodrama, as articulated by Vincent Roumagnac (2020), precisely challenges this contradiction. Rather than focusing on subject matter, ecodrama proposes a fundamental aesthetic and ethical shift in systems of representation and perception, as Roumagnac describes. What is at stake is not only what theatre addresses, but *how* it is made. Three dimensions of this shift, described by Roumagnac, have been particularly generative for my practice. The first concerns *topicality*: addressing ecological crisis while continuing to rely on extractive, energy-intensive production models risks emptying urgency of its force. The second concerns *sustainability*, not as moral display, but as a pragmatic attentiveness to materials, labour, time and relational responsibility. The third, and perhaps most demanding, involves an *aesthetic paradigm shift*: a rethinking of inherited Western assumptions about stage, narrative, spectatorship, and scale.

In addition, Roumagnac's notion of "reacclimating the stage" (Roumagnac, *Reacclimating the stage (Skenomorphoses)*. [Doctoral artistic research exposition, Performing Arts Research Centre, Theatre Academy, Uniarts Helsinki]., 2020) offers a productive metaphor for this *ecodramatic* rethinking. Drawing on the colonial history of acclimatization gardens, where foreign ("exotic") species were extracted and domesticated for European use, the concept performs an inversion. Instead of adapting "nature" to the stage, the stage must learn to adapt itself to ecological conditions, becoming sensitive to exchanges of agency between human and other-than-human actors.

This reframing helped me clarify something essential to my rehearsal process. The challenge was not how to make the Baltic Sea function "theatrically", but how to allow this "theatrically" to remain unknown, ready to be reshaped by the sea's rhythms, refusals, and excesses themselves. In this sense, I understood that directing had to become less about execution and more about exposure to uncertainty, to interruption, and to failure as constitutive conditions rather than obstacles. The challenge is to transform this understanding into concrete practice within the process of *Two More Days*.

2.2.1.2. *From Site-Specificity to Site-Sensitivity: Histories and Revisions*

To understand how space/place/site operated in this process, it is useful to briefly situate site-specific performance historically. Early site-specific practices in the visual and performing arts, emerging in the 1960s and 1970s, often positioned location as a counterpoint to institutional spaces such as galleries or theatres. The site was treated as singular, irreplaceable, and resistant to neutral display. Later developments expanded this focus, yet frequently retained an artist-centred logic: the artist interprets, reveals, or frames the site's meaning.

More recent approaches question this asymmetry, and many of them focus on the sea as a site. Rather than asking how a site can be a container for an artwork, they ask how a site might actively shape, interrupt, or even resist artistic intention. This shift is articulated clearly in site/sea-sensitive practices, such as those developed by Contemporary Art Archipelago (CAA).

CAA's long-term engagement with the island of Seili (Finland) foregrounds fieldwork as a reciprocal process. As they note, working with place requires that methods, timelines, formats, and assumptions remain open to dis-ordering. The site does not just inspire; it demands negotiation and adaptation. Knowledge emerges not any longer from extraction but from sustained exposure.

For performance practice, this distinction has very concrete consequences. To work site-specifically risks instrumentalising location as a resource; to work site-sensitively is to accept that place may reconfigure rehearsal rhythms, dramaturgical structures, and even artistic ambitions. In my process, this meant allowing environmental conditions, local histories, and everyday activities to interrupt planned trajectories. Certain scenes

became impossible; others emerged unexpectedly. The site should not serve the work; the work had to learn to respond.

At the same time, this responsiveness unfolded within a clear paradox: the performance was ultimately programmed for a theatre black box. This did not negate the site-sensitive approach; rather, it complicated it. The black box became another site, a conventional space that demanded translation, compression, and negotiation. What could not be transferred exposed the limits of the work; what resisted representation revealed where site-specificity breaks down. To engage site-specifically with the black box theatre (and the institutional production patterns) while also implementing a site-specific approach to the sea doubled the challenge, taking on the risk of excess: too much to hold, too many contradictions to negotiate. We chose to take that risk.

Instead of resolving this tension, the project allowed it to remain active, and the tension to be the work, so to speak. The encounter between an uncontrollable site and a highly controlled theatrical apparatus amplified the field of negotiation and foregrounded the possibility of failure, not as a deficiency, but as an epistemic and aesthetic condition. The black box did not neutralise the site; it made visible what could not be contained, preserved, or stabilised. In this sense, the work did not arrive, develop and perform in the theatre intact. It arrived marked by what had been lost, transformed, or refused, and it was precisely this (tempestesque) friction that sustained its critical force.

2.2.2. Seaformance and the (Re)Distributed Stage

I sustain the dialogue with Roumagnac. Within the site-specific, or sea-specific dynamic, his concept of *seaformance* offers a framework that extends site-sensitivity into an explicitly marine orientation. Seaformance describes artistic formations that are oriented toward the sea as an active participant rather than a representational object. In Roumagnac's postdoctoral artistic research project, *Data Ocean Theatre*, the ocean is not staged; it stages.

I was also interested in how seaformance is not confined to theatre as a discipline. I quote: A seaformance can be "an object, installation, ritual, ceremony, scene, protocol, event, or a discipline-fluid happening." (Roumagnac, 2025). This multiplicity resonated strongly with the heterogeneity of bodies, objects, and practices I was interested to engage with with *Two More Days*.

In this perspective of plurality, *Two More Days* should not be happening as theatre on an island. It should better be implemented as a formation emerging from the entanglement of a canonical text, a specific sea, institutional conditions, and an ecological crisis that exceeds representation. Again, the performance did not seek to "master" these elements but to hold them in tension.

Closely related to seaformance, and complementary, is Roumagnac's notion of *seanography*, which reimagines scenography beyond decorative or symbolic representation of marine environments. Seanography proposes theatrical forms that are hospitable to other-than-human agency, whether through coastal landscapes, underwater contexts, or digitally mediated seas. Here, the environment is not illustrated, but always recognised and enacted as a co-compositional force. This resonated strongly with the dialogue I had started, with, for example, set and costume design for *Two More Days*.

2.2.3. Aquastages and Tidal Thinking

The concept of *aquastage*, also developed within Roumagnac's *Data Ocean Theatre* project, further sharpens this reorientation. Aquastage describes a theatrical space-time shaped by fluidity, interconnectedness, and temporal multiplicity. It challenges the Western stage as a fixed, anthropocentric container by welcoming the unstable materiality and temporality of water.

Again, this framework resonated strongly with my rehearsal experience. The stage no longer functioned as a controlled environment in which actions unfolded according to a predetermined plan. Instead, it had to become responsive, porous, and contingent. Time was no longer linear or uniform but cyclical, shaped by what Roumagnac refers to as *tidal thinking*, a dramaturgical logic attuned to ebb, flow, delay, and return.

Such thinking complexified narrative progression, resisting resolution and embracing simultaneity, allowing different temporalities and scales to coexist without being subsumed into a single storyline and performance rehearsed, and repeated, timeline.

2.2.4. Simultaneous Environments and Non-Linear Narrative

Roumagnac's notion of *simultaneous environments* provides language for this dramaturgical condition. Rather than functioning as a background, environments are understood as dynamic, complex configurations in which multiple presences, spaces, and temporalities intersect and interact.

In practice, this meant that *The Tempest* had to unfold alongside, rather than above, other realities: the Baltic Sea's ecological degradation, colonial histories embedded in the text, institutional politics, mythological residues, and contemporary climate anxieties. None of these elements was resolved into a coherent whole. They coexisted, sometimes in friction, sometimes in silence, in latency.

This simultaneity challenged conventional dramaturgical expectations. Meaning did not accumulate towards closure; it circulated, overlapped, and occasionally dissipated. What emerged was not a unified message but a field of relations, risking chaos, and the correlative tricky, and central, question: *can chaos take a form, and how?*

2.2.5. From Control to Hospitality: The Director as Host

Across these frameworks, a consistent redefinition of the director's role becomes apparent. Rather than orchestrating meaning from above, the director operates as a host, someone who cultivates conditions for multiple agencies to appear and interact. Roumagnac describes this as a practice of "hyper-hospitality": an openness to forces and fragilities that may disrupt intention, coherence, or efficiency.

This role requires letting go of the history/fantasy of control. Failure, refusal, and misalignment are no longer treated as problems to be corrected but as materials that shape the work. When the sea resisted textual clarity or disrupted rehearsal plans, these moments were not setbacks. They were encounters.

Understanding the *stage as milieu*, as Roumagnac proposes, rather than centre, further clarifies this shift. A milieu is not a neutral container but a complex, dynamic environment that exceeds full comprehension. The director is not outside this

environment but embedded within it, subject to the same forces as performers, materials, and non-human agents.

From this perspective, directing becomes less about imposing vision and more about enabling conditions under which visions - plural, sometimes conflicting - can emerge and transform one another.

Therefore, the concepts discussed here - ecodrama, site-sensitivity, seaformance, seanography, aquastage, simultaneous environments, and stage as milieu - do not constitute a closed methodology. Rather, they point toward a shared reorientation: theatre as a practice that learns to radically share its stage. A practice of *redirecting*.

It is not a retreat from artistic rigour or human responsibility. Nor is it a romanticisation of nature. It is a pragmatic response to ecological conditions that increasingly resist human control. In this context, working with the environment becomes not an aesthetic choice but an ethical and practical necessity that might become an aesthetic formation.

My collaboration with the Baltic Sea was an experiment in this way. I tried to implement a theatre that does not represent ecological crisis, but is structurally transformed by it, a theatre in which non-human presence is not illustrative, but constitutive; where disruption is productive; and where the director's task is to facilitate, rather than dominate, the emergence of meaning.

With *Two More Days*, I was trying to relocate the entire apparatus of theatre-making toward a practice of shared stage, distributed agency, and the humble recognition that the world will not conform to our magic, and that this limitation is not a tragedy, but an opening. What emerges from all of these frameworks is a repositioning of the director's role. I am no longer the one who decides what the stage means. I am, instead, what Roumagnac calls a practitioner of "hyper-hospitality", someone who opens space for multiple agencies to appear and interact.

2.3. Redirecting and reacclimating: concepts in dialogue (my work + Roumagnac + ecotheatre and more)

As previously established, redirecting is not just a matter of changing direction. Within the scope of this artistic research, the concept of redirecting has emerged as a crucial

necessity to diverge from a singular cultural paradigm. Drawing on Daniel Quinn's *Ishmael* (Quinn, 1992) which critiques a monolithic Western worldview in which humans are imagined as the climax of creation, set apart from and above the rest of life, living in order to conquer and rule the world, I understand my own training in theatre directing as deeply imbricated in this same *Taker*³ logic. These assumptions of separateness and destined mastery underpin the drive for hypercontrol: visions crystallising into directives, and the director cast as architect of certainty. However, by the time I began my Master's studies, this certainty felt complicit with the very ecological crises it claimed to address.

Redirecting thus evolved into an act of survival, not just for the individual artist but for a mode of thinking aware of its boundaries. It involved deliberately forming partnerships with natural non-human agents, such as the Baltic Sea, to create knowledge and aesthetic forms beyond the director's mind alone could not produce.

This redirection manifested in concrete choices. The casting of *Two More Days* was driven by affinity rather than role-fit: I invited people who wanted to participate and felt called toward the work, rather than those I could mould into predetermined characters. I approached the rehearsal space not as a creator imposing a vision but as a facilitator of emergence. Meditation became our primary dramaturgical tool. I would visit the Baltic, mostly to the ice hole near my home, where I would sit and listen, while others had their own encounters with the sea in rehearsal spaces or on their own terms. Afterwards, we would share what the sea had offered us. No interpretation or rational extraction of meaning. Only presence, contamination, and gradual reorientation. Several group sessions intended for collective meditation by the sea were scheduled; however, recurrent illnesses such as influenza and exhaustion impeded their realisation. We learned to accept that even our collective efforts could not override external circumstances. The absence of the sea became as influential as its presence.

So I am returning (and will do so many times, intentionally, as a refrain, a sticky leitmotiv, in this thesis) to the experiment of drowning the printed *The Tempest* text in the Baltic to dramatise its transformation. I expected the paper to dissolve and the words to blur into illegibility. Instead, the pages emerged slightly wrinkled, materially changed but linguistically intact. This was my first true lesson in redirecting: the sea does not answer where you expect it to. It does not confirm my hypothesis. It responds in its own

³ Takers = "the people of your culture", i.e. modern, so-called civilised societies that enact the story "the world was made for man", assume the world belongs to humans, and therefore live as if they can "do what [they] damn well please with it. (Quinn, 1992)

logic, its own time. Learning to read material transformation as a form of dramaturgy meant accepting that answers appear in forms that the director has not trained themselves to recognise.

To follow Roumagnac, *reacclimating the stage* is the ecological agenda. If redirecting repositions the director into uncertainty, reacclimating repositions the stage as a living system that must attune itself to new conditions. In my work, this meant designing rehearsals and performances so that the Baltic Sea's presence was not symbolic but actual. Even the individual human death it carries.

We learned to respond to the sea as if it were a collaborator. We named geographical points within the performance space as if they corresponded to locations in the Baltics. The dancer who had joined the process studied marine creatures not to represent them but to let her body be reshaped by their logic. When performance ended, and feedback arrived, we acknowledged the audience responses, the weather, the physical state of our bodies, our insights, but we did not debate, and we did not implement changes. Instead, we meditated with that feedback, allowed it to move through us like contamination, like a wave, a ripple even, and then we performed again with that material still living in us.

Co-directing with the sea is where the promise and the limitation become visible in the same moment. I defined it as the director's acknowledgement that the natural non-human agent is a partner in the process. Not a passive backdrop, not a metaphor, but an active presence with stakes in the outcome. The sea has agency. But as I was basing my method of work *The seven levels of the stakeholder involvement spectrum* (Veselova, 2023) in codesign, where stakeholder involvement and the power to affect the process are high, the sea was involved as a partner, where "Designers recognise the actor as a relevant stakeholder and involve the actor as an active design partner; the stakeholder has an active role in and impact on the whole or parts of the design process. Designers retain the majority of the power" (Veselova 2023, pg 21). Therefore, I, the human director, retained the majority of the power. We choose which feedback to meditate on. We decide where to place the Baltic's geography within the theatre space. We determine the rehearsal schedule (around the sea's accessibility, yes, but still according to our academic calendar). We interpret the sea's responses through our bodies and our intuitions.

This asymmetry is not a failure. It is the honest acknowledgement that co-creation with a natural non-human agent happens within structures of human dominance that cannot be simply washed away. What changes is the intention: the director stops pretending

they are alone. They distribute their authority among the performers (through affinity-based casting and meditative decision-making), to the space (by letting it teach them), to the sea (by making it a condition of the work, not a decor). The director becomes one voice in a multivocal process. They are still heard. They are still responsible. But they are no longer alone in the room.

2.3.1. Weak Signals as Recognition: Meeting Vincent Roumagnac

The concept of *weak signals*: "emerging developments that, if amplified, could cause a significant change within society and systems" (Veselova, 2023) became crucial to my research through an encounter that exemplified weak signals in action.

Before reading Vincent Roumagnac's texts and acknowledging his artistic experiments, I was drawn to him. I knew that he worked with the Baltic Sea and re-examined the director's practice. This vague sense of resonance indicated I was sensing something unspoken, already emerging elsewhere. When we met, I realised that Roumagnac and I were working similarly: both engaged with the theatre's urgent need to redistribute agency and redefine the director's role.

This meeting was a weak signal, evidence that theatre, through various practitioners in Europe, was already trying to transform similarly. Roumagnac became my supervisor for the artistic work and thesis, not through a prearranged match, but because the attraction showed what I would later practice: sensing emerging patterns, recognising resonance in incomplete info, and trusting the pull of alignment even when language lagged.

This meeting crystallised something that had been diffuse in my searching: the recognition, and the relief, that I was not alone, that there were practitioners and theorists actively working towards redistributed agency on the stage, towards listening practices, and towards the stage understood as a leaking ecosystem, a milieu rather than a centre. More profoundly, the meeting suggested that this transformation was not the innovation of individual directors but something the theatre system itself was already attempting to express. My struggling practice was one articulation of a larger shift already underway.

2.3.2. Practicing Weak Signals: In the Rehearsal and Beyond

In my artistic work with the Baltic Sea, weak signals became the primary material of knowledge-making by creating conditions where weak signals could emerge. Through voluntary participation, non-verbal listening exercises, and openness to unpredictable material responses we were creating conditions where weak signals could emerge and I was practicing redirecting: training my directorial attention away from controlling outcomes and toward recognising the articulations of non-human agency.

The methodological insight is this: my being drawn to Roumagnac before reading his work, and his work being drawn toward concerns similar to mine, demonstrates that weak signals operate not only within a single artistic process but across a field of practice. If we are attentive and trust resonance even when we cannot name it, we can recognise that transformations in theatre are not individual discoveries but systemic shifts in which multiple practitioners participate, often without knowing that others are moving in parallel directions.

2.3.3. Concepts in Dialogue: Practice and Theory Recognising Each Other

Where Roumagnac speaks of the director's role becoming "uncertain, inevitably flawed, possibly failing", I discovered that uncertainty can coexist with profound responsibility and power. I did not cease to be a director when I accepted the sea as a co-director. If anything, my directorial power became more visible, and more troubling. I was on stage during performances, adjusting lights, reading text, choreographing live. I wore the authority of the director's body, at the same time deconstructing it, and intentionally fragilising it. The sea might have been a partner, but audiences saw me as the person in charge, making things happen, so to say.

This points to a broader question within ecotheatre discourse, one articulated by thinkers like Theresa J. May and Una Chaudhuri, though in different registers.

May's concept of *ecodramaturgy* insists that ecological theatre cannot simply add "nature" to existing dramatic structures. Rather, it must fundamentally rethink what theatre is for. For May, theatre becomes a practice of reciprocity, of listening for the

voices of the more-than-human world and letting those voices reshape narrative, character, and meaning. Theatre is not a representation of ecological crisis; it is a space where ecological relationships can be enacted, made visible and felt. The playwright, the performer, the audience all become participants in an extended ecological community.

Chaudhuri's work on "Anthroposcenes" (with an inserted s, turning the Anthropocene into scenes of it) and species thinking pushes further: she argues that theatre can stage the Anthropocene only by decentering the human gaze itself. This does not mean abandoning human presence but recognising it as one presence among many, subject to the same material forces that shape all life. The stage becomes a space where multiple species, multiple temporalities, multiple ways of being collide and coexist. The director's role, in this framework, is not to orchestrate harmony but to hold open the space for incommensurability, for the fact that human and non-human beings may not be reconcilable, may not resolve into a unified narrative.

My practice of co-directing with the Baltic Sea moved in these directions, but with a crucial difference: I neither fully embrace the reciprocity that May envisions nor the radical decentering that Chaudhuri proposes. The sea has agency, yes. But following Veselova's different levels of co-design (Veselova, 2023), I decided how its agency is made visible. I resonated or decided which of its responses count as dramaturgically significant. The sea does not consent to this interpretation. It simply is, indifferent to meaning.

Here lies the productive tension: is the director moving toward genuine co-creation with the non-human, or are they simply finding more sophisticated ways to absorb "nature" into human meaning-making? The answer, I believe, is both. This co-directing with the sea is not a solution to anthropocentrism. It is an honest attempt to stage the contradiction of living in a world where humans must act, must make decisions, must bear responsibility, even and especially when that action inevitably fails to honour the autonomy of what we co-create with.

Roumagnac's concept of redirecting becomes, in this light, not a way to escape the director's authority but a way to become conscious of it, to let it remain visible and accountable. The director who redirects does not pretend to transcendence. They acknowledge their implication in structures of power and control. They remain uncertain not because they have abandoned authority but because authority itself has become uncertain.

2.3.4. Failure as Material: The Director's Persistent Body

Yet redirecting is also fundamentally about encountering failure. Not failure as an aberration to be corrected, but failure as the inevitable texture of any process that genuinely shares power with forces beyond human intention (Halberstam, 2011).

In *Two More Days*, multiple kinds of failure occurred simultaneously. There was the failure of my pedagogical vision: participants came seeking classical direction, i.e. a clear vision, a role to play, and a sense of mastery. Instead, I offered meditation, uncertainty, and shared responsibility. Some people found this liberating. Others found it destabilising. One performer left a week before opening, unable to finish this production, which lacked a conventional structure. This failure revealed something I had not fully acknowledged: my desire to avoid the director's traditional role did not mean I could simply set it aside. By refusing to be a classical director, I became a different kind of director: one whose authority lay in non-direction, in the permission to fail, and in the embrace of incompleteness. (Isn't this too a form of power? To be meditated further...)

There was also the failure of the de-anthropocentrism itself. Could I become less human, less dominant as such?. My body remained on stage. My gaze remained directing. The sea remained something I watched, interpreted, and tried to translate into theatrical meaning. If redirecting means accepting that the director is "inevitably flawed", then one of those flaws is the impossibility of truly ceding full authority to non-human agencies. I could not step entirely outside the role that my body, training, and institutional position have made me. But maybe I could try to "weaken" as Tuija Kokkonen suggest when working, as a director, with plants and animals

This is where the concept of failure can become a structural necessity. A failure is not something to overcome or explain away. It is something to metabolise, to let change you, to make part of the work. These were not obstacles when the text did not dissolve in the Baltic, when the performer left before opening, when the body (to enter the stage soon) in the ice hole forced us to reckon with the sea not as a metaphor but as a site of real death. They were the material of the work, the places where redirecting actually happened: where my intention met something that refused it, where I had to respond not from my vision but from whatever could be salvaged from the collision.

The director who practises redirecting is, in Roumagnac's phrase, "possibly failing". But this failing is not incidental to the work. I understood that it is the work. The theatre of redirecting is a theatre that remains incomplete, bearing the marks of unresolved tensions between human intention and non-human agency, between the director's persistent desire to make meaning and the world's refusal to be fully meaningful.

In staging *Two More Days*, did I remain a director? Yes. Did I retain power? Yes. Did I make decisions that shaped what could be seen and felt? Yes, again. But. But I did so while conscious of these contradictions, inviting them into the work and allowing them to reshape what "directing" could mean. This might not be a full solution to the problem of anthropocentric theatre. It could perhaps be a more honest way of inhabiting the role: as someone trying to redirect the theatre's gaze away from an exclusive focus on human drama, even while acknowledging that the gaze doing the redirecting is still, inevitably, human. What changes, however, is how this gaze is reoriented and complemented by other senses towards openness, towards a wider, calmer, and more humble mode of attention.

The following chapter turns to the concrete techniques through which this *listening* orientation was practised, and can be practised, in the future.

2.3.5. Listening as Redirected Attention

Both redirecting and reacclimating depend fundamentally on practices of listening; Not a passive reception, but an active, embodied attention attuning to what is barely perceptible, what emerges in the margins, what refuses clarity.

In my rehearsal process, listening took multiple forms:

1. Direct sensory listening to the Baltic Sea: standing at the shore, observing tides, weather patterns, the sound of waves, the presence of absence (contamination, dead zones)
2. Listening through the body: meditation and non-verbal movement practices that allowed what was witnessed to move through the body without the mediation of rational interpretation
3. Listening to departures and deviations: treating ensemble members who came and went as offering signals about the process itself; accepting that different and often unexpected structures offer different unexpected outcomes, and that this was information, not failure

4. Listening for weak signals: training attention to catch the subtle moments when the choreography broke, when the text didn't fit, when an unexpected word or gesture emerged from the intersection of human intention and non-human material presence
5. Listening in the literal way: sound and music, and the status of these in the process and the performance

This redirected attention constitutes a form of knowledge. It is not the knowledge of mastery (I know what the work needs and how to achieve it), but the knowledge of encounter: I do not know what will emerge, and I am attentive to its articulation.

Both redirecting and reacclimating propose that theatre, and directing, can be otherwise. They offer not a new mastery, but a new openness to what resists mastery. They are practices, not destinations. They are ways of being in relation to forces and agencies that exceed human intention, human comprehension, and human space/time-scales.

In staging *Two More Days* with the Baltic Sea, I was enacting these concepts through my body and my directing choices. Every moment in which I released control, every time I accepted that the sea would not comply, that ensemble members would leave, that failure was not something to overcome but something to learn from, was a practice of redirecting.

2.4. First Partial Conclusion: A Practised Incompleteness

Both redirecting and reacclimating propose that theatre and directing can be otherwise. They offer not a new mastery but an openness to what resists or is indifferent to mastery. They are practices, not destinations. They are ways of being in relation to forces and agencies that exceed human intention, human comprehension, and human space/time-scales.

In staging *Two More Days* with the Baltic Sea, I enacted these concepts through my body and directing choices. Every moment in which I released control, every time I accepted that the sea's indifference, that people would leave, that failure was something to learn from, was a practice of redirecting.

But the habits of the classical director are deeply embodied. Unlearning them is ongoing work. But it is also the work that the present moment demands. As the Anthropocene

accelerates and as the limits of human control become increasingly apparent, theatre should learn to redirect: to reposition itself not as the centre of the stage, but as one agent among many, listening for the weak signals, practising the uncertain knowledge that emerges in the space between human intention and the world's refusal to comply.

3. ARTISTIC PROJECT – CO-DIRECTING THE TEMPEST WITH THE BALTIC SEA

3.1. Two More Days: production overview (where, when, who, what and how)

Two More Days: The Tempest Resummoned by the Baltic Sea was inspired by, based on, and partly copied from William Shakespeare's *The Tempest*, Aimé Césaire's *A Tempest*, Finnish and Estonian mythology, as well as the lyrics, music and cultural imaginaries of Metsatöll, Ultima Thule, Peeter Volkonski, and Siiri Sisask. The text and staging were developed by myself Simba Siim Maaten, together with the working group: Olli Kalliala, Romeo Ström, Emil Houlind, Elina Jackson, Salvador Esparza, Sabina Aftyka, Tuule-Helin Krigul, Marjukka Savolainen, Katariina Jumppanen, Jin Oh, Lambis Pavlou, Maria Myllykangas, and the Baltic Sea. The performances were technically supported by Aimo Eräkorpi. (Re)Directing work was supervised by Vincent Roumagnac, and the actors' work by Tom Rejström. The mentoring teacher in visual design was Julia Jäntti.

The performances took place at Uniarts Helsinki's Theatre Academy Studio 4, from February 28 to March 6, with a total of six performances. This was the artistic component of my MA directing thesis, functioning simultaneously as both a production and artistic research project. The work did not fit neatly into repertory theatre frameworks because the Baltic Sea was invited as a co-director whose presence could not be fully fixed or repeated, bringing significant uncertainty to both the process and performances.

3.2. Priming the stage: workshops, live feeds, sinking the text (process description)

3.2.1. Opening the Space: First Workshop and Letting Go

The process began not with explanation or concept clarification, but with a physical act of entering the rehearsal space. On the first day, I asked each ensemble member to bring a chair and enter the rehearsal room in silence, placing the chair wherever felt right to them. There were no instructions about arrangement, aesthetics, or intention. What unfolded was a long, slow process of collective negotiation - people placing chairs,

moving them, feeling the space, adjusting their positions. The room was being made together, without words.

I noted in my diary that I wanted to accelerate this process, to make it more efficient. This impulse to control, to move faster became itself a learning moment. The slowness was not a failure of method. It was the first encounter with what would become central to the entire project: accepting that the process cannot be rushed, that listening takes time, and that my role as director meant learning to wait.

From this first session of the workshopping phase, we established a principle: whenever we gathered in the rehearsal room, we would sing together. Not as a warm-up, but as a fundamental practice of sharing messages in ways other than words. We developed exercises around communicating without spoken language - through movement, sound, and gesture. For example, when one person left the room, the remaining ensemble would sing together to decide what the absent person should do and how to communicate it to them upon their return. The means were never words but always a movement or a sound. Later, we let go of the singing but kept the openness of communicating in more than just conventional ways.

This was the beginning of what I would later understand as redirecting my own directorial practice. I could not stand at the center and instruct. I had to become one voice among many, learning to listen to what emerged when control was released. I do regret not continuing the singing practice throughout the production, as it would have helped us, as traditions within sailor communities hold that collective singing synchronises bodies, sustains labour, and creates a sense of togetherness while surrounded by the sea. In this context, singing is not just vocal expression but a communal practice shaped by shared space and environment. Choosing to gather and sing by the sea, rather than in a theatre, would have, perhaps, allowed this relationship to be felt more directly.

3.2.2. Ritualistic Theatre and Astrological Mapping

As the process deepened, we incorporated ritualistic theatre practices. These were not decorative or symbolic gestures, but embodied methods for trying to attune ourselves to forces beyond individual will. We invented an astrological map of the production. It was a visual representation that positioned the work within larger cosmic and temporal

currents. This mapping became a way of thinking: not as a director imposing a vision, but as a co-practitioner recognising patterns already present, already moving.

The map (drawn in my process notebook) captured the central tensions: *Two More Days* at the centre, leading to DEATH, the death of the human-centred theatre model.

Opposing this was the question: "Best Wall?" - the traditional theatre's protective boundaries - versus the Beach, where weather, sea, and human collaboration form an unpredictable but generative field. Waves hitting the shore and the earth inhabiting the water. This visual thinking became part of how the ensemble understood the work: not as a story to be told, but as a set of forces to be entered and navigated.

3.2.3. Meditation and Embodied Listening

At the beginning of each rehearsal and before each performance, we meditated together. The guided meditation I developed drew on visualisation practices from Headspace (a widely used smartphone application offering guided mindfulness exercises, breathing techniques, and meditations, for both beginners and experienced practitioners) oriented within hydrofeminist thinking. As Astrida Neimanis articulates in the *Hydrofeminism Manifesto* (Neimanis, 2026)", water connects bodies across times and spaces, through various complex movements and cycles to other bodies and beings in diverse exchanges, gifts, thefts, and forsaking. We could think of this work of water as flow, or more specifically, as a logic of connection or communication." We were (are) "wet together", bodies of water entangled in fluid relation with one another and with the more-than-human world.

The meditating process was as follows:

We would gather together and imagine a source of water within ourselves. This water would fill our bodies, then expand outward to fill the space around us, then flow onward to the Baltic Sea, become one with the Baltic Sea hitting its shores, expand further to cover the entire planet, and then be drawn back inward into ourselves. This circulation from self to other, from other to planet, from planet back to self, became a somatic practice of interconnection and non-separation.

The meditation served multiple purposes. It was a way of finding the sea within ourselves, not only as a metaphor or narratives, but as embodied reality. It was a method of preparation that bypassed rational thought. It was also a practice of humility,

recognising that the sea was not something we could control or stage, but something we would attune ourselves to through our own bodies.

After meditation, we would practise butoh-inspired movement. We used butoh-inspired exercises since none of us are fluent in butoh. I have had some experience with butoh on the Consciousness and Art course at Uniarts Helsinki's Theatre Academy, and I have adapted this experience into modified exercises. According to my course notes, butoh is a Japanese form of dance that emphasises slowness, darkness, and the exploration of states between stillness and motion (*jokingly: it is dance, but potato*). In this context, the movement exercises became a method for finding movement triggered not by choreographic intention but by internal sensation, by the image of water moving through the body, and by the pull of gravity and the earth. We then expanded this movement into different styles of reading or saying the text.

3.2.4. Sinking the Text

Let's return here to the sinking the text experiment. Early in the rehearsal process, I took copies of Shakespeare's *The Tempest* to the Baltic Sea. My intention was to submerge the text entirely, to let the sea rewrite it so to say. I had chosen a place near our home from which to retrieve water for the performances, a place that would become significant in unexpected ways. The place was in Otaniemi, by the shores of Laajalahti, in front of the Otaniemi sauna.

I sat there for an hour waiting for the sunk text to be altered, but something different happened than I had imagined. The paper did not dissolve. The text did not disappear or transform into something unreadable. Instead, the paper's surface subtly deformed under the water's touch, warped, changed in texture, but remained completely legible.

I could have waited longer, but I did not know the results until I had hung-dried the text. The result was humbling. I could have returned to the water, but the exchange had already revealed the limits of my desire for control and my fantasy that the sea could be enlisted to literally alter the classical text. Collaboration with a natural, non-human, I learned, means accepting unpredictable modes of exchange, beyond domination. The text would not be erased. It would persist, but altered. It would carry the sea's touch without being obliterated by it. The co-directing had begun.

We used pages from this sea-touched text throughout the performances. Before the scenes of the play appeared onstage, I walked in front of the audience and placed the deformed pages on the stage floor. After sharing verbally my co-dramatising experience, in which the text did not change, with the audience, I activated the wind machine and blew the pages across the stage. It was an intuitive action that became an illustration, and, to borrow Roumagnac's term, a "reacclimating the stage" in which the director lets the text enter the environment where it is supposed to be altered in unexpected ways.

HUMAN DIRECTOR: (standing before the audience on the premiere, uncertain, nervous and afraid) I planned for an artistic research of co-directing with the Baltic Sea. I printed and took my Shakespeare's text to where I had planned to meet the Baltic over this process. And I cast the text into the sea. I soaked it for at least an hour, expecting the text to be unreadable or, interestingly, fragmented. After soaking I took the text back here, to the rehearsals. I proudly shared my experience and showed the video while I also hung the text to dry in front of the exit, so it would always meet our eyeline Again and again. Finally, the text was dry and I opened the textbook and nothing had changed.

(The Director lays the text in front of a wind machine)

(Beat)

A week ago, I found out that after I had drowned, a human body had been found in that same location.

(The Director switches on the wind machine, and the pages are blown across the stage. Not to create a theatrical effect, which it also does, but rather an acknowledgment of death, of loss, of the sea's position as something more than a mere backdrop to human drama.

The convergence of the submerged text, the dead body found in the ice, and the dispersal of pages became one of the production's most necessary moments. It refused the comfort of metaphor. It insisted that the sea is real and that our playacting occurs within a world marked by genuine loss and contamination.

3.2.5. Live Feeds from Bengtskär Harbour

The lighthouse live feed came to the production almost by intuition. I chose Bengtskär Harbour's continuous live stream (Bengtskär, 2025) for aesthetic reasons, following my

gut rather than intellectual planning. The feed showed a harbour on the outer edge of the Baltic, recording the sea's surface, the coastal line and sky conditions in real time.

Only later did I learn that this geographical location held personal significance for one of our ensemble members, connecting to their childhood. The synchronicity of the intuitive choice aligning with someone's lived history became evidence that weak signals also operate across the ensemble. We were drawn towards something without knowing why.

The lighthouse camera was stationary and automated, shutting down when darkness fell. This meant that on some performance days, the live feed was no longer active by evening. On those occasions, we used recorded footage from earlier in the day. The video was present before rehearsals began, during the performances, and continued after they ended, a continuous, indifferent recording of the sea's conditions.

During performances, the lighthouse feed was on a digital screen on wheels, visible to the audience. This created a temporal collapse: the ensemble moving in the studio space, the sea visible in real time on screen, the revised decolonising version of Shakespearean text and its local mythology all occupying the same frame. Occasionally, the feed would glitch, or the camera's blinds would close (as happened during the fourth performance). These interruptions were not identified by the ensemble as failures but as information: the sea performing its own characteristics. In retrospect, I wonder what might have happened if we had welcomed this darkness instead of applying control by playing the recording.

3.2.6. Performance Messages: Live Typing During the Show

As the performance unfolded, I (the co-director) was present on stage via a laptop connected to the projection screen. The screen showed a live feed from Bengtskär Harbour lighthouse and also functioned as a live message board. Throughout each performance, I typed messages in real time, announcing, deconstructively, what was happening, acknowledging technical failures, speaking to the audience's presence, and reflecting on the process as it unfolded.

These messages were not pre-written. They emerged from the moment itself: from what I was witnessing on stage, from performers being unwell, from the lighthouse feed

cutting out, from technical mishaps, from the sudden understanding of what a scene had become. The audience could read these messages on the same screen they used to watch the sea.

This created an uncanny temporality and simultaneity: the classical drama unfolding on stage, the real-time sea visible via the lighthouse, and my typed commentary flowing across the screen like a running internal monologue made public. The boundary between performance and documentation, between what was planned and what was being discovered, dissolved.

Here are the actual messages, typed live during the six performances:

21 February, Rehearsal:

*"HELLO TOM AND VINCENT!!!
THE PROSPEROS STAFF HAS RED LIGHT ON TOP.
I HAVE BEEN HERE ALL THE TIME.
A LIGHT IS MISSING.
VIDEO HAS NEVER BEEN SEEN FROM THE AUDIENCE BEFORE.
I DID NOT TALK ABOUT COSTUMES.
I FORGOT TO DO THE MEDITATION IN THE BEGINNING.
GEOGRAPHIC LOCATION AROUND THE BALTIC SEA.
LIVE FEED HAS STOPPED, POSSIBLY THE LIGHTHOUSE FELL OVER OR IT DID NOT."*

26 February, Rehearsal:

*"JULIA NEEDS TO LEAVE AT 17:15 LATEST.
LIGHT ON MQ⁴ IN THE TRANSITION.
HOOD ON S2P1.
OLLI⁵ JUST CAME FROM ANOTHER SHOW.
EVERYTHING IS A PART OF THE SHOW.
IT IS OK THAT PEOPLE WALK AROUND.
THE END!!! 80 MINUTES IN TOTAL.
JULIA CAN LEAVE ON TIME.
THANK YOU."*

⁴ Dancer Marjukka Savolainen

⁵ Actor Olli Kalliala

27 February, Rehearsal:

*"EMIL AND SALVADOR⁶ NOT FEELING WELL.
HELLO PEOPLE!!!!
TODAY 16:07 27.2.2225.
IF YOU WANT TO HEAR THE WORD, READ THE SUBTITLES.
PUKING SOUNDS ARE NICE.
THANK YOU EMIL FOR THE CHANGE.
FAN DUET 🙌.
HELLO AND THANK YOU FOR BEING HERE WITH US!"*

After the rehearsals, I felt that caps-lock characters were taking up too much space on the screen, and it became harder to recognise Baltic's presence. We decided to change to lowercase letters and a smaller font.

28 February, First Performance:

*"If You wish to hear, read the text online.
Hello and Thank You for being here.
We have two performers who are a bit under the weather.
I forgot to mention that we have theatre smoke and flashing lights.
Thank You for the tempest.
It amazes me can be an ear worm!
We have cut many scenes.
Over the process we have lost three performers
since they could not maintain the schedule.
We strictly kept it throughout the process,
including the designers, including translations.
Feel free to stay and share your feelings/ideas/feedback!
Thank You."*

1 March, Second Performance:

*"Hello!
One is not feeling good today, that is why MQ sits on a chair and is by the TV.
This is a live message board.*

⁶ Actors Emil Houlin and Salvador Esparza

4VP9 is the code for subtitles.

This is a transition from the tempest into the island.

MQ is the proxy for the Baltic Sea today.

I attached a hook to the wall.

In the beginning I did not plan on being on stage.

But the impossibilities of scheduling made us lose three possible performers.

The last one four days before premiere.

It was a long time since I last wrote.

Feel free to stay if you want to talk."

3 March, Third Performance:

"Hello!

I am corresponding live.

This station is available for everyone but it has its limits.

Subtitle code 4VP9.

Thank You for being here.

Marjukka researched different Baltic Sea animals and their movements.

She is following the pull from either musical instrument - Sabina with harmonica⁷ and

Tuule with flute.

I never intended to be on stage but due to impossibilities it happened.

I felt stressed with the mic today.

Feel free to stay and share."

4 March, Fourth Performance:

"There might be moments in the show when you cannot hear.

Subtitle Mobile app could help.

Code 4VP9 (Fin or Eng).

They are sinking.

Thank You all for being here - I see You.

Thanks to all the impossibilities for helping us create the show.

We have yet to do this scene in that way - the director used to have the mic.

Now the video is not live.

They shut the blinds on the lighthouse."

5 March, Fifth Performance:

⁷ Correction - accordion

"The subtitles are still available.

4VP9 subtitle mobile app.

Thank You for being here.

Today is 5.3.25 and here is a feed to the Baltic Sea - it is present.

Two more days and then this show is over.

That was the scene where Prospero imprisoned Ferdinand.

Anyone can come here and share a message.

We worked a lot around the impossibility of working 7 hours per day,⁸

about the impossibility of theatre structures,

maybe even TEAK⁹ structures.

But I do need to say that I am forever thankful for the opportunity to work here.

With these people within this however we call this place.

Thank You and good-bye.

Feel free to stay if You want to.

Thank You."

6 March, Sixth and Final Performance:

"Gentle reminder subtitle mobile app.

Code 4VP9.

Hello!

This is our last show!

It feels like this is the end or not.

'The hell is empty and all the devils are here!'

The dancer is the proxy for the sea.

When You forget the sea, then the dancer will remind You.

FEEL FREE TO STAY AND SHARE.

THANK YOU."

⁸ I have to address the 7-hour-per-day rehearsal schedule. The issue was that this schedule never felt sufficient, and it was impossible to find common times to rehearse as some of the students also needed to attend courses. We discussed the non-present participants working on their own schedule and material, and then bringing it on stage. But their coursework took all their resources, and this non-work became the work that appeared on stage. Their presence doubled with the Baltics' indifference, and their presence was felt across the stage.

⁹ Uniarts Helsinki's Theatre Academy

3.2.6.1. *The Message Board as Method*

By typing these messages live during performances, I experimented on enacting several things simultaneously.

Transparency about conditions: the audience saw, in real time, what was actually happening, such as performers being unwell, technical failures, and the impossibilities of the process. There was no pretence of seamless execution, deconstructing the expectation of rehearsed and repeated, finalised work/piece.

Breaking the fourth wall, but differently: instead of theatrical address, this was documentary address. The typing was visible; the thinking-in-real-time was exposed. The audience could see the director working, problem-solving, witnessing, witnessing their witnessing, witnessing witnessing their witnessing...

Creating a parallel text: alongside the ensemble's actions in *Two More Days*, alongside the live feed from the Baltic, the typed messages created a third layer of meaning. Three simultaneous narratives occupied the screen.

Inviting performers and audience members to participate: by typing "Anyone can come here and share a message", I literally opened the message board to the others. The screen was not only a one-way communication channel but potentially a space of dialogue, though in practice, the technical setup and the flow of the performance meant that mostly I controlled what appeared. Perhaps a question could be raised here about the paradox at play: because no one else wrote on the screen, it became a monologue, risking a reinforcement of my power and position as director, precisely when the strategy was to weaken that power by sharing doubts, disruptions, and mixing in other voices. This could open the door to the future, prompting a question about how the process might be made more collective next time.

Resisting polish: the messages, the typos, the urgency, the emotional register shifting from administrative to poetic to despairing; all of this refused the polished professionalism of traditional theatre communication. It was raw, it was real-time, it was the work as it happened. Live.

3.2.7. The Collaborators

The ensemble was organised as follows:

Performers and Creators:

- Five core performers: Romeo Ström, Olli Kalliala, Emil Houliind, Salvador Esparza, Hanna Kalo
- One dedicated dancer, whose body became a proxy for the Baltic Sea: Marjukka Savolainen
- The co-director (myself), who initially had no planned stage presence but became an on-stage performer due to scheduling impossibilities, navigating the inevitable gaps created by this unconventional directing method: Simba Siim Maaten
- Other artistic collaborators: Elina Jackson, Maria Myllykangas, Katariina Jumppanen

Musicians and Creators:

- flutist: Tuule-Helin Krigul
- accordionist: Sabina Aftyka
- live sound mixer (at the mixing desk) and composer: Jin Ho
- additional musician who moved through the space, supporting the sound design and participating improvisationally as both performer and actor: Lambis Pavlou

Technical Support and Creators:

- stage and lighting designer (myself), working intuitively with gut feeling and body-sensing, using handheld lamps for light design whose choreography was partly predetermined but also open (anyone could place the lamps as felt right to them): Simba Siim Maaten
- technical support during each performance: Aimo Eräkorpi

Teachers and supervisors:

- (re)directing supervisor: Vincent Roumagnac
- acting supervisor: Tom Rejström
- mentoring teacher in visual design: Julia Jäntti

Consultants:

- light design consultant: Samu Kotilainen
- stage design consultant: Anna Papinsaari

Services for artistic activities at Uniarts Helsinki's Theatre Academy

- Stage department: Marja Zilcher
- Props department: Tarja Hägg
- Costume department: Arja Nuppola
- Lighting, sound and AV department: Hanna Käyhkö, Mika Savolainen, Jyrki Oksaharju
- Communication, poster, handprogram: Jaana Forsström
- Production coordinator: Rosa Sedita
- Producer: Maria Kaihovirta

3.2.8. The Question of Equality:

When asked whether roles were equal or whether there was hierarchy, my honest answer would be: it is impossible to answer. What does equality mean? The director retained certain powers - I was still the one with the core concept, with the outside proposition and the method, the point of view person, I opened the show, I spoke the messages to the audience, I held the architectural vision of how the piece would unfold. At the same time, the ensemble's departures, their physical discoveries, their refusals, their illness all shaped the production in ways I did not and could not control.

What we practised was not equality but maybe interdependence; a recognition that we needed each other, that the work could not happen without everyone's participation, and that when someone left (as three performers did), the entire structure had to shift as it was supposed to. The process made me realise that redirecting may be a site of contradiction rather than purity, raising a difficult question (to be readdressed in future works) of how to combine collective decision-making with personal responsibility, individual aesthetic orientations/desires/intuitions, and collaborative, fully inclusive diversity.

3.2.9. Priming the Stage: Making Space for the Sea

To "prime" the stage meant to make it receptive to the sea's presence and agency. We did this through multiple concrete practices:

Geographical Mapping: We marked geographical locations around the Baltic Sea on the studio walls using white tape. These were not decorative but functional. They positioned the audience and ensemble within a real geography of contamination, death

zones, and ecological crisis. When we moved through the space, we moved through actual places: Saaremaa, the Lithuanian coast, the Swedish shore, the Russian border etc.

Water as Medium: Before each performance, I sprayed Baltic Sea water onto the audience members' hands and onto placards welcoming them to the space. This was not symbolic gesture. It was actual sea water, carrying actual contamination, actual history. The audience literally carried the sea on their skin as they entered.

Submerged Text: Pages from the sea-touched text were scattered on the stage floor. The text was literally deformed and changed by the sea. It was not the pristine, controllable text of printed books, but text that had been transformed by its encounter with what lay beyond human intention.

The Lighthouse as Witness: The live feed from Bengtskär Harbour meant that the sea was always present, always being recorded, always watching. The feed continued even when we were not performing, even when we did not look at it. This created a kind of responsibility; the knowledge that the sea was documenting itself, that we were performing within a larger temporal and spatial frame that exceeded the theatre.

The Dancer as Proxy: One ensemble member was the dancer whose movement would be triggered by the sea's presence. Before performances, during meditations, this dancer would attune themselves to the images that the feed presented. During performances, when the audience might forget the sea - might fall back into the comfort of watching human drama - the dancer would move, insistently, reminding everyone that another agency was present.

3.3. Another Partial Conclusion: Rehearsing/Preparation as Listening

The preparation process for *Two More Days* was not about creating a controlled aesthetic or training the ensemble to execute a director's vision. It was, instead, a sustained practice of learning to listen: to the sea, to each other, to the impossibilities that kept arising, to the body's wisdom, to the interconnectedness, to the weak signals that indicated direction. From the outset, we knew this would be an impasse of sorts, an impossible mission. The black box, the institutional timetable, and the academic

framing would always pervade, sometimes brutally. Yet we had chosen to make the work inside these conditions, not outside them.

Each meditation, each ritual, each moment of standing in silence before the ensemble, each announcement of impossibility was a different way of saying: I do not know what will happen. I am opening myself and this space to forces I cannot control. Will you join me, ensemble members and, eventually, audience members, in this uncertainty? Within this knowingly compromised frame, the small exercises, tentative gestures, and leakings-in of the sea did not overturn the structure; they accompanied a movement away from established patterns and representations. Probably not enough, certainly incomplete, but still a collective, and at times poetic, movement - chaotic, unresolved, yet oriented away from habitual forms.

That the ensemble showed up, week after week, learning to sing messages instead of speaking them, finding movement in their own bodies rather than following choreography, sitting with long silences and unresolved tensions. This was an act of extraordinary trust and courage. The stage was primed not through technical preparation, but through the accumulated willingness of all participants to let the sea, and the unpredictability the sea represents, reshape what theatre could be, even while the black box and its institutional logics continued to press in from all sides.

4. METHODS – REDIRECTING A DIRECTOR'S PRACTICE

4.1. Methods: Redirecting a Director's Practice

4.1.1. On Redirecting and Roumagnac's Influence

On 9 January 2025, I met with Vincent Roumagnac, my supervisor for both the artistic work and written thesis. I have already unfolded our dialogue extensively in Chapter 2, but it is important to reiterate it here and restart the analysis from this point. As a kind of conceptual looping, this keeps the core of the problem in view. In that conversation, Roumagnac asked me a question that would become central to the entire written component of this research: How, during the co-directing process with the Baltic Sea, did you redirect the director within yourself? What was the result?

This question reframed the entire project. It moved the focus from what we made (the performance, the production) to how I transformed in the process of making. And it suggested that this transformation, this redirection, was not incidental to the artistic research but rather its core.

So, I restart from Roumagnac's definition of redirecting: "Redirecting becomes the reecologised practice of the theatre director, integrated into, and in service of, the reacclimating the stage process and agenda. Thus, redirecting here means reorienting materials, time, attention, method, agency, and spectatorship according to the shifting conditions of the stage as milieu, rather than as a static anthropocentric center. It enacts a paradigm shift from the image of the omnipotent director to a repositioned role, uncertain, inevitably flawed, and constantly adapting, within a pluriscalar, multi-agencial, and polyphonic process."

Roumagnac connects this epistemological shift to a material practice, making it beyond a theoretical position: "Reacclimating the Stage", a deliberate inversion of the colonialist legacy of acclimatization gardens, where exotic plants were appropriated for human use. To reacclimate, by contrast, is to create a stage that operates through exchanges of agency between human and other-than-human beings and matters, where design itself becomes plural, interdependent, ecological.

To redirect, then, is not to abandon directing but to reconceive it. Not as the imposition of a unitary vision, but as the navigation of multiple, often conflicting agencies. The director becomes, in my own formulation, a conductor of certain uncertainties: orchestrating not toward a predetermined harmony, but toward the emergence of forms that no single intention could have predicted.

In the context of *Two More Days*, redirecting meant changing not only my working method but my entire epistemological and ontological framework. This chapter traces that transformation, showing how co-directing with a natural non-human agent forced a fundamental reconception of directorial agency itself, that aligns with both Roumagnac's artistic research claims and the ecological design principles articulated by Emilija Veselova in *Designing with Nature for Sustainability*.

4.1.2. Part One: The Director I Was Before

4.1.2.1. *The Practice of Fixing Vision*

Taavi Eelmaa (an Estonian director and actor) describes this crystallisation as the moment when *"a certain state, desire, or thought crystallises in a person, and at that moment whatever comes to hand opens their eyes. Whether it's material, a painting, a film, or some natural image, the person suddenly feels an unbearable need to express themselves - and if there are people around them who have reached more or less the same state, they all hook together"* (Eelmaa, 2013).

In my pre-research directing practice, this crystallisation became the origin point for most of my art. The unbearable need to express became my singular vision; the people who "hooked together" became the ensemble tasked with realising that vision. I understood, almost before rehearsals began, what the production would feel like, how it would move, and what emotional and aesthetic resonances it would carry. Through subtle mechanisms of questioning and framing, I guided everyone toward this pre-imagined harmony, a process that was crystallised not only in idea, but in the very structure of directorial authority itself.

For example, in *Kummardage Lipud* (2017), the crystallised idea was: children participated in the Estonian War of Independence, and contemporary audiences remember them only as romantic historical figures, not as human children. I knew from the outset that I wanted to make those children visible as people, to help the audience

see them through the children's eyes, and to create moments where both actors and spectators would encounter each other "through the eyes of another person."

Once I had this crystallised idea, I would compose what I can only describe as a harmony, a vision of the final outcome. I would see, in my mind's eye, where the process would lead. And then, through the rehearsal process, I would systematically guide the ensemble toward the realisation of this pre-imagined harmony.

The mechanism was subtle but pervasive. I would ask designers and actors questions that seemed open: "What do you think this moment needs?" "How would you approach this character?" But the questions were structured, knowingly and unknowingly, so that the answers I received would inevitably point towards the outcome I had already envisioned. If a designer proposed a solution that diverged from my interior vision, I would praise their thinking while gently reorienting: "Yes! Thank you! And..." The designer would feel heard and given agency, but the final design would be remarkably close to what I had imagined all along.

This was the classical director's position: what Egill Pálsson (Balevičiūtė, et al., 2022) calls "bricolage without blueprint¹⁰", which, in contradiction, always pointed back to a hidden blueprint, a director's private vision. The ensemble was invited to create, but only within structures I had already designed.

4.1.2.2. *The Consequences: When I Performed*

Even when I failed, the failure was mine to own and to correct. I would adjust the vision, but vision remained: a unified, coherent, director-authored form that the entire ensemble would collectively realise.

This practice had consequences, ones I only fully understood through contrast. When I performed as an actor in Vallo Kirs's *Idiot* (2012) at Ugala Theatre in Viljandi, Estonia, I found myself trapped. The director's framing of the values, the emphases, and the emotional logic of the production did not align with my own understanding of the world we were supposed to be building. I felt incompetent, unsupported, squeezed into a shape that was not mine. The entire troupe felt estranged from me; I was unable to experience a shared sense of what we were doing. In another production, Tamur

¹⁰ Bricolage is constructing a performance from whatever materials are immediately at hand – available actors, spaces, texts, objects, constraints – rather than starting from a blank slate or detailed blueprint.

Tohver's *Roheline nagu laulaks* (2020) at the Polygon Theatre in Estonia, my character's "wrong" understanding of good and evil reached the audience in such a way that the production's overall message was inverted and the meaning I sought to embody was turned inside out by the directorial frame.

These experiences as an actor taught me something crucial: the director's position is extraordinarily powerful, and this power is often invisible, embedded in the structures and questions and implicit values that shape the ensemble's work. When the frame does not align with an actor's values, they cannot escape it from within. They are trapped.

And after being armed with this knowledge, I began experiencing a shift within that was crying for a shift in my directing practice.

4.1.2.3. *Anthropocentrism and the Problem*

When I began to think about sustainability and "ecotheatre", I had not broken free from the same controlling pattern. I had made *Nonhuman* (2018), imagining that I could stage a conversation between Planet Earth (in a human form as *Gaia*) and humanity about the conditions for continued life. The production remained incomplete because I felt it could not grasp something I could not name. I felt that sustainability, the messy, non-binary, impossible question of how to live interdependently, could not be contained in the classical dramatic structure, with its clear conflicts and resolutions. Yet my directing language had no other form to offer. I was trapped in the very Aristotelian frameworks I was trying to critique.

This is the paradox that "ecotheatre" theory names: to critique anthropocentrism through a directing practice that remains fundamentally anthropocentric is to fail before beginning. As Theresa J. May and others in the *ecodramaturgy* tradition argue, the problem is not merely the content of what we stage but the fundamental structures of control and vision that shape the stage itself.

4.1.3. Part Two: The Redirection Begins

4.1.3.1. *What Changed, What Stayed*

When I arrived at Uniarts Helsinki's Theatre Academy to pursue the master's Degree Program in Directing, I carried both a strong desire and a blind spot. The desire was clear: I wanted to create engaging theatre that could hold ecological questions without

reducing them to human psychology or binary conflict. I wanted to work differently, not only as a content choice but as a fundamental practice. I wanted to move from being a director who fixes a vision onto the stage toward being a director who could respond to forces and agencies beyond my control. To "redirect" myself, I would say now, retrospectively.

And after seeing Veselovas PhD work mentioned above, I thought I knew how to do it. I have to think about interdependence and co-direct with a natural non-human participant. But in the early phases of *Two More Days*, the old patterns reasserted themselves. The vision just kept reappearing. The vision did not go away! I still believed, at some level, that if I could just find the right concept, the right method, the right ensemble, everything would cohere according to my intention.

Then the Baltic Sea refused to follow my logic. Paraphrasing my physics professor, Kalev Tarkpea, from my BA studies, *telling someone to "think logically" does not change their thinking. Everyone reasons logically within their own framework, and those frameworks differ.*

4.1.3.2. *The Refusal: Material Fact*

It is important to be precise about what this refusal looked like. The refusal did not happen through a dramatic gesture or symbolic action. It happened through simple material facts: ice closed over the spots where I had prepared to gather water (possibly because of the death in my ice-hole; those who had kept it open let it freeze over); the livestream from the lighthouse cut out unexpectedly; performers left because the production's framework allowed it (and their personal survival demanded it); bodies got sick; the text, when submerged, did not dissolve as I had fantasised but instead deformed in ways I could not predict or control, I did not have the knowledge how to change my logic.

Each of these small, individual moments was an encounter with something I could not direct (and did not want to direct), and they became cumulatively overwhelming. In encountering this overwhelm, I felt a shift and began to redirect myself.

Redirecting, as Roumagnac notes, is not a choice but an inevitability born from specific material conditions. The pluriscalar, multiagential process is not a theoretical ideal; it is what happens when you try to work with forces that refuse to cooperate with your anthropocentred vision. The sea is no longer a metaphor for multiplicity, or a

representation of it. It is multiplicity: ice, temperature, salt, currents, contamination, dead zones, life, indifference to human intention.

4.1.3.3. *The Moment of Confusion: Loss of Authority Over Other Humans*

The shift came as a specific kind of confusion. In previous work, when actors looked to me for direction: "How should I solve this moment? What does this character want here?" I had always known how to respond, even when I did not know the answer to the concrete question. I might frame my response as a question, but the question was designed so that the answer would point toward my envisioned solution. I might have shared a personal experience or facilitated an analysis of the bigger picture to find the "right answer". We would generate an exercise. We would do research. I was, in a sense, orchestrating a kind of controlled emergence, a manipulative power strategy, giving the ensemble the illusion of agency while I maintained an invisible control.

In *Two More Days*, actors came to me with questions, I consciously made myself increasingly unable to answer them in the way I felt comfortable. Not because I lacked ideas (I had plenty, and I still have!), but because the frame had shifted. The work was not *my work* that I was inviting them to realise. The work was to work together with something that refused to cooperate with my vision.

Mareike Nele Dobewall's (Balevičiūtė, et al., 2022) concept of spatial-social practice influenced my work. She describes directing as creating "dialogue" among agents - performers, space, audience - via "inward-outward listening" and "spatial-social sounding". The director doesn't author relations but attends to existing ones, shaping structures to make them legible, generative, and transformative.

So instead of offering the actor disguised instructions, I began to say things like: "I do not know". Or: "I don't know. What does the question make you feel? What signals are you receiving from the space, from the sea, from the other performers? What signals would you like to send out? What signals surface from within?" Or: "That's interesting - what if we let that confusion stay? What if the confusion itself is the material we're working with?" Or: "How would *you* like to approach it?"

Different members of the team responded differently at different moments. Some found this bewildering. Others experienced it as liberation. (For example, the dancer took the time and space to conduct independent research into how to address the question of the

qualities of movement). Some moments of my resistance to giving straight answers could have been experienced as abandonment, as if I had abdicated my responsibility as director and left them adrift. All of these responses were true. I was, in fact, abandoning (or trying to let go...) the authority that I had always wielded, invisible as it was. And I was, simultaneously, asking them to take on another kind of responsibility: to author their own relationship to the work, to listen for signals that did not come from me, to trust their own reading of what was needed. And feel like eventually they did.

This is what Una Órleifsdóttir calls the *I-Thou* relationship in directing: not a relationship of authority and obedience, but a meeting between subjects, where each person's interiority is recognised and respected. The confusion I felt - and that I asked the ensemble to feel - was not a failure of communication. It was the beginning of a genuine encounter.

This shift toward collective process and genuine encounter was necessary. Yet I must acknowledge a critical limitation in what I have described in this section. Redistributing authority among human participants, while important, does not, in itself, constitute a reacclimatization of the stage. A collective of humans, however attentive to one another, can still reproduce an anthropocentric apparatus where meaning-making remains fundamentally human property. I was not yet redirecting the stage itself, only the humans within it.

The layer of redirecting that addresses the systemic transformation Roumagnac articulates required something more radical: allowing non-human agents themselves to reshape not only the content of our work but also its temporal structure, its material conditions, in other words, its very possibility. This was a matter of reconceiving the stage as a milieu in which human agency was no longer sovereign. The ensemble's collective listening had to extend beyond each other toward what exceeded human intention entirely.

4.1.3.4. *Creating Conditions Rather Than Solving Problems*

As the process continued, I developed a practice: instead of solving problems with a single, elegant solution to achieve harmony, we began creating conditions where multiple, even contradictory, solutions could coexist.

For instance, when we worked on a scene, I would not ask the performers to find "the right" interpretation of a moment. Instead, we used predetermined exercises like guided

and unguided meditation, ritualistic experiments, movement, and embodied listening, and let these methods reveal what the performers' bodies already knew. Some performers would lean into the violence of the situation, some into its beauty; some into the liberation of it. Some would enact the human desire to control the chaos, to give it meaning; others would enact the human desire to merge with it, to surrender to its logic.

This approach is rooted in the practice of bricolage - working with what is at hand, what emerges - but with a crucial difference: I was no longer trying to make the bricolage point toward a hidden blueprint. I was trying to honor the bricolage itself, to let it be seen as bricolage, as the collision of multiple intentions and material constraints.

On stage, the approaches created a subtle dissonance, making the production not entirely "followable" in a traditional sense and that was the deliberate. By avoiding a unified vision, we embodied the research's main idea: human intention isn't the sole force on stage; other factors like the sea, weather, performers' bodies, institutional constraints, and space hold real power. The director's role is to work with these forces, not to overcome them.

In Emilija Veselova's design framework, "with nature for sustainability", design does not impose a predetermined form onto materials. Design creates exchange, the conditions within which human and non-human agents can shape, alter, and transform one another. The designer (or director) is not absent from this process, but their role shifts from authorship to orchestrating relations.

4.1.4. Part Three: On Stage, In the Room

4.1.4.1. *Dismantling the Aura*

The most concrete expression of this redirection was my decision to be present on stage during performances, not as the traditional invisible hand that shapes everything from outside, but as a visible, accountable, possibly clumsy body in the room.

I had not planned to be on stage. The original idea was to remain backstage, working the cues and typing live messages to the audience while observing from the safety and darkness of the control board. But the impossibilities I have mentioned previously (redirecting myself, scheduling conflicts, performers leaving, the last one only a few days before the premiere), meant that someone needed to fill the gaps, make the dead

spots visible and hold them and hold the space when others could not. So, I stepped on stage. And this became very meaningful for me, for the process, for the performance.

Stepping on stage made visible the structure that was supposed to be hidden. The audience could see that the work was being made in real time, that there were indifferent harmonies on stage, that there were situations where someone not present was filled with another presence, only people trying to navigate impossibilities. This is what I call *dismantling the aura*, the invisible authority that makes a director's wishes feel inevitable, even when those wishes are never explicitly stated.

By being on stage, I did not just emphasise revealing the structure. I was entering into the shared vulnerability with the ensemble. If a performer was unwell, they were visible to the audience. So was I. If a stage design broke, it became part of the material that had to be worked with, and I did it live, in front of the audience. If the live feed from the lighthouse cut out, I could type it on the screen: "Now the video is not live. They shut the blinds on the lighthouse". The frame became permeable. The boundary between "work" and "the conditions of work", and between the audience and the performance, dissolved. At least, started to dissolve...

This transparency is central to Dobewall's (Balevičiūtė, et al., 2022) understanding of spatial-social practice: the recognition that the audience is not separate from the performance but part of the social space that the performance creates. The audience, in *Two More Days*, although watching from a unified vantage point, experienced a stage, in a simultaneous configuration, each person able to focus on different scenes happening at the same time in front, left, or right, and behind them. Some watched the sea on the screen, which was present but not physically; the sea mediated through image and proxy movements. Others watched the performers' bodies, the ensemble's collective struggle to hold the space. Some focused on details. Some stayed with the trouble of their personal confusion. Others watched the gaps, the empty moments, the places where the work broke down. Even if we decided to keep the frontal, divided disposition of audience and stage (to quote the habitual apparatus of theatre) multifocal dynamics emerged, creating a tension between the "given" and the "redirected".

Each audience member was, in effect, editing the performance in real time, choosing where to direct their attention, composing their own "montage" from the simultaneous material available. This is not the montage theory of Eisenstein (Todd, 1989) where the director composes the collision of images and the audience receives the collision as the

director intended. Rather, it is a distributed montage, where the audience participates in the composition through the act of attention.

The audience was not a passive recipient of a unified vision. They were active agents in the creation of meaning, even if (or especially because) they did not know they were. The work was not complete on stage; the work completed itself in the minds and bodies and emotional responses of each audience member.

4.1.4.2. *Working Without Solutions: Meditation, Ritualisation, Listening*

In previous productions, my role as director included something I will call the practice of elegant solutions. If a scene was not working, I would think it through alone or with the team, arrive at an insight, and then bring that solution to rehearsals or the stage. The ensemble would work to implement it. Usually, it worked because the solution had been designed invisibly to work.

In *Two More Days*, I made a different choice. When confusion arose (and confusion arose constantly) I did not try to solve it. Instead, I, and we, brought the confusion into the room and (sometimes reluctantly) celebrated it as material.

The methods I used to do this came from my earlier work in *LOST!* (2024, Uniarts Helsinki's Theatre Academy) where I experimented with the practices of shibari, butoh, shamanism/ritualistic theatre, dream work, and hypnosis, which I was introduced to in the consciousness and art course over my current MA studies. In *Two More Days*, I experimented with my personal continuations of these practices, and involved meditation, intuitive movement, ritualistic and dream work, which were not exercises in self-discovery or character development. They were techniques for learning to be present to forces beyond individual intention.

For example: in the rehearsals, performers were looking to me for direction on how to embody the sea, how to move through space, how to relate to the other performers and/or the material. In the old practice, we would have developed a clear vocabulary, and they would have performed it. Instead, I read these lines from my notebook:

"I wish to create situations where we find movements that are shaped by the sea, but not determined by our imagination of what the sea is. So I suggest that we will meditate together. We will find water within ourselves, not as metaphor, but as a real sensation in

our body. We will let that water move through our bodies. And whatever emerges, however strange or ungainly or unexpected, that is the material we work with. We combine that with what *The Tempest* and *A Tempest* and what the space brings in. We don't harmonise them. We let them stay in conversation, even when they contradict".

This required the ensemble to trust their own sensing, their own intuition, their own bodies' knowledge, their own embodied truth. It required them to understand that clarity and control were not the goal. The goal was to become permeable to forces that moved through and around us: the sea, the text, each other's bodies, the space, the audience's multifocal attention.

I find parallels in working with dreams and what Montague Ullman calls "dream appreciation" (Siivola, 2021). A practice of witnessing what arises without trying to interpret or control it. It creates conditions for others' creativity to emerge rather than trying to shape it toward a predetermined form. As Markku Siivola articulates in his exposition of Ullman's method, the director's task becomes one of creating what he describes as conditions for authentic emergence: not authoring the work, but midwifing it.

One performer, who had classical training, found it nearly impossible. They kept wanting me to give them "the right answer". And I had to sit with the discomfort of not providing it, of saying: "I don't have the right answer. This confusion is what we are working with, and it does not mean the same to you as it does to me. And our confusions singing together on stage is part of what we are producing".

What does it mean for something to be "true" rather than "right"? In the context of ecotheatre and redirecting practice, it might mean: does this emerge from a genuine encounter with what is actually present: with the bodies of the performers, the material of the text, the agency of the audience, the indifference of the sea? Or does it emerge from a director's predetermined vision? Conundrum. To cherish.

4.1.4.3. *After Each Performance: Dialogue With The Ensemble*

Importantly, *Two More Days* was never a one-way practice. After each performance, the ensemble gathered and shared what we had witnessed, what had surprised us, what had changed from performance to performance. This created a loop of continuous adaptation: not adaptation toward a fixed vision, but adaptation as genuine responsiveness to what was actually happening.

We also celebrated the audience's feedback, including their observations about what they had chosen to watch, what had moved them, and what had confused them, which was brought into the ensemble's reflection. When sharing it within the team our understanding of our own work deepened and shifted. Did we work the same on the same scene on day six as on day one? Not exactly. The material stayed, but the ensemble's relationship to it had transformed through witnessing how audiences encountered it, through understanding what moments had landed and what moments had washed away.

It is not the director invisibly shaping the ensemble toward a predetermined outcome – a manipulation. It is the ensemble and audience in genuine dialogue, mediated by a director who is trying to listen to all the voices in the room, including the voice of the sea, present through the screen, through the bodies that carried water and salt and cold, through the text that speaks of shipwreck and usurpation and the desire to control.

4.1.5. Part Four: What It Means to Conduct Uncertainties

4.1.5.1. *Redefining the Director's Work*

A director's tools have traditionally been understood as a set of techniques for shaping human and aesthetic material toward a predetermined vision: the ability to read texts, to understand character psychology, to imagine spatial arrangements, to inspire or cajole or manipulate actors toward a desired outcome. The director, in this conception, is a kind of architect, designing a structure that will, when built, house the director's meaning.

But the Baltic Sea is not interested in my vision. It will not be shaped by my aesthetic choices. It cannot be manipulated into serving my dramatic intention. Yet it is still an agent in the work, maybe/hopefully the primary agent. So, what does directing mean in this context?

In my reworked understanding, as mentioned earlier, a director is a conductor of certain uncertainties. The director's work is not to eliminate uncertainty but to orchestrate it, to create structures within which uncertainty can move, be witnessed, and become generative. This does not mean abandoning aesthetic intention. Rather, it means shifting

from the imposition of a predetermined aesthetic form toward the cultivation of conditions within which form can emerge.

In *Two More Days*, I did not begin with a unified vision of how the production would look or feel. I brought materials and ideas into the rehearsal space that I sensed could work with the research: a large fabric that could be manipulated (inspired by how water had been represented in other productions), sea-themed props, and the decision to make the Baltic Sea literally present through a live feed on a contemporary digital screen. These were not prescriptive aesthetic choices but rather invitations, openings through which the work could develop. Most of these initial props did not end up on stage. Those that did became comments on human perception of the sea rather than direct representations of it.

The aesthetic signature that emerged from this process was not predetermined but negotiated. The unifying colour of the ensemble's shirts and the set fabric was not chosen from my interior vision but extracted from a moment in the live feed of the Baltic Sea itself, a moment when the colour "felt singing the best for the stage". This was a choice, but one rooted in a genuine encounter with what was present rather than in imposing what was not. The work's quality of silence has a John Cage-like irregularity. The bodies move with different qualities: some embodied, some representing. The stage space itself with its nooks, platforms, central pillar, and walls became material to work with rather than a neutral container for the director's vision.

Who made these aesthetic decisions? All of us. The negotiation was not between me and the ensemble alone, but between all participants, including the meditations with the sea, the sound designer and musicians. This is what distinguishes redirected practice from classical directing: the aesthetic does not emerge from a single authorial consciousness but from the collision and composition of multiple agencies.

The variables in this orchestration are multiple and not always human. There are the human ensemble members, each with their own bodies, histories, resistances, and capacities. There is the institutional context: Uniarts Helsinki, with its restriction on work for 15 credits, its studio spaces, its timetables, its budget, its personnel, its pedagogical frameworks. There are the natural forces: the tides of the Baltic, the ice that forms and melts, the wind that carries salt and contamination, the dead zones. There are the historical forces: the colonial history embedded in Shakespeare's *The Tempest*, the postcolonial reframing through Aimé Césaire's *A Tempest* and the context-responsive narrative expansion through Estonian and Finnish mythology samples. There are the

economic forces: the fact that no one was paid, and that people had to have other jobs to sustain their participation. There are the aesthetic forces themselves: the materials at hand, the specific qualities of light and sound available in the space, the satellite-bound apparatus that makes the sea visible on screen. There is the distributed attention of the audience, each person composing their own experience from the simultaneous material offered.

Is there a poetics of how uncertainty moves? Yes. The aesthetic of *Two More Days* is not chaos or randomness. It is messy, vulnerable, broken, and beautiful. This beauty did not emerge despite the uncertainty; it emerged because uncertainty has its own forms. The tenderness of the truth - the moment when the apparatus became visible because it had to, when gaps appeared because performers left, when the director's voice emerged on stage because of the need to fill the space, this tenderness made the work beautiful. I dare to claim it. It is the aesthetic consequence of genuine encounter.

This required restraint as an aesthetic choice. I needed recognisable frameworks within which to establish the redirecting. I experimented with ZERO¹¹, a concept developed by Adalheidur Sigursveinsdottir, Povilas Barzdzius, Jonas Kuprevicius, and Justinas Vinciunas in their work on collective creativity in the performing arts. But ZERO is completely unpredictable, and I found that working entirely without parameters would move me away from the redirecting direction I was trying to discover. So, I chose constraint. I chose to work with meditation, with the materiality of the space, with the live feed, with the specific colour palette drawn from the sea itself. These constraints were not arbitrary restrictions. They were the parameters within which multiplicity could speak to itself rather than dissolve into incoherence.

The director's task is to arrange, within a collective process of decision-taking and decision-not-taking, these variables, these uncertainties, in such a way that they can speak to and transform each other. Not to resolve them into a unified message, but to create the conditions for them to be in generative relation. This is what Roumagnac means by "exchanges of agency": not a director managing multiple voices so that they harmonise, but a director setting the parameters within which genuine encounter can happen. The parameters I set were aesthetic, but they were set in service of responsiveness rather than control.

In classical directing, this frame is invisible. The audience believes they are simply watching a performance unfold, not realising that every element has been carefully

¹¹ WOW! A cardset for collective creativity on the performing arts

shaped by the director's invisible hand. The unified vision is so seamless that the work of composition disappears. In redirecting practice, the frame becomes visible. The audience can see the bricolage, the improvisation, the gaps. When the live feed cuts out, I type a message on the screen: "Now the video is not live. They shut the blinds on the lighthouse". When a performer is unwell, their vulnerability is present. When the fight choreography breaks because performers have left, the ensemble adapts and the audience witnesses the adaptation. And this visibility is the point of it all, not a failure. Because when the frame is visible, the audience's own role in the production becomes visible too. They are not passive recipients of a unified vision. They are active constructors of meaning, editors in real time, composing their own experience from the simultaneous material offered.

The aesthetic dimension of redirected practice is not the absence of choice. It is the distribution of choice across multiple agents and multiple moments of decision. It is the aesthetic that emerges when a director refuses the comfort of invisible control and instead becomes visibly, vulnerably, imperfectly present in the work. And it is beautiful not despite its brokenness, but precisely, because of it.

4.1.5.2. *Embodying the Contradiction*

This practice of orchestrating uncertainties rather than authoring visions is not something I fully understand even now. It sits in tension with fundamental aspects of classical director training. I was taught that a director must have vision, must know what the work is "about", must guide the ensemble toward coherent meaning. And I carry that training in my body; I cannot simply unlearn it. Nor do I need to, I suppose.

And yet: in *Two More Days*, I found that the work was more coherent, more meaningful, because I was not imposing a pre-authored vision. The vision emerged from the friction between the classical text, the ensemble's particular bodies and histories, the sea's material presence, the geographical context, the institutional constraints, and the distributed attention of the audience. This is what I mean by conducting uncertainties: creating the conditions for a vision to emerge that no single person could have authored. And if I would not have the classical training I would not have an idea on how to conduct anything.

It is important to say: I did not stop directing. I did not become a "facilitator" in the sense of someone who simply holds space and lets whatever happens happen. I made countless choices: about which scenes to keep, how to frame the messages on screen,

how to work with the performers, how to interpret different theories, how to respond when someone left, how to be present on stage in a way that made the structure visible rather than hiding it. I still wielded considerable power.

But I wielded that power differently. I hope I did. I tried to exercise it not through invisible shaping but through visible navigation. I tried to use my position as director not to impose an outcome but to create the conditions within which outcomes could emerge that surprised me and possibly others: the performers, the Baltic Sea, and for the audience. I was moving toward what I might call "the revelation of presence": the director appears as a situated, vulnerable and imperfect participant among other human and non-human agents, rather than as an invisible authority outside the work.

This work aligns with what Tuija Kokkonen (Kokkonen, 2017) calls the practice of "visibility ethics": the recognition that power relations are always present in theatre-making, and that the ethical task is not to pretend they are not present but to make them visible so that they can be negotiated, contested, and transformed.

Was I successful? That is a question I cannot answer, because "success" implies a predetermined standard against which the work can be measured. What I can say is that the work that emerged was neither what I had envisioned nor what the ensemble could have created alone, nor what the sea "wanted" (if it can be said to want anything). It was what emerged from the collision and collaboration of all these forces, mediated by a director who was imperfectly and desperately trying to conduct the uncertainties rather than resolve them.

And perhaps that imperfection, that desperation, that visible struggle is more honest, more true, more ecological than the seamless coherence of classical theatre.

4.2. Possibly the Last Partial Conclusion: The Core of the Research

My supervisor's question, "How did you redirect the director within yourself?" turned out to be asking about the very heart of this thesis. The artistic research was not primarily about creating a novel form of theatre or developing new techniques for working with natural non-humans. Those were secondary to the fundamental question: how can a director trained in classical European traditions reconceive their relationship to power, vision, and authorship?

The answer, as embodied in *Two More Days*, is: partially, imperfectly, and only by embracing confusion, vulnerability, and the possibility of failure. It is an answer that sits in permanent tension with classical director training. It is an answer that may not be reproducible or even fully articulable. And it is an answer that I do not think I have fully understood even now, as I write these words, this thesis for making it to the title of *Directing mastering*. Ironically.

What I do understand is that I will not direct the way I did before. And that the process of learning to conduct uncertainties has changed not only my professional practice but my fundamental understanding of what it means to hold authority, to shape the world, to work with others in common cause.

This redirection and reorientation of the director's role from author to conductor, from visionary to navigator, from controller to orchestrator of forces beyond control, is perhaps the most important artistic research of this thesis. I am not able to fully document or explain it. When I release control, I can enact it, again and again, in the specific contexts where human and non-human agencies meet, where meaning emerges from collision, or gentle touch, rather than composition, where the director's task is not to achieve a vision but to learn, in real time, and it becomes possible when control is released.

5. ANALYSIS

How Working With the Baltic Sea Transforms Theatre and Thinking?

5.1. WHAT CHANGES WHEN THE SEA DOES NOT MEET HUMAN EXPECTATION?

As the reader might remember that then pages of Shakespeare were submerged for an hour in the Baltic Sea at the Otaniemi pier in front of the Laajalahti sauna, they emerged unexpectedly pristine. No salt-stained margins. No creases mapping tidal pressure. The ink did not bleed into the watermarks. The text was not rendered illegible. The sea did not mark the text as anticipated. This indifference to human expectations of dissolution or damage was the first encounter with natural non-human agency operating by its own temporal and material logic, unconcerned about whether it cooperated with artistic intent.

This opening gesture established what would become the rehearsal's organising principle: that non-human forces operate according to their own agency, and theatre can choose to work with that agency rather than against it.

5.1.1. Example 1: The Submerged Text - Encountering Non-Human Indifference

Let's contemplate the scene a last time. The pages lay submerged for one hour. No dramatic transformation occurred. Upon retrieval, the text was as legible as before. No changes were made. I had anticipated a material change; instead, I encountered material stability, paradoxically indicating non-human agency. The sea had not cooperated; neither had it destroyed. It had simply proceeded according to its own logic and made a difference.

This unexpected indifference opened a different kind of knowledge. Rather than treating non-human elements as either resources (serviceable to intention) or obstacles (to be overcome), the work encountered them as agents with their own temporal and material rhythms. The pages suggested that the non-human neither serves nor opposes human artistic vision; it simply exists in its own register of time and possibility.

Vincent Roumagnac's distinction between acclimatization and "reacclimatization" illuminates this encounter. Acclimatization - the colonial practice of bending foreign environments to serve human logic - assumes human mastery. Reacclimatization, by contrast, suggests allowing human systems to learn how to inhabit spaces not designed for human control. I see the work's response to the sea's indifference as a form of reacclimatization: accepting that pages might or might not change, that the sea's intervention or non-intervention was not a failure of the artistic design but evidence of non-human agency. The text would proceed not in spite of this encounter, but with it.

In rehearsal, ensemble members engaged with the submerged material differently than they would have with conventional scripts. The pages themselves became witnesses to encounter without visible damage; they testified to material exchange. When performers worked with knowledge of this particular occurrence, they carried awareness that the text had been to sea and returned. This awareness altered how bodies moved through scenes, how attention was distributed, and how meaning could form. Not through intellectual recognition, but through embodied presence with material that had travelled.

5.1.2. Example 2: Meditation as Epistemological Shift - Embodied Knowledge

The rehearsal process abandoned traditional table work, skipping textual analysis and character or thematic mapping. Instead, the ensemble practised structured meditation: sessions of fifteen to thirty minutes, five times weekly in both the studio and the performance space. This approach echoes Riko Saatsi's (Balevičiūtė, et al., 2022) argument in "Notes on the Director's Body" that directing often overemphasises the mind and neglects the "living body", where perception and decision-making occur. Saatsi sees the body as a "constant resonance organ for emotions" and perception as "something we do" through bodily action, not just inside the head. These meditations shifted table work into the body, serving as the main space where sensing, affective responses, and shared attention to the Baltic Sea developed as knowledge.

I guided these sessions, drawing, as mentioned earlier, on the Headspace application alongside self-directed practice. My personal meditative work occurred at varying distances from the Baltic Sea (from awareness of its direction to sitting by its edge), exploring diverse approaches to embodied engagement with place. The aim was not to understand the sea intellectually but to achieve material-sensory proximity: bringing the

Baltic Sea closer through embodied practice, allowing the body to absorb its presence before the mind could interpret it.

This methodological choice constituted an epistemological repositioning: a claim about how knowledge emerges in theatre. Rather than the conventional sequence - *analysis* → *understanding* → *embodied execution*, the rehearsal moved from embodied *listening* → *sensation* → *performed presence*. Una Ørleifsdóttir (Balevičiūtė, et al., 2022) argues that intuitive decision-making is not a mystical gift but a developable knowledge practice, refined through preparation and embodied attention. Meditation created conditions where this intuitive knowledge could emerge, where bodies could register complexity that intellectual analysis could not fully contain.

When ensemble members entered the rehearsal space after meditation, they carried sensation over interpretation. For example, the memory of water, the experience of waves or the indifference of natural forces to human presence. No one explained these sensations; bodies simply held them. When scenes were staged, they emerged from this embodied presence rather than psychological realism or rational character development.

As mentioned in chapter 3, Una Chaudhuri (Chaudhuri & Hughes, 2013) theorises performance as a site where more-than-human worlds can be staged; not represented, but made present through embodied encounter. The meditation practice created conditions for this: ensemble bodies became permeable to non-human presence through temporal, spatial, and embodied proximity to the sea.

In performance, this attunement became recognisable to audiences. The ensemble moved with a particular quality; not the quality of actors executing predetermined blocking, but the quality of human bodies remaining present to conditions exceeding their control. Different audience members experienced it differently. This texture differed from conventional theatre not in clarity of meaning but in the grain of embodied attention.

5.1.3. Example 3: The Ice Hole Discovery - Death Contaminating the Work

Three weeks before opening, my meeting point with the Baltic Sea at Otaniemi near the Aalto sauna became infamous. An ice hole (in Finnish, *avanto*), where I had my closest encounters with the sea for meditation or chats, and where I submerged the text prior to

rehearsals, had become the site of death during rehearsals. A 36-year-old person had died there; their body had been recovered (Peltonen, 2025). And this is the actual death I wrote about in the earlier chapters.

When I shared this knowledge with the ensemble members, knowledge arrived not as abstract information but as material contamination. This could have been, but was not, content for intellectual processing. This was weight entering bodies, carried forward with resolution.

The ensemble collectively acknowledged the loss; everyone had their space for grief, (even not knowing the deceased human personally) processing, but there was no transformation of suffering into artistic meaning. The rehearsal process refused these gestures. We had no formal group circles formed or therapeutic intervention. We made no attempt to aestheticise the death. Instead, the knowledge settled into bodies and remained there, present.

What changed was nearly visible in its subtlety. We carried an altered physical presence bearing the actual weight of knowing they were working with material that was in the same space where someone later died. This knowledge did not render scenes psychologically "tragic". It translated more as a sense of gravity, an atmospheric pressure unrelated to theatrical intention, inseparable from the material fact that death had marked the material and the ensemble inhabited its echo.

Judith Halberstam (Balevičiūtė, et al., 2022) theorises failure as an opening to knowledge that success excludes. Failure, loss, and contamination from real suffering introduce understanding impossible through the smooth execution of artistic vision. Here, the "failure" to compartmentalise art from death, or more precisely the refusal to perform as though death had not occurred, became a deep epistemic encounter. The ensemble and I allowed feelings and thoughts arising from this discovery to shift creation itself, not to overcome loss but to remain accountable to it.

In performance, audiences might sense this gravity without knowing its source. They might feel a presence in the air that corresponds to nothing explicitly staged. This unlocatable weight, presence without explanation, opens space where spectators' own mortality and contingency can resonate. Theatre becomes not a protected space from real loss, but an affective and affected place where real loss can be acknowledged without resolution or redemption.

5.1.4. Example 4: Departures and Redistribution

Departures within the team occurred at two distinct moments, each requiring different creative responses and revealing different aspects of what happens when directing must accommodate forces beyond its control.

Two ensemble members departed before intensive rehearsals began. Both had been present during the workshop phase and participated in text reading. Their roles as dramaturgy creators meant their input had already contaminated the creative thinking in the collaborative exploration. Their departure meant their dramaturgy remained embedded in the work while their performance bodies did not. The ensemble that entered rehearsals thus carried ideas shaped by absent presences, a dramaturgical *haunting*, so to say.

The final departure occurred four working days before the premiere. A performer exercised an accepted choice: the ensemble had established that departure was permissible, that any person could choose to leave without judgment or penalty. This performer made that choice. The ensemble reacted with understanding; the rule had been implemented, and thus the creative handling remained possible. What could have been a crisis became material for continuation.

How this became visible in practice: roles shifted among remaining performers. Rather than the departed performer's role disappearing, it was redistributed across other bodies. Some performers took on a greater physical presence, filling gaps through body and/or reading lines from the script when performance was impossible. For moments when choreography could not accommodate the remaining ensemble size, I stepped into the performance space physically and vocally, reading absent lines into a microphone while simultaneously resetting stage elements, moving the screen from one side of the performance space to the other or helping with costumes.

As analysed earlier, this intervention made directorial presence material and visible rather than invisible. The audience heard directors voice, not as disembodied authority but as embodied labor filling spatial and temporal gaps. The scenes, originally designed for six actors, continued with five bodies and my own mediated presence. The audience witnessed the actual labour of adaptation. They were presented not the fiction of seamless execution of a predetermined vision, but theatre's actual condition: fragile, adaptive, dependent on bodies showing up and remaining responsive to what emerges. Authority was distributed not through theoretical commitment but through material

necessity: ensemble filled physical and sonic gaps; conditions interrupted and required constant responsiveness. The apparatus itself became a character in the unfolding. We deliberately chose not to adopt the strategy of the "work in process" or "still rehearsing" format (an approach frequently staged within postdramatic¹² performance) but instead treated chaos, contingency, and accidents as agents of a finalised performance.

(Throughout this thesis I have refrained from using postdramatic because I align with the idea that *"Post-drama may be in danger of becoming a buzzword that no longer opens up new perspectives – as it did when it first emerged in the early 2000s"*

(Numminen, Kilpi, & Hyrkkänen, 2018) (translated by me).




Robert Schuster (Balevičiūtė, et al., 2022) distinguishes between *impositions* and *proposals*. An imposition demands execution; a proposal invites response and remains open to being wrong. For example, the original six actor scenes constituted a proposal, testable through ensemble work. Departure rendered that proposal obsolete; new proposals emerged from constraint. The director's presence on stage was not an imposition of vision onto the ensemble, but a practical response to material reality. Authority became circulated rather than centralised, visible rather than concealed.

5.1.5. Example 5: Living Organism Exercise - Embodied Discovery of Form

The ensemble engaged with a particular experience exercise documented in exercise cards (Kerschewicz & Perner-Wilson, 2024). Using this structured exploration, performers played with stage design elements, specifically the fabrics that would constitute the set, and experimented with handheld lights for the stage lighting design possibilities. From this embodied play emerged an unexpected formal discovery: a living-organism image resembling the sea, the land, the perpetual movement, a pillar and a lighthouse.

¹² Postdramatic theatre (Lehman, 1999) does not refer to a specific style, but is rather a descriptive concept that illustrates a number of different phenomena that are related to each other through certain similarities. Typical features of post-dramatic theatre include, for example, the changing role of text in the performance as a whole, an emphasis on the intrinsic value of the performance, and the abandonment of fictional characters or the representation of a fictional world, either partially or completely. Visual theatre, duration-based performances, various forms of documentary theatre, and participatory performances can all be considered examples of post-dramatic theatre. (Numminen, Kilpi, & Hyrkkänen, 2018) Translated from Finnish and edited with the help of multiple AI agents.

Detecting IS Connecting

 4-20
  40-60+
  space, objects, paper, pens, paint, music, headphones

HOW-TO Detecting: Explore the space, in silence, focusing on attending to and detecting ● Don't force anything to happen, just be with an open focus ● Free exploration, individually, eyes open/closed; observe, touch, play, move, breathe ● Clear decisions: always take 3 sec when deciding. Detect, 3 sec, move on ● To signal a desire to connect with someone, raise your hands in the air. Make eye contact and silently agree on an activity together, such as movement, listening to music, or observing ● To move on, stop the action and express it silently. Group Evaluation in a circle: ● Sharing: Individually go to a place where you found an interesting connection. Share out loud words, sentences, any reflections that come to you. Writing: In a journal/big shared paper. Write

down your reflections in a free flow.

TIPS&TRICKS The 3 sec can be longer ● Be influenced by the space and its content and allow it to bleed into creativity

VARIATIONS Draw the reflections individually or as a group ● Find gestures for words/sentences from the reflection. Make them a repeatable score ● In pairs, A shows exploring the physical score for a few minutes, B writes a text of any kind (poetic, monologue, dialogue etc.)

CREDITS Bergdís Júlía Jóhannsdóttir

This image became central to stage design and to the production's relationship with the lighthouse feed, where the camera was set up inside the lighthouse and the lighthouse itself was never visible. Rather than the lighthouse arriving as a conceptual element or technical addition imposed from above, it emerged from ensemble play with materials and light. The "living organism" quality suggested that the lighthouse was not a fixed structure but a presence, something breathing and responding, alive. The lighthouse feed, when integrated into performance, would not function as external data imposed on theatrical narrative but as a continuation of this living quality the ensemble had discovered through bodily engagement with materials.

Carl Lavery (Frieze, 2017) theorises that performance emerges not from predetermined vision imposed on materials, but from sustained attention to what materials offer. When performers engage with fabric, light, and spatial possibilities without a predetermined outcome, materials reveal their own possibilities. They have their own logic. The "living organism" image exemplifies this principle: it was not designed in advance but discovered through embodied exploration. Once discovered, it became an organising principle for the entire visual field.

5.2. THEATRE WRITTEN ON WIND

5.2.1. Instability, Contamination, and Responsive Becoming

Peter Brook writes: "theatre is always a self-destructive art, and it is always written on the wind" (Brook, 1996). (Coincidentally, in year one in my undergraduate theatre directing studies, we had to choose sections of texts from Peter Brook, and this phrase belonged to the section that I chose). This metaphor can be read as an affirmation (theatre's impermanence is where its honest power lives). This production practised accepting instability as a permanent condition and organising the rehearsal process around learning to remain responsive within it.

Rather than organising towards readiness (chaos → clarity → stability), the work was organised around responsiveness (clarity → openness → intentional incompleteness/possibility of chaos). The work deliberately resisted being reduced to a repeatable artefact. Each performance remained contingent on the conditions of that particular moment. We did not experience the failure of finishing; rather, we adopted a different temporal and epistemological stance towards what theatre can be.

5.2.1.1. Three Types of Instability

Material Instability: When Conditions Are Indifferent to Cooperation

I return again and again to the bedrocks of this research – the seas indifference to submerged pages. Ice holes closed where I meditated. Performers departed without replacement. Weather shifted the light- summer clarity giving way to autumn darkness, giving way to winter cold. Equipment operated dependently on daytime hours (the lighthouse feed stopped early in the evening performances). The bodies got sick. The rehearsal timeline fractured under unexpected demands.

Rather than treating these as failures of preparation or obstacles to overcome, the work welcomed them as creative agents. When conditions have their own agency, when they force transformation, the work's stability collapses. There is only negotiation. The ensemble had planned particular blocking; material conditions interrupted. We had imagined particular emotional registers, but, for example, actual mental and physical exhaustion demanded a different breath, a laughter instead of a tear, a different

movement. We had scheduled rehearsals according to human availability; performer availability demanded different rhythms.

As mentioned earlier, Vincent Roumagnac's understanding of the stage as milieu as an environment to be inhabited rather than a centre to be controlled, offers a useful framework for thinking beyond theatrical mastery. In this perspective, material conditions do not frame action but actively shape what becomes possible. This sensibility aligns closely with Saana Lavaste's (Balevičiūtė, et al., 2022) borrowed Japanese concept of wabi-sabi, where the aesthetic beauty of imperfection and impermanence articulates what the rehearsal was practising. In Japanese aesthetics influenced by Zen Buddhism, incompleteness and transience are not failures but meaningful aspects of beauty. A worn branch, a broken vessel, materials marked by time and weather become beautiful precisely because they testify to contingency. Theatre written on wind enacts this: the marks of contingency become the most beautiful parts because they testify to what is actually true. Impermanence creates acute beauty.

In performance, these material marks remained visible. The pages, having journeyed to the sea and returned. The gaps in the ensemble where performers had been. The visible exhaustion and confusion of bodies working under material constraint. Rather than hiding these traces, the work made them central to what audiences encountered.

Relational Instability: When Systems Respond Continuously

When the ensemble gathered after each of the three pre-opening performances the following six performances for informal feedback, stability dissolved into circulation. Audience members and the ensemble shared what they had witnessed, what surprised them, what confused them, what they liked or disliked, what they agree with and what not. These observations became working material. Rather than feedback as external judgment, this functioned as input that reshaped the system.

We performed differently in subsequent shows because they had heard themselves reflected through another perception. We allowed ourselves to be shaped by this hearing, not in defensive correction but in genuine responsiveness.

This responsiveness occurred gradually, subtly, like seasonal shifts in the environment rather than a dramatic overnight transformation. As I wrote in my notes, "as we were cooperating with nature the dramatic shifts do not happen overnight. We were able to

notice subtle shifts as one might notice in the environment over the seasons". Between performances, the ensemble noticed small adjustments: a gesture landing differently, a moment of deliberate opacity emerging, an unexpected clarity arriving. Rather than radical restructuring, the work registered continuous micro-responsiveness.

Johannes Maria Schmit (Balevičiūtė, et al., 2022) theorises the shift from *Kritik* (director's authoritative notes reshaping performance from a position of authority) to *Feedback* (circular communication where information flows continuously back into the system and reshapes it). When information circulates in circles rather than a top-down hierarchy, what anyone in the circle perceives matters. Audience perception reshapes ensemble; ensemble response shapes subsequent audience experience; director's role transforms from imposing adjustments to witnessing circulation.

In this system, instability indicates health. The work is receiving information and adjusting appropriately. The performance changing each night and the structural shift of the performance before the premiere could be treated as a problem in conventional theatre, but here they become the sign of aliveness. Stability would indicate the system has closed itself off from input.

In performance, audiences witnessed this living responsiveness. Performers were not executing the predetermined vision. They remained in conversation with each other, with conditions, and with the audience. Some nights this conversation moved quickly; other nights slowly. Some nights it felt resolved; other nights deliberately unresolved. The performance was not repeatable artifact but living encounter, contingent on the specific conditions, the specific audience, the specific night.

Theoretical Instability: When Multiple Epistemologies Coexist

The text refused to cohere into a singular narrative. Shakespeare's *The Tempest*, a European colonial narrative, sat alongside Aimé Césaire's *A Tempest*, a deliberate postcolonial intervention that explicitly names colonialism, enslavement, and the violence of European expansion. These texts do not synthesise. They interrupt each other. Prospero's European magic contradicted Vanapagan's nature-logic, Joukahainen's enslavement and Öl, the Saaremaa island itself.

Aimé Césaire's *A Tempest* constitutes a fundamental postcolonial refusal of synthesis. Rather than adapting Shakespeare's plot to include voices of the colonised, Césaire stages colonialism itself as the problem. Ariel remains enslaved but conscious of

enslavement; Caliban names oppression explicitly; Prospero appears not as a melancholic ruler but as a colonial authority maintaining domination through magic (or what amounts to technological/military superiority). The play does not resolve these contradictions. It maintains them in productive friction. By introducing Césaire's decolonial epistemology into this work, it enacted a similar refusal: human (European) narrative and non-human (Baltic/Indigenous) narrative, colonising logic and decolonised consciousness, would remain in tension rather than resolution.

Alongside textual contradiction came mythological and temporal contradiction. Norse figures (Joukahainen) and Estonian figures (Vanapagan) interrupted the European narrative. Real-time video contradicted the theatrical representation of "the sea". These multiple registers operated simultaneously without synthesis. The audience could not settle into a single understanding; they had to practice holding multiple, contradictory truths.

Now back to Roumagnac and his polyphonic, pluriscalar, multiagential take on ecodramaturgy. Multiple voices speak at once, none subordinate. Multiple timescales operate simultaneously: rehearsal time, tidal time, geological time, and real-time audience observation. Multiple agencies act: human intention, sea's agency, performer availability, weather conditions, audience perception. These do not resolve into one story. They remain in productive tension.

Daniel Quinn (Quinn, 1992) critiques monolithic thinking, and it works here too. He critiques the assumption that one worldview, one way of organising reality, is true and all others must conform to it. Western civilisation, Quinn argues, carries this invisible monolithic assumption: that civilisation's way is the right way; all other ways must eventually become like ours. This assumption shapes narrative (one protagonist, one central conflict, one resolution), politics (Western governance as a model, which nowadays reculminates in its dark absurdity), and human relations to "nature" ("nature" as a resource for human use).

Theatre, inheriting from Western narrative traditions, has been mainly reproducing this monolithic thinking invisibly. One protagonist, one central conflict, one meaning. Everything serves the main story. *Two More Days* insisted on holding multiple, contradictory truths without resolution, enacting a different epistemology. Not "how do we resolve contradictions into unified meaning?" but "what becomes possible when we remain in contradiction?" Thinking here of Donna Haraway's "Staying with the Trouble" ... The answer, practically, was that audiences witnessed something closer to

actual reality. In actual reality, multiple epistemologies coexist. Colonial history and decolonial wisdom inhabit the same place. European magic and Baltic nature spirits share the same waters. Human intention and tidal indifference operate simultaneously. No more nature-culture bifurcation. I do believe that theatre that maintains these contradictions is more honest than theatre that packages complexity into a neat narrative, and might be even more reachable since it is here and now.

"Not-Ready" as Epistemological Stance

The conventional timeline of theatre moves from chaos toward clarity toward stability. Rehearsals begin fragmented and unclear. Through weeks of work, the director shapes material toward a vision. By opening night, the work is "finished", repeatable, polished, and stable. The production can then tour, live in the permanent repertory of theatre history. Stability is the goal; readiness is the condition where all uncertainties have been resolved.

This work organised around a different timeline. Again, not chaos → clarity → stability, but clarity → openness → intentional incompleteness, and the possibility of chaos. Final rehearsals did not move toward "getting ready" but toward deepening capacity to remain responsive. By opening night, the work was unstable, contingent, permeable to input. It was not finished, it was alive.

This refusal of closure contains three distinct epistemological refusals:

First: Refusal to close into a repeatable artefact. Conventional theatre aims to create a repeatable object. Each *Two More Days* performance was unique, shaped by that night's conditions. No two performances were identical. Rather than treating this as a failure of consistency, the work embraced it as honesty. The performance was alive because it could never be repeated.

Second: Refusal of certainty. The director does not know what will emerge. Ensemble does not have a secure understanding to fall back on. The audience does not know what they are about to experience. This uncertainty became material itself. Director, ensemble, and audience remained genuinely present because none of them knew what would happen.

Third: Refusal of mastery. The director cannot claim to understand the Baltic Sea, to represent it fully, to extract meaning from it that resolves its complexity into art. The

director must remain attuned, responsive, and uncertain. It is a deepening of artistic honesty. Rather than claiming mastery through the terms "I have understood the sea and transmit that understanding through theatre", the work would claim something different, would claim difference: "I remain in conversation with what I do not fully understand, and that conversation is the work itself".

In performance, these refusals became visible. The work did not feel polished, not because it was not "finished", but because it was alive with all the imperfections and accidents of life. The work felt indeed alive to me because it remained genuinely open to what each night brought. Audience members said they sensed this aliveness as the quality of humans remaining present to conditions they could not control. This work achieved aliveness through acceptance of what remained open.

5.3. REIMAGINING THEATRE AND THE HUMAN

5.3.1. Through Genuine Non-Human Co-Presence

Western theatre inherits a profound and largely invisible anthropocentrism: the assumption that humans are the subject, non-humans the backdrop. Stories are told by humans, about humans, to humans. From Aristotle onward, theatre has organised itself around the human protagonist with human intentions, human conflict, human resolution, human catharsis. "Nature" – as humanly built opposite to the human – appears only when the plot requires an obstacle in a form of a storm to shipwreck the hero, a forest to shelter the fugitive. Even when "nature" is central to a work, it functions primarily as a resource to human meaning-making. In Shakespeare's *The Tempest* and Aimé Césaire's *A Tempest*, the sea exists as the problem Prospero must solve. The island exists as a resource and backdrop for Prospero's magic. Miranda exists in relation to Prospero's plans. Ariel exists in service to Prospero's will. Even so-called nature itself becomes enslaved to only human narrative.

What becomes possible when theatre stops organising around this hierarchy? When a natural non-human agent becomes a genuine presence with its own claims on attention, not a resource or backdrop or metaphor? This requires transforming not just content but form itself. It means dismantling the structural inheritance that keeps humans at the centre and everything else orbiting their meaning. It means accepting that human intentions will be interrupted, reshaped, and contaminated by forces beyond control. It means learning to remain present and responsive to what exceeds human understanding.

5.3.1.1. *Dimension 1: Culture-Nature Relation Transforms*

Conventionally, theatre invites audiences to consume a human-authored world. The sea functions as backdrop, obstacle, or metaphor serving human story. This work chose differently: to stage the Baltic Sea as co-presence with its own logic, indifference, and claims. This required a fundamental shift in what could appear on stage and how it could be understood.

The lighthouse feed from Bengtskär constituted the dramaturgical mechanism enacting this shift. The feed operated live or pre-recorded, showing the actual Baltic Sea at that moment. While ensemble performed narratives about the sea, real data as temperature, wind, atmosphere appeared simultaneously on stage. This was not poetic rendering; it was data in its own register. The sea "making difference" in its own language, not human language. Audiences faced a choice they could not resolve: attend to human narrative OR attend to non-human presence. Both occupied shared stage space. Neither is subordinate to the other. The human story happens here; the sea's presence happens here; they share space but not meaning.

The proxy performer(s) for the Baltic Sea was not representing the sea; that would be impossible. They were contaminated by the sea. They spoke as humans touched by what they could not fully know. This proxy differs from direct representation. It acknowledges the limit: we cannot speak for the sea; we can only speak as beings who have been listening.

In performance, audiences experienced the sea not as backdrop to human drama but as co-presence with its own claim on attention. Sea had no narrative and human meaning-making was no supreme. What emerged was not resolution but genuine encounter: challenging, asymmetrical, ongoing.

5.3.1.2. *Dimension 2: Directorial Authority Redistributes*

When the director steps into gaps left by departing performers, authority becomes visible and distributed. As the reader might know by now, this director is not an omniscient architect designing all meaning; instead, it has become one presence among multiple presences: ensemble, audience, conditions, the sea itself. It is honesty about what directing can be, not a weakness.

Conventional directing accumulates power: director knows the vision; shapes all creative decisions; gives notes that reshape ensemble toward that vision; controls what audiences perceive. The director remains hidden, the invisible architect. Theatre appears to emerge naturally, not through directorial intervention. This invisibility is where power lives. The more invisible the director's hand, the more complete the control. When are the predetermined actions natural?

This work inverted this. The director became visible, stepping into empty spaces, bearing witness to what emerges, remaining responsive rather than controlling. This intervention made directorial presence material and visible. The audience heard the director's voice, not as disembodied authority, but as embodied labour filling spatial and temporal.

As mentioned earlier, Robert Schuster argues that directors should work with proposals rather than impositions. A proposal is testable; it invites response; it remains open to being wrong. When the director proposes the authority distributes, and the ensemble has genuine creative responsibility, not to execute the vision, but to respond to the proposal with their own agency. Conditions have agency too. The sea proposes through its presence; the director responds; the ensemble negotiates; audiences perceive and feed that perception back.

This distribution happens not through democratic gesture but through material necessity. The director cannot give notes that will restore the original vision because departures have made that vision impossible. The director must listen to what the ensemble is actually capable of holding and remain responsive to that. The director becomes a witness of circulation rather than the originator of meaning.

In performance, this distribution became visible. Audiences watched the director's body in the space, holding attention, witnessing. They watched the ensemble's attention including both each other and the director and the visible empty places. They sensed that no single author controlled what was happening. Instead, multiple agencies (director, ensemble, audience, conditions) were negotiating in real time. This paradoxically created powerful work. Audiences were witnessing not a representation but an actual holding of space, fragile, contingent, honest.

5.3.1.3. *Dimension 3: What Humans Become in Multispecies Relation*

I was taught Stanislavski and worked (and will probably continue to work) under the assumption that actors draw on personal emotional memory to embody character. This rehearsal process inverted this fundamental assumption. Rather than personal psychology becoming a vehicle for character, the ensemble drew on sea-body memory, on knowledge of death, on the sensation of conditions beyond their control. Reaching towards feeling the sea, the place, the loss, and the cold. And the following sensation became the medium through which to perform.

This means humans are not sovereign interpreters of the world; they are permeable beings shaped by what they encounter. Donna Haraway (Haraway, 2016) calls acknowledging that humans are entangled with forces beyond their control, and that this entanglement is the condition from which responsibility emerges, not something to be overcome as "staying with the trouble". The performers in this work became permeable. Cold and water on stage shaped how they moved. Knowledge of death shaped how they stood. The sea's indifference shaped what they could claim to know. They were not separate observers interpreting the world; they were beings being reshaped by the world.

Annette Arlander's (Arlander, 2015) research on *performing landscape* offers language for this shift. When a performer's body stands in genuine conversation with place, when the body listens to landscape, is reshaped by it, becomes a medium through which place can be felt, something changes fundamentally. The performer is no longer representing the landscape; the performer is being reshaped by it. Knowledge emerges through embodied encounter.

In this work, ensemble bodies became media through which the sea could be felt. Not representations of the sea (that would be impossible; the sea exceeds human representation), but bodies touched by the sea's presence, informed by meditation on conditions beyond intention. In performance, audiences witnessed something in the performers' presence that did not correspond to anything explicitly staged. This feeling of presence without explanation became a space where their own contingency could echo.

5.3.1.4. *Dimension 4: Knowledge Production Transforms*

Meditation as dramaturgical practice (rather than text analysis at a table) suggests that intuition can function as developable knowledge. Returning to the Una Órleifsdóttir (Balevičiūtė, et al., 2022) argument that intuitive decision-making is not mystical gift but knowledge practice, refined through preparation and embodied attention. When ensemble listened to the sea with bodies while being intellectually engaged with the work, different knowing emerged, differently rigorous.

Emilija Veselova's (Veselova, 2023) framework of transdisciplinary research indicates that approaching complex problems requires multiple perspectives. No single discipline or way of knowing is sufficient. Contamination from outside viewpoints, like ecology, Indigenous wisdom traditions, and the sea itself, improves understanding. Rather than approaching the text purely through literary analysis, the ensemble approached it at the same time also through marine observation, through meditation, through embodied listening. Knowledge emerged not from theory alone but from embodied encounter with actual conditions.

In performance, this different kind of knowledge became visible in a particular quality of presence and reactions to it. The ensemble remained present and open to sensation, intuition, and conditions of the moment. Different presence, moment by moment, responsive to what arose.

5.3.2. Four Implications: What This Could Mean for Theatre and Humanity

5.3.2.1. *Implication 1: Anthropocentrism Is Not Inevitable*

Because this work staged a human narrative in genuine tension with the real sea, it suggests that theatre can de-centre from exclusive human meaning-making. This carries significance. For 2,500 years, Western theatre has operated on the assumption that anything that appears on stage must relate to a human passions. What becomes possible when that assumption is suspended?

In this production, the sea made a difference with its presence in its own language, indifferent to whether humans understood or appreciated it. Theatre potentially became a space where multispecies coexistence could be practised. Not represented as a concept; not understood as an intellectual exercise, but experienced as an actual,

difficult, asymmetrical coexistence. The sea was there. Humans were there. Neither centred. Neither erased. Both claiming attention.

This opens what theatre might become. Not an escape into human-centred fantasy, but a practice ground for multispecies relations. Not a solution to the ecological crisis (that might exceed the theatre's reach), but a rehearsal for what different relationality could feel like. If humans could learn to share stage space with non-human agents, if theatre could stage genuine encounters rather than human domination, perhaps other forms of coexistence would become imaginable, and even enacted.

5.3.2.2. *Implication 2: Directorial Authority Can Redistribute Without Disappearing*

The director in this model does not vanish. Instead, the director's role transforms. Robert Schuster (Balevičiūtė, et al., 2022) insists that directors remain accountable for their choices: "I can explain why I made this proposal; I cannot control what emerges from it".

This distributes creative responsibility: no single person authors the work; authorship becomes collective, contingent, and ongoing. The director proposes, the ensemble responds, conditions interrupt, audiences perceive, and feed perception back. Authority flows in circles rather than top-down. Everyone in the circle has agency. Everyone's perception matters. Directors trained in this way do not disappear. They become more skilled, more attentive, more genuinely responsible.

5.3.2.3. *Implication 3: Instability Is Realistic, Not Pathological*

In times of climate disruption and cascading system instability, unpredictability is not an aberration; it is a normative condition. Heatwaves, floods, droughts, and ecosystem collapse... these are not exceptional events but ongoing conditions humans must learn to inhabit. Theatre that rehearses instability and practices remaining responsive when plans collapse may offer something pragmatically valuable.

Saana Lavaste's wabi-sabi-oriented aesthetic teaches acceptance of impermanence as beautiful. Judith Halberstam's work on queer failure teaches that knowledge emerges through the collapse of expected structures. Theatre that embraces these approaches potentially becomes a training ground for the real-life conditions humans face.

Audiences leave not comforted by the fantasy of control but equipped with embodied practice in remaining present when certainty fails.

Two More Days (and this written part) attempted to open this. Each performance was different because the conditions were different. No amount of planning could make the work repeatable. Rather than treating this as a failure, the work treated it as honesty. The world is not repeatable. Theatre that accepts this appears more realistic than theatre that pretends to eliminate contingency.

5.3.2.4. *Implication 4: The Non-Human Has Claims on Human Meaning-Making*

Finally, and perhaps most radically: non-human presences may have claims on human meaning-making that cannot be erased. Emilija Veselova's (Veselova, 2023) concept of natural non-human stakeholders reframes nature not as a resource but as an agent with its own needs and perspectives. The sea cannot be represented, cannot be fully understood, and cannot be made to serve human purposes without protest. What humans can do is acknowledge its presence, remain attentive to it, and accept uncertainty about it.

This may be the most honest gesture theatre can make: to stage not human triumph over the environment or human integration with environment, but human encounter with what exceeds human comprehension, including the nature within. The sea is not evil (does not need defeating) or good (does not need protecting). The sea is simply other. The sea follows its own logic, indifferent to human narrative and powerful in its agency. Theatre that remains present to this otherness, without trying to master or redeem it, opens space for sustainable relation.

In this work, the final scene enacts this. Prospero, originally written as the protagonist and remaining on the island, is left behind. Vanapagan, Joukahainen, Miranda, and others depart. Prospero remains on the island that is no longer his to command. He still has his magic, his power, but the non-human forces have exercised agency: they remain, but they depart. They do not serve his narrative. They have their own trajectory. Prospero survives not because he deserves to, not because the sea or the land has decided to be merciful, but because natural forces have their own reasons, their own indifference. "Two more days", Prospero says. Two more days to finish his work, to restore order, to make everything cohere. But the sea will not wait for Prospero's completion. This work enacts a different temporality: not the time of human narrative

moving towards resolution, but the time of tides, seasons, geological shifts. In this temporality, "two more days" becomes perpetual deferral, permanent incompleteness, the condition of remaining not-ready, even if Hamlet in the other tragedy says that "*The readiness is all*".

5.4. Conclusion: What Could Become Possible

When directing stops assuming omniscience and starts practicing responsiveness, theatre might transform. When theatre stops representing the world for human consumption and starts staging authentic encounters with what exceeds human control, what audiences witness may shift fundamentally. When humans stop understanding themselves as sovereign interpreters and acknowledge themselves as permeable beings in relation with forces beyond their intention, the very category "human" becomes available for reimagining.

These are not technical notes about blocking or staging technique. They are philosophical anchors about what directing, theatre, and human-ness can become. This work suggests that directing becomes less about controlling meaning and more about cultivating conditions in which meaning can emerge unpredictably. Theatre becomes less about representing the world and more about practising honest encounter. Humans become less sovereign subjects interpreting from a position of mastery and more responsible beings learning to remain present to what they do not understand and cannot control.

This work is not a solution to the ecological crisis unfolding around us. The Baltic Sea will not be saved by theatre performances. Humans will not suddenly learn to live differently because they watched performers interact with a sea stream and listen to the sea. But theatre at this historical moment might offer something valuable: practice. Rehearsal in what different relationality could feel like. Embodied training in how to remain present when certainty fails. Witness to the possibility that humans can share space with non-human forces without needing to master, represent, or fully understand them.

The work stands finally as an opening.

Not as an answer, but as a question.

Not as a destination, but as a practice.

Not as a finished product, but as permanent non-readiness.

The non-readiness being may be the honest condition of what theatre, and human among other beings, ask for.

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