

**THEATRE
ACADEMY**

X UNIARTS HELSINKI

2018

THESIS

Twining plants & cultivating the unexpected

Disruption through contemporary
theatre practices

KENNETH SIREN



MASTER'S DEGREE PROGRAMME IN THEATRE PEDAGOGY

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ABSTRACT

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<p>The aim of this research is to examine the role of disruption in an artistic process and the possibilities of utilising disruption in contemporary theatre. The theoretical starting point is John Dewey's view of disruption as the onset of all learning and problem solving, and hence crucial for all pedagogy and education. The two research questions are: (1) in what ways could disruption be made a more central, productive, and visible element of an artistic process by means of contemporary theatre practices, and (2) what kind of a theatre performance results from an artistic process which aims to provide the audience with experiences of disruption?</p> <p>The basis of this research is the artistic process of the devised theatre performance <i>Names of Plants</i>, as well as its four performances. A group of nine performers, aged 19–48, and myself as the director experimented with various contemporary theatre practices used to create potential for disruption for the participants. An added pedagogical dimension to the process was acknowledging the gender diversity in the group as some of the participants and the author do not identify with binary terms for gender. The resulting performance, staged in an art gallery, was devised from the ideas, elements, autobiographical accounts, and movement sequences which originated in these exercises and practices. The artistic outcomes were created with the aim that the members of the audience would have possibilities to experience disruptions. Material for this practice-led research was collected in a research diary, through questionnaires to the participants and by an exit questionnaire to the audience.</p> <p>The theatre practices used turned out to have different results in cultivating experiences of disruption. Particularly fruitful were exercises that didn't provide a clear model of a successful completion but rather allowed for the unexpected to happen. Both primarily physical and primarily verbal approaches seemed to produce disruptions and recollections of past moments of disruption. Other useful means included shifting the rehearsal structure multiple times. Some disruptions arose from the concrete aspects of the rehearsal situation itself; some of these fed the creativity while others caused tension and stress. Focusing on experiencing disruptions seems to have fostered a warm, caring atmosphere and acceptance towards mistakes, unfinishedness, and individuality.</p> <p>Aiming to provide the audience with experiences of disruption, <i>Names of Plants</i> combined a collage-like collection of elements with a unified, cohesive aesthetic quality throughout the performance. The elements were created through collecting autobiographical material from the participants as well as crafting scenic ideas from the experiences come upon during the exercises. The collage-like structure allowed for a diversity of autobiographical voices and was intended to provide opportunities for the audience to self-identify with, to recall past unexpected moments, and to experience new ones. The audience members found various unexpected elements in the performance, even in the kind of artistic context where people expect to be surprised.</p>			
<p>KEYWORDS</p> <p>disruption, John Dewey, theatre, contemporary theatre, performance, art, devising, autobiography, life stories, eventalisation, habits, embodied practices, non-binary gender, gender diversity, audience participation, participatory theatre, theatre in education, pedagogy, art education</p>			

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Picture on the cover:

Photograph of the performer: Yuko Takeda

Photographs of plant parts and editing by the author.

1 INTRODUCTION

Artistic processes in theatre enable a vast number of possibilities to learning, increasing understanding, and introducing and adopting new creative thought processes and skills. The ever-shifting theatre processes are characterised by intense concentration, repetition, and eventful physical action punctuated by laid-back moments of reflection and discussion, providing a unique profusion of means to accessing a large variety of experiences. Theatre in pedagogical setting opens up a space for dialogue, including comprehending the abilities, reactions and dimensions of one's own and others' alike. Identifying with someone else's experiences and story doesn't happen only through taking on a theatrical role (a character or simply the role of a performer); the thinking and creative efforts of others also enhance, challenge and become part of one's own experience. Unlike many of our everyday practices, theatre pedagogy embraces trying and failing, coincidence, error, and surprise, and invites and accepts them readily. While theatre easily glides between different types of text and speech, it is inextricably a bodily practice and form of art, working with the living body as its primary material, drawing from and productive of embodied knowledge.

This research sets out with the idea that we can enhance our understanding of the pedagogical and educational capacities of theatre by drawing from the work of John Dewey. One of the best known American philosophers of his day, Dewey wrote extensively on topics in philosophy of art, aesthetics, education, logic, and philosophy of science. During the past decades, his ideas and views have become of subject of increasing interest among philosophers, artists, and art educators, among others.

A central concept in discussions concerning Dewey's views of education and its connection to art is *disruption*. In Dewey's view, learning, inquiring and problem solving all begin with disruption, a feeling or an experience of uneasiness or tension which turns the situation we are in into a problematic one, often casting preconceptions, beliefs and habits into doubt. In his writings on aesthetics, Dewey maintained that such disruptions play a central role in artistic processes, setting the stage both for artistic reflection and the potential resolution of a problematic situation in a work of art. Thus, also in an artistic process, disruption is a central factor in learning, problem solving, increasing understanding and developing novel practices. In Chapter 2, I will describe

Dewey's views and briefly compare them with the notion of *eventalisation* due to Michel Foucault, an approach which has been argued to have a similar impact in making us question the practices and preconceptions which we hold self-evident.

In line with these theoretical approaches, disruption can be seen as a pivotal element in the educational capacities of theatre. Accordingly, the aim of this research is to examine its role in artistic processes and performances in contemporary theatre. The two central research questions are:

- (1) In what ways could disruption be made a more central, productive, and visible element of an artistic process by means of contemporary theatre practices?
- (2) What kind of a theatre performance results from an artistic process which aims to provide the audience with experiences of disruption?

The basis of the implementation of this research is the artistic process leading up to a theatre performance named *Opettelen kasvien nimiä (jotta ne muistuttaisivat minua hänestä)* [I'm Teaching Myself the Names of Plants (So That They Would Remind Me of Her)], henceforth *Names of Plants*, as well as its four performances, in 2017–18. In this process, a group of nine performers, aged 19–48, and myself as the director experimented with various contemporary theatre practices used to create potential for disruption. The resulting performance was devised from the ideas, elements, autobiographical accounts, and movement sequences which originated in these exercises and practices. The artistic outcomes were created with the aim that the members of the audience would have possibilities to experience disruptions.

As the aim of this research is to advance knowledge about the theatre practices used and to analyse new creative outputs, it takes the form of practice-led research, where the creative process and the findings attained in it are described and elaborated on in a written research report. One central methodological starting point for the research is Joe Norris's notion of playbuilding as qualitative research, which recommends a collaborative framework for material collection for a theatrical performance. In addition, typical methods of qualitative research, such as the detecting relevant key terms and descriptions in responses to questionnaires and other written materials, are used. The data in question was collected through my own rehearsal diary, open-ended written questions to the participants of the artistic process, notes on the audience reactions during the performances, and written questions to the audience after

the performances. The research methods and data collection are described in Chapter 3.

The findings of this research are detailed in Chapters 4 and 5. In Chapter 4, the artistic process leading to the performance is described. The various theatrical practices and exercises used within the process to highlight and produce disruptive experiences and elements are examined with respect to how they achieved this aim. In other words, this part of the research attempts to answer the first research question. In Chapter 5, the resulting performance is described alongside the reactions and reports from the audience members; here, the second research question is addressed.

In Chapter 6, the conclusions of the research are presented, and future applications for theatre practices focusing on disruption are suggested.

2 THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

Dewey & disruption

John Dewey (1859–1952) was the best known American philosopher of his time whose ideas have greatly influenced educational theory and pedagogical practice. Known as the originator of *learning-by-doing*, he maintained that education should deal with practical matters relevant to the learner's life and surroundings. In Dewey's view, the goal of education is *growth*: "education means the enterprise of supplying the conditions which insure growth, or adequacy of life, irrespective of age" (Dewey 1916, 61). But growth is not determined by any specific goals or characteristics. Instead, the educational process of "continual reorganizing, reconstructing, transforming" is its own end (Dewey 1916, 59). Successful learning brings forth more opportunities to learn. Growth is thus "a form of learning that enables individuals to continue learning throughout their lives" (Hildreth 2011, 34).

Dewey maintained that our action and conduct rely on *habits*, equally in physical tasks like walking and in intellectual efforts like reasoning. Many of these habits are due to our passive adaptation to our surroundings; this *habituation* signals a change in an individual with no faculty to change their surroundings (Dewey 1916, 54–57). However, we can also develop new habits to actively "readjust activity to meet new conditions" (Dewey 1916, 62). When we use our habits to control and transform our surroundings, we access new experiences that make us vary our responses, allowing us to develop further.

Accordingly, every individual should retain their *plasticity*: the ability to learn from experience. It is plasticity that allows us to develop new habits, ways to actively achieve what we want in our surroundings, when our old ways seem insufficient (Dewey 1916, 52–53, 56–57). The surroundings here not only refer to the material conditions that we're faced with, but also to the social environment, giving learning a social dimension (Dewey 1916, 14–18). Retaining the plasticity required for actively adjusting one's habits is in contrast with people continuing with their old habits when they no longer make sense, feeling aversion to change, and losing the "instinctively mobile and eagerly varying action of childhood, the love of new stimuli and new developments" (Dewey 1916, 58). Habits, when repeated without thinking, can become routine

and even “bad habits” that stifle our plasticity, our skill in finding new appropriate ways to act and react (Dewey 1916, 44–49).

Dewey’s idea of habits, habituation and plasticity could be put in terms of a concept central to contemporary dance and theatre education: *embodiment*. Embodiment refers to “human existence as it becomes manifest through and in our bodies, as bodily sensations, lived experiences and physical actions”, with the interconnectedness of our processes of meaning making and our material conditions present (Anttila 2015). This idea resists a dualistic dichotomy between the body and the mind, and emphasises the togetherness of the body-mind unit. A simple example of *embodied knowledge* is riding on a bicycle: the body knows what to do with “no need to verbalize or represent in the mind all the procedures required” (Tanaka 2011, 149). Similarly, habits and beliefs, as Dewey understands them, are primarily ways in which we are prepared to act, although we may become aware of them in conscious thought.

Dewey held that learning and education is the active acquisition of new habits and revision of previous ones. This learning occurs in a process of inquiry (Luntley 2016, 8). According to Dewey, inquiry is the transformation of an indeterminate situation into a determinate one. An indeterminate situation arises from our interaction with our environment; inquiry begins when we realise the problematic nature of our situation. (Dewey 1938/1986, 111). Such a “state of perplexity, hesitation, and doubt” is an essential part of reflective thinking (Dewey 1910/1978, 188). An active inquiry aims at the resolution of the problem, resulting in a new habit or belief.

In the emergence of problematic situations and, accordingly, in the process of learning and inquiry, *disruption* plays a pivotal role. Disruptions are moments that subtly unsettle us, starting the process of examining our situation: they “stimulate emotions and create the potential for reflection, action and meaning making” (Innes 2004, 40). Dewey himself doesn’t consistently use the term ‘disruption’. For example, in *How We Think* (1910) he employs ‘interruption’ and ‘shock’ (Dewey 1910/1978, 188). There, the role of disruption is illustrated with an example:

“A man is walking on a warm day. The sky was clear the last time he observed it; but presently he notes, while occupied primarily with other things, that the air is cooler. It occurs to him that it is probably going to rain; looking up, he sees a dark cloud between him and the sun, and he then quickens his steps.” (Dewey 1910/1979, 186–187.)

In the example, it is the unexpected coldness that produces a disruption, creating a suspension of belief and the need for inquiry. A disruption can be brought about by anything, no matter how slight or mundane, that perplexes us or interrupts our ongoing activity (Dewey 1910/1978, 186–190).

The disruption and the resulting indeterminate situation is not primarily an intellectual affair. Not yet a matter of conscious thought, the disruption could be described as an “itch”, something that demands our attention. The “itch”, the sense of unsettledness, disrupts the precognitive expectations and the patterning to experience that we act upon. Since the patterning to experience is not yet a process of conceptual thinking, it operates on something more intangible, on the *aesthetic* qualities underlining our cognitive processes. (Luntley 2016, 12–13, 17–18.) The change from an indeterminate situation to a problematic one marks a shift from something not yet fully cognitive, more ‘felt’ than ‘thought’, to something that beckons us to analyse and inquire into it. In Dewey’s terms, the indeterminate situation becomes a *problematic* situation when subjected to inquiry (Dewey 1938/1986, 111–112). Here the situation is understood, or *thought* to involve a problem to be solved.

Again, Dewey’s views can be connected with the embodied practices of contemporary dance and theatre. Because of its precognitive nature, disruption could be approached by means of *embodied learning*. Embodied learning refers to practices from widespread somatic methods to individual endeavours that aim at developing sensitivity toward our pre-reflective processes and allowing for deep understanding (Anttila 2015). By developing sensitivity to the pre-reflective processes that produce disruptions, the indeterminate situation could be recognised more easily and turned into a problematic situation to be addressed (also) by reflective means.

According to Dewey, a dominating, underlying *aesthetic* quality permeates a situation. This quality is something that we describe when we say we have an impression, or a “hunch”. Situations are internally complex affairs, characterised by a quality, that are “understood” rather than made explicit. The quality ties together the separate elements involved in thinking about an event, a person, and so forth. (Dewey 1930/1984, 244–249.)

“We follow, with apparently complete understanding, a tale in which a certain quality of character is ascribed to a certain man. But something said causes us to interject, ‘Oh, you are speaking of Thomas Jones, I supposed you meant John Jones.’ Every detail related, every distinction set forth remains just what it was before. Yet the significance, the colour and

weight, of every detail is altered. For the quality that runs through them all, that gives to meaning to each and binds them together, is transformed.” (Dewey 1930/1984, 245.)

Thinking also has its aesthetic quality. Thinking arises from a situation, and “the situation controls the terms of thought”, with the quality of the situation guiding our thinking or testing its validity. (Dewey 1930/1984, 246–247.) When we say, “I had an idea” or “the thought just came to me”, the underlying quality has been at work, before becoming something that we can wrap into a conceptual whole. We even recognise the feeling when we should be having a thought but can’t remember what it is we should be thinking of: we recognise an aesthetic undercurrent without fully realising its context.

Similarly to disruption, also the *resolution* of a problematic situation is marked by an aesthetic quality. Dewey holds that while we often use the word ‘conclusion’ for the end point of thinking, reaching a conclusion is a variant of what he calls the *consummation* of every integral experience (Dewey 1934, 37). Consummation means that an experience is carried out to a satisfactory end that unifies it, and not merely to a cessation due to distraction or other causes. In Dewey’s terms, here the experience becomes *an* experience; it has its own permeating, unifying quality and it stands out as its own whole against the flow of constant experiences that is life. Dewey provided almost romantic examples of *an* experience—a storm of all storms, a meal in Paris—but he also mentioned everyday-life activities: solving a problem, playing a game, finishing a meal, having a conversation, and so on. (Dewey 1934, 35–36.) *An* experience can be identified by its most pervasive quality, which we can deem intellectual, emotional or practical in nature, and that quality enhances the parts of the whole rather than losing them (Leddy 2004).

This unification of elements into *an* experience underlined by a single quality is exemplified by a work of art, where “different acts, episodes, occurrences melt and fuse into unity, and yet do not disappear and lose their own character as they do so” (Dewey 1934, 36). The artistic process shows to a high degree a characteristic present in all thought: the selective process of integrating distinctions, details, and materials demanded by the qualitative whole which then give it its form. It is the permeating quality that ties a work of art together even though the properties of the work can be taken apart and considered separately. (Dewey 1930/1984, 247, 251–252.) Dewey even suggests that in works of art, “[c]onfusion and incoherence are always marks of lack of control by a single pervasive quality” (Dewey 1930/1984, 247).

Dewey compares the process of a scientist and that of an artist. Both the scientist and the artist deliberately search for disruption, and go through the process of indeterminate situation, inquiry, and problem solving. An artist teases out the problems to develop and materialise the aesthetical whole, the work of art:

“Since the artist cares in a peculiar way for the phase of experience in which union is achieved, he does not shun moments of resistance and tension. He rather cultivates them, not for their own sake but because of their potentialities, bringing to living consciousness an experience that is unified and total.” (Dewey 1934, 15.)

However, the focus and the results of the scientific and artistic processes are different. The scientist does not “rest” upon reaching the satisfactory consummation, as his interest is in the problem solving itself. He’ll look for a new problem as soon as he’s attained the solution to the last one. The artist, by contrast, focuses on the creation and the aesthetic whole of “*an* experience”. (Dewey 1934, 15.)

While disruption is thus cultivated and made use of in an artistic process, the end product of that process itself aims to be underwritten by aesthetic qualities producing a unified whole. Accordingly, the aesthetic quality pervading a work of art cannot be disruption itself. However, this should not be taken to imply that a work of art cannot be productive of disruptions in its audience. Even though the underlying quality of the work of art is not disruption itself, it can turn the situation of the perceiver into an indeterminate one with its contents, themes, style and contexts.

To Dewey, the perceiver is a pivotal element of work of art, as the materials that have been selected to create it have been chosen with the experience of the perceiver in mind:

“The doing or making is artistic when the perceived result is of such a nature that its qualities *as perceived* have controlled the question of production. The act of producing that is directed by intent to produce something that is enjoyed in the immediate experience of perceiving has qualities that a spontaneous or uncontrolled activity does not have. The artist embodies in himself the attitude of the perceiver while he works.” (Dewey 1934, 48.)

In Dewey’s view, the act of perceiving is not the same as bare recognition — recognising something as what it is. Perceiving involves an emotional response in the perceiver, guided by the pervading aesthetic qualities that the receiver must plunge into. A gaggle of visitors hurried through a gallery by a guide might

see and recognise works of art, but moments of perceiving might be few and far between. (Dewey 1934, 53–54.) Just as the artist has worked on their materials, condensing them into a qualitative whole, the perceiver must put the elements of the artwork in order according to their interest and point of view, extracting what is significant to them. The perceiver is engaged in an active process: “Without an act of recreation the object is not perceived as a work of art.” (Dewey 1934, 54.)

While people desire harmony with their surroundings, seeking out disruptions allows further learning, inquiring, and acquiring new consummated realisations of harmony (Innes 2004, 41–42). From Dewey’s perspective, art can provide the experience of disruption and consummation in both the participants of the artistic process and the perceivers of a work of art. What is more, the aesthetic quality of an experience —engendering both disruption and consummation— is at the heart of the process of learning and inquiry. Therefore, the theory of pedagogy should start with aesthetics. (Luntley 2016, 71.)

Foucault & eventalisation

The account of disruption and its role in the process of learning presented above can be compared with and enhanced by an influential view of the kind of processes that bring our habits and customs into doubt. This view is based on the work of the French philosopher Michel Foucault (1926–1984)¹.

In his work, Foucault details various processes which have led to our current practices and habits of conduct. In *Discipline and Punish* (1975), he concentrates on discipline and its effects in “normalising” people, creating norms of behaviour and being. These norms extend to how an individual spends their time, to their bodies, their sexuality and their way of speaking, using mechanisms such as corporal punishment, confinement, shaming, and so on, and through creating a system of good and bad individuals, with bad ones (such as bad students) supposed to desire the rewards given to the excellent ones. (Foucault 1975/1980, 200–208) In *The History of Sexuality* (1976), Foucault notes how, on a large scale, preserving life in a modern society is mediated through means of war and conflict. He also uses the term *biopower* to depict

¹ To my knowledge, Foucault doesn’t use the word ‘disruption’ or its French equivalents in his writing; however, A. M. Sheridan Smith’s translation of *The Archaeology of Knowledge* (1972), includes “interruption”, “discontinuity”, and “threshold, rupture, break, mutation, transformation” to describe defining moments in the history of ideas (Foucault 1969/1972, 9–11).

the way in which human body has been the target of efforts to maximise its usefulness and optimise it like a machine, and interventions to control the body and its biological processes related to life; conceiving, birth, life expectancy, maintaining health, and creating conditions to improve these. This power of regulating individuals' and whole populations' bodies is also a key element in the development of capitalism. (Foucault 1976/1978, 135–141.)

One way in which the habits and norms prevalent in our everyday life can be called into question, is through what Foucault calls *eventalisation*. Eventalisation is Foucault's term for bringing out the *singularity* of situations, either here and now or historical, instead of assuming their existence as natural and self-evident. It aims to expose the numerous causes that have established any given situation. (Olssen 1999/2006, 64–65.) While complicating our understanding of the event and its relations, the approach does not create instructions or guidelines for what to do. Instead, it can create a situation where people *don't* know what to do, leading them to problematise the previously unquestioned acts and discourses. (Biesta 2008, 199–200.) As eventalisation can be used to make us conscious and aware of the experiences, habits, or thoughts that we consider ordinary, it may also allude to other options of behaviour and being (Hannula 2003/2005, 56–57).

The differences between Dewey's view of disruption and Foucauldian eventalisation could be described as follows: eventalisation is an active method that attempts to reveal a more pluralised form of understanding of our activities and what we consider self-evident — this awareness can then be turned into doubt cast against the customs and habits of our surroundings and our own. Disruption, in Dewey's sense, leads to a problematic situation infused with doubt and possibly to the breaking down of a habit. Disruption originates at a precognitive level and is due to the interaction of an individual and their surroundings. Eventalisation is an active approach to take, while disruption, to Dewey, is an integral part of the constant unfolding of experience and life.

Rancière & the audience member

Additionally to Dewey's ideas presented above, namely that a work of art is created with the perceiver's experience in mind, French philosopher Jacques Rancière's (1940–) ideas are used as a framework for understanding the position of the audience member.

In Rancière's view, theatre practitioners have for a long time deemed the audience members too distant from the reality of the performance, and too passive if they're merely observing. Solutions for curing the spectator of the passivity have been developed by theatre practitioners. For example, Bertolt Brecht's epic theatre with its alienation techniques attempted to wake the viewer up, make him solve an issue and analytically ponder between different opinions and options. Antonin Artaud's Theatre of Cruelty hoped to rip the viewer out of his seat into the fantastical theatre experience that strips away his position as a distant observer and forces him to confront his primitiveness and vitality. (Rancière 2016, 8–13.)

According to Rancière, however, the presumption of the audience's passivity is erroneous. Being seated should not be equated with passivity as every spectator is already the actor in their own story: "spectatorship is not the passivity [that] has to be turned into activity. It is our normal situation". (Rancière 2016, 25.) The process in which the spectator interprets the performance, selects elements of it and compares them with any other performance or event they've observed, is an active process. The audience can also refuse to accept what the performance is offering, for example turn the vital energy projected on stage into a mere image which links with their previous experiences. In this view, the audience is hardly ever passive: "looking also is action which confirms or modifies" the distribution of power in given situation, and that "'interpreting the world' is already a means of transforming it, or configuring it" (Rancière 2016, 20–21.)

Accordingly, Rancière argues for more equality between the performers and the audience. His "stage of equality" calls for performers to use their competence to create a new expression whose effect can't be anticipated, and for spectators to make an active interpretation of the story, to "appropriate the story for themselves and make their own story out of it" (Rancière 2016, 30–31). Thus, the role of a work of art and the performer is not to attempt to control the experiences of the audience.

The way in which these theoretical concepts and views influenced and were used in the artistic process at the basis of this research is detailed below in Chapter 4.

3 METHODS

Practice-led research

The findings of this research are drawn from the creative process and the work of art created in it. For this reason, the research takes the general form of *practice-led research*. In using the term practice-led research, artists and researchers Hazel Smith and Roger T. Dean (2009) refer to instances where a work of art functions as a form of research and the insights gained in its creation are documented and theorised upon. They also note, that another term, practice-based research is used, but that term often refers to creative works as research themselves. Practice-led research emphasises the research process coinciding with or following the creative practice. Smith and Dean also use the term research-led practice for practice that starts out as a scholarly practice and turns into artistic creation. (Smith & Dean 2009, 5–7.)

Owing to the relatively recent emergence of practice-led research paradigms, the terms are not always used the same way. For example, researcher Brad Haseman uses practice-based research to refer to a wide range of methods within qualitative research, such as reflecting-in-action and reflecting-on-action, participatory research and action research. He places performative research, carried out by those who do practice-led research, outside either quantitative or qualitative research. According to him, practice-led researchers “have little interest in trying to translate the findings and understandings of practice into the numbers (quantitative) and words (qualitative)”. (Haseman 2006, 2–4.)

The methods used in this research include those that in Haseman’s terminology (unlike Smith and Dean’s) fall under the scope of practice-based research, using a variety of methods from the qualitative research paradigm. Even as the insights in creating one performance cannot truly be generalised, the interest in trying to translate the findings of practices into words is paramount; especially since theatre processes can be serendipitous, unpredictable, non-linear and hard to put into words.

In some instances of practice-based and practice-led research, the work of art itself is used to present research findings. Here, the artistic medium can be used to “shape experience and to enlarge understanding” (Eisner 1997, 8). For example, a story or a film can illuminate data the same way a diagram graphic

can. Additionally, works of art used as data presentation can engage the human emotions and empathy sometimes necessary to understand others and their situations. Artistic processes also guide the researcher to new questions and details: for example, a researcher working with a camera will look at things in a specific way. Artistic forms of presentation can evoke (and not only denote) the intricacy of situations. The artistic medium can, instead of generalised, abstracted information, provide “a sense of particularity” and give the findings a sense of being “real”. (Eisner 1997, 8.) In the research at hand, the work of art itself was not used to present research findings.

The research questions and some methodological starting points were decided upon before the rehearsal process and its documentation began. However, as is the case with practice-led research, these were considered tentative and not immune to change during the process. Working “from unknown to the known” is characteristic to practice-led research (Sullivan 2009, 49). Instead of making use of established conventions and practices, practice-led researchers tend to take “imaginative leaps” into the unknown to see if new insights can be generated (Sullivan 2009, 48).

Playbuilding as qualitative research

In the artistic process that is the basis of this research, drama teacher and artistic director Joe Norris’s method of playbuilding was used as a framework and starting point. In his book, *Playbuilding as Qualitative Research: A Participatory Arts-Based Approach* (2009), Norris presents his approach and method to playbuilding, a form of participatory research utilising methods commonly found in devised theatre.

In Norris’s playbuilding method, a group of people assemble to discuss a mutual concern, a social injustice, a phenomenon, or so on. Some of the people may be theatre professionals, some may work in other fields. In the beginning of the process, storytelling and discussion are facilitated, followed by high-energy drama games. The participants are encouraged to tell their individual accounts on the phenomena they have experienced or witnessed, and to articulate, what Norris calls, “their half-baked ideas” to allow the group to develop them further. Imagination and “what if?” situations can be used just as well as real lived experiences. (Norris 2009, 22-30.) The power of collective storytelling manifests as a source of data on lived experiences; “declarative sentences in the form a narrative can yield more data than can an interview

question.” (Norris 2009, 24.) Later in the rehearsal process, these stories are honed into dramatic vignettes:

“Like qualitative studies that categorize data into themes, Playbuilding performances that use a vignette style provide a range of issues experienced by many different people. The form allows for a greater range of issues, experiences, and perspectives. However, in the case of Playbuilding, the themes are not made explicit. [--] Playbuilding uses vignettes to phenomenologically reenact lived-experiences.” (Norris 2009, 34.)

The vignettes range from simple performed actions to fully-dialogued scenes to living sculptures or any other form of theatrical presentation. Often, improvisational methods are used. The originator of the idea is usually present, giving their input to the scripting and rehearsing process. All scene ideas, however short, are methodically written down and collected into a folder, as this allows the whole group to later pore over the scene ideas written down, and start to work on the play’s dramaturgy. (Norris 2009, 46-53.) As the process is collaborative, the participants are considered coresearchers and coauthors. Due to the personal nature of people’s stories, creating a safe environment is important. Ways of achieving this range from not disclosing the stories shared in the rehearsals with people not part of the process, distancing stories from the originator and presenting them with fictional details if need be, and regularly checking that the performers are OK telling the stories they’ve chosen. (Norris 2009, 35–37.) The role of the director in the process is “creating opportunities for storytelling and translating those stories into dramatic forms”, and looking for “ways to design improvisations that may better help us understand a phenomenon” (Norris 2009, 31).

The final performances become a collage of vignettes, juxtaposed together to show diverse perspectives. The scenes are not fully-polished as the raw and improvisational quality invites openness and dialogue. The performance is presented with the means of forum theatre (Norris 2009, 24, 33–35). Forum theatre is a wide-spread method of participatory theatre created by theatre practitioner and writer Augusto Boal. In it, a scene showing a problem or a situation of inequality is presented, and the audience members can replace characters on stage to offer and perform solutions to the issue (Boal 1973/2008, 117–118). The proceedings —conversations with the audience and interventions on stage— are facilitated by a ‘Joker’, a performer who’s neutral to the fictional reality shown on stage (Boal 1973/2008, 152–153, 159).

I had no previous experience with Norris's playbuilding method. It was chosen as the starting point for the artistic process because it provided (a) a clear framework for producing heterogeneous vignettes in which the lived experiences of individuals could be focused on, (b) a model for director's position in a devising group that appeared ethically sound and transparent, and (c) because it allowed for any sort of collaborative theatre practices and exercises within it. However, the research did not aim to prove or disprove this method of playbuilding, or use it as itself as a method of qualitative research. In addition, I was making modifications right from the beginning; for example, while I have done forum theatre in the past, I never considered it a viable form for this performance. At the same, the idea of keeping the performance rough around the edges and partly improvisational was retained.

While Norris's method of playbuilding formed the framework for the theatrical method of material collection, a whole range of theatre exercises and devising practices were used in the rehearsal process. Devising (or 'collaborative creation') broadly refers to ways of creating theatre performances with a group of participants, "from scratch, without a pre-existing script" (Heddon & Milling 2006, 3). Ways of working often involve discussions and improvisational exercises with an ensemble of theatre practitioners — at large, many different theatrical practices can be used in a devising setting. Sometimes devising happens without differentiating between a director and a performer; sometimes a director helms the process.

The rehearsal process including the exercises and practices used is detailed in Chapter 4.

Other research methods and data collection

In this research, typical methods of qualitative research such as the detecting relevant key terms and descriptions in responses, and contrasting them to unearth the complexity of events and experiences, are used. The collection of materials occurred by means of (1) my keeping a research diary of the artistic process and the performances, (2) asking written testimonials from the participants during the rehearsal process, and (3) asking the audience members at Forum Box to answer an exit question after the performance.²

² The questionnaires were in Finnish, the responses in Finnish, Swedish or English, and the research diary was kept in Finnish and English. All quotations from this material below are translated to English by the author, except when originally in the English language.

Throughout the process, a research diary was kept as a practical tool to help with self-reflexivity, and to memorise observations I made about myself as the director and about the group as participants, as well as the audience's reactions at the performances. Notes on the performers' conversations and actions were made on the day of the rehearsals to keep track of the process and recall the events correctly. In addition, data was collected in the form of questionnaires to the group. On three occasions (14.11., 29.11., 5.3.), the participants were asked to respond to open-ended questions in writing (see Appendices 1, 2 and 3). The questions were intentionally written so that the participants could reflect on various themes without attempting to write down a "correct" answer. In many cases, the participants wrote very freely and outside the topic of the questions. On two occasions (15.11., 19.12.), the participants were asked to reflect freely on the rehearsal with no particular question asked. On one occasion (22.11.), a discussion about the process was had and opinions voiced collected in the research diary. The data collected in these ways was considered separate from the artistic process; the participants' answers would not be shared with the group. In cases where something written could be transferred into the rehearsal process (e.g. a performer wrote their wish to do a long dance sequence), I approached the performer first to discuss whether to make this information known to the group.

After the performances at Forum Box, 20th, 21st and 22nd February 2018, the audience had the option to answer one question: "what was unexpected in the performance?" ["Mitä odottamatonta esityksessä oli?"]. This question was prefaced with me saying the answers might be used in the research for my thesis (see Appendix 4). Out of the 94 audience members who attended the three performances at Forum Box, 65 opted to answer the questionnaire. The word 'unexpected' (*odottamatonta* in Finnish) was chosen over 'disruptive' or 'disruption', due to 'disruption' not translating neatly to one word that would capture all its nuances³. Of course, asking the question made the audience think about its content, so 'unexpectedness' within the performance may be overtly emphasised in the answers. However, the research does not aim to verify the scope, frequency, or existence of the disruptions felt by the audiences; this data was collected to describe and showcase the experiences of the audience and compare them with the content of the performance.

³ Throughout the process, alongside the more technical loan word 'disruptio', 'häiriö' (*disturbance, interference*) and 'keskeytyt' (*interruption, pause*) were used as Finnish translations for 'disruption'.

4 THE REHEARSAL PROCESS

In this Chapter, I will examine the theatre practices and exercises used to highlight and produce disruptive experiences and elements within the artistic process leading to *Names of Plants*. These practices and exercises are reflected upon against the data collected from the participants by reflective writing and answers to questionnaires as well as included in my research diary.

Performers, rehearsal spaces and timetable

Seventeen three-hour rehearsals were held between November 2017 and February 2018. The rehearsals were held mostly at the Theatre Academy on Tuesday or Wednesday evenings. The seven rehearsals in the autumn used different approaches to disruption each time, while the ten rehearsals in the spring were more oriented toward building the actual performance and rehearsing the scenes. A break of three weeks was held to coincide with the Christmas season. Additionally, in January, a promotional photoshoot took place at EMMA – Espoo Museum of Modern Art, with the participants performing chosen scenes for the camera. After the performances at Forum Box (20th, 21st, and 22nd of February), two rehearsals were held at EMMA, in March and April, to rearrange the performance for the new venue.

The group consisted of nine performers. Most of them I approached myself, while two answered an open call. Four of the performers were actively studying theatre or dance at Theatre Academy of Helsinki, while one had a previous degree in theatre and an extensive background in performing. Two of the performers had a background in writing poetry or doing performance art, with one doing it occupationally. Four of the participants worked as teachers or group leaders, either in schools, in sports, or in arts activities. One of them had a background in visual arts. The participants were aged 19, 21, 23, 24, 28, 29, 31, 46, and 48 years old in November 2017, at the beginning of our process. (I was 28.) To my knowledge, all were able-bodied. All were Finnish, and understood Finnish, while Swedish was the mother tongue for two.

One of the performers was a friend of mine who I had previously studied with. Two had been performers in a community theatre performance I had been an assistant director of, so I had previous experience of directing them. Three of the students studying at Theatre Academy I had taken courses with. One participant I had met through a mutual art project. Only one of them I had no

previous ties with. These relations were disclosed right at the start of the rehearsal process, especially my friendship with one of the performers. Some of the performers knew each other well. Five of the performers were women, two men, and two did not describe their gender in binary terms. To protect the anonymity of the participants, the gender-neutral pronoun singular ‘they’ will be used to refer to all of them.

Non-binary gender in theatre

One thing to consider throughout was acknowledging and respecting the gender diversity in the group. Two of the performing participants did not go by binary terms when describing their gender. One wrote their gender down as “non-binary/there’s none”, and even described themselves as “aggressively non-binary”, which they specified to mean that they don’t apologise for their gender or hide it (participant, 14.11.2017). They later specified that ‘agender’ describes them the best (participant, 4.3.2018). The other performer didn’t fill their gender in or use any specific word to describe it. Both later mentioned, while speaking with the participants who were Swedish-speaking, that they’d prefer the gender-neutral pronoun ‘hen’ in Swedish, and singular ‘they’ in English. It should be noted here that people going by gender-neutral pronouns or not using binary words when describing their gender —or people who explicitly identify as non-binary, gender-fluid and so on— should not be understood as a monolithic, clearly-definable group.

In Finland, in recent years, there has been a surge in performances that depict the realities and lived experiences of transgender and/or non-binary people. It seems that performances like this often take on a role of relaying information available online and in literature to a presumed spectator not educated on the issue. In other instances, this role is put on the performance, and the life stories of individuals are seen as examples of the whole phenomenon. There’s a risk in autobiographical performances that the authenticity in an individual’s experience makes that experience the ‘truth’, “‘I become[s] the evidence” (Heddon 2008, 26):

“Any assumed equation between ‘I’ and ‘truth’ might be considered less problematic if there are enough ‘I’s telling their experiences since this would allow the production of a multiplicity of ‘truths’.” (Heddon 2008, 26.)

As the multiplicity of transgender or gender non-conforming voices is yet to be reached, the individuals still become emblems of a complex phenomenon. Reducing the role of transgender artists and amateurs to gender identity educators actively others them on stage and in the artistic community, and doesn't truly shake up the gender norms permeating our practices. When inviting people to this project, who identified either as transgender, non-binary, genderless or so, I outlined that they wouldn't have to 'represent' their gender identity in any way if they didn't want to — just like any other participant. In the end, only one explicit feature referring to the diversity of gender appeared on stage: one performer wore a chest-flattening garment, binder, underneath a mesh t-shirt. At the same time, having people of non-conforming gender identities in the production cannot be reduced to a single costume choice. If a diversity of voices is allowed, those voices are there, and influence and guide the work. Having performers who don't identify with binary terms required certain measures: that non-gendered toilets were made available⁴, that everyone could decide what they wore on stage, that everyone could use whichever name they wanted, that people wouldn't receive different type of direction based upon their assumed gender, that it was publicly said that personal details like gender or sexuality shouldn't be assumed in our group, and so on. These measures should be taken *anyway*, regardless of any previous knowledge of participants' gender — inclusivity is not the *result* of the artistic process; it should be considered every step of the way.

My interest in producing work that includes lived experiences and the point of view of people who don't conform to the gender binary stems from the fact that I'm a non-binary trans person. I've previously written about my experiences as a gender-fluid child and teenager doing theatre and dance in school and community theatre contexts: not only were there no non-binary roles available, but being seen and cast according to one's gender assigned at birth led to other problems as well. The biggest challenge was being constantly told that I should "just be myself" and not do too much — what 'too much' seemed to imply was 'too feminine' or 'too gay', something that didn't align with the culturally constructed masculinity of the male roles. Similarly, 'just being myself' never seemed to refer to myself but to some ideal of a young (heterosexual, cisgender) man. As theatre and dance were my main forms of

⁴ Providing non-gendered toilets proved surprisingly problematic and finally required me to print out non-gendered toilet signs myself.

expression, this only amplified the body dysphoria, the feeling of wrongness in my body that I was experiencing to begin with. (Siren 2016, 312–313.) In theatre training, the focus might often be on the individual character of a person’s body only when that body does not conform with the expectations, whether by tendency, injury, weakness or differing from the norm (Evans 2014). At the other end of the spectrum, female characters seem to be created, instead of by “being themselves”, by adding numerous ‘feminine’ attributes, such as ‘fussiness’ or ‘coquetry’ (Siren 2016, 313). Not only do gender norms get amplified and reproduced, but the artistic expression of people belonging to minorities is side-lined.

A turning point for me was practising somatic techniques that allowed for self-discovery rather than representing a social norm. I realised my body was actually a part of me, just as gender-fluid as I was, and that I could demand be recognised as non-binary person while practising theatre and dance (Siren 2016, 315). Having experienced both the struggle of gendered expectations and the boon of using embodied practices to understand myself better, I have wanted to create spaces where transgender and non-binary people can practise theatre in a not-gendering environment and to seek gender non-conforming participants so that their experiences and views are made visible.

At the end of our process, I specifically asked the participants who did not identify with binary terms for gender whether they were treated appropriately in the process. Both recounted one experience in the rehearsals when they were referred to as a member of the wrong gender, but they both downplayed it: “I’ve accepted that this will happen so it was not a bad situation” writes one (participant 29.3.2018). Overall, the experience was very successful in welcoming gender diversity:

[Question: Was your gender taken into account appropriately and were you treated with respect in regards to it? Could your gender have been taken into account better?]

“I’d say my gender was taken into account in an appropriate manner in that no big deal was made out of it. I just told people the first or the second time we met, and everyone was like [thumbs up emoji], cool. I feel that when I don’t need to think whether or not my gender will be taken into account, it means it has been taken into account. [--] At no point was it a thing like ‘let’s discuss gender diversity now’, it was a thing or attribute among others. So I was treated respectfully and I felt really safe — much safer than I thought I would in the beginning. That I could just be in my own body, and that I actually liked that other people touched me, was something really beautiful.” (participant 15.3.2018.)

“What was most integral was that you [author] brought up your own gender experience openly in the beginning, and that in the rehearsals there were no assumptions. [--] I might

add, in regards to my gender diversity answer, the feeling of safety, that there is no discriminatory behaviour in the rehearsals toward gender. Or anything else. When, in many other productions, this is something to think about a lot; as a default that most likely someone will say something horrible at some point.” (participant 28. and 29.3.2018.)

It seems important that the director or teacher starts the conversation about diversity. If a teacher or a director does not belong to a gender minority, they could still invite diversity by opening the conversation about assumptions (“hey, in our group, let’s not make assumptions—”) or simply noting out aloud that not all people are the gender they seem (or any other categorical assumption). At no point were our rehearsals ‘gender neutral’: we talked about men and women — we simply didn’t refer to men and women as somehow essentially unified and exclusive groups. On top of that, we added the wealth of experiences by people whose gender doesn’t fall under the binary gender terms — not assuming they’d form a monolithic unity either.

Approaching disruption: Background for the process

To my knowledge, Dewey’s concept of disruption hasn’t been used as a framework for theatre practices previously. However, the idea of unexpectedness, shock, or something rising from the precognitive “hunch” isn’t a new idea in theatre. For example: “Surprise yourself!” is a comment often heard in theatre rehearsals, especially in improv training. The approach to actor training created in the Actor’s Art in Modern Times project at Theatre Academy of Helsinki includes elements such as entering a “state of in-between”, a state that hasn’t yet become an experience per se, and translating that into a “state of being”, an experiential state in which the actor operates, connected to their surroundings. The movement from one state of being to another can happen with “destabilisation”; “a surprising psycho-physical impulse”. (Hulkko et al. 2011, 211–213, translation author’s.)

Trying to see everyday habits and habituations as something extraordinary is also often used in arts. Examples include the performance group Goat Island formulating tasks such as “invent [seven] ways to exit your chair” (Mitchell et al. 2000) or creating a choreography inspired by the architecture and the history of a public building (Johnson 2008). In the field of applied arts, Meiju Niskala’s “Everyday Explorers” project (2011) aimed to influence people to “sprain” their everyday life with small performative acts such as yarnbombing,

building a scale model out of sweets and photographing a known landmark in an unusual way (Niskala 2011, translation author's). A commonly used concept in theatre that is similar to Dewey's conception of habits, is Schechner's conception of *restored behaviour*; the recombination of bits of behaviour previously seen and behaved, both in performance and in everyday life (Schechner 2002/2013, 34–36). Whenever I have been faced with “destabilising”, “spraining”, or “surprising myself” in theatre training, I haven't got to grips with it. But an interplay of expectations and surprise seem key in these; approaching disruption through theatre practice quite possibly captures something along the same lines.

It should be noted that theatre practices here not only refer to professional theatre-making but also to applied theatre, theatre in education, and so on. While the goal of this process was to create a great performance, my main interest was in coming up with new ways to apply theory to theatre, and finding new approaches to cultivate experiences and creative impulses in theatre practice. I hoped that my findings could be applied widely in teaching or directing people who are and people who are not theatre professionals.

Autobiographical performance

Since disruption, in the Deweyan view described in Chapter 2 above, is an experience within the interaction of an individual and their surroundings, it seemed reasonable to approach such experience by basing the artistic process on autobiographical elements; out of the stories of the participants and myself. To me, moments of disruption and the following consummation appear somewhat well-captured in the memory, defined by minute details, exact locations, and clearly identified feelings. To document the breadth of experience in a moment of disruption, I wrote the following passage on leaving my parents' place, trying to evoke the vividness and the almost curated sense of different elements. The experience detailed in the passage below ended up inspiring the beginning of *Names of Plants*, as well as the name of the performance.

I walk across a small country lane, hop over a ditch, and grab a hold of a metal fence, being careful not to stick my fingers into the sharp ends of wiring jutting out at the top. As I manoeuvre myself around the fence, I'm already halfway to the top of the small, steep hill on which the log trains run, and that's when the thought hits me. I don't necessarily stop, as I'm prefilled with ideas of how wet and nasty the rain-soaked willowherb must be being up to my armpits, and how many insects must dwell on the inflorescences and if I'm quick

I won't disturb them and be stung, and how I've done this numerous times and I know how to do it quickly which is the easiest way considering how slippery the hill and how awkwardly-placed the opening in the metal fence is, and how I've got to pay attention when crossing the railway track even though I've never been in any danger and just earlier that day had taken selfies trying to whip my hair sexily next to a logging train standing still.

But I quickly glance back, and see the garden peeking from between two hedges. I only need to glance quickly, since the image is stamped to my memory. On the right, a small spread of elephant's ears around a cheap red letter box. On the left a bit farther a moss-covered round stone with a low pot of geraniums on top of it, then an old oak with a honeysuckle-covered weathered ladder leaning against it, then a lilac bush with some short dark-leaved saplings I don't know the name of, then the dog gate.

I walk across the tracks, not being hit by a train, only stepping on either the rails or the sleepers (of course), and hurry to the bus stop. But the thought won't leave me. This is the first time I've visited my parents after learning about my mother's cancer having spread, and the whole reason for my visit was to cheer them up, and walk about making 'hmm' and 'oh' sounds as she tells me about her newest gardening acquisitions (we share the love toward plants even though neither of us really knows how to cultivate anything, my clematis vine flowering more through sheer luck). The situation with her illness isn't dramatic, nothing is terminal, and nothing is new either —this being her fifth cancer— but this time it has spread, and it feels a bit more serious. And as I'm walking, I realise that all the plants in her garden that I can recognise, will from now on always remind me of her, and of her passing —which, at the time of writing, still hasn't happened—, and I grieve her passing now, already, through this thought, through these pictures of plants in my head. I realise that the moment when a process started happening in my head, and the moment I will come back to later to wallow in sadness, was not the moment she called me about her diagnosis. It isn't the moment when she's just died, it isn't the moment 30 years from now when I sneak between the hedges to see what the new couple living in the house have done with the place, it is the moment when I was walking away, and suddenly started to index all the plants that I will remember. Plantain lily. Wood crane's-bill. Horse chestnut. Gooseberry, raspberry, and chokeberry. Rhododendron. Alpine catchfly. Mallow, etc. (research diary, July 2017.)

In the moment here described, I realised that I was already grieving even though I had somehow imagined that part would come much later, and wouldn't have said I was grieving if asked. That the plants had now become a symbol for the grief inspired me to vision a tableau on stage: about eight performers, standing on stage in silence, swaying slowly, until one of them would start uttering common names for plants. Some features of this inspiration did not happen — in my original vision, the performers were Greek goddesses on a traditional stage, wearing draped outfits with theatrical smoke and fog swirling around them in warm-and-cool-tone theatrical lighting. Nonetheless, a stripped back version of this became the first scene of *Names of Plants*. Since my own starting point was so personal and emotionally laden, I was not sure whether to disclose this information with the group in fear that it would make everyone view disruption through grief and passing. It wouldn't

have felt ethical to use a group of people as a mere tool in my emotional process; on the other hand, it didn't feel right to conceal my process from them. So, I spoke about it openly, but made sure to underline that everyone could approach disruption from their own perspectives.

In addition to the connection to experiences of disruption, my interest in the autobiographical is influenced by my being non-binary transgender person, as in theatre productions and media creations at large, life stories of people like myself are rarely represented. The points of view and experiences of minorities often get cast aside when creating master narratives that aim at overall relevancy to a presumed majority spectator. To avoid this, we could present a diversity of autobiographical voices.

The history of autobiographical performance is political, with its rise in theatre tied to the second wave feminism in late 1960's and early 70's. Women's rights oriented artists used personal stories, and consciousness-raising acts such as performing everyday-life scenarios on stage, to create spaces and collectives for women to discuss topics not normally discussed in arts and politics. Reinventing life stories in a performance and showing women's lives on stage became part of the statement 'personal is political'. From there, the use of autobiographical performance art as a political practice was taken up by lesbian artists, gay male artists, and finally in the 2000's by artists with non-conforming gender identities. (Heddon 2008, 20–52.)

“[T]he binary between art and life, just as between public and private, collapsed as feminists consciously incorporated their lives into their art making. So too did the binary between the aesthetic and the social, or art and politics, as many artists strategically understood their art as feminist praxis.” (Heddon 2008, 23)

However, in recent times, the autobiographical one-man show seems to have become a vehicle to success for aspiring performers. At the same time, the world itself has exploded with possibilities to exhibit oneself, especially online. This begs the question, whether personal truly is political, or what personal is political and how. (Heddon 2008, 158–162.)

How political does a work need to be for it be considered feminist work? I wanted to produce work that wasn't racist or ableist, and that I could call 'queer feminist', but what would that mean with ten different people with different personal and political views in play? For this I took simple steps that felt naïve at the time, but seemed to work: firstly, everyone was informed from the

invitation that queer feminism was the goal, so if that was to be a red flag for anyone, they could beware and bow out. Secondly, simply stating that all stories were equally as important, including ‘women’s issues’, the experiences of minorities, and the *feminine* regardless of the participant’s gender. Thirdly, saying out aloud that whatever we implied of ourselves at any given moment shouldn’t identify us the very next: we could be in flux as ourselves and shouldn’t assume our co-creators to be any different. We would present our personal stories *as our personal stories*; not as paradigms for others to follow. This meant avoiding generalisations and extrapolating our own experiences into existential questions regarding the whole human race. With these ‘guidelines’ in place, it seemed that even if the performance wouldn’t be political in its nature, the process would be informed by queer feminist ideas.

As the performance was to be devised and to contain very personal autobiographical information, I needed to reflect on my position as the director and the person conducting the research. Who would be making the decisions in the process, and how? What has troubled me often, in devised performance processes both with professionals and with amateurs, is the convention where the participants do *devise*, creating an idea or material, but then that material is taken away from them and rearranged and used based on someone else’s (usually the director’s) preference. The process of devising, also known as collaborative creation, seems to awake ideals of democracy, communality, cooperation, and a picture of a tightly-knit ensemble. Nonetheless, as many devising companies are run by leading directors, and many ensembles operate with exchangeable members, the non-hierarchical and totally communal flair of devising might be a myth (Heddon & Milling 2006, 5). I tried to find a very practical solution to this: telling the participants that they had the right to withdraw anything they’d created, or voice any discomfort with the way their idea was being handled. Also, I was transparent about all my ideas regarding their creations. They could also decide how collaboratively or not they would like to approach their creation.

In order to collect autobiographical content and materials within the artistic process, Joe Norris’s playbuilding method and its collaborative collage of vignettes approach (detailed in Chapter 3) was utilised. Additionally, I was inspired to think of the connection between the autobiographical elements presented on stage and the audience members’ lives by my topsy-turvy reading of author and theatre critic Miriam Felton-Dansky’s essay “Anonymous is a

Woman: New Politics of Identification” (2015). Felton-Dansky describes how female artists choose to evade the trappings of identity politics by remaining anonymous or distant on stage, or eschewing verbal language and consistent characters. She connects this approach with Amelia Jones’s notion of *identification*: instead of fixed *identity* constructs, we should aim at a fluid, fleeting form of identification of the performer. (Felton-Dansky 2015, 256–262.) In my head, I immediately turned this around toward the audience: could the performance provide moments of *self-identification* for the audience? If the performance would present a mesh of multiple different moments in the performers’ lives with each performer presenting many, and if the aspect of whether the performers on stage were performing their own stories or not (and this ambiguity was explicitly presented to the audience), the audience could simply hear every snippet, every story, and briefly attach themselves to those that they identified with, regardless of whether they had identified with something that particular performer had said or presented previously. Instead of aiming for generalised relevancy of the stories, we could assume that each of the participants’ stories, no matter how particular, would have someone in the audience identifying with that story. Jill Dolan describes the theatre audience as an “amorphous, anonymous mass” to be addressed from the stage, their individuality substituted by an assumption of commonality; that ideal mass of audience is then assumed to be of the dominant culture, namely, straight, male, and so on (Dolan 1988, 1). The audience mass representing the cultural majority is oft made visible inadvertently when the artist decides what needs and what doesn’t need to be explained to the audience. We would steer away from that: if we could present our lived experiences without explaining them, we could present them in a pure sense to those who would identify with them for a moment.

Not-understanding

Another framework for the theatre process that seemed to tie together the indeterminacy of disruption and the personal was *not-understanding*. My approach to not-understanding was informed by three different perspectives on not-understanding and its role in theatre.

According to theatre director Eero-Tapio Vuori (2008), not-understanding is a resistance to our need to control phenomena and explain them categorically. By approaching things from a point of not-understanding, we allow ourselves

to see that which is “shapeless or oddly shaped, foggy or in the process of coming to be — and that which cannot be locked into any category, except of course with force” (Vuori 2008, 32, translation author’s). This allows inspiration and ideas to spring forward, and one to indulge in mystery and that which doesn’t yet exist (Vuori 2008, 32).

In turn, suggestion therapist Risto Santavuori (2008) suggests that understanding is the basis of one’s existence as one comes to understand oneself in relation with the surroundings. In the Heideggerian view, as presented by Santavuori, understanding is involved with possibility; becoming aware of the possibilities of what one could become is understanding oneself. While not-understanding is a process based upon this understanding, the aim is to avoid getting attached to looking for meanings and let oneself fade to background, what Santavuori poetically describes as turning over the understanding for the other. A not-understanding director or teacher doesn’t assume the role of a superior, attaching meaning to the other’s experiences by categorising them, but creates space in which the other’s self-expression and self-understanding can grow. (Santavuori 2008, 80–82, 88.)

Finally, according to theatre lecturer and artist Irene Kajo (2011), not-understanding is a liminal space or a state of mind to stay in that includes within itself the conscious and the non-conscious, the controlled and the uncontrollable, the knowing and the not-knowing. Not-understanding produces, amongst other things, freedom: freedom to relinquish authority, control, knowing and finding the right thing, and letting something new take their place. When working in not-understanding, what we usually value can lose its value, and the other way around. Estrangement is one tool for approaching not-understanding; for example, approaching a poem like a strange person without knowing how the encounter will turn out. (Kajo 2011, 14, 53–54.) When describing a theatre piece she directed, where not-understanding was one of the key aspects, she mentions the aim of creating the piece believing that if something is meaningful to a participant, it would also be meaningful to someone in the audience (Kajo 2011, 12).

Based on these ideas from different points of view, not-understanding seems to become an act of allowing: allowing the “foggy” and “oddly-shaped” to come, allowing us to let go of the psychologising of actions and utterances on stage, allowing us not to describe every action with a weighted argument full of meaning, allowing us to assume that what is meaningful to us is meaningful to

someone else. When planning the artistic process, I presumed that not-understanding and disruption may be connected in helpful ways: disruption could be used to access the state of not-understanding, and conversely, not-understanding could be used to engage in disruptions. In Dewey's view, the developing underlying quality of disruption is not a matter of understanding or logical thought at first. It forms in the background, eventually turning our situation into a problematic one, requiring inquiry to solve the problem. In this way, disruption may lead us to realise that we do not understand something in our situation. Trying to work in a state of not-understanding, without attributing clear meanings to the various features of the situation, might allow for something surprising and disruptive to occur.

Abstract art as inspiration

The intrigue and experiential power of the lack of clear meaning is present in abstract art. For example, Wassily Kandinsky's totally abstract paintings, that I was inspired by, don't point to any specific symbolic meaning that should be understood yet are very evocative as is (e.g. *Compositions VII* and *VIII*). While discussing abstract art with one of the participants, they remarked that when faced with Kandinsky originals at MoMA, they teared up (research diary, 7.1.2018); the artworks can evoke powerful emotional reactions in us, even when trying to create any logical meaning to them becomes arbitrary.

Another source of inspiration was Eeva Muilu's contemporary dance piece ~ ~ ~ (2016) that is hard to put into words. I'd say that "three dancers moved one by one, then all together, in slow, repetitive and individualistic ways in a dimly lit room". Yet the slowness, the dimly pulsating light, and the rhythmic highly personal movement were absolutely captivating. There I was, in the audience, keenly following the meditative and repetitive piece and at the same time rushing through memories and thoughts totally unrelated to the scene in front of me, thoughts that I was surprised to think of.

One of my central aspirations was to combine the particular lived experiences, autobiographical materials and people's bodies with abstract and impersonal elements. How could the bodies on stage be both extremely living and personal, but also appear almost non-living and without persona? I thought that the movement between the straightforward autobiographical elements and the abstract impersonal elements would encourage disruption, giving a sense of fluidity and instability to the proceedings.

The extent of the participants' experience with performing arts

Inviting participants with different amounts of performing experience seemed like a way to create a group that didn't have a shared understanding about what theatre or performance should be, and in which disruptions could easily take place. Some of the performing participants had extensive background in performing, some had less, some were students at the Theatre Academy, and one participant had never done any performing arts. However, questions of experience are always blurry in the performing arts, since while someone may have done a lot of certain type of performing, the ways of working in this process may have been quite alien to them, while someone who had only done a little bit of theatre overall, turned out to have done something that very much aligned with the type of performing this piece called for.

In conversations of people who work in the arts, the idea of 'amateur' seems to often indicate a total lack of artistic history or experience, implying a well-intentioned hierarchy where the trained artist gifts the amateur with the artistic process. However, the people who may have never done theatre, may have written stories and poetry, done visual arts, or studied art degrees other than performing arts – or, simply, they may have been very creative in their lives. In our process, while the foray into some movement practices was new to the amateurs, the multitudes of physical activities, sports, and somatic methods they had done ensured that the idea of working with the body was not unknown to them.

I hoped that the piece would teeter-totter between utilising the individual strengths in people's skill sets, and ignoring the supposed lack of. While I did ask, if a dancer wanted to dance, or a poet wanted to write and recite, people could try something they had no experience in if they wanted to. Many offered ideas that aligned with their artistic background: an actor wanted to act out a scene, a painter paint, and so on. Maybe this simply came down to a person's preferred form of expression? This goes back to the autobiographical performance: people could use the artistic language that most rang true to their personal experiences.

Using two languages

The performance and the rehearsal process were conducted mainly in Finnish, but two of the performers were Swedish-speaking, and they used their mother

tongue as well. My decision to actively seek out Swedish-speaking performers was both political, artistic, and research-oriented. Although Finland is a bilingual country, there is controversy about the position of Swedish as an official national language. Against this background, using Swedish would be a political statement. Not to mention, if the content reflected the personal and the autobiographical of the performers, it should also reflect the language. Swedish is also a beautiful language that has a different, faster rhythm than Finnish (and my mother is Swedish-speaking, which I thought made a lovely touch considering my inspiration was the grieving process).

Finally, I thought having two languages would be a disruptive experience for the audience members. Many Swedish-language performances, films and TV series mix ample amounts of English into their scripts — idioms, one-liners, and whole sections of non-translated text. This has always played out like a lively, associative frolic that reflects the internet-dominated reality that we live in. But Finnish-language productions tend to stick with Finnish. If we are comfortable mixing together the languages of different art forms, why not the actual languages people use daily?

THE AUTUMN OF DISRUPTIONS

The seven rehearsals in autumn were mostly planned as workshops with different approaches used each time. The most important findings of the autumn's process are described in this chapter — some important due to their relation to disruption, some due to their relation to the overall pedagogy of the process. The rehearsals were held in movement spaces at Theatre Academy, except for the sixth rehearsal which happened in downtown Helsinki.

The first rehearsal: Examples and moving bodies

“I’ve been taken over by great self-criticism and I’m sure that no one will care about any exercise or topic that I’ve chosen. Is the structure again too blurry? — I like blurry structures, maybe I should defend those. This is my chance to do something that flows between abstract and meaningless and deeply personal. Maybe my research question kind of targets how these two can alternate, and how abstract is maybe some precognitive state waiting to be verbalised that erupts out as a personal truth (truth is now not the word I’m looking for). We often ruin things when we want to immediately clarify them and give them meaning.” (research diary, 13.11.2017, the night before the rehearsal.)

I felt the pressure to jump into action —*to do*⁵— to get the people meeting for the first time connected, to get them on each other’s skin and moving together. At the same time, I found it difficult to accurately introduce the notion of disruption to the group. Should we sit down and have a lecture or a reading circle into Dewey’s writings — or should everyone define disruption on their own? I chose a middle-ground option, telling everyone examples of having come across disruptions. I’ve written these down to showcase the common understanding of the concept as we started working, and perhaps they also speak about the everyday-life origins of the creative thought.

Approaching disruption through examples: Fridge

One cause for experiences of disruption, in Dewey’s sense, was my new refrigerator when I moved house. Usually fridges open when you pull a handle. Not this one. This one opens when you push a tiny pedal with your foot. It happened a handful of times: I’d approach the household appliance and try to pull the handle, and the door wouldn’t budge — a momentary confusion would ensue. Then I’d do a little shuffle, both mental and physical, place my foot tentatively on the pedal, and succeed. After a couple of times, I would no longer have to think about it; it had become a habit. The disruption was caused by something material outside myself obstructing my efforts. Although a very tangible example of disruption, I didn’t have the faintest idea how to use this sort of disruption on stage. Sure, we could physically block people from doing something, but I didn’t see many possibilities with that. (Still, we did an exercise where people physically blocked each other’s paths.)

Approaching disruption through examples: ‘Non-binary’

A second example I thought of was the moment I discovered that I wasn’t the only person in the world who was neither a man or a woman:

At seventeen I found a website advocating transgender rights. It was an amateurish-looking website, behind its times, with a lavender background, and italicised Times New Roman, 11pt, in white. But the site housed a page for vocabulary, and under the entry ‘Non-binary’⁶, it read: “A person who is both a

⁵ It might be tempting to add up Dewey’s interest in action and doing, and the term derived from his education theories, learning-by-doing, with the etymology of the word *drama*, Greek word for action, derived from doing. However, I feel that the focus on ‘doing’ in theatre practices is often misguided and focused on concrete physical action — when what exactly, in an artistic process, is *not* ‘doing’?

⁶ I’ve taken the liberty of translating this to ‘non-binary’, as the actual word was *transgender*. As a loan word in Finnish, *transgender* doesn’t mean the same as it does in English. The adjective ‘transgender’ in

man, and a woman, but neither.” There it was, my gender experience in actual words that someone had typed out. That meant that I wasn’t the only person feeling this way. And if I wasn’t the only person feeling this way, this was a legitimate thing to be feeling. And if this was a legitimate thing, I could *be* this thing that I already was. Men and women are people. In absence of any contradictory information, I had come to think that *all* people were either men or women, and now this short piece of text overwrote my previous belief.

As an example of disruption, this demonstrates how an individual learns something that unseats the previous knowledge and worldview they had. I chose this example to openly state to the group that I’m a non-binary transgender person. Knowing there were others in the group who didn’t identify with either binary gender option, I was hoping that if I spoke up first, it might make it easier for them to speak up if they wished to.

Approaching disruption through examples:

My mother’s garden

I had decided to tell the group about my grieving process, so the last example I used was of my realising that the plants my mother had cultivated in her garden would always remind me of her passing, whether upcoming or in the past (a recollection of this moment is written in Chapter 4: Autobiographical performance). The disruption didn’t happen in regards to the garden plants themselves, even though they were transformed in the process: the rhododendron didn’t change a bit, but now it had a totally new meaning. The disruption happened in regards to my own emotional processes: I wasn’t expecting myself to be already grieving, but I was, and it was the experience of indexing plants in my head that made me realise it.

The three examples showcase the learning of three very different types of things, based on experiences caused by very different materials — a concrete object, a text and a thought. However, in all three, the same elements of an experience of disruption and the process of inquiry and learning are present.

I disclosed that I had planned the first scene, with performers dressed in white swaying and humming, and I had asked one of the participants into the

English translates to *transsukupuolinen*, while in Finland, in the noughties, *transgender* was adopted for the diagnosis for people whose gender identity wasn’t covered by the binary options. While the word has stayed for the diagnosis, otherwise the term has since been translated to *muunsukupuolinen*, an umbrella term that approximately translates to ‘non-binary’ or ‘genderqueer’. In Swedish, the term for ‘non-binary’ is *icke-binär*.

project specifically since I envisioned them listing common names of plants as the first monologue of the piece. I had also asked their friend to participate because I knew they carpoled together⁷, and I had envisioned the second performer interrupting the first one the way these friends did in real life. I told the group that this was what I had in mind for the first scene, but other than that, the performance could spring forward from our collaborative efforts. Following Norris's idea that imagination and imaginary situations could be used just as well as real lived experiences, I told the group that in this process they didn't have to tell actual life stories; they could tell any sort of thoughts they'd ever had, even purely speculative or something that had happened to a friend. They could even tell lies and we would never have to know. This was also to combat the idea that what people are, and what they've experienced, is only 'real' if it is somehow concrete. Additionally, it should be noted that 'story' never referred to a verbal account only: right from the first rehearsals, some started to voice ideas in terms of movement or methods of visual arts.

Bodies translating each other's movements

After the discussion and introductions, we moved onto physical exercises. I find that movement together creates a sense of connectedness within a group quicker than conversation. A moment I keep coming back to is one where a dance student was tasked with walking a path and executing moves they had chosen. Another participant, skilled at movement but not a dancer, started to follow the dancer, trying to mimic their every move. The dancer performed a series of moves at a quick pace ending with a smooth knee slide from which they easily sprung up to continue walking. The moment when the non-dancer had to keep up with the dancer's pace, and instantly compute those movements with their body, was delicious. The visible effort with which they threw their body into the movement was a perfect contrast to the dancer's effortless glide. Instead of a knee slide, the non-dancer went down on their hip, rolled, and then rolled back up from a crab walk position — by no means, was this a mistake: it was them answering with their body to the *problematic situation* that the dancer's smooth, sudden choreography presented. It brought the effort, of thinking and of moving, into the effortlessness of dance practice. This kind of

⁷ This is an example of the numerous practicalities that guide the artistic process. Others include, what white clothes were discounted, what rehearsal space was available, who was present and when, etc.

moments of physical mimicry and failing at it were sought in the rehearsal process and influenced some of the scenes on stage.

One of the performers pointed out the connection of body and thinking:

[Question: How do you see yourself in relation with the group or the process?]

“Good sensing and pondering, mostly with the body today – which was great. A pondering—curious—acquaintance-making body” (participant, 14.11.2017.)

However, answering the same question, another participant commented on the divide between physical exercise and analytical thought:

“SO LOVELY TO MOVE! I find myself avoiding too much reflection for I have a tendency to OVERTHINK THINGS and freeze up.” (participant, 14.11.2017.)

This was echoed in other comments: that it was lovely to ‘just’ get up and move (research diary, 14.11.2017). This created a bit of pressure to me: how much, for the process that would be fruitful to everyone involved, should there be physical movement, and how much analysis?

Canine disruption

The biggest disruption of the first rehearsal was not human, however. One of the performers had asked me if they could bring their dog. I said yes, of course. This was when a real-life version of Dewey’s story presented earlier happened: John Jones became Thomas Jones. I was sure, in my head, that I remembered the performer describing their dog as a grey miniature poodle. When I saw the poodle, it was a large shepherd-like mixed-breed dog. In the end, the huge dog was no trouble. It was walking about, closely following its owner, approaching people discretely and retreating if given too much attention. At one point, it started barking when people were running and shouting, and had to be taken outside for a while, but otherwise it was calm and collected. However, it already seemed that if we went looking for disruption, it was going to find us.

The second rehearsal:

Plunging into personal stories

In the second rehearsal, the aim was to talk, write, verbalise and collect material. What surprised me was the participants’ openness to share deeply personal stories, having only met the day before – I was even worried, whether we were plunging too deep too soon? However, as the participants’ feedback

was positive, I now consider this a successful, ethically viable venture into collecting personal stories, and will detail the rehearsal here.

I've felt that conversation, in the commonly-used methods of cultivating it such as sitting in a circle and speaking 'freely', often develops quickly into something where a sense of consensus, connections and similarities between the experiences of individual people are sought. Often this happens simply by people paralleling their experiences with those of others, as if they were related. This might block people from sharing their experiences if they don't match the developing sense of linearity and unity, or if people view their own stories as insufficiently significant in comparison to the others. Therefore, instead of an open conversation, specific exercises were used.

The first exercise was a modified version of one created by Riku Saastamoinen, the head lecturer at Theatre Pedagogy programme; in it, people pick five small objects, arrange them into a picture, deconstruct it, and then verbally instruct a blindfolded partner to recreate the same picture with the same objects. In my version, a small box included objects ranging from romantic to mundane and to rubbish. It was only after choosing that the aim was told: to create an installation of those items. I asked for it to represent a moment of disruption. At this point, people could swap items or introduce some of their own belongings. After the picture had been built, the positions of the items were marked, and the installation was deconstructed. Having the blindfolded pair rebuild the picture according to the original builder's verbal instructions resulted in hilarity and intense focus as the positioning of small objects was difficult without seeing and the instructing of something requiring such dexterity was difficult. Then, without a blindfold, the pair talked about the picture with the original builder explaining the story behind it.⁸

In some of the participants' writings, an appreciation for the moment shared with the listener, or with the objects themselves, could be found:

[Asked to reflect freely on the rehearsal.]

"Surprisingly open and calming. At first, gluing the objects on top of a story felt weird. I found myself giving the objects meaning in relation with the story. It was meaningful what

⁸ I have used a 'small box full of small items' multiple times now, and the selection of the available items illustrates the small actions that art teachers and directors can do to steer the process and signal to participants what stories are welcomed. For example, I had some tampons lying around and decided to include them. Every single time I've used the box in my workshops, multiple people have reached out for the tampons and incorporated them into their installations or storytelling. I would like to think that small acts like this help dispel the taboo surrounding feminine hygiene (please note, that not all people who menstruate are women, and not all women do), and that they work as interventions in creating an inclusive, open space for discussion free of some arbitrary social norms.

represented what. [--] The essences of the objects strengthened some qualities in the story. [--] It felt empowering to share the story with a new person. Placing the objects together felt like settling into the story. Mutual building. No rush, I'm thankful for that. The world is so busy!!" (participant, 15.11.2017.)

"Today, I magically selected four items and a stone that I have. When I had to make a picture or installation, I didn't know what moment to choose. So I just played with the objects on the paper and thought of something else and played with them, and suddenly the objects were symbols and formed a perfect picture of a moment so meaningful to me. And I couldn't have picked better objects. So was the story in my head when I chose the objects, or did the objects bring the story to my mind?" (participant, 15.11.2017.)

The appreciation for 'concrete doing' was mentioned, as was the sense of childlikeness which ended up being a recurring theme in the autumn:

[Asked to reflect freely on the rehearsal.]

"It's lovely to get concrete, to work with materials." (participant, 15.11.2017.)

"Placing the objects felt like a return to childhood. I found a piece of pyrite — as a child I kept one as my gold treasure." (participant, 15.11.2017.)

To disrupt expectations on how the director-performer relationship operates, such as who asks for stories and who provides them, I decided to stage a personal monologue of my own for the group. I wanted to see what this could create into the rehearsing situation. I also wanted to strengthen the idea that our process welcomes everything from personally unsettling to mundane, and once again wanted to create more space for the minority point of view by openly discussing my gender and sexuality. For this reason, in the middle of the rehearsal I performed a 15-minute monologue piece called *Kenneth since 2004*: in the performance, I read out, in a rapid-fire way, fifteen questions and all their annual answers from a diary-like booklet I've kept since I was 14 years old. It *was* a performance but I also framed it *as* such and we built a seated audience for it. I also framed what I was wearing as the costume for that performance. I told the group that if I was going to ask about deeply personal life events, I should probably lay myself open to them first.

The group laughed as I talked about sex, dating failures, my family's battles with chronic illnesses, my secret desire to design home textiles, and how much I hate monkeys. Afterwards, I told the group that this was driven by my desire to test performance in a rehearsal process and should not be seen as an example of what I expect from *Names of Plants*. I also made a point that nobody had to dwell on the sexual or the sad if they didn't want to, or open up to any certain

extent for their stories to ‘qualify’ — the participants could set the boundaries and keep re-setting them if they wished to.

At the end of the rehearsal we did an exercise (in the style of Irene Kajo, lecturer at the Theatre Pedagogy program) where the participants are supposed to ‘witness’ others’ stories without any interruption or commentary, with all forms of social feedback such as utterances or laughter discouraged. In our case, in groups of three, each participant had exactly seven minutes to use, and they could use this time to talk about moments of disruption, or something else if they wished to. The one whose turn it was to tell decided how they and the witnesses were situated. For example, one group decided to sit with their backs against each other:

[Asked to reflect freely on the rehearsal.]

“I remember the moment when we three sat backs against one another and [a participant] told about their childhood. I remember the warmth of the bodies and the support that you get from sitting back to back. I leaned on the others, and felt how [the participant’s] voice resonated in my body. [--] It felt the best to share stories when you didn’t need to look at them but could feel them.” (participant, 15.11.2017.)

As I was on the outside, *looking at* them sharing stories *felt* relaxing and safe. The safety was highlighted by the participants:

[Asked to reflect freely on the rehearsal.]

“It felt really good when we were doing the ‘witnessing’ thing because I felt like I could speak to my diary and TRUST. I met these people yesterday. What an awesome feeling.” (participant, 15.11.2017.)

“[P]eople didn’t react with shock or take it badly when I alluded to my non-normative relationships.” (participant, 15.11.2017.)

“It is so rare at least in my life that I listen to someone without commenting. Also, that I get to speak without being interrupted. Conversation is good, but it’s really good to just listen! It was exciting when one story ended (when it was my turn) and there was still time left and you knew that no one was going to start talking right away; that it’s me who continues or doesn’t. [--] It felt safe today to share personal stories.” (participant, 15.11.2017.)

“It felt very liberating to tell two people who are still strangers something so personal. It was *not* therapy, but just that you were allowed to tell.” (participant 15.11.2017, emphasis in the original.)

I heard snippets and was scared of the honesty: many stories involved death, illness, and misfortunes, and now they were shared in absolute detail. At the same time, I was intrigued by every snippet: particularly my attention was taken when one participant told, in less than 40 words, how their placenta did not detach during childbirth, and what followed. The stories revealed contradictions: one spoke lengthily about a car crash, having thought they’d always

been a good driver, and then injuring the driver of the other car —ending with: “but it didn’t really affect my driving habits in any way” (research diary, 15.11.2017). Later, one participant noted that they have a hard time taking time and space for themselves in a group discussion (research diary, 23.1.2018); this points to how valuable it is to create the opportunity for everyone to express themselves.

At the end, everyone produced a written text about disruption with the idea that it might be used somehow in the performance. The first text I read, at home, was a very personal account of wanting to do self-harm and commit suicide. While the text built up to the person vowing never to say the words ‘I want to die’ ever again, the hair on my neck stood up: was this going too far, was this too raw? Could I ask and expect anyone to talk about something this personal on stage? But the text touched me deeply. And I also thought: if I was moved to tears on every read-through, could I simply, as a director, think that this was *a good text* that would lead to *good art*? Later, we properly discussed this with the participant, and I got a sense that performing this text was empowering to them — especially since they had taken to reading the text to people in their personal lives (research diary, 22.11.2017). The text became part of our performance with hardly any modifications.

An unexpected situation occurred with one of the other texts: I happened to read a six-page monologue in a completely wrong order — and it worked brilliantly. I made an edit that followed this wrong order, and suggested it to the participant; they agreed to do it, and it was used in the performance.

Third, fourth, and fifth rehearsals: Hiccups, blindfolds and harmony

Here, the proceedings and events of the following three rehearsals are depicted with various exercises used in them described. During the third rehearsal, many things took a different turn than what I had expected. Firstly, we did theatre exercises where the choices of the performer were limited by some external influence, either rules or other participants’ commands. I had thought that the strictness of the situation might create disruption and problematic situations. Instead, the people familiar with theatre practices noted that they had done these exercises before, and compared these to how they’d done them previously. The non-novelty of the exercises seemed to dampen the possibility for a

surprising experience or a disruption, as performing the exercises had become routine.

Secondly, I introduced the idea of trying the approach to acting created in the Actor's Art in Modern Times project, as the approach uses techniques like entering a "state of being" through a "state of in-between" and "destabilisation" (Hulkko et al. 2011, 211–213, translation author's). Contrasting the methods of Actor's Art in Modern Times with any practices toward disruption we might find in our process sounded interesting, and the actor students voiced interest in this idea. However, the more I talked about it, I realised that my thirteen days of trying the approach were not enough to succinctly direct or teach it. Due to the scope of this rehearsal process and my inexperience with the approach, the thought had to be abandoned. Contrasting practices focusing on disruption with the methods created in Actor's Art in Modern Times project is something to work on in the future.

Thirdly, after doing theatre exercises in the first half of the session, I asked the participants to read the texts they had written the previous week, and presented my suggestions on what could be done to these texts in regards to theatrical vignettes. There was a considerable shift in the atmosphere — two participants especially voiced their uneasiness with the approach I'd chosen:

“Performer 1: Before the break could enjoy more. Criticism toward own material + feeling that mind gets locked with their own text. It was just something done quickly the week before.

Performer 2: ‘When does the authorship get divided?’ Scared to get locked into one thing and not be able to freely brainstorm with the group.” (research diary, 22.11.2017)

Maybe I'd acted too quickly —Norris waits until the fourth or fifth rehearsal before dealing with vignette ideas— as the idea of texts becoming scene ideas seemed stultifying and not productive of creativity and new ideas. The focus on the originator of the texts —that these were *their* ideas and they got to choose what was done to them even if I as a director made suggestions— seemed to isolate the participants alone with their texts instead of creating a collaborative atmosphere with different ideas openly expressed.⁹ Later, when prompted by a questionnaire, another performer describes this moment as perhaps disruptive, having made them pause:

⁹ A curious layer to the autobiographical aspect also occurred: some performers didn't, after having written a text, consider it autobiographical to *them* anymore, but to the fictional narrator of the text — creating an artistic distance between the text and the writer.

[Question: Have you attained the feeling of disruption in the rehearsals?]

“[T]wo cases/situations happened that made me stop and think. I’m not sure if those can be called disruptions. The word sounds negative, and these weren’t negative per se. [--] The other was a situation where, in the talking circle, a person questioned the director’s methods, with good intentions, but it somehow upsets the structure.” (participant 29.11.2017.)

This performer had previously said that they liked how ‘firm’ the sense of direction felt (research diary, 15.11.2017), so this may have been a collision of different expectations or preferences over the style of direction. The other situation they described also pertained to the rehearsal culture:

“The other was a situation in which a person told me to be quiet in the middle of an exercise/rehearsal situation. This was due to their sensitivity to loud noises, and I’ve never come across such a situation in a theatre rehearsal. Good or bad? I don’t know, but it made me think.” (participant 29.11.2017.)

Here, having experienced performers and amateurs in the same group made disruptions possible. In two of the rehearsals, participants experienced with performing suddenly used loud voices, and a participant not experienced in theatre asked them to not be so loud. In everyday life, suddenly switching to a loud voice is unexpected; in theatre practices, being told not to be loud is. Even though, in the two quotes above, the participant wonders whether these are examples of disruption as the word sounds negative, I would say these most definitely are; disruption is not negative or positive per se.

A detour highlighting the associative nature of the artistic process occurred when one performer wrote a somewhat graphic text involving BDSM. After the text had been read out aloud, I wondered that while it would be wonderful to present BDSM in such a normal, everyday-life light, would an audience member’s ability to receive new information be somehow halted due to the text’s graphicness? What happened next was that some of the participants drew a connection between certain BDSM practices and gardening plants, and started a totally casual, associative discussion about these two things. The ‘smuttiness’ of the BDSM text completely evaporated when sexual practices became just another thing to contrast with plants and gardening. Even though the originator of the text later withdrew the story and it wasn’t used in the performance, the unrehearsed associative conversation was kept as a scene.

The meaning of ‘amateur’ was also called into question inadvertently. One of the most experienced performers in the group suggested an exercise where one person goes in front of everyone else for some minutes, doesn’t ‘do’ anything,

and is simply looked at. What was rather unexpected was that some of the participants more experienced in performing became nervous while not doing anything, while on the contrary, some of the less experienced participants didn't care to try. I realised, linked or not, that for many people, their jobs require them to be in front of other people all the time, as themselves, while people in the performing arts often perform protected by roles, narratives, choreographies, and stage lighting. This became central to think about considering what kind of performing I thought the performance would include. To use Michael Kirby's distinctions (as presented by Richard Schechner), the continuum of non-acting-acting can be divided into five: nonmatrixed performing (doing something on stage without a role), symbolised matrix (doing something as oneself but so that the audience understands it belonging to a character), received acting (being in role but doing very little), simple acting (doing a character with some simulated feeling), and complex acting (committing all of one's physique and emotions to create a character) (Schechner 2002/2013, 174–175). What I could see the performance mostly consisting of, was actually nonmatrixed performing, simply doing things on stage without a role or a character.

Walking the blindfolded

In an attempt to create disruptions between the participant and their surroundings, exercises with blindfolds were tried. These were returned to multiple times as they seemed to create the novel situations needed for disruptions. In its basic form, the exercise involved one person being blindfolded and passive, and being led by one or two custodians. The custodians not only moved the blindfolded person around but also used the person's hands or other body parts to feel the surroundings; the blindfolded person could even be guided to perform actions, such as drumming the floor, moving objects, and so on. The custodian kept the blindfolded person safe. As with any exercise, but especially due to the aspect of not seeing, anyone could stop the exercise at any time.

We kept trying different configurations: varying the duration (from five to 25 minutes), the number of custodians, the space (exiting the rehearsal room and wandering around all places at Theatre Academy), and the level of activity of the blindfolded person. With two custodians, they did not plan or silently signal to one another what they aimed to do, as this would have eliminated the

possibility for error, surprise, and conflict. This also worked as a team-building exercise: a participant noted that when being one of the custodians, they could surprisingly well get into the dynamic of two participants who were good friends beforehand (research diary, 22.11.2017). The level of activity of the blindfolded person varied: at first they were passive and receptive, but in the end, the instruction was that they could try to surprise the custodian. This facilitated disruptiveness: the blindfolded person was no longer a mindless, helpless object but rather started to unsettle the custodian's plans.

After one exercise, a performer wanted to show the group what had happened. They recreated a situation where their blindfolded person was sitting stoically on the floor, completely still, and they, the custodian, were carefully placing pieces of paper into the sitting person's lap. This, the custodian remarked, was a beautiful act. Suddenly, the sitting person pushed all the scraps of paper out from between their legs, and returned to stillness. The custodian was shocked — how had they rejected the beautiful act of meticulously placing papers? “It went wrong!” (Research diary, 28.11.2017.) This was a true disruption: an upset of the custodian's beliefs in their action with the surroundings. The scenic image was also so strong and curiously meaningful in its meaninglessness that it became a scene in *Names of Plants*.

This exercise seemed to create moments when things went ‘wrong’ (differently than expected), which cultivated disruption. Even though my position in making of the theatre piece was that of a facilitator and director, I wanted to experience some of the exercises myself because I wanted to feel whether disruption could be felt. This proved useful: at one point, my custodian tried to carefully manoeuvre me around a chair in a tight corridor, and I was sure that it was out of the way. Except, they accidentally pushed me against it. A simple thing, yet called into question all the trust I had in them as my custodian; a full-on disruption. While trust exercises are common in many professional settings, the strength of the experience came from the unexpectedness of it; had ‘trust’ been chosen as a theme, experiencing something related to it wouldn't have been unexpected. When I seemed so giddy about being accidentally pushed against a chair, the participant brought up the forgiveness of theatre practices: “one doesn't have to be scared of anything in here when even the mistakes are welcome!” (Research diary, 28.11.2017.) During the same exercise, I realised they were leading me to a flight of stairs:

In the bigger room, on the second-floor walkway that I've previously thought of as our playful dream Paris, with them speaking French to me, and Vi kommer alltid ha Paris by Veronica Maggio playing in my ear, I realise they're taking me towards the door. Since I know there's a steep staircase behind it, I'm suddenly nervous, proceeding more carefully on the walkway itself — even though the walkway hasn't changed, it's no longer the dream Paris, it's a prelude to Pedagogue-Dies-in-Staircase-Accident. Even though they've just accidentally pushed me against a chair, almost tripping me up, I've laughed it off and felt happy-go-lucky and content to follow, but now all of a sudden I don't trust them, thinking they're smaller than me, conjuring up half-finished images of how they're gonna either push me down the stairs or pull me down the stairs, and me, either way, somehow stumbling and us both crashing down, feeling responsible for landing on them and the sports equipment below.

They guide me through the door, I'm hesitant, but even though I could at any moment ask them to stop, ask us to turn around, even simply take my blindfold off, I don't want to.

They slowly turn me around, my back toward the flight, somehow it's worse and I feel more exposed to harm than when facing it, even though it makes much more sense logistically (and reminds me of being a small child and coming down stairs on all fours with my legs first — I'm reminded: when I was six I fell and slid down a flight of stairs headfirst and had to be taken to a hospital, is that going to happen again?). Are they going to lead me from behind, or somehow push me? They position themselves behind me, one step below, and guide my hands back to the handrails. I instinctively hunch forward to counter the slight change of weight as my arms shift behind my centre line. Nervous. Then, they proceed to somehow use their opposite foot to lift mine, and guide it and my whole leg down on to the next step, sliding it along their weight-bearing leg and placing it firmly between their feet. I feel sturdy and safe. They use both of their feet and the weight of their legs to almost masterfully instruct my foot to rise, to move through the air, and land on the step, all the time keeping contact with either or both of their lower limbs. By step three, my nervousness has been replaced with impatience: as they carefully and with great dexterity move my legs about, it is actually more difficult and time consuming —while very safe!— than if I backed down the flight on my own. As they move my feet, I can't put my weight on them fully, and as my foot lands, they cannot actually tell whether or not my weight is sitting on it comfortably, and since they place my foot securely between both of their feet, I can't shift its position and have to shift the organisation of my thigh bone and my hips instead. I feel almost defiant —aha, while you're doing a marvellous job keeping me safe, little do you know that I'm actually a staircase expert— and it's true: for the longest time, since I was a child, I've amused myself by not turning the lights on if I needed to get up at night and go somewhere. I'd simply feel my way around in the stairs, and I'd consider myself super adept at moving in darkness. But how could they know and why would they assume that? So surprisingly, the disruption isn't caused by my lack of sight, it is their skilful handling of my feet, aimed to guide me safely with no disruption whatsoever. (research diary, 28.11.2017.)

As the experiencer, I was in the middle of my wishes, their wishes, what I was reminded of, what I imagined might happen, and realising what they thought would happen. The situation was full of 'what if's and 'what now's, creating expectations and then unsettling them. This moment in the stairs inspired us

to try a scene involving ‘moving each other too carefully’, performing everyday actions with a wrong kind of physical support provided by a partner.

Another instance that occurred between this performer and me led to a surprisingly strong sense of understanding and empathy. With me as the custodian, I saw a traditional double pedestal office desk. An idea came to my mind, and I quickly and firmly guided and pushed my blindfolded pair underneath the table — not with force, but not in a nice way either. I also went there, and ended up half covering them with my elbows on their back. My assumption was that being pushed and confined into a small space would feel like an uncomfortable situation — but suddenly, I realised how content they were. They were totally at peace —not producing any clear signal of their contentness— but I understood it from their body, their way of being. And I started to sing quietly, something like a made-up French lullaby. My expectation went out the window, and I somehow fully understood the scope of this person’s contentment there, even though it didn’t make any logical sense to me. As I later told them this, they told me that they *did* in fact habitually read or sleep underneath a table. Later, they described how this exercise had been full of constant shifts:

[Question: Have you attained the feeling of disruption in the rehearsals? Has it happened in the here and now? Have the rehearsals brought up past experiences?]

“While walking blindfolded yesterday, I was all the time in the atmosphere of wondering, because there were constant shifts in the moving. The imagination started going. I returned to many mental images from my past, for example my trip abroad to Paris.” (participant, 29.11.2017.)

While my pushing the participant under a table was intended to be an experiment with brutish behaviour, other questionable experiments took place as well: one custodian left their blindfolded person alone in a chilly staircase for an extended time. The participant left there later mentioned how alone and cold they felt, and how it brought to mind the recent negative life events that they’d had. They then proposed that a single audience member would be made to feel uncomfortable and cold (research diary 28.11.2017); this became part of our performance.

Another performer also describes a negative feeling in the blindfolded walking exercise:

[Question: Have you attained the feeling of disruption in the rehearsals? Has it happened in the here and now? Have the rehearsals brought up past experiences?]

“It has happened here and now in the walking the blind exercise. In walking the blind, my partner took me out of the rehearsal space into the corridor where there were people and a lot of talking. I was listening to them eyes closed and I felt helpless.” (participant, 29.11.2017.)

It could be that the participant felt safe in the rehearsal space surrounded by only the people they’d gotten familiar with: now, exposed to the people in the corridor, the expectation of the safe, inwards-turning atmosphere of theatre rehearsals was unsettled. They also bring up how memories from childhood have come up frequently in the process:

“CHILDHOOD has come up multiple times, in the examples this time, and in the stories that we shared in the three-person groups, and that we wrote.” (participant 29.11.2017.)

It seems that moments of unsettledness and resolution from youth are well-preserved in the memory.

All in all, the blindfolded-walking exercises seemed most fruitful in generating disruptions. Removing sight from people who normally see puts them into a new position with their surroundings. Being led around constantly creates expectations and habits for both the blindfolded person and their custodian. Aspects that fed disruption were (1) having two people guiding the blindfolded person without planning or discussing what to do, leading to fruitful uncertainty during the journey, and/or (2) allowing the blindfolded person to shift between different levels of agency (active or passive, submissive or disobedient), and/or (3) questionable use of power (bullying or negligence) by the custodian – while the last one, in our relatively safe environment, did produce findings and creative work, it cannot really be recommended due to possible ethical concerns.

Humming and movement

Following Dewey’s (1934) thinking that art should be actively perceived by the audience through an inner process similar to that that led to the creation of the artwork, and Rancière’s (2016) idea that the audience member is already actively piecing together the story as the performance unfolds, trying to somehow forcibly engage the audience in disruptions didn’t sound reasonable. Not only did this chance the spectator refusing the attempted disruption altogether, it didn’t allow for the freedom to create one’s own story and own experience. The approach shifts considerably, if the purpose of the performance

is to present possibilities of experiencing disruption, instead of outright causing disruptions. This shouldn't be mistaken for an inattentive "they'll see whatever they'll want to see" approach: the performance needs to be crafted with a certain aesthetic whole in mind, and then given to the audience to translate to their own experiences. Disruption itself also cannot be the underlying quality, as then there is no aesthetic whole.

As we wanted the focus to be on experiencing disruptions, the aesthetic quality was in fact to be harmonious to amplify it. I had an image of the first scene: people humming and slowly swaying, it then developing into a hectic movement. It could create a binary out of these two: harmonious humming and chaotic movement. As I sensed that the participants craved something concrete (and was affirmed of it afterward (research diary 29.11.2017)), we started practicing the opening scene in the autumn already.

The humming was started by locating four different resonance areas in the body: the chest, the clavicle area and lower neck, the inside of the mouth, and the skull. Voice was then produced so that the resonance would be felt in any of these areas, with people changing resonance areas and sliding their voices up and down. No pitch or key was ever agreed upon: curiously, when people work with resonances, they effortlessly end up in a harmonious key with one another. The humming created a backdrop to disrupt: as people were instructed to keep switching between different places of resonance, dissonant sounds were created and new competing harmonies and patterns of sound started to take place. The quality of the sound stayed calm and easy while it as a whole kept evolving, distorting itself, and establishing harmony anew. However, the backdrop and harmony was not only that of sound: humming can bring about an emotional or affective resonance. According to artist-researcher Heidi Fast, "vocal-affective attunement between multiple people and the surrounding spatial circumstances is an immediate artistic event" (Fast 2017, 22, translation author's). Affective attunement is borrowed from psychologist Daniel Stern's thinking: it is the instinctive understanding of emotions and intentions between two people, happening in the transformation and matching of their gestures, tones of voices, subtle changes in body posture and so on — different from imitation, the actual action is not pivotal, but rather the feeling behind it (Stern 2004, 89, 241). The human voice is affectively resonating. The wordless, vocal expression might amplify people's sensibility to emotions, and sensitivity to

interaction. It creates communication and vivid non-verbal expressions. (Fast 2017 22, 24, 27.)

To interfere with this achieved harmony, we added a contrasting element of movement. The starting position was an almost still, soft swaying, as if suspended in the air from cheekbones. Any movement that any performer made would be taken up and repeated by anyone who happened to see it, rippling through the group. We practiced this with both rehearsed, abstracted movements, and with natural, spontaneous movements such as rubbing one's nose. Between movements, people returned to humming. As the movements rippled in the group, we added intensity, with movements requiring more effort and making the soft humming more difficult. We strong-armed the voice — what was once a gentle humming, was now a forced churn or a yelp, even a religious trance— as the movements grew bigger and more frequent.

While the humming was the harmony interfered with by the frantic movement, elements of cohesion and disruption were present in both. In the largely harmonious humming, voices slipped in and out of shared keys creating dissonance, and the pattern of sound was unpredictable in nature, while in the largely chaotic movement, moments of fluid, well-balanced composition emerged between the moving performers. In the mutuality of the situation the multiple bodies sharing affects acted both as agents for harmony and as agents for disruption.

Sixth rehearsal: Eventalising the city

Inspired by Foucault's eventalisation, an approach that aims to call into question what we think of as natural and self-evident, I planned a rehearsal in which we would wander around in the public and try to see, in a new light, the way the urban area is constructed and how people act in it. One possibility was to try to see the area as a 'new, previously unknown culture', and make assumptions of that culture's customs and history. I wondered, if this could create disruptions with the way in which the performers saw or acted themselves in their everyday surroundings (all but one of the participants lived in Helsinki). The rehearsal was held in central Helsinki on 5th of December 2017. Adventitiously, this coincided not only with the Christmas market season but with the Suomi 100 — Finland's 100 years of independence¹⁰ festivities

¹⁰ Finland's Independence Day is the 6th of December.

which meant that the area was full of people, market stalls, and seasonal ornaments.

We met at the lobby of Helsinki City Museum, and the participants first had 15 minutes to find a spot from which to observe whatever unfolded. After that, we met and discussed their observations. Then, they could choose whether to work solo or in small groups, and were tasked with exploring and researching the city for one hour. Whimsical props, such as paintbrushes coated with red fake paint, or Mickey Mouse hands, could be chosen to give a sense of otherworldliness to the proceedings¹¹. After an hour, we'd meet at a cafeteria on the top floor of a local shopping centre, 1,6 km or one mile from the museum to discuss what had occurred. The participants' comments here are paraphrased from my diary as I wrote them down while we were discussing.

Two of the participants picked the cartoonish paintbrush and went around interviewing people participating in the Finland 100 festivities as if the huge brush was a microphone (which it obviously wasn't). They asked the people: "what is going on in here?". Curiously, many people answered to the fake paintbrush. The most remarkable answers included: "We're getting ready to celebrate Finland 100 here... Did I get it right?", and "I don't know" (while still participating in the festivities), which could be postulated to showcase the hive-mindedness of big, especially national celebrations — that there is a correct reason for them and that people have to be there. A shoe shop owner answered to the paintbrush: "I sell shoes". (Research diary, 5.12.2017.)

Behaving wrong or being in the wrong place was noted by some of the performers. One performer stood next to a market stall at the Christmas market, while one decided to walk backwards on a crowded street. One had ended up sitting on the wrong side of a red-and-yellow boom barrier:

"If I stood up straight [next to the market stall], people would start to look at me, but if I crouched just a little, nobody would notice. Only one person passed me by, you could tell he'd gone there [between the stalls] before, it wasn't the first time he took the shortcut." (research diary, 5.12.2017.)

"Everyone was walking peacefully in the same direction. I decided to turn the other way and walk backwards. Suddenly EVERYONE was staring at me, they couldn't even finish what they were saying. After maybe four steps I had to turn and walk normally." (research diary, 5.12.2017.)

"I should realise by this red-and-yellow colouring that I'm not supposed to be here. Why?" (research diary, 5.12.2017.)

¹¹ This was inspired by the performance *Avalokiteshvara Superclusters* (2017) by Other Spaces, in which the audience members could study an outdoors space with copper pipes, chopsticks, and so on.

One performer felt that they would have had to have a child to ride in a merry-go-round, even though there were seats available — “[a person] taking photos up close surely had their child there, but how would I know!” (Research diary 5.12.2017.) One performer ended up staying in a remote hallway of a museum, instead of the exhibition spaces, and noted that they felt invisible there:

In the hallway, next to the courtyard, I'm looking at space that's maybe a meeting room, a sign: "max. capacity 40". Orange sofas, lovely ones.

It was an empty space. Something in it interested me.

I stay in the hallway, I'm leaning on a wall, a beautiful staircase.

Where should I go?

(I didn't.)

Where do the stairs lead?

There's a rope, signalling you shouldn't go there. A man enters from a door, and a woman in winter clothing, the man didn't look at me, but said to the woman "in the courtyard over there is one more work of art".

I didn't see one. It felt strange that the man came from the door and I was there, in a space that didn't have a work of art in it, was I allowed to stay there? Here you should only be in places demarcated by signs —

Why are there house plants on top of these few tables, why? Someone working in this museum has put them there, not the interior designer. That someone hasn't been able to get rid of the plants, hasn't found another place for them.

A museum guide tries to lure a child somewhere, the child moved a few steps towards him, then decided not to go.

I went.

Old shadows, and a sound of helicopter. I thought the helicopter was part of a war-themed work of art.

Soon something wild will happen. (research diary, 5.12.2017.)

Sometimes behaving in an unexpected manner meant becoming invisible, sometimes it brought a lot of attention to the participant. The exercise also got people's imaginations racing. One imagined the masses of people preparing for apocalypse, with the shopping centre as a long-term management facility for bodies and spinning tower cranes as engines driving the approaching end of the world, while one simply imagined a ramp towards a multi-storey car park filling up with millions of bearing balls. (Research diary, 5.12.2017.)

A wealth of observations about the norms and contradictions taking place in the social surroundings was made. For example, a participant, noting their wearing hiking boots for the occasion, wondered why artificial nature oases were sprinkled around the city — “get inside a fake glasshouse to eat, ‘yay our own summer cottage’”. I noted that the only animal I saw was a dog inside an old lady's purse, yet store displays were littered with images and figurines of

animals, a toy store had a wall-like display of stuffed animals staring with plastic eyes, and restaurants were covered with pictures of animals — usually species not served in those establishments. A participant noted how mannequins had gotten weird with elongated, “seaweed-like” hands — “do they look unrealistic so that no one could blame them for eating disorders?”— while another wondered whether we all become mannequins after we die. There was a display that played a recording every time a potential customer came close; “hey you—”, it shouted. I wondered how that was acceptable, and how negative the reaction from the public would have been, had we staged some sort of a performance intervention. (Research diary 5.12.2017.)

In Foucauldian manner, the structures yielding discipline in our society got noted as well. One performer noted how they ended up at a place with nice-looking outdoors lighting where many children gathered, and while the parents couldn’t be seen, their loud, commanding voices would be heard:

“Parents’ yelling voices: ‘DON’T DO THAT, DON’T GO THERE, SLIDE DOWN THE STAIRS ON YOUR BUTT.’” (research diary, 5.12.2017.)

Due to the Independence Day festivities, many policemen and security officers had been deployed in the area, with helicopters (either police or press) circling in the air. One performer noted the following contradiction:

“I felt that the surveillance —the helicopters, the police, the security officers— created a feeling of the threat of terror, even though it is for us that they are there.” (research diary, 5.12.2017.)

As these findings could work as social critique, I was envisioning how they could be presented on stage in a Brechtian manner. With Brecht’s *Verfremdungseffekt* (*V-Effekt*), the alienation or distancing effect, the situation or characters on stage are made strange, not-self-evident and not-understandable in a way that makes the audience wonder and look for an explanation. Through estrangement, the audience member is led to imagine all the other possibilities that the performance or the actor could present, showing that what is presented was not the only option. *V-Effekt* uses tools ranging from specific austere staging to the actor trying to show in each action all the other actions he’s not taking, and was developed to engage the spectators in social critique. (Brecht 1976/1991, 121, 140–141, 152–153.)

However, even though the findings of that day were collected in folder, some as vignette ideas and some as texts, only the idea of interviewing strangers was picked up by any of the participants in the following rehearsals, and even that ended being discarded from the overall dramaturgy. Thus, the material collected in the city remained largely unused in the performance. Nevertheless, I would assume that the rehearsal spent in new spaces was advantageous for the process since the performance was to be held in a different place than where the rehearsals were held. Most of the performers also noted how lovely it was to simply meet outside a rehearsal space, and how nice sitting and chatting at a cafeteria together felt (research diary, 5.12.2017).

Seventh rehearsal: Missing director

The last rehearsal of the autumn was held without a director present. As the process had been largely helmed by me, there was potential to generate moments of disruptions and unexpected insights. I have previously had good experiences as “a missing director”, as turning the reigns to the group and suddenly working without the hierarchy present in theatre practices tends to lead to creative inputs. I had thought I would surprise the participants by not being there, but then thought against it: these sorts of surprises are displays of power, and would go against the transparency of the process. So, I told the group I wouldn’t be there, and that there would be an IKEA bag waiting for them. What they didn’t know was that the bag was full of food. It also included all the vignette ideas that we had collected so far, many with illustrated instructions. A covering letter stated that the participants were free to use the time however they wished (had they only eaten together for three hours, it would have still been beneficial for the group process, possibly leading to new ideas). I’d also selected three vignette ideas as my preferred options to test.

In the end, the participants ate and chatted for a long time. Like the public space of the previous week, the food and drinks were intended to work as a fresh, new situation, possibly disrupting the routine rehearsal process. Many noted the joy about the selection of treats:

[Asked to reflect freely on the rehearsal.]

“I WAS IN SUCH A GOOD MOOD BECAUSE OF THE SURPRISE TREATS [three heart drawings] [--] I realised that I was NERVOUS. That we are as a group for the first time without you. So this rehearsal functioned as *team building* in such a lovely way.” (participant, 13.12.2017, emphasis in the original.)

Reflecting on the day, the freedom to select what to do was noted by multiple participants as a positive:

“It is always nice when you get the freedom to choose the structure of the rehearsals, through that we could concretely experiment with some tasks/exercises.” (participant, 13.12.2017.)

“What a lovely rehearsal! Free atmosphere!” (participant, 13.12.2017.)

“The freedom to do or not to do works every time!” (participant, 13.12.2017.)

In the end, the group decided to do two different things than what I had chosen—which at first, I confess, made me go “why these!”—and one of them ended being a misunderstanding. I had written down a notion about movement with a geometrical illustration: the group created that illustration in the space with their bodies, moving in harmony with one another, or going against one another’s movements. The accidental exercise worked brilliantly. Then, the group created a scene in which people cared for each other as if for plants. As a soundtrack to it, one participant had decided to play Mort Garson’s album *Mother Earth’s Plantasia* (1976), composed to benefit the growth of different plant species. The participants mentioned the loving attention and tenderness of the scene:

[Asked to reflect freely on the rehearsal.]

“CULTIVATING PLANTS WAS THE BEST EVER.” (participant, 13.12.2017.)

“Taking care of plants was nice, to observe people’s enjoyment when they cared for each other as much as possible. To get into the being of the plant.” (participant, 13.12.2017.)

And I, as a missing director, didn’t know any of this yet. Later, I read their accounts which appeared promising—and frankly, if cultivating plants was the best thing ever, we could surely find a way to put it into the performance no matter what it actually looked like.

THE SPRING OF REHEARSING

In the spring, the ten rehearsals blurred together more, as each was more of a continuation from the other, and the focus was on building the performance and rehearsing scenes. New scene ideas were conceived throughout January. While the idea was to keep the performance rough around the edges, with a feeling of unfinishedness to it, it actually needed to be finished. Following Dewey’s idea of a work of art forming an aesthetic whole, the separate scenes that had no connection with each other needed to be tied together with some qualities, bringing the artistic process to a close. In my view, despite the role of

disruption in both the artistic process and the performance, the latter was to be harmonious, thoughtful and serene. However, especially in the beginning of the year, after a three-week break, there was a sense of fluctuating uneasiness or concern arising from the messiness and fragmented nature of the process. The participants started feeling more assured after two things. Firstly, I reminded the group that the unfinishedness, the essayistic interest in personal stories, and working with not-fully-formed ideas and actions wasn't something that had to disappear before the final performance. Instead, it was to be part of the final product, an artistic choice, not due to a lack of resources. Secondly, I put together a score or dramaturgy for the performance. (Research diary 16. and 24.1.2018.)

The collaborative discussions and co-creation did not unfold as I had expected. Due to scheduling conflicts and illnesses, one to four participants were missing in every rehearsal (sometimes the dog was present). This made the collaborative aspect of the process more difficult as the assortment of people present kept changing all the time; it also meant more time and repetitions went to rehearsing scenes with a partial cast.

Trying to retain a sense of authorship for the originator of any given idea still appeared somewhat stifling as it did in the autumn: even in settings where mechanisms (voluntary exercises) were present for group discussion and brainstorming to take place, people chose to work alone, and some only presented their scene ideas to the group very late into the process. How to let the authorship remain with the originator of the material but still encourage collaborative transforming of that material? This is something for me to think about in future projects, as I still believe that the originator should be respected much more than usually happens in a devising process.

Yet the further the spring went, the more I was making decisions from a traditional director's position. Many of the performers also turned the reins to me as the director more and more, using language such as "no, the director decides!" or "I regress and stop taking responsibility" (research diary 10.1. and 12.2.2018). However, whenever I posed a question to the group or said that I didn't know how to proceed, they immediately came up with ideas and solutions – while all participants offered viable solutions, here the amount of experience in performing and the level of the person's art education correlated with the ease and quickness on which the artistic resolutions arrived.

I also realised a mistake in my thinking: we were creating a performance to two very unique gallery spaces, in the spirit of site-specific performance, yet I was the only one who had been to the venues. How could I expect to have an equally collaborative decision-making process, then? While I tried to replicate the venues in our rehearsal room, showing floor plan printouts and taping the floor didn't create an equal amount of knowledge.

The space of February's performances, Forum Box, presented us with an unexpected moment: two weeks before the premiere, was the opening of the three exhibitions featured in the gallery¹² (before this, we only knew hints and tentative plans of what would be in the space). An amazing coincidence occurred: the week before, we had rehearsed a new scene where people "disappear into the walls and the floor" — now, at Forum Box, Pauliina Kaasalainen's deceptively lifelike human-shaped sculptures were merging with the walls and the floor of the gallery. What was not so fortunate was that one of the figurines in the *On the hollow ground* installation was right in the centre of the room we'd been planning to perform in. The other gallery room on the street level, featuring Jukka Hautamäki's media installations, was dark as the houselights couldn't be switched on. I made a quick decision: the performance would move between the gallery spaces with the audience in tow.

The role and appeal of disruption seemed to change for me. In short: in the autumn the disruption had been an elusive yet inspiring concept with efforts made to make sketches out of it and grasp at it, yet in the spring the disruption became a real upset of expectations with consequences when people were missing or the performance venue was different than what had been anticipated. With the stress of a premiere approaching, the mystique and allure of disruption was replaced with my wishing for consistency in the artistic process.

Even though in the autumn, I had said that being tired or listless in our rehearsals was welcome and informative in itself, now I was worried that the pervasive quality of our performance would be fatigue — the participants kept stating how stressed and tired they were. Many were falling ill with or recovering from flu-like symptoms, many had a lot of work or school, and some

¹² Jukka Hautamäki: *Conditio* [multiple mixed media installations], Pauliina Kaasalainen: *On the hollow ground* [site-specific installation, multiple life-size figurines] & Katri Kuparinen: *Time-variantiot* [Time variations] [paper cuttings]. (Forum Box 2018.)

were grappling with events in their personal lives (research diary, Jan–Feb 2018). We were also rehearsing in the evenings in the darkest season of the year. I thought it would’ve been unfair to the audience if the performance mainly projected tiredness at them. So, I tried to find ways to pick up the energy. The usual ways of boosting energy in theatre practices could be divided into three categories: (1) fast-paced childlike games, a playful rush, (2) aggressive, sporty, sweaty physical exercise-based practices, and (3) deep-rooted calmness and body sensing exercises informed by somatic practices. The quality of the rehearsal process easily seeps into the performance as well, so if the latter was intended to be thoughtful and serene, the atmosphere of the rehearsals couldn’t be frantic or antsy either. Therefore, the first and second option didn’t seem feasible. The third option, the one I usually default to, didn’t seem to work the way I’d hoped: relaxation seemed to bring out more languidness. So, I had to find ways to combine calmness and energy: we did warm-up dancing to pop songs, lifted one another while walking, caressed each other’s skin, and so on. Additionally, the last week before the premiere was not filled with multiple rehearsals. Instead, we had a week’s break, as minds that have had time to rest bring freshness to a performance.

All in all, the measures taken to avoid too much stress seemed to have worked: during the performance week, a performer described the process as “therapeutic” (research diary 21.2.2018). Even though I’d problematised the traditional director’s role that I took, a participant described the atmosphere as having been “equal and attentive”. They also mentioned that the group of performers felt really safe in the performance. (Participant 27.3.2018.)

Experiences from the artistic process

In March, a questionnaire was submitted to the group (see Appendix 3). What was surprising to me, as a pedagogue, was that one participant found that what felt most nerve-racking to them wasn’t the performance or any ‘artistic’ part of the process, but rather a simple often-repeated warm-up exercise where people, one by one, improvise a movement and everyone follows. This shows that while at times taken for granted, ‘the easy bits’, the small improv games and warm-ups, are also learned and acquired behaviour. Nonetheless, the same performer describes learning on many fronts during the process:

[Question: What did [you] learn, and what did the process give to [you]?”]
 “All in all, I learned to work in a group

I learned more about writing about some subject
 I learned listening and understanding others' ideas etc
 I learned more about making a performance, e.g. building a scene and testing different elements" (participant, 28.3.2018.)

This learning of group work, listening and understanding, and of building a performance is especially noteworthy: in the very beginning of the process the participant said openly that they were not familiar with creating and working with a group, and wanted to learn more (participant 14.11.2017). Another performer described a collaborative moment in the process as empowering:

[Question: What did [you] bring into this process and performance?]
 "Hmm. In the beginning I was scared that I wouldn't have anything to offer. A moment that I carry with me was when the 'back then I was...' texts were laid out on the floor, and when we read those out aloud and people had chosen my texts, and it felt really empowering. Somehow it was magnificent that my experiences pleased/touched/something enough, so that someone else picked those texts." (participant, 27.3.2018.)

I also asked the group about their relationship with disruptions. Two of them noted disruption arising during the performance from there being acquaintances in the audience:

[Question: What was most unexpected in the performance situation to [you]?]
 "That sometimes there were these powerful moments in which I became aware of myself, my performing and saw myself almost from the outside: 'eh, now I perform... now I must concentrate... now I must remember... there's audience here... there are acquaintances...' [--] Also the acquaintances in the audience disrupted the most in the introduction where we moved and warmed up in the space... I was, due to experience, prepared for this: I didn't even try to stay distant like with strangers in the audience, [instead] I nodded, smiled a little, because I think that the effort in trying not to acknowledge the familiar face would lead to overthinking it or, for example, a burst of laughter." (participant, 28.3.2018.)
 "[T]hat people there affected my own feeling." (participant, 27.3.2018.)

With the performer giving the latter answer we talked after the performance where their acquaintances had been present. Their whole body language in their monologue had shifted from a suspended, floating vertical into a horizontal swaying from side to side. This didn't matter, of course, but was a totally different bodily expression. (Research diary 22.2.2017.) The same participant, responding to a question concerning disruption, noted the creativity following experiences of disruption. In reflection, they returned to a physical blocking exercise done in our first rehearsal in November:

[Question: How did disruptions and unexpected situations appear to [you] in the process and the performance?]

“In the process it brought out creative states of mind, i.e. thoughts and mental images. It was relaxing to write down my stream of consciousness after disruption experiences.

On the other hand, in the rehearsal it felt interesting to be an active agent at disrupting, walking in front of another.” (participant, 27.3.2018.)

Responding to the same question, another performer recalled a moment in which they thought they had broken a TV screen that was part of the multimedia installation (the screen simply turned off due to a timer):

“Both in the process and in the performance I observed that disruptions and disturbances are kind of beautiful in their own way. Somehow it was really soothing that after an unexpected moment you could rely on the other performers and the structure of the performance, carrying that confusion at the same time. Like in the moment when my back grazed the screen and I thought I had broken it and I couldn’t do anything about it.” (participant, 27.3.2018.)

In the response, the disruption is seen as both a beautiful thing in its own right. Their occurrence is balanced by a reliance on both the other performers and the structure of the performance – the artistic process itself. The pedagogical aspects of the artistic process were described, by the same participant, in strong emotional terms:

[Question: What did [you] learn, and what did the process give to [you]?”]

“I fell in love a little with every person who was part of this process. Somehow I feel that through this all I got a much better grip of how much I really have genuine joy and love to share. I feel that everybody participated on each day exactly like they happened to be that day, and that was really important to me. We all deal with the same difficult and painful emotions and thoughts (and also good and lovely and warm and light, of course!) and throughout this mishmash there was space for it all the time. I learned that I can like touching people and enjoy people being close to me. I learned that everybody’s life holds something that someone else can hold onto and identify with. I got courage and strength to be more open and feel more and on a larger scale. I learned to speak more gently of myself. I gained courage to care more about other people and love harder and ask what everyone is up to. I’m happy about everything I’ve learned and felt and the people that I could grow close to and share experiences with. And I was given a beautiful succulent that’s pushing a new stalk or flower or something, and it’s wonderful.” (participant, 27.3.2018.)

The safety and warmth described by this participant seem to have functioned as a catalyst for learning, allowing growth on a very personal level.

Summary

Upon reflection, based on the data collected, the theatre practices and exercises used in this artistic process turned out to have different results in bringing experiences of disruption into the artistic process. Approaching disruption through autobiographical life stories brought out a wealth of memories of moments where disruption had taken place, some deeply life-changing, some light-hearted. Focusing on the disruption instead of a 'theme' of the stories allowed for dissimilar lived experiences to be shared with no pressure to dwell on certain emotional content. The vividness of these moments, many recalled from childhood, seemed well-captured in memory. Having participants with differing levels of experience in performing arts resulted in a group that approached performance and its artistic solutions from multiple angles. Indeed, previous experience with specific exercises seemed to dampen the possibility of disruption. The blindfolded walking exercise with its variations was very fruitful in bringing out disruptions, as were unplanned physical mimicry and associative discussion. Approaching the urban environment with an exercise inspired by eventalisation brought up, in a short time, multitudes of observations. Changing the structure, place, or conditions of the rehearsal itself seemed to produce new creative input. Not all disruptions were actively sought: some of these were stressful and not helpful for the process when the performance was being put together, while some fortuitous moments led to new creative ideas and understanding.

What became clear in the process was that for the performance to be marked by disruptions for the audience, it would have to form a cohesive aesthetic whole in which the disruptions can occur. To contrast with the disruptiveness, a calm quality was chosen. Sharing moments of disruption through life stories and through embodied practices seemed to generate a strong sense of warmth, empathy and caring in the participants' scenic interaction with one another. The trust between the participants grew quickly during the artistic process, leading to increased connectedness and harmony in the performances. It may be that the focus on experiencing disruptions —or disturbances, pauses, interferences, and unexpected moments— cultivated acceptance towards mistakes, failure, and moments of inability and uncertainty. If the practice embraces the unexpected instead of a rigid set of expectations, it might also embrace its practitioners as ever-changing complex individuals, providing a safe environment in which to conduct artistic work.

5 PERFORMANCE AND RECEPTION

In this chapter, I will analyse the performance scene by scene, paying attention to where there was an effort to provide opportunities for the audience members to experience disruptions, and reflect this against the data collected from the audience and my notes concerning audience reactions in my research diary. The following descriptions concern *Names of Plants* as it was staged at its first venue, Forum Box, from 20th to 22nd February 2018. Forum Box is a gallery space with two main rooms (approximately 8 x 8 metres) and a hallway at street level, and a third exhibition room accessible through a staircase. At Forum Box, I was present as the ticket person at the door, and as a sound technician visible in the same space as the audience members. Therefore, I could observe their reactions. After the performance, I spoke to the audience and asked volunteers to answer a question, “what was unexpected in the performance?” (see Appendix 4). 65 audience members out of 94 answered. After a short scene description, some of these comments are presented¹³, and I will mirror them with my thoughts on how I imagined the disruptive elements could unfold. However, the comments, or lack thereof, shouldn’t be taken to mean that a certain scene ‘worked’ in causing a disruption, especially since the performance formed a whole. They are simply presentations of what was unexpected to these audience members.

Attending a theatre performance creates its own set of expectations; it could be said that when coming to a theatre (or circus, art gallery, cinema, and so on) an audience member is expecting and even hoping to be surprised in some way. Moreover, when attending a show that is not a classic and does not offer much information about itself beforehand, one doesn’t know what to expect. Three audience members mentioned not having expectations coming in:

[Question: What was unexpected in the performance?]

“Nothing much, when I didn’t have any expectations.” (audience member, 21.2.2018.)

“Truthfully speaking everything [laughing emoji]. I totally didn’t know what to expect coming here so even moving during the performance was surprising.” (audience member, 21.2.2018.)

“I couldn’t really expect anything, so in a way everything. Using the space, handling the themes and engaging [the audience] in contact maybe surprised. A coming-of-age story to blossoming via developing stolons, transformation, pain and necessity, agents being the space and interaction, environmental factors. EXQUISITE! The actor’s way of making and

¹³ The comments have, except when noted, been translated from Finnish and Swedish by the author.

wanting contact, and the surprising reaction when it succeeded, was maybe the most unexpected element.” (audience member, 20.2.2017.)

To one, nothing is unexpected, to another, everything – and the third one describes both the overall experience and recalls very singular moments of being in contact with a performer. Here we can see that how people understand and approach unexpectedness differs greatly even if they’ve worded their starting point somewhat similarly. Generalisations should not be made based on particular exit questionnaire answers because the audience’s experiences may be very individual even if their wording is common.

Names of Plants lasted from 45 minutes to an hour, and consisted of scenes that did not form a narrative whole. It contained many features typical in postdramatic theatre. Typical features include the use of parataxis (presenting elements pointing to different directions side by side ambiguously); heavy use of simultaneous actions, texts, and scenes; having either a lot or very little happening at any given time; presenting stories that could be very emotionally charged with distance (‘coldness’); and eroding the aesthetic distance between the performance and the audience (Lehmann 1999/2006, 86–104). Also, the choices made with the space were typical to postdramatic theatre. In postdramatic theatre, the space might not stand for another fictive world, there may be tableaux scenes with “sculptural precision”, at times performers might stay in the same space to watch other performers perform, and in site-specific theatre an atypical space is selected and “*cast in a new light* through theatre” (Lehmann 1999/2006, 150–152, emphasis in the original).

Aspects of the performance which I expected to be disruptive to the audience included (1) the performers coming physically very close to them, (2) involving them in participatory elements without a lot of forewarning, (3) the lack of signalling of expected reactions (“whether to laugh or cry”), (4) having multiple people speak at the same time or multiple scenes take place simultaneously, (5) the Swedish language, and (6) stretching the plausibility of some contents, for example showing something as something that it obviously is not. I also thought that if the audience member was constantly thinking “what now?” or “what is this?” whenever a new scene unfolded, it wouldn’t stop them from identifying with the stories and actions, on the contrary: the audience member might be more porous, more open for identifying with the life stories we had to offer in their moment of confusion and disruption (circling back to the idea of

‘moments of self-identification’ for the audience, described above (Chapter 2: Autobiographical performance)).

Engaging the audience in participatory elements in *Names of Plants* fell somewhere between the conventions of participatory theatre and non-participatory theatre that decides to add a surprise participatory element: in the latter, the participation, such as an actor wandering into the audience for a short time, is often a sudden element meant to momentarily unsettle the border between the audience and the performers. On the other hand, various participatory forms of theatre aim to keep the audience member engaged throughout, and include structures and instructions, down to specific word choices, on how to best approach the spectator. Previously, I’ve done playback theatre, a form of theatre where the audience tell stories and they are re-enacted on stage by the performers. In playback theatre, there are very clear roles (the conductor, the performers, the audience), a clear structure (opening stories, attuning stories, activating discussions, actual story, a look of acknowledgement), and clear techniques of performing (fluid sculptures, microcosm etc.) (Suhonen 1999, 187). Every scenic re-enactment should begin with the words “Let’s watch”, and the staging has a strict ideal of where and how performers sit — even where fabrics should be placed (Playback Theatre UK). To me, there can easily be an element of trickery and coaxing in this: if the audience member is approached slowly enough, they will gleefully commit to participating in the way the dramaturgy calls for. The focus on the performer-facilitator is also quite misleading: if the performer-facilitator is focused on performing the ‘correct’ acts of approaching, they are not focused on the spectator who is probably reacting in a very individual, idiosyncratic, often not ‘correct’ way. Following Rancière’s notion that the audience member is not as passive as is often assumed, the job for the performer becomes simply presenting their intentions and wishes of participation, instead of ‘gently activating’ the audience. The audience members are a bit like dogs (and I write this as a dog lover): if you approach one too aggressively and abruptly, it’ll back away or even attack you, or maybe worse still, conditioned to reciprocate, stay and endure you with its eyes signalling the inner despair. If you sneak up to one tentatively and nervously, the fear spreads and the dog becomes nervous, too. But if you make your intentions clear and approach one firmly and openly, all is well — and once you get there, you can properly pet them, since nobody wants to be slightly stroked with a single fingertip.

Let's take a slight detour here: in my previous work, while doing playback theatre, like in 2014's hybrid piece *Hippaa hyvinvoinnin kanssa* [Playing Tag with Well-Being], I've done it 'wrong'. Firstly, it's been a hybrid piece that doesn't follow the accepted structure of playback theatre, and secondly, I've simply gone to the audience and asked: "who wants to tell a story? This is the part where we need a story from you. Otherwise we can't go on." The other performer in that show had no previous experience in playback theatre, and gloriously struggled with verbal interaction, so she simply went up to a spectator, stared at them for a while, and said: "would you tell me something?" — this seemed to work, the audience chuckling and opening up.

An example of participatory performance art that I kept thinking of was *Avalokiteshvara Superclusters* by Other Spaces (2017). In the three-hour outdoors performance, the audience not only watched the performers, but also had discussions and performed tasks on our own such as studying the environment either with chopsticks or a copper pipe that could be finished with a willowherb inflorescence. We observed, we performed tasks, my friend went to use her phone for a long time, she came back, we observed again, I lay on a rock, and the show ended. The happy, uncomplicated mixture of different elements allowed me all the space in the world to think, to experience, and to wander 'off-script', and strengthened my desire to allow those experiences in my own work. At no point did I feel like being led by the hand.

Any guaranteed recipe for participation cannot be formulated as the audience members themselves will defy any set of expectations laid on them: for example, three of the answers provided to the exit questionnaires mention the audience member not understanding Finnish, the main language of the performance, yet describe multiple great experiences while in attendance.

Scene-by-scene analysis

Introductory scene: Beginning before the first scene

The audience members enter the gallery space, get their playbills and leave their coats in the racks. As the ticket person, I instruct them to go and look at the exhibitions. In the hallway a white paper of 2 x 8 metres with a black marker pen on it has been placed on the floor. Everybody carefully circles the paper. The performers are waiting in the staff area, and when they feel like it, start entering the space (from 30 minutes to few minutes before the starting time). There they perform tasks inspired by our rehearsal process:

(1) standing still without doing anything and being looked at, (2) doing physical warm-ups, (3) standing back to back with another performer and trying to find their hand to hold, (4) approaching another performer firmly, saying “no”, and rearranging the other’s body into a new shape. The last one was the final mutation of the ‘being helped down the stairs too much’ idea.

As the audience members arrive, they appear unsure of whether to enter the exhibition spaces or wait by the coats rack. I believe this unsureness stems from the differences in how the audience is expected to behave and move in a traditional theatre setting as opposed to a traditional art gallery setting. The space itself comes up in the responses to the exit questionnaire:

[Question: What was unexpected in the performance?]

“That the venue was an exhibition gallery instead of a theatre.” (audience member, 21.2.2018.)

“The space. Whether the sculpture figures were part of it or weren’t.” (audience member, 22.2.2018.)

“That there were other works of art in the space.” (audience member, 20.2.2018.)

The soft, sly beginning of the performers appearing sporadically was also mentioned as an unexpected element:

“There were many unexpected turns, the first confusion was the beginning, I wasn’t sure when and where the performance began. The performers were moving in the space even before the first ‘tableau’ – that piqued my interest.” (audience member, 22.2.2018.)

“The whole performance was quite full of unexpectedness. Even the spatial beginning, where the performance somehow inconspicuously started among the exhibitions.” (audience member, 22.2.2018.)

“The beginning and how relaxed the performers are warming up in front of the audience.” (audience member, 20.2.2018.)

The audience members don’t react to the performers in any distinct way. Some are not paying any attention to them, yet some are keeping a keen eye on them from a distance. The nine performers, in all-white, barefoot, many with exposed arms, stand out not only from the audience members wearing winter-friendly knits, but from Pauliina Kausalainen’s human-shaped installations that are decked in multi-layered, colourful garments.

Scene 1: Humming garden and rippling movement

The first scene is a tableau in one corner of the exhibition gallery. Performers gather and start humming (the background for this scene is detailed above (Chapter 4: Humming and movement)). Then, four monologues begin one by

one: one listing names of plants, two describing either a morning or an evening routine (one in Finnish, one in Swedish), and one performer trying to interrupt the other three. Only one performer is in any contact with the interrupter, the others ignore them. With a phrase, “I want to understand everything!”, all performers get ‘sucked up’ to their feet, and start to produce interfering movement that ripples through the group. The audience stays farther away from the performers than what I had expected: they stand right next to the walls and linger in the open doorways. Unlike the lifeless works of art that are observed up-close, a performance is viewed from a distance.

The simultaneous speech was often mentioned as an unexpected feature:

[Question: What was unexpected in the performance?]

“The moment when the characters speak simultaneously for the first time, and as an audience member you try to listen to multiple people at the same time.” (audience member 20.2.2018.)

After a performance, an audience member told me that they started tearing up as soon as the performers started humming (research diary 21.2.2018). This illustrates the emotional or affective resonance brought about by humming.

Scene 2: A poem

As most of the performers walk through the mass of audience and go to the other exhibition space, two stay behind. One standing and alert, the other sitting catatonically with inward rotated wrists making the position statue-like. One of the statues of the installation is face down on the floor in front of them. There’s no contact between these three still ‘human shapes’. The first performer recites a poem. It lists several plants as well as everyday activities that need to be done. After this, the performer leaves, and the sitting performer stays. The background for this scene was the poem written by the performer. The austerity and stillness of this scene served as a counterpoint to the amount of texts and movements in the first.

An audience member recounts their experience:

[Question: What was unexpected in the performance?]

“That the performance moved me multiple times and I had to tell myself, that I can’t cry now. The situation was too stark and open for crying, even though certain things related to mourning and missing someone came close to my life. For example, certain plants and the experience that you prioritise and only do the most necessary things in life among the

sorrow, unexpectedly touched upon my own life. Thank you.” (audience member, 20.2.2018.)

I wouldn't have expected anyone in the audience to share the connection between plant names and mourning, but I was wrong: even the smallest detail can have relevancy and connect with the audience in a meaningful way.

Scene 3: Paper statue

This is the scene created through the blindfolded-walking exercises, and elaborated on earlier (in Chapter 4: Walking the blindfolded). One performer places pieces of paper on another, who then pushes them out from between their legs. This repeats, and finally one throws a crumpled-up paper at the other's face. The statue-like performer stops being catatonic, and leaves. The other, defeated, signals for the audience to move to the other room.

Here, the spectators started moving immediately and moved to the other exhibition space very quickly, even though we had wondered how they would react to non-verbal cues. Transitions between the spaces came up in the audience comments.

[Question: What was unexpected in the performance?]

“Transitions from one space to another, great use of spaces.” (audience member, 20.2.2018.)

“The transitions and their smoothness.” (audience member, 22.2.2018.)

One audience member mentioned in discussion that they were pleasantly surprised by the transitions not being messy and confusing (research diary 22.2.2017). Nevertheless, unexpectedly, not all audience members took a seat. In the February 21st performance, a spectator went to leave their jacket at the coatrack, and afterwards didn't walk across the stage to an empty seat but rather stood in the open doorway between the entrance hall and the space. On the February 22nd performance, two audience members who had arrived together decided to sit on the floor in the hallway instead of taking the separate seats left.

Scene 4: 'Back then I was...' life anecdotes

The performers sit in the middle of the room, surrounded by seated audience on three sides, and recount, in one to five sentences, moments of disruption in their lives. These range from tragic (death of a friend) to comical (learning at the age of 20 that islands don't float). Many of the stories refer to events and

revelations in childhood: for example, a ten-year-old trying to sleep and realising what dying is. All anecdotes end with the phrase “back then I was—” with the age of the person mentioned. Some anecdotes are those of the performer telling them, some are not: the audience can get a clue about this as performers who are people in their twenties recount life stories from their forties. After a while, performers start telling the stories simultaneously so that only the anecdotes of the most nearby performers can be heard. The audience sits with very serious faces punctuated by occasional shy laughter. The stories themselves are among the things listed by the audience:

[Question: What was unexpected in the performance?]

“I would have wanted to hear everyone’s stories → they were absolutely amazing, and you could tell that they were actual real-life stories.” (audience member, 22.2.2018.)

While telling the stories, the performers calmly and openly make eye contact with the audience. This contact is also noted by the audience:

“The performers’ contact with the audience.” (audience member, 20.2.2018.)

“Eye contacts, [--] sharing some personal moments with performers. [--] The serious focus in the audience (maybe the text pieces were heavy – didn’t recognize).” (audience member, 20.2.2018., in original language.)

Scene 5: A real conversation

The performers have all been given a task: one of them should come up with a new thing to say and turn around. The others turn around as well, creating a circle facing inward, where they then have an improvised discussion. There is a heightened sense of nervousness and relief in the moment, the performers laughing and being realistically awkward in the situation. The discussion is very short, as one performer interrupts it by starting to recite poetry.

This idea of an associative discussion is elaborated above (Chapter 4: Third, fourth, and fifth rehearsals). In each performance, the same person started the conversation, even when they weren’t the first one to turn around. We joked that this performer had planned all their openings, but they swore they hadn’t. A specific topic of the talk was recalled by an audience member:

[Question: What was unexpected in the performance?]

“The question of switching to Euro as the currency.” (audience member, 22.2.2018.)

In that performance, the performer started the discussion by saying they don't recall when Finland introduced Euro as its currency, and the others started educating them on the topic.

Scene 6: Disappearing into the walls

A performer cuts the discussion abruptly by starting to recite a long poetry text. The others go silent and start to slowly and inconspicuously leave the circle and, with their own individual kinds of physical expression, 'disappear into the space' – the walls, the floor, the audience's seats, the artworks. I notice that the audience members fix their stares on the performer reciting text in the centre of the room, not looking at other performers slipping, slithering, and tiptoeing past them. At times, someone quickly glances at the performer near to them, and then quickly away. The focus of their stares to the middle of the stage makes the disappearing performers seem much more invisible than they had seemed in our rehearsals. (Research diary, 20.2.2018.)

The performers' proximity to the audience was mentioned:

[Question: What was unexpected in the performance?]

"When the performer physically touched me when moving to the side of the room and underneath the chair of the person sitting next to me." (audience member, 20.2.2018.)

"The performer lying underneath my chair felt very pleasant and not at all distressing, even though that's what I thought at first. It was somehow cute." (audience member, 22.2.2018.)

"The performers came really close to the audience (the border between performers and audience was really wavering, how close can a performer come, so that it's not awkward for the audience member?)." (audience member, 22.2.2018.)

None of the comments outright state that the physical proximity would have actually felt awkward or unpleasant (instead, many offer thank-you's), but what is visible is an expectation of awkwardness or difficulty in physical proximity. This expectation was disrupted in the audience's experience.

Scene 7: Dance sequence with nice and nasty comments

A performer puts a blindfold on and starts to crawl. The performer circles the space, guiding themselves by feeling the shoes and legs of the audience, inadvertently bumping into them. The others walk behind, and say nice, adoring comments. Then, the blindfolded performer gets up and starts to dance in the centre of the room. The others form two choirs that, in Finnish and Swedish, first exclaim niceties and compliments and then start adding insults and nasty comments. At the climax of the choirs repeating insults, the dancer

takes off their blindfold, stares the other performers down, and goes to lie down on the floor. The others detach from one another and go lie next to the dancer, suddenly appearing warm and relaxed again.

The physical touch of the blindfolded person circling the space was brought up by the audience, as was the content of the scene:

[Question: What was unexpected in the performance?]

“Touching of the feet.” (audience member, 20.2.2018.)

“THE TRANSITION FROM PRAISING, THE ELEVATED ATMOSPHERE OF ALMOST WORSHIPPING, THAT WAS BROKEN SO ARROGANTLY, THAT I STRONGLY GOT THE FEELING OF BEING OFFENDED, DEEPLY.” (audience member, 21.2.2018.)

As the blindfolded performer was actually feeling their way around the room, in one performance they stopped because the shoe they had touched felt so unusual. The audience member, my acquaintance, later gushed about the moment and the fact that the performer “came back to feel my shoe!” (research diary, 1.3.2018). In one performance, the performer bumped headfirst onto someone’s lap — the audience member was surprised but appeared delighted. Also, the performer almost bumped into two audience members while dancing, grazing their legs, and the look on their faces changed rapidly from surprise, to disapproval, and to delight — the surprise or shock seemed exciting in how unsettling it was. (Research diary 20.2.2018.)

A scene that’s happening on the side

At this point, two performers leave the exhibition space and go to the hallway to the big, blank paper taped to the floor. One of the performers starts moving and the other starts drawing around them, which develops into a collaboration of movement, positioning, drawing and shaping. This is to the side of the ‘main stage’ and can only be seen by approximately one third of the audience members. This continues to happen until the last scene of the performance.

Motivating a scene that is weirdly ‘to the side’ was challenging. Both performers individually mentioned to me that they wouldn’t mind not having that scene — “if nobody’s gonna see it” (research diary, 6.2.2018). My only reasoning was that something about having a scene weirdly to the side is interesting, and we should try it. In the end, people enjoyed the weirdness of it, one mentioning in conversation that they were following it in the reflections on the huge windows behind it (which we hadn’t been able to predict) (research

diary, 20.2.2018). The two audience members who chose to sit in the hallway at the 22nd of February performance could see this scene the best, and later told one of the performers that they were glad they accidentally got to watch the drawing-movement process (research diary, 22.2.2018).

For the premiere, a fresh marker pen had been opened which, unexpectedly, made a high-pitched scraping sound that was audible in the other scenes:

[Question: What was unexpected in the performance?]

“The sounds of the marker! I thought they came from the loudspeakers but they were real sounds.” (audience member, 20.2.2018.)

This led us to buy multiple different types of black markers for the following performances, and test them for their ‘sound quality’.

Scene 8: Monologue about self-harm

As described above (Chapter 4: The second rehearsal), one of the performers wrote an autobiographical text about suicidal thoughts and self-harm. Here, they perform it by mainly speaking. Next to them, the other performers lie on the floor in comfortable positions. As the monologue continues, the others straighten their bodies, and the performer telling the story lowers themselves to them, and the others roll the performer on top of themselves. Then, as the text talks about water and depression, the ‘rollers’ start moving their hands and feet, and when the performer, in text, finds strength in themselves and rejects self-harm, the rollers reject the performer and roll them to the floor.

The autobiographical aspect was unexpected to some audience members:

[Question: What was unexpected in the performance?]

“The level of autobiography on the behalf of performers. And on the other hand that was to be expected.” (audience member, 20.2.2018.)

“Experienced some of my old traumas. I identified with it.” (audience member, 20.2.2018.)

“Maybe the least I could expect the personal monologue in the middle of all the absurdity.” (audience member, 21.2.2018.)

The reason why there were ‘rollers’ on the floor was manifold: as the monologue was so deeply personal and open about depression and self-harm, there needed to be something else on stage to alleviate the situation and keep it from being too confessional. People rolling on the floor created a sense of abstraction while at the same time illustrating the story connotatively. Two audience members, separately, also told me that “those people rolling on the floor” had brought up memories of their childhood, which combined with the emotional content of

the scene; “I have done that once in my life with my friends, when I was six, and now I’m sixty, and I was remembering that” (research diary, 22.2.2018). This speaks of the emotional power of seemingly abstract and irrational details. The performer on top of the rollers recounted one performance as the most unexpected experience to them:

[Question: What was most unexpected in the performance situation to [you]?)

“In one performance the water rolled me off very quickly and I ended up *right* next to the audience and on top of their feet. But I just got up and continued the performance and it didn’t feel like anything went wrong.” (participant, 27.3.2018, emphasis in the original.)

Scene 9: Train

One of the performers gets up, takes the chair I am sitting on, and sits on it. The others make a train on the floor. The performer on the chair launches into a fast-paced monologue where they switch between Finnish sections mimicking train announcements and Swedish sections describing something entirely unrelated, becoming a tirade of self-doubt and anxiety.

The dual language was unexpected to many in the audience, both to those writing in Finnish and to those writing in Swedish:

[Question: What was unexpected in the performance?]

“The bilingual monologue.” (participant, 21.2.2018.)

“That I understood it so well even though my Finnish is not very good. And that there was some Swedish there as well.” (participant, 21.2.2018.)

“That one’s mind starts to create a story between dissimilar fragments automatically, even the Swedish part (that I didn’t understand anything of). It feels impossible to look at a performance in fragments, a mind starts to produce a story: a beginning and an end.” (participant, 22.2.2018.)

In the audience, some chuckle and smile at the Swedish content while the audience member next to them look puzzled and bewildered, while some chuckle at the Finnish content. The expectation of sticking with one language is visible in the answers and in people’s reactions to the scene.

The performance style in this scene was also different than in others, as the performer could be thought of as doing complex acting: combining physical presence and emotional expression to create a whole character (Schechner 2002/2013, 174–175). But if we look at the train cars, what kind of acting is that? As the monologuing performer grants the symbolic meaning of train to the others by simply gesturing at them and stating that it is a train, no further ‘performing a train car’ would be needed. On the other hand, the performers

are creating the role of a train car by crouching down and slightly swaying like train cars would, aiming at some realism and the ‘feeling’ of a train. Whatever the answer, this is another moment in the performance where people mimic lifeless objects surrounded by art artefacts mimicking living creatures.¹⁴

Scene 10: A song about a green pyjama shirt

Everybody gathers quickly into a school choir -like formation (even the two drawer-and-movers from the side), and the performers sing a cappella a short song about a broken shirt. Short and sudden, it gets noted by the audience:

[Question: What was unexpected in the performance?]

“The choral song.” (participant, 20.2.2018.)

“The choral song about a shirt.” (participant, 22.2.2018.)

“The beautiful song!” (participant, 20.2.2018.)

The melody and the lyrics of the song came to me as I was going to sleep. I thought: we couldn’t include a silly ditty about a pyjama shirt into this serious performance. Then I thought: why not? It acted as a quick and light freshener after the relatively heavy, introspective scenes.

Scene 11: Simultaneous scene

From the strict school choir pose, the performers explode into different directions. The drawer-and-movers go back to drawing and moving. One performer leaps out and begins a theatrically delivered monologue, performing for some audience members, shaking their hand, then rushing to the other side of the space, and so on (this is the monologue I had read in the wrong order, described in Chapter 4: The second rehearsal). One performer chooses a few audience members, sits in front of them, and starts to tell about *another performance altogether*, and how in that performance a certain poem was performed and they liked it, and then starts to recite that poem. This was inspired by an idea to openly admit to stealing from other performances and unsettling the assumed originality and singularity of a performance. Two performers stand in the middle and caress each other’s faces and collarbones.

In discussion, the performers caressing each other joked that no one is watching them. The two monologuing performers rebuked this immediately,

¹⁴ This theme was carried into the next venue, as at the 14th of April performance at EMMA – Espoo Museum of Modern Art, this scene was staged in a room exhibiting portraits by Meret Oppenheim; the portraits staring, appearing lifelike, and the performers definitely not staring, trying to be train cars.

stating that while they try to get the audience's attention, "everyone's just looking behind [us]" at the two caressing each other (research diary 21.2.2018). Here the audience is using its power to refuse one element of a performance in favour of another, in line with Rancière's notions.

Three separate participatory elements also happen simultaneously. One performer invites four people to a lesson of sleeping under a table (the background of this described above (in Chapter 4: Walking the blindfolded)). The audience members get up and follow the performer to the ticket-selling desk in the hallway, and the performer, very matter-of-factly, first shows how to sleep underneath a table and then instructs the audience to try it.

[Question: What was unexpected in the performance?]

"The practical training of being underneath a table!" (participant, 22.2.2018.)

"I got to go / I had to go underneath a table [smiling emoji]." (participant, 21.2.2018.)

"That I could take part in the play myself." (participant, 21.2.2018.)

The audience members become part of the performance more explicitly than before: many who are still seated are observing those who are risk-assessing the table before going underneath it.

At the same time, another performer invites four audience members to follow, and leads them to through the other exhibition spaces. On the way, the performer tells a made-up story of the surroundings as a cheese factory, shows them the (non-existent) machinery, gestures at thin air, tells them to put on (imaginary) earmuffs, and so on (based on the factual history of the gallery as an old cold storage for cheese¹⁵). Perhaps not surprisingly, this tour to cheese factory was considered unexpected:

[Question: What was unexpected in the performance?]

"Well, at least the guided tour to the cheese factory. [smiling emoji]" (participant, 21.2.2018.)

"The tour in a small group → then the quick exit by the performer." (participant, 20.2.2018.)

"Maybe what was most unexpected was that a performer came and asked me to come with [them]. The performance kept me on my toes the whole time, in a good way." (participant, 22.2.2018.)

The seventh separate simultaneous element has one of the performers choosing an audience member, grabbing a cool box, and without a word giving that audience member a plastic bag 'creature' filled with ice cubes. The performer fans the audience member for the duration of the scene, and in the end asks:

¹⁵ At EMMA, the building's history as a printing house and a sometime floorball arena was featured.

“how did it feel?”. Then, they take back the ice creature and explain that they were left in a cold corridor and the scene was inspired by that event (described in Chapter 4: Walking the blindfolded).

[Question: What was unexpected in the performance?]

“Most unexpected out of the particular things was, when an ice cube bag was given to you and you were fanned: that was followed by an unexpectedly frank question: ‘how did it feel?’. I am used to interactivity and methods of participatory theatre, but the ‘invisible wall’ between the audience and the performers was broken entirely, unlike in many others. What was astonishing was the performers’ genuine contact without dithering, e.g. when they were looked in the eye.” (participant, 22.2.2018.)

“The multisensorial aspect → fanning the ice lump gave off a cooling sensation even when sitting next to it.” (participant, 22.2.2018.)

“The performer actually asked me, how I felt. [--] It was unexpected because often the way in which the audience is made contact with is so superficial/pseudo-contact.” (participant, 21.2.2018.)

Of the three audience members who got to hold the ice ‘lump’, the reactions differed wildly. One held it in a very performative way with great posture and outstretched hands, looking like a deity, while one looked offended and ended the scene prematurely — yet later described the experience with the ice lump as great (research diary, 21.2.2018). It is noteworthy how many potentially disruptive elements there are in the ice scene: being singled out, the ice lump, the duration, the non-verbal approach, then the genuine question.

The simultaneity and splintering of the audience into smaller groups figured prominently in responses to the exit questionnaire, as well as the participatory element of the same scene:

[Question: What was unexpected in the performance?]

“Maybe the way the space was used was most unexpected. How, in the middle of it, audience members were taken somewhere as small groups.” (participant, 20.2.2018.)

“It was more like normal life than theatre in that sense, that at times in the audience we saw + heard the same shared story — sometimes not. On the other hand special attention and on the other hand exclusion from something else (but it didn’t bother at all).” (participant, 21.2.2018.)

“What was unexpected was how the participatory elements didn’t make me uneasy, points for that!” (participant, 20.2.2018.)

It appears that approaching the audience with very little forewarning and no ritual-like steps worked, as in the responses to the exit questionnaire, audience members specifically contrast the ease at which they were engaged in participatory aspects of theatre with what they were accustomed to.

Scene 12: Cultivating plants

Then, Mort Garson's *Plantasia* (1976) starts playing. The performers head into the hallway (some instructing the audience to follow), and they gather on top of the huge paper — now filled with black lines trailing everywhere, sometimes in the shape of body parts (drawn by the drawer-movers since the seventh scene). Some performers curl up on the floor, while others get bottles of water handy; the audience is standing in the hallway. Then, the performers on their feet start cultivating the others like plants, and they 'start growing'. The plant-performers move and dance with fluid, outstretching movements, occasionally starting to wilt until more care is given. The caregivers sometimes water the plants, sometimes embrace them like people, sometimes observe them adoringly. Then, the plants form a giant plant together and engulf their caregivers. Some of the performers become saprophytes and with their fingers make the plant decay and slowly fall to the ground. The performers end up as a pile on the floor, eyes closed. The music fades and the performance ends.

This scene was originated by the performers while I was away (see Chapter 4: Seventh rehearsal). The initial idea had the caring, growing and wilting; what was added was the decay at the end, and more plant-like movement; this was done by studying time-lapse videos of twining plants growing.

The amount of care, empathy and adoration between the plant-people and caregivers appears tremendous and some spectators tear up (research diary, 22.2.2018). In the responses to the exit questionnaire, the scene is presented as exemplary of the overall pleasantness and generosity of the performance:

[Question: What was unexpected in the performance?]

"Maybe a bit surprising was how open and generous the performance was, not at all difficult but also not simple. Like here's the scene where they're growing on the paper (I'm thinking right now about being in my garden with all the new growth and not having to think about stress of my new job, thank you!)" (participant 21.2.2018.)

"It is hard to evaluate unexpectedness in a performance like this because one comes with an open mind. [--] The movement of the ending was beautiful. It is pleasant that not all contemporary theatre needs to be abrasive. Left a good feeling. That is a lot." (participant 22.2.2018.)

The feeling of peace and calmness —and hopefully the warmth— presented in the plants scene was transferred to the audience members.

Summary

Integral for *Names of Plants* as a performance aiming to provide the audience with experiences of disruption was the collage-like combination of elements with very little to do with one another, while tying the performance together with a unified, pervasive quality. Harmony, calmness, and warmth were successfully harnessed to give the audience member time and space to think and feel; we didn't 'do' the disruption to them, we created situations in which they could come upon it. Staging the performance in a gallery space, physical proximity to performers, being involved in participatory elements, splitting the audience, simultaneity and not hearing or seeing everything, presenting something as something it is not, and using two languages came up as unexpected aspects of the performance in the exit answers. Of the things I had expected to be potential causes of disruption, the lack of signalling an expected emotional reaction didn't come up in the audience data: however, many described being surprised by their own emotions.

Engaging the audience in participatory elements abruptly in a straightforward manner and with a flair of absurdity seemed to alleviate and remove the possible awkwardness of participating: participation and physical closeness were seen as surprisingly enjoyable — maybe due to the calm and harmonious quality of the performance and the overall focus on unexpected moments. While the audience's focus was sometimes directed firmly to the centre stage, the actions and scenes happening on the sides were followed as well, sometimes in unexpected ways.

All in all, the audience members found various unexpected elements in the performance, even in the kind of artistic context where people expect to be surprised. The exact nature of possible disruptions in the audience cannot be captured by this data. A central motive of *Names of Plants* was that the performance was not be designed to produce disruptions which lead to a specific type of learning, or the learning of a specific idea or other content. Rather, while elements potentially causing disruption were made available, the aspects and themes of further problematisation and learning were left up to the individual members of the audience.

6 CONCLUSIONS

The aim of this research was to examine the role of disruption in an artistic process and the possibilities of utilising disruption in contemporary theatre. The theoretical starting point was John Dewey's view of disruption as a key factor in learning and inquiry. According to Dewey, disruption is the starting point of all learning and problem solving: it turns our situation into a problematic one, often casting our beliefs and habits into doubt. Inquiry and problem solving may turn the problematic situation to a determinate one — a satisfactory conclusion possibly leading to a new belief or a habit. Retaining one's ability to seek out new disruptions and create new satisfactory solutions is key in continuing to learn and grow throughout life. In Dewey's view, in an artistic process, the artist resolves a disruption and a problematic situation into a cohesive whole; this satisfactory consummation, tied together by a pervasive aesthetic quality, manifests in the work of art.

The two research questions were: (1) in what ways could disruption be made a more central, productive, and visible element of an artistic process by means of contemporary theatre practices, and (2) what kind of a theatre performance results from an artistic process which aims to provide the audience with experiences of disruption? The basis of this research was the artistic process of the devised theatre piece *Names of Plants*, as well as its four performances. In this process, various contemporary theatre practices were experimented with to create potential for disruption for the participants, and the performance was built so that the audience could experience disruptions within it.

Regarding the first question, the theatre practices used in this process turned out to have different results in cultivating experiences of disruption. Exercises that didn't provide a clear model of a successful completion allowed for the unexpected to happen: for example, when walking the blindfolded. Both primarily physical and primarily verbal approaches seemed to produce disruptions and bring to mind recollections of past moments of disruption. Other useful means included shifting the rehearsal structure multiple times. An exercise influenced by Michel Foucault's concept of eventalisation also brought up many observations and problematisations of our habits. Some disruptions arose from the concrete or structural aspects of the rehearsal situation itself; some of these fed creativity while others caused tension and stress. Remaining

open to disruptions towards the end of the process, when the performance was finalised, proved difficult. Nonetheless, focusing on experiencing disruptions seems to have fostered a warm, caring atmosphere and acceptance towards mistakes, unfinishedness, and individuality.

Regarding the second question, aiming to provide the audience with experiences of disruption, *Names of Plants* combined a collage-like collection of elements with a unified, cohesive aesthetic quality throughout the performance. The elements were created through collecting autobiographical material from the participants as well as crafting scenic ideas from the experiences come upon during the exercises. The collage-like structure allowed for a diversity of autobiographical voices. Having multiple vignettes tied together by the quality and not an overarching narrative was intended to provide opportunities for the audience to self-identify with, to recall past unexpected moments, and to experience new ones in multiple ways. The audience described the performance in many emotional terms and deemed certain aspects, such as simultaneity, staging the show outside a typical theatre space, participatory scenes and using two languages as unexpected.

The research suggests further research topics concerning the role of disruption in theatre practices. (1) As the focus allowed for any unexpected, past experiences to be brought up, the participants were not coaxed to reveal anything emotionally or thematically specific. This was an ethically sound way to collect material for artistic purposes. Many memories of these moments were from childhood. Focusing on the unexpected with children in a dialogical theatre setting could provide ways to communicate experiences that otherwise wouldn't be told or heard. These expressions could also act as data for qualitative research. (2) Systematically contrasting practices used to approach disruption with specific acting techniques, such as those of the Actor's Art in Modern Times project, could be used to articulate disruption through the vocabulary of theatre, and explore the role of coincidence, surprise, and working on a precognitive "hunch" in performing. (3) The focus on disruption seemed to create a caring, open atmosphere. Highlighting the social aspects of Dewey's theory of education, the connection between empathy, embodied practices, and solving problematic situations in a collaborative process could be researched e.g. by way of applied theatre practices in communities, schools, or workplaces, further exploring their role in learning and growth.

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Appendix 1: Participant questionnaire
Questionnaire to the participants 14.11.2017

How would you describe yourself? What kind of a person are you? What do you do? What do you like? How do you think you that you could be described as a person in this project?

How do you see yourself in relation with the group? How about the artistic process? What does the group seem like, how about the direction?

(Originally submitted in Finnish, translation author's.)

Appendix 2: Participant questionnaire
Questionnaire to the participants 29.11.2017

Have you attained the feeling of disruption in the rehearsals? In which situation? If not, where do you think that stems from? Has the experience come in the here and now? Have the rehearsals brought up past experiences?

What is your relationship with disruptive moments in your everyday life? Do they affect how you feel about yourself? What have been the situations when something hasn't worked like it did, or something familiar was unfamiliar? What happened to you in those situations?

(Originally submitted in Finnish, translation author's.)

Appendix 3: Participant questionnaire
Questionnaire to the participants 5.3.2018

What was most unexpected and surprising in the performance situation to me?

How did disruptions and unexpected situations appear to me in the process and the performance?

What did I bring into this process and performance?

What could I have differently in the process and the performance, or would do different now?

What did I learn, and what did the process give to me?

(Originally submitted in Finnish, translation author's.)

Appendix 4: Audience questionnaire
Questionnaire to the audience 20., 21. & 22.2.2018

What was unexpected in the performance?

(Originally submitted in Finnish, translation author's.)