Performing Interventions: a methodology for reinventing the role of the theatre lighting artist through practice-research

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Abstract:
The role of the theatre lighting designer in the UK has traditionally been conceptualised using a model of ‘designer’ as someone who makes a prior imaginary act before the moment of performance, which is subsequently realised in performance through an essentially procedural, non-creative, process. In this paper I describe my recently completed PhD research in which I attempted a partial reinvention of theatre lighting as a professional arts practice, emphasising the live operation or ‘performance’ of lighting, rather than its design prior to the performance event, and combining the existing roles of the lighting designer and the lighting operator into what I term the lighting artist.

The paper gives an overview of the aims and the conceptual and practical processes involved in the research, and discusses some of the methodological issues arising from this type of practice-research. I describe: a process of reading professional literature and first-person accounts ‘archaeologically’ (after Foucault); the conceptual basis on which I established a process of creative invention that was nevertheless rigorous in research-methodological terms; some of the methodological issues of a research project in a collaborative performance-making environment; and how I argued that a ‘first-person’ perspective fits within the established research practices of autoethnography and qualitative research.

Key words:
Lighting
Scenography as performance
Lighting artist
Design
Research methodology
Practice research
Heuristics
Qualitative research
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Introduction

In this paper I describe some of the methodological issues and approaches of my recently completed (2012) PhD research investigation and thesis, in which I attempted a partial reinvention of theatre lighting as a professional arts practice. My research proposed a shift in emphasis towards the live operation or ‘performance’ of lighting, rather than its design prior to the performance event, by conflating the existing roles of the lighting designer and the lighting operator into what I term the lighting artist. My aim was to investigate a possible reform of the established UK model of lighting design so as to be a better fit with certain current and emerging theatre-making practices, in which scenography is developed as part of the rehearsal process, rather than as an independent (and usually prior) ‘design’ process. My research tested my proposal through two practical elements – a custom lighting control and lighting for a performance – both created at Rose Bruford College, London. This paper addresses the sometimes-complex methodological issues arising from this type of practice-research, where there is comparatively little previous research or scholarly literature specific to performance lighting practices.

Structure and Content

I want first to outline briefly the overall structure and content of the thesis, before discussing the key methodological issues. My thesis was presented in three parts, with both written and practical elements. This later point is important because my practice research was not only a research process but also a research outcome, demonstrating and articulating part of the argument of the thesis in conjunction with the written submission.

Part I of the thesis examined the available literature and described and justified my methodology. In it I argued that there is no single body of material or single established discourse – either professional or scholarly – that can act as the discursive platform for my project. I went on to identify three overlapping and interlinked stages of research: an archaeology of historical and current professional lighting practice; a process of discursive invention that developed a series of strategic interventions into the conventional processes and practices of the lighting practitioner; the practice-research that tested, extended and evaluated the efficacy of the strategic interventions.

Part II of the thesis began by considering a precedent to my proposal to give the theatre lighting artist a different, more performative role within the performance, dating from the nineteen-thirties. At that time, Frederick Bentham while working for Strand Electric (the leading theatre lighting manufacturer of the time in the UK) created a new lighting control that was in three respects a radical departure from the systems then in use: the Light Console (Figure 1). The first departure was the Light Console’s ‘playability’: for the first time all stage lighting was brought under the control of a single, comfortably seated operator, who could select any light or combination of lights for immediate control. The Light Console made it possible for the operator to improvise lighting in the moment in response to stage action. The second departure from previous control systems was that the Light Console separated the control interface from the dimmers themselves, allowing the operator with the console to be placed front-of-house where s/he could see the activity of the stage and (potentially) take a creative part in its making. The Light Console’s third departure was that the state of the interface controls did not reflect the state of the dimmers (and so the light on stage), requiring the operator to have a mental model of the system state that was different to the one presented by the interface itself: with the Light Console, the lighting system acquired a virtual dimension.

These three innovations – playability, the spatial position of the operator, and the partial virtualisation of the lighting system – came about because of Bentham’s central proposal: that lighting should be performed or played in the way a musician plays music. Some seventy-five years later, my project made that proposal again, and again proposed changes to the practices of the lighting artist and her/his role in the making of live theatre performance. To restate Bentham’s proposal in relation to present practices, to reposition the role of the present lighting designer to be more like that of the performer is to defer certain design decisions until the moment of performance; rehearsal leads not to a ‘frozen’ lighting plot to be reproduced with as much technical accuracy as possible, but rather prepares the lighting artist to create anew in the moment.
Each of Bentham’s innovations suggested *strategic interventions* that might be fruitful in seeking to promote such a repositioning of the lighting artist’s role, and my thinking in each of these three areas was developed in a chapter of Part II of my thesis, summarised below.

**The Virtuosity of the Lighting Operator:** Historically, lighting as a component of theatre performance has become aligned with the scenographic. The first chapter of Part II traced that history and identified some of the factors that led to the alignment with the scenographic, and begins to develop a discourse of lighting as a performative element of the theatre event. I argued for a lighting methodology that is more attuned to the immediacy of performance ‘in the moment’, and so – both in terms of process and aesthetic sensitivity – more like the methodology of the performer (actor, dancer, musician) in its openness to the variability of live performance. The purpose of rehearsal for lighting is then changed: instead of rehearsal as a process to arrive at a ‘finished’ lighting design for automated replay during performance, rehearsal serves to develop a lighting ‘script’ or ‘score’ for the creation of the lighting in the moment of performance. From this chapter emerged two *strategic interventions* into the role of the lighting artist: firstly, to defer certain design decisions until the moment of performance, and secondly to rehearse the lighting with the other performance elements in order to develop a lighting score for the performance event.

**Ways of Looking:** The second chapter of Part II argued that the relationship between the lighting professional and the performance space has been determined by specific historical, technological and cultural factors, and it considered some of the technological and attitudinal changes that might be required to reposition the lighting artist as performer rather than designer. The chapter theorised the relationship between both the lighting designer and the lighting operator and the stage. I argued that both the lighting designer’s and the lighting operator’s relationship with the performance event they help to make is in part determined by certain traditional professional practices that fix their spatial location in the theatre. I then argued that certain theatre geometries establish ‘circuits of energy’ that link not only performer to spectator, but also spectator to spectator, and that – in order to promote the lighting artist’s sensitivity to the audience in the moment of performance – the lighting artist must be connected into this circuit. This chapter’s *strategic intervention* was to place the lighting artist in the theatre so as to connect her/him into the ‘circuit of energy’ between lighting artist, performance and spectators, so as to promote the lighting artist’s role as a performer.

**Playability, Immersion and the Virtual:** In the third chapter of Part II, I considered the relationship between technologies and conceptual models of the light on stage, and how redesigning the lighting control interface might create an alternative model better suited to the aims of my project. I argued that the development of the increased
technological complexity of lighting systems and controls means that the interface no longer has a simple, analogical relationship with light on stage (for example, a fader per channel), but presents a ‘data space’ that is highly abstracted from the light on stage. This data space can be seen as a (partially) immersive, virtual environment. In current practice, the difficulty of being present in both real and virtual spaces is avoided by dividing the task between an operator (focused more on the virtual or data space) and the designer (focused more on the real space). Since my project requires a conflation of the two roles throughout both rehearsal and performance, the difficulty must be avoided another way: by bringing the real and the virtual spaces together through a control interface the lighting artist can manipulate as a musician plays an instrument, with minimal conscious thought about the process or immersion in a virtual ‘data’ space.

I also argued that present lighting controls promote a particular conceptual model of theatre lighting, that I termed the “state/cue” model. In this model, lighting designers define a series static lighting ‘states’ (often in considerable detail), which are then replayed in performance with transitions (‘cues’) created largely automatically by the lighting control system. This model privileges the static over the dynamic, and the pre-designed over the immediacy of the moment in performance. This chapter’s strategic intervention was to redesign the lighting interface, firstly to promote a conceptual model of the control of light that promotes dynamic immediacy over static, pre-defined, and synoptic pictures, and secondly to promote the presence of the lighting artist in the ‘real’ of light on stage.

Part I and Part II together formed the discursive platform, and established the strategic interventions that underpinned the practice research elements of Part III. In Part III I took up these strategic interventions and tested, further developed and reflected on them through the two practical elements, drawing on my experience – including my embodied, tacit knowledge – as a professional lighting practitioner. Part III of the thesis thus comprised the two practical elements – the ‘Theolux’ lighting console, and the Passages performance – that implemented the strategic interventions of Part II, together with written evaluations of those elements.

The Theolux lighting control system (Figure 2) replaced the conventional ‘state/cue’ model with a ‘thread/impulse’ model in which ‘threads’ represent lighting elements (combinations of colour, direction and intensity) that have specific aesthetic or dramatic value and which exist for the duration of the performance. These threads are balanced against each other by modulating their intensity on the impulse of the lighting artist, responding to action elsewhere in the performance or to a sensed need to prompt a response amongst the audience and/or the performers. Such impulses are not completely spontaneous, but are the result of a rehearsal process.

Figure 2: The ‘Theolux’ console

For the Passages performance (Figure 3) I was present as the lighting artist throughout the rehearsal period, operating the custom lighting control in the rehearsal room (which was also the performance space). The spatial relationships between audience, stage and lighting artist-operator were configured so as to promote a ‘circuit of
energy’ linking these three elements in performance, with particular attention paid to the sightlines from each element to the other two. The resulting performance ‘script’ or ‘score’ for the lighting artist was arrived at through close collaboration between the lighting artist, the performers, the director, and other members of the production team, from the very start of the project.

Figure 3: The Passages performance

Methodology 1: Archaeology

Having outlined the thesis, I want now to describe some of its methodological issues and approaches. My project proposed conflating the roles of the lighting designer and the lighting operator to create the lighting artist, with a creative process ‘more like’ that of the performer. I needed to establish a way to approach an investigation and testing of this proposal, and a basis on which choices of method could be made, within the framework of a doctoral thesis. My research process comprised three stages: first, a critical analysis of relevant aspects of the historical development of theatre lighting practices in order to reveal the values, structures and forces at work; second, a process of (re)invention, leading to a series of strategic interventions into conventional lighting practice; third, testing, developing and evaluating the interventions through practice. I will now describe some of the methodologies I adopted for these three stages in more detail.

One of the challenges I faced was that there is very little scholarly material written about theatre lighting, while the professional literature (books and magazines) generally lacks criticality. To examine current lighting practices, I drew on the primary archive of the history of those practices, mainly in the form of contemporaneous professional publications such as magazines and manufacturers’ literature, together with ‘how to’ text books and autobiographies published by lighting professionals, as well as my own professional experience and the accounts given by lighting designers I interviewed. I used this material to examine aspects of the history, practices, economies and formations of power and knowledge of theatre lighting – what in Foucauldian terms, as Shapiro points out, we might call an archaeology (Shapiro 2003, 9-10). Such an archaeological approach was the starting point for each of the three chapters in Part II of my thesis, and I want to offer one short illustrative example here.

I have described above how Bentham’s radically innovative Light Console was in part a precedent and inspiration for my project. However, while the Light Console offered the possibility of a position front-of-house and a capacity for rapid, complex lighting changes, for drama, opera and ballet the Light Console had a crucial limitation: it was unable to set balanced levels accurately and repeatedly. Bentham’s proposition – that the lighting operator might be a lighting artist, deploying a creative virtuosity in addition to a technical skill – was for the most part blocked by the Light Console’s own technological limitations, and only seventeen were built.
The Light Console was not the only innovative lighting control technology of the period: by the late nineteen-forties a new dimming technology developed in the USA – the thyratron dimmer – had been adopted by Strand to create the control system known as the Preset Electronic (Figure 4). The Preset Electronic had a very different interface and way of working to the Light Console, with twin banks of faders or ‘presets’, with one fader for each dimmer, which could be cross-faded between, thus allowing precise dimmer levels to be preset in advance of the entire lighting ‘look’ being brought onto stage with a single control wheel. By 1950, then, Strand offered two distinct top-of-the-range controls – the Light Console and the Preset Electronic – representing two very different operating philosophies. The Light Console promoted the operator as a creative interpreter of the director’s artistic requirements, live in performance. The Preset Electronic prioritised the precise reproduction of the director’s plot, with minimal creative contribution on the part of the operator. The two systems proposed differing virtuosities on the part of the operator: both required a technical craft skill, but the Light Console additionally promoted a virtuoso creative engagement with the performance.

It would be easy to think that the key innovations of these two control systems were their technological advances – the use of cinema organ technology in the Light Console and of the thyratron vacuum tube in the Preset Electronic. Similarly, one might think that the key difference between them was technological, not functional. My archaeological approach, examining contemporaneous records and the later writings of the people involved, as well as interviewing those still living who used these lighting controls, revealed the values and attitudes of the time, and showed that the significant innovations of the two control systems are in how they enable light to be controlled. The presetting facility introduced to the UK by the Preset Electronic meant that the role of the operator remained an essentially procedural one, and control over the artistic aspects of the lighting remained with the director, or with the emerging figure of the lighting designer. The Light Console’s proposal that the ‘backstage’ person of the lighting operator should be ‘promoted’ as an artist was too contrary to the values and professional-political power structures prevalent in theatre at the time. My archaeological method revealed this formation of power to explain the events of the time, the subsequent development of lighting control and indeed some key aspects of present lighting practices.

![Image of the 1951 Preset Electronic control at the Royal Shakespeare Theatre, Stratford.](image)

**Figure 4:** The 1951 Preset Electronic control at the Royal Shakespeare Theatre, Stratford.

**Methodology 2: A Method of Invention**

The archaeological method enabled me to explain the forces at work shaping certain aspects of present lighting practices. However, while this hermeneutic approach could explain, I needed a strategy to enable the partial reinvention of the role of the lighting artist. That is, a heuristic method, a strategy of invention. Furthermore, as a
practitioner-researcher, the methods I employed were made available by and influenced by my professional identity, as practising artist and educator. Invention was therefore central to my project both in terms of the creativity of lighting as part of an arts practice (that it, it is a theme of my research) and as a means of making a strategic shift in that practice (invention as part of my research methodology).

Gregory Ulmer provides an extensive theorisation of what he terms ‘a logic of invention’, in which the hermeneutic epistemology in which theories are valuable in proportion to their explanatory scope is replaced by one that emphasises a power of invention (Ulmer 1994). Here, a theory borrowed from another disciplinary field can be used to provoke creative thinking without the theory having to be adopted completely or validated in the new disciplinary domain, since ‘success’ is defined not in terms of explanation or proof but in terms of creative efficacy, and intuition and acts of judgement replace explanation.

Brian Massumi offers his own account and examples of similar discursive strategies that are aimed at invention rather than analysis in his book Parables for the Virtual (2002). For Massumi the techniques of examining examples in close detail and borrowing concepts from other disciplinary fields are vital to his inventive strategy, and were influential in developing my own methodology. In Massumi’s heuristic method it is the confrontation between concepts and examples, and concepts from different disciplinary fields and conceptual systems and networks, that is generative, since the confrontation is a violent one, not merely an application of a concept to particular material:

The important thing, once again, is that these found concepts not simply be applied. This can be done by extracting them from their usual connections to other concepts in their home system and confronting them with the example or a detail from it. The activity of the example will transmit to the concept, more or less violently. The concept will start to deviate under the force. Let it. Then reconnect it to other concepts, drawn from other systems, until a whole new system of connection starts to form. (Massumi 2002, 18-19)

It is the new ‘system[s] of connection’ generated by this method that I wanted to make use of in order to rethink the role of the theatre lighting artist: a confrontation between concepts from diverse disciplinary fields and the specifics of professional lighting practice to bring about new ways of connecting the concepts, new ways of thinking the role of the lighting artist (and so new ways of doing that role).

While I drew on a diverse range of texts in Part II as I established the strategic interventions that guide the practical investigation of Part III, there are two key texts I want to identify briefly here. In her article ‘Objectual Practice’ (2002) Karin Knorr Cetina examines and theorises what she calls ‘knowledge objects’ or ‘epistemic objects’ created by research scientists. These objects are typically experimental apparatuses of various kinds, and Knorr Cetina seeks an understanding of these that sees them not as static or simple physical objects but as dynamic, mutating, with many instantiations from initial ideas and plans through to physically realised forms that are nevertheless incomplete and continuously revised. I selected Knorr Cetina’s work because her stated intention to rethink the practices of scientists strongly paralleled my own need within my project to rethink the creative process of lighting designers, and particularly to rethink the lighting design as a dynamic and mutating knowledge object rather than something static and inert. I adopted Deleuze’s phenomenological account of the creative practices of the painter Francis Bacon (A Logic of Sensation, 2005) for its consideration of the role of the accidental, and how an artist can both make use of but also control random factors. Deleuze’s approach focuses on the creation of sensation and affect, rather than meaning, in an artistic work, which resonates with my premise in this project that light’s potential contribution to the performance is not fully realised in current mainstream practice.

I chose these texts primarily for their potential, following Massumi’s strategy, to generate new ways of thinking about the subject at hand by extracting concepts from their original system and applying them to detailed examples in the new context. Thus I took concepts of science practices and fine arts practices and confronted them with the specifics of theatre lighting practices, both those described in historical and current accounts (in Part II), and those of my practical investigation (in Part III). I deliberately chose not to make extensive use of accounts or theories of closely related creative practices (such as those of other theatre designers, directors or performers).
since this would have undermined the strategy of confrontation between different fields and disciplines, and risked simply modelling the new role of lighting artist that I wanted to establish on an existing role in theatre-making practice.

**Methodology 3: Practice**

The third stage of my research process comprised the two practical elements – the custom-built lighting control system, and the performance project. Both these elements were designed to test and extend the strategic interventions I established in Part II. My practice research was not simply a matter of testing or verifying the proposals of my strategic interventions. Rather, if research is concerned with ‘knowledge’, ‘understanding’ and ‘insights’, then practice research offers different ‘ways of knowing’ compared with research that is undertaken primarily through reading/writing/thinking. This different way of and order of knowing applied not only to research outcomes at the end of the practice process, but also during those processes, and so fed back (an ongoing feedback loop) into the research practices themselves.

Practice research also has its own pragmatics: equipment fails, activities take longer than planned, resources are not what are needed, intended outcomes are replaced by unintended ones. These pragmatics seed the accidental, offering new possibilities while closing off others. The research project unfolds, explodes and mutates, not wholly under the researcher’s control – critical insights arise, some sought and some not. The shift from analysis to invention I described above is vital here. The question ‘what if?’ is in my experience a guiding, speculative question for practitioners in the creative arts and is also a guiding question for the practice researcher. While the research project may have an overall direction that is determined (in my case by the strategic interventions), deciding what to do next at the local level is more a matter of – in Massumi’s terms – operative reason than instrumental reason: ‘a process of trial and error, with occasional shots in the dark, guided in every case by a pragmatic sense of the situation’s responsivity (as opposed to its manipulability)’ (Massumi 2002, 112). In this sense there is, perhaps, little difference between the professional practitioner and the practice researcher. While their intended outcomes may differ, their ways of thinking/doing/seeing have, I would argue, much in common. The difference between them, though, is critical, for it is a matter of discursive practices: research through practice makes possible a combination of the kinds of knowing that can only be achieved with a direct, lived engagement with the practices being investigated, together with the reflexivity and self-awareness of scholarly discourse. In terms of my project, my enquiry could only have proceeded from the strategic interventions of Part II through practice research.

For example, the conceptual basis for the Theolux control system’s design arose both from the processes of invention (using Ulmer and Massumi’s methods) and – crucially – from my own experience as a lighting operator using a variety of control systems in a variety of professional contexts. Here, an embodied and tacit set of knowledges regarding the intricate and sensitive relationships between the technologies of the lighting control system, the physicality of the control interface and of the lighting operator her/himself, and the creation of lighting effect and affect was vital to the design, development and use of the lighting control system as an element of the research. Without my extensive experience as a lighting practitioner, I doubt that such a research enquiry would have been possible.

The position with the Passages performance project is more complex still, due to its collaborative nature. In particular I was aware of the importance of working with people who would be receptive to the project as a research enterprise as well as a performance-making one. Before starting the performance project, my view was that the greatest difficulty in implementing my strategic interventions would be found where they impinged on the working practices of others. Trying to test my proposals for the reinvented role of the lighting artist for the first time in a mainstream professional context would have run the risk of the project failing (in the sense of not producing useful research outcomes) because of resistance or a lack of commitment to the project as research on the part of other personnel. Working with academics and students, together with a professional director with research experience, helped ensure the project’s personnel understood and supported its research as well as its
artistic imperatives, although in some sense it reduced my project’s validity as an intervention into professional practices. However, practice-research of this kind is often time- and resource-intensive, and so there may be limited opportunities to repeat the research under different conditions to extend or broaden it. Pragmatically I had to make choices based on a need to be reasonably confident that I could achieve the main research outcomes – testing the strategic interventions – and so I deliberately created a relatively controlled environment. Moving those strategic interventions into a more typical ‘professional’ environment is a matter for future research, beyond the scope of my doctoral project, with its sense of ‘laboratory’ rather than ‘field’ research.

**Methodology 4: Qualitative Research**

The kind of practice research I undertook, in which the researcher is as much an object of research as a distanced observer, is open to the criticism that it lacks objectivity. The question, then, is how to contextualise and justify in methodological terms the ‘first person’ aspects of my approach. My methodology had many of the characteristics that Denzin and Lincoln identify with qualitative research:

> Qualitative research is a situated activity that locates the observer in the world. It consists of a set of interpretive, material practices that make the world visible. These practices transform the world. They turn the world into a series of representations, including field notes, interviews, conversations, photographs, recordings, and memos to the self. At this level, qualitative research involves an interpretive, naturalistic approach to the world. This means that qualitative researchers study things in their natural settings, attempting to make sense of, or interpret, phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them. (2005, 3)

Denzin and Lincoln go on to identify some other characteristics of qualitative research that are also helpful in locating the research methodology I have adopted. Qualitative research, they argue, tends to comprise a *bricolage* of materials and methods:

> [t]he qualitative researcher as *bricoleur* … deploy[s] whatever strategies, methods, and empirical materials are at hand. If the researcher needs to invent, or piece together, new tools or techniques, he or she will do so. Choices regarding which interpretive practices to employ are not necessarily made in advance [but depend on] what is available in the context, and what the researcher can do in that setting. (2005, 4)

Susan Kozel, approaching the subject more specifically from a performance research perspective, underlines the value of a hybrid approach:

> Writing from lived experience often amounts to writing without a clear methodological mandate, or demands the courage to assert that the methods are fluid and subjective. Paradigms are scraped together (defiantly, guilefully, playfully, intuitively) from philosophy, literature, the social sciences, physics. This bricolage or hybridization is done in part to find a voice in the academy, but more important, to help the writer herself understand what it is that she is experiencing and to communicate these experiences. (Kozel 2008, 9 cited in Kershaw and Nicholson 2011, 227)

I selected my own methods on a pragmatic basis for their potential to achieve my research objectives and to make use of the available materials and resources – accommodating the absence of a readymade scholarly discourse of lighting practice, and making best use of myself as practice-researcher who as a lighting practitioner is an object of research as well as the researcher. On this basis, I would describe my research methodology as located within qualitative research practices (while noting the complexity and variation within this single descriptor) but that – after Denzin and Lincoln – I was not operating within a single research paradigm.

I also made choices regarding the articulation and presentation of the research in the context of a doctoral thesis, with the first two stages presented in a relatively conventional written form. The question of the extent to which practice-research can articulate research outcomes without resort to accompanying written or other commentary or ‘explanation’ is a contested one. Robin Nelson argues that,

> [a]n arts practice or artwork may stand alone as evidence of a research outcome. A musical composition, a choreography, a theatre-piece, an installation or exhibition, a film or other media artefact, a performance in any field, may self-evidently illustrate a development of what has
gone before in ways which offer substantial new insights in the subject domain as adjudged by those in a position to make such judgements, namely peer reviewers. (Nelson 2006, 111-12)

However, Nelson goes on to state, ‘[t]hough insights may indeed be evident within the product, the production of knowledge is typically processual and the relational encounters in which it is yielded might helpfully be pointed up for the purposes of articulating research’ and ‘praxis (theory imbricated within practice) may … better be articulated in both the product and related documentation’ (115). The practice-researcher therefore is likely to have an anxiety that the spectator observing her/his practice may not be able to ‘properly’ discern the research outcomes supposedly contained within a performance or artefact. Such an anxiety may well of course be shared by spectators, including examiners of PhD theses, and is amplified when the practice produces artefacts whose operations can only be experienced through use (such as a control interface) or that only exist in the moment (such as a live performance). Furthermore, video and other documentation is inherently partial and limited in what can be captured for archiving and dissemination.

Given these difficulties, I chose to provide a detailed written analysis of the research outcomes drawing on video recordings of rehearsals, performances and post-performance and post-project discussions, my own journals, and feedback from audience members and project personnel. I did not provide this analysis on the basis that a written account of the research outcomes is somehow a more reliable or ‘accurate’ means of communication, since even with a written thesis there remains the issue of expertise – of whom is equipped to make the kinds of critical judgements required when reading or observing a research output in whatever form. However, with research outcomes articulated through a performance or artefact, the question of expertise is of particular concern: what expertises do researcher and observer hold in common, that they might have similar understandings about the performance or artefact in question? How is it possible for an observer to be one of Nelson’s ‘peer reviewers’? Specifically, how to articulate understandings acquired through research to others who may have differing expertises and who will not have direct access to the experiential knowledge (including embodied, in the moment knowing) of a practice-based research process? I presented my research through a combination of written thesis, the practice itself, documentation of the practice and written evaluation of the practice not to privilege one form over another but to give examiners and others multiple ways of approaching the research and its outcomes so as to ameliorate, but not eliminate, these difficulties.

Methodology 5: On the messiness of real life

I want to conclude with some remarks on how the lived experience of research is often not as it is described in submitted theses or indeed in papers such as this one. I have presented my various methodological approaches in neatly structured terms, as if I had designed and carried out a master plan built on a fully thought through strategy. The reality, of course, was quite different – my PhD studies were extended over some ten years, with various false starts, wrong turnings, and periods of inactivity. The aims of the project at the beginning were quite different to those articulated in the final thesis and here, and it was perhaps not until half way through the overall duration of the project that the aims and strategy took their eventual form. The various phases of research that I have outlined here as being distinct in reality overlapped and blended into each other, while tidy, coherent causal arguments have been constructed retrospectively. I began this paper with two observations about changing theatre making practices and comparatively static lighting practices, but these were not the observations that initiated my research. Rather, the research was originally impelled by a much less focused dissatisfaction with lighting practices and a sense – emerging from both my professional practice and my teaching – that some kind of reform was possible and might be interesting to explore. Doctoral theses, then, tend to omit or efface the detailed, messy specifics of the pragmatic, lived world, and present activities and ideas formatted in neat, structured, simplified and achronological order. Similarly, the role of the accidental is almost always left out – chance discoveries of journal articles, and passing conversations in corridors with colleagues may be as influential as structured and diligent ‘research’.
Furthermore, at least some of the material I submitted for examination in the thesis was not only an account of research undertaken, but was also an artefact left behind by the research process. That is, the act of writing was itself generative, part of the process of invention, of thinking, and did not take place entirely (or even largely) ‘after the fact’. The versions of the three chapters of Part II that I finally presented for examination were edited and significantly reduced in length to meet my university’s requirements, and so are a partial record only. It was the original, longer versions of those chapters that were the outcome of the heuristic process that led to the strategic interventions that in turn shaped the practice research. Because the thesis is both an outcome of the research process and an account and examination of it, the thesis not only theorises the topic of the research project, but also theorises the research process itself, in a reflexive move. And again, I have shaped and structured the material in the present article in a similar way to my thesis, organising the content and ideas thematically rather than as a narrative account of the research process. Indeed, in a further reflexive gesture, much of the material in this paper was originally generated as part of my thesis or associated documents, including some published outputs, which I have selected, ordered and edited for the present purpose. Ideas and themes fold back in on themselves in order to regenerate, a living, mutating engagement with the complex world. Research projects are never finished, only abandoned.

Related publications

Further information about the Theolux control system and the Passages performance project, including photos and videos, can be found at www.passages-project.co.uk (site under construction – due for completion by December 2013). Aspects of my research have also been published in various journal articles:


Bibliography


Start studying Theater Roles. Learn vocabulary, terms and more with flashcards, games and other study tools. In smaller theatres, the artistic director may be the founder of the theatre and the primary director of its plays. In larger non-profit theatres, the artistic director may be appointed by the board of directors. Director. Sound design is the art and practice of creating sound tracks for a variety of needs. It involves specifying, acquiring or creating auditory elements using audio production techniques and tools. Sound design commonly involves performing and editing of previously composed or recorded audio, such as sound effects and dialogue for the purposes of the medium. A sound designer is one who practices sound design. Video Designer. 2 Methodology in Language Teaching. The issues seen to be important at any particular point in time and the approaches to teaching that are followed in different parts of the world reect contextual factors such as. those just mentioned, current understanding of the nature of second language learning, educational trends and practices in different parts of the world, and the priorities the profession. accords to specific issues and practices. In the last 30 years or so, the eld of Teaching. English as a Second or Foreign Language has developed into a dynamic worldwide com. Two sets of discussion questions are included. One set serves as prereading questions and seeks to explore some of the background knowledge, beliefs, and practical experience. However, through the role-playing, tableaux and creative writing he constantly appeared as a witness and pivotal influence in my life. In paying attention to, and remembering, his story, the monologue became about two brothers journeying through life. I had not written or publically talked about my brother since I spoke at his memorial service 19 years before the monologue development. Substantial scholarly work in research-based theatre supports how and why this methodology is a viable form of qualitative research. As well, engaging in research within the field of theatre education surely prompts consideration for including theatre when presenting, as most people attending such sessions are familiar with the art form. Offering an imaginative approach through dialogue with theatrical theory and practice, Vander Lugt demonstrates a new way to integrate actor-oriented and action-oriented approaches to Christian ethics within a comprehensive theodramatic model. This model affirms that life is a drama performed in the company of God and others, providing rich metaphors for relating theology to everyday formation and performance in this drama. [Show full abstract] genre where translation is regularly practised: The Role of Translation in Rewriting Naturalist Theatre. Adapting Classical Drama at the Turn of the Twenty-First Century. Design/methodology/approach Interactive Theatre is a dynamic event that helps to release employee...