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To teach as if there were no future

Devon Baur^a, Electa Behrens^b, Felipe Cervera^a, Diana Damian Martin^c,
Renata Gaspar^d, Sozita Goudouna^e, Kyoko Iwaki^f, Eero Laine^g, Sarah Lucie^h,
Elizabeth McQueen^{i*}, Theron Schmidt^j and Rajni Shah^k

^aUniversity of California, Los Angeles, Los Angeles, CA, USA; ^bNorwegian Theatre Academy, Fredrikstad, Norway; ^cRoyal Central School of Speech and Drama, University of London, London, UK; ^dInstituto de Investigação em Arte, Design e Sociedade (i2ADS), Porto, Portugal; ^eGoldsmiths, University of London, London, UK; ^fUniversity of Antwerp, Antwerp, Belgium; ^gUniversity at Buffalo, State University of New York, Buffalo, NY, USA; ^hWorcester Polytechnic Institute, Worcester, MA, USA; ⁱUniversity of California Davis, Davis, CA, USA; ^jUtrecht University, Utrecht, Netherlands; ^kAcademy of Theatre and Dance AHK, Amsterdam, Netherlands

ABSTRACT

Drawing on diverse situated experiences, the twelve authors of this article suggest the potential in teaching as if there was no future. To speak of a performance pedagogy futurity is to speak of an impossibility – the coexistence and circulation of technique does not lead towards a shared future, as intercultural pedagogies might have it, but instead to the absence of futurity altogether. The question is not when a future will arrive, as institutional temporalities often suggest, but rather how we hold each other, across the planet, in a constantly shared present, by means of a pedagogic encounter committed to multidimensional processes of differencing.

KEYWORDS

Performance pedagogy; futurity; international performance literacies; non-futurity

Article

Schools and classrooms are designed towards a certain future or a certain notion of a future. That sense of futurity might be a consideration of what lessons will be directly applied or of use in some future scenario, or it might be a dim notion that at some point, the course will conclude and students will graduate, leaving the educational institution and carry on with the rest of their (professional) lives. Or perhaps not carrying on, or carrying on differently. In higher education design, we are trained to conceive of education in relation to learning outcomes, developed along an ascending pyramid of Bloom's taxonomy of learning, and working backwards from things such as 'Dublin descriptors' (in the EU context) of 'knowledge and insight' to reverse-engineer 'constructive alignment' (Biggs and Tang 2007) between these learning outcomes, curriculum objectives, methods of assessment, and finally, as if determined by these future outcomes,

CONTACT Diana Damian Martin ✉ diana.damian@cassd.ac.uk

*Present address: Florida State University, Tallahassee, Florida, USA

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the activities of teaching and learning. These articulations require the possibilities of a future: the knowledge created now, today, this week, this semester, is still understood as knowledge to the extent that it can be articulated, applied, and carried forward to new contexts – a present extended into the future.

Yet, it is not too bold today to claim the future as uncertain; futurity itself precarious. We are living through significant shifts in (and beyond) performance and the humanities, in our ability to forecast their institutional support, and in the para- and beyond-institutional functions of education.¹ This article suggests ways that arts education might be formulated once one steps outside of the futures assumed and established by educational institutions and the ways that artistic pedagogies can refresh their radicality vis-a-vis the certainty of an unviable future. That is, performance knowledge is assembled, embodied, questioned, and transferred differently when futurity is no longer the organising temporality of our classrooms – or when that futurity is not pre-determined.

Here, then, we are interested in what it might mean to teach as if there were no future. This approach perhaps un-indexes hope (and relatedly doom) from the notion of the future. So, rather than taking up a nihilistic approach, to think through pedagogy as if there were no future is a speculative, generative act that in principle troubles the assumption of a future, orienting educational practices towards alternative temporalities not necessarily indexed by the yet-to-come. The proposition resists what Elizabeth Freeman articulates as ‘organising various temporal schemae into consequential sequence’ (2010, xi). As if there were no future is then thinking with Stefano Harney and Fred Moten’s proposition of the logic of refusal not as inactivity, but the absence of a pre-determined plan, a mode of ‘stalling real politics’ (2013, 9). Or, as Sandra Ruiz and Hypatia Vourloumis invite, an openness ‘to the option of *the future of the future* even if, and especially when, we can’t see past the end of this world’ (2021, 14). If hope can be a mode of politics, it should sit outside the temporal regimes of institutions that might remediate it, including coloniality and its manifestations. We evoke these thinkers who have expressed something beyond sequential futurity to explore the displacement of that futurity overdetermined by our pedagogical places of work, their histories, and their assumptions of training, art, and their possibilities.

Teaching as if there were no future perhaps then makes space for divergent and multiple temporal relations, and offers an escape from an institutional capture of ‘future’ that functions as if that future has already unfolded. To teach as if there were no future is then a call to a radical present in the pedagogical encounter, one that assumes no future in and of itself. Intertwined in this is the question of whether performance pedagogy (or other radical pedagogic practices) can envision new social actions, new forms of community, and a ‘new’ world to overcome the global problems that beset us, or whether education is only able to formulate collaborative utopias in the context of arts education itself (i.e. our classrooms and studios). While those spaces and moments are increasingly important respites from the outside world, it sometimes leaves us paused in an omnipresent now that doesn’t correspond to other shifts in economy, social practices, technology, discourses, and the broader society.

As Sruti Bala has argued, rethinking pedagogy requires training ‘to make sense of the present, but also to generate the ferment, from which knowledge that does not exist may emerge’ (Bala 2017, 344). Crucial in this project is what Swati Arora argued to be a key pedagogical tenet: our pedagogical practices ought to ‘shuffle the centre and the

periphery in the hope that the concept of the centre is no longer relevant' (Arora 2021, 17). In our own thinking through this text and through the question of pedagogic futurity, we therefore are compelled to question whether the future should remain the centre of teaching and learning, or whether, following Bala and Arora, we can shift our pedagogic perspective away from centring futurity.

In the last few years, our focus has been on thinking beyond the walls of our institutions, at times, dissolving their edges – encouraging and facilitating exchange with colleagues, students, and friends, to other theatre and performance programmes, to organisations, across borders, both home and abroad. Our work on the politicality of pedagogy is in itself a temporal proposition, and at the same time, this calls for questioning of normative temporal assumptions that underpin it. The power structures that emerge from pedagogic and institutional assumptions that reinscribe normative futurities are not in themselves intrinsic to the pedagogic encounter. The construction of knowledge does not necessarily reside in its applicability or perceived instrumentality.

It would be alarming to think that we can only teach what we assume the future will need instead of teaching based on the realities co-present in the classroom; or the presence of the future as multiple, and already in the classroom. We see an ethical need to move away from an ivory tower model of elite fragility, geographically bound and oriented toward future individual achievement and expertise, and to move towards a notion of learning as an act embedded in, and in relationship to the world as a way of thinking about a lack of future. The theatre studio and lecture hall are peripheral to the world, but no less in the world.

So, we ask the question: how to teach as if there were no future? And how might that differ from 'teaching in the present'? We begin with the initial work of any magical 'as if' to query the normative assumptions of futurity. Not to dissipate the practice of hope that's essential to political change, but to dispel the imperial logics of temporality as growth or progress. That is, there is no future like the futures we have been taught to imagine in institutional terms: futures of growth and development, futures of nostalgic attachments, futures that demand the sacrificial capitalisation of the present, captured futures, singular futures, colonised futures. As performance scholars, artists, and teachers based in various countries and cities across the planet and in a variety of educational institutions and spaces, our day-to-day lives may differ significantly, but the issues we confront in the classroom and studio are strikingly related in that our work is often about emphasising the here-now as a mechanism to project and perform the future. That is, we all have very different lived and day-to-day experiences, and our futures might not be shared, but we can stand in solidarity with the multiple futures that might emerge, and reimagine their relations to now.

Let's shift the dream towards a decomposing future, a future beyond an apocalypse, a future we cannot project yet because it is inherent to the possibility of meeting to learn now; a cosmic or multiple or contingent or yet-to-be imagined or being-imagined future. In this article, we think beyond our individual classrooms and institutions amidst climate crises, war, and political attacks on universities and the performing arts. These impact each of us very differently and for different reasons situated as we are across the planet. But these differences help us see what we share and hone our attempts to find overlapping approaches and concerns while facing the same imposing horizon. We are dedicated to and reflect on how to move, be moved, and to move students – from

small gestures to bold initiatives that overturn educational policies and systems to ways of rethinking the mundane and everyday life to form new paths of symbiosis, co-authorship, and reciprocal engagement.

Not when, but how: nonfuture pedagogy and methodology

The conceptualisation of this article centred first on imagining a writing methodology that proactively addresses the question of pedagogic futurity. When responding to the call for papers, our impetus was to resist following a much-rehearsed critical trajectory that alerts an impending apocalypse and then centres on what theatre and performance may do to counter it. Instead, our starting position was to question the linearity with which time is assumed to behave in education, echoing Petra Mikulan and Nathalie Sinclair's argument that in 'schools—as autopoietic sites of cultural reproduction and interpretation—epistemologies, axiologies and ontologies are created and reproduced based on certain regimes of time' (2023, 5). Our question – 'what if we teach as if there were no future?' – answered by the authors here, sometimes in unison and sometimes disjointedly, is a perhaps blunt tool to disrupt a linear model, to question and unsettle the stability in the association between education and time that we might map on to any of our individual classrooms, syllabi, or lesson plans. In articulating a methodology to answer this question, our strategy is to look around to the present, as it were, to suggest modes of scholarly work in theatre and performance studies that value epistemic horizontality over intellectual verticality and instrumentalist futurity. Our methodology is equally attuned to the thickness of now as it is entangled with futurities and pasts.

Performance pedagogy, as put forward in this and other instances of our work, is a reorientation of performance as always already a pedagogy: performance understood as transfer, relation, and epistemic co-habitation and incompleteness. Michel Foucault stated in 1967 that

we are in the epoch of simultaneity: we are in the epoch of juxtaposition, the epoch of the near and far, of the side-by-side, of the dispersed. We are at a moment when our experience of the world is less than of a long life developing through time than that of a network that connects points and intersects with its own skin. (Foucault 1986, 22)

Foucault's provocation continues to resonate when we think of the fields of performance studies or performance pedagogy similarly: as two sets of inquiries that cannot be explained without their co-finitude and co-existence, without their 'skins' being shared through acts of embodied transfer and intellectual communitas.

We are connected by a network of studios and classrooms associated with theatre, dance, and performance. We use these terms as if they describe a shared field of practice, and if any one of us were somehow transported to another site of theatre and performance training elsewhere in the world, we would likely recognise most of what happens in such spaces – the co-authors here clearly have much in common. And yet, our studios and classrooms that teach performance are strikingly different from each other and sometimes feel so far away, perhaps even from another era, whether it be past or future. The academic job market would love us being interchangeable, our teaching spaces mirrored, our standards and units and learning outcomes universalised – but the reality is that even when we know what to teach now, we do not know what the future holds

at each specific location. Pedagogy is a situated performance practice.² What future, then, do we see as a discipline? Of *a* world? To speak then of *a* performance pedagogy futurity is to speak of an impossibility – the coexistence and circulation of technique does not lead towards a shared future, as intercultural pedagogies might have it, but instead to the absence of futurity altogether. What matters is not what is to come, but the urgency of sustaining each other through the multidimensional processes of differencing enabled by the pedagogic encounter in the present. The question is not when a future will arrive but rather how we hold each other, across the planet, in a constantly shared present.

We answer this prompt already at the methodological level. Our methodology might be more formally a kind of collaboration that is seen across many science and social science disciplines. Indeed, 'The humanities might benefit from massively authored research, like those produced in the context of CERN, where many scholars examine one idea closely, disagree, find consensus, qualify their responses in relation to each other, etc.' (Ambayec et al. 2025). This article, for example, has over a dozen contributors. It should be clear by now that we are writing in a collective voice, and that these words are assembled from multiple contributors, copying, pasting, and adapting individual phrases and citational references. This has been the case from the beginning of the article – much like the collaborative process of devising a performance, we have devised this text. With such assumptions, co-authors were contacted with a series of questions and asked to reply or otherwise contribute their 'data' or 'materials' to the study. The call for contributions was released widely across several collectives and networks, some of these associated with the porous 'Ends' network (see more about this below). Once these materials were received, Diana, Eero, Felipe, and Theron 'coded' this 'data' according to possible categories of thinking and thematics (some of which now organise the text), and then arranged and curated the prose and arguments. A draft was sent to all of the authors for feedback, the feedback formed the basis for the revised version submitted to the journal for editorial comments (this process was repeated after peer reviewers sent their feedback), and further development into the text now available to the reader. In many ways, this is not dissimilar from what a single author might do, but the work here performs a methodology that extends and reinforces relations across our dispersed field. The work is a way of holding each other, as dispersed researchers in various institutions and at different stages of our careers: a relational methodology for the present. It is also a way of holding open possibilities, and as such our methodology is also hopeful, as we collectively aspire to recognise the equality of intelligences (Rancière [1987] 1991) during the processes that lead and sustain the production and transfer of knowledge.

This form of authorship allows productive critical gestures through the prefix 'co-', which then becomes essential to teaching as if there were no future. Firstly, it enables many to co-author knowledge with varying degrees of engagement without necessarily implying an epistemic strata or institutional hierarchy. Here, the future becomes multiple, and so we may speak about a shared sense of presence over an elusive singular all-encapsulating futurity that compels us all to move forward to the same direction. Put in practical terms, this article advances many futures (or lack of futures), and multiple conceptualisations of futurity. There is an acknowledgement that we are moving together towards a series of futures that may not exist, or that will be so radically

different from the present vision for futures that any preparations for it will quickly fall into obsolescence – nevertheless, we are moving together. As some of us have argued before,

what is at stake here for us and other performance studies collectives is precisely how to become sticky, stick together, and stick to it so that such knowledges and practice become thicker, more present, and dense, thus strengthening the plane of co-labor-ation. (Cervera et al. 2017)

Whilst this movement is collective, its experience and shape are fractured, multiple, dissonant and at times perhaps even contradictory. Thus, the togetherness of collaborative work in the face of such a future provides shared pedagogical guidance – co-learning, perhaps towards some futureless co-teaching.

Building on that, the second benefit of our proposed mode of distributed authorship is that it performs epistemic co-finitude. Here, we build on the work that we, all authors in this article but also others, have done as part of what we call the ‘Ends’ Network. The Ends Network is an experiment in collaboration at the various ends we encounter today. At its core, Ends brings together posthuman and posthumous thinking with collaborative research, holding central the praxis of co-finitude in scholarly work. It is a shared mode of thinking that is dispersed across a now far-ranging web of contributors and various clusters of artists and scholars who work together amidst shifting and uncertain futures. It comprises multiple overlapping collectives, all of which work in a laboratory modality that allows theoretical and practical experimentation on the various intersections between theory, writing, performance and institutional critique (Ambayec et al. 2025; Bharucha et al. 2022; Brown et al. 2021; Chua et al. 2021; van Baarle et al. 2022; Ends n.d.). In this context, this article represents a collaborative approach or a possibility for co-labour across institutional boundaries. We are interested in the possibilities for a pedagogy that fills the in-betweenness of both our research and our day-to-day jobs. Especially in the arts and at a time in which the future of theatre and performance studies is very much at risk across various countries, we are connected already, even if we are not (yet) formally working together. In all senses but the institutional, we are already a school, a department, a programme, a laboratory of performance studies scholars, teachers, and artists.

Futurity/or not

Our investment in the future can perhaps be traced to 2016, when Performance Studies international (PSi) set up a Future Advisory Board, or FAB – an organism of which some of us have been either founding or consecutive members (Bleeker, Laine, and Metzger 2019). FAB’s goal was to advise the PSi board with regards ‘to the future of the field from the perspective of new generations’ (Performance Studies international n.d.). Some of the contributors to this text were either FAB founding or consecutive members – it is not a coincidence, then, that we have stuck together to work across our different contexts towards a vision of academic labour and practice predicted on the singular-plural as its subject. In 2018, FAB observed that ‘The future is now, as it were, and we feel the pressure of the uncertainty about its possibilities closing down on us.’ They asked both: ‘How far beyond *do* performance studies scholars perceive the future?’ and ‘How far beyond *can* performance studies scholars perceive the future?’ At the time, based on the responses

to a call to create syllabi for the future, the answer to both questions appeared to be: 'Not too far—these futures are immanent in the present' (Cervera et al. 2018).

The original *RiDE* call for papers for this special issue was formulated on the premise that the future can play a central role in what we perceive and pay attention to in the present. We are invested in interrogating this logic because we perceive as well how such a strategy is played out in governmental policy design and decision-making. For example, in its role as a global laboratory of ideas, UNESCO has championed Futures Literacy (FL) since 2012: the competency that allows people to better understand the role of the future in what they see and do. Futures Literacy, through structured on-the-ground learning-by-doing activities known as Futures Literacy Laboratories (FLLs), helps people understand why and how we use the future to prepare, plan, and interact with the complexity and novelty of our societies. Such a highly institutional programme has the goal of helping learners to become more 'futures literate', and deploys optimistic language borrowed from technocapitalism:

in our complex world, the global challenges we face require more inclusive and agile approaches to policy design and decision-making. Rooted in the discipline of anticipation, Futures Literacy can improve our capacity to shape policies and systems that withstand shocks and create long-term resilience. (UNESCO n.d.)

According to UNESCO's announcement, people can become more 'skilled at 'using-the-future' because of two facts. One is that the future does not yet exist, it can only be imagined. Two is that humans have the ability to imagine. As a result, humans are able to learn to imagine the future for different reasons and in different ways (UNESCO n.d.).

Such operationalisation of the future may serve multiple purposes, sometimes nefarious but also sometimes emancipatory. It is critical to acknowledge that while the creation of futures is a mechanism of capitalist alienation, non-futurity is the actual condition of a global majority for whom tomorrow is equivalent with social, military, and financial uncertainty. Maybe what needs to be imagined is not different futures, but different relations between present and future and how we hold them, jointly, together. And perhaps we – here, between classrooms, throughout the field, and across the page – are already practising a different relationship between present and future, within academia and beyond institutions. This thorough overview of our methodology here is in many ways the work itself. So then, what do we turn to with this mode of working in the singular-plural, as hope is an increasingly flimsy or precarious imperative for teaching?

Of course, we are tempted to celebrate the potential of the imagination: to imagine the future otherwise. Not long ago, the question of teaching as if the future were unwritten would lead us to a futurity in the making, a present filled with hopeful urgency. Futurity attached to the premise that art and art education's capacity to affectively articulate thoughts and experiences is vital to both the exercise of conceiving emancipatory (inclusive and pluralistic) socio-political alternatives, and the practices of care and responsibility necessary for their creation and maintenance. That was then. It is difficult to write now, but no less true because of its difficulty: art and artistic education are not powerful enough to change a world so massively dominated by co-opted futurity. Today, after palpable changes in public discourse concerning the normalisation of sexist, racist, xenophobic, ableist and homophobic narratives across academic circles surrounding multiple power poles around the world, futures of emancipation seem harder to imagine and

riskier to rehearse. In Portugal, for example, there is current pressure toward a reversal of rights and liberties hard-won throughout the last fifty years (which followed forty-one years of fascist dictatorship). This, alongside the consolidation of neoliberal corporate power permeating higher education across different geographies, economic and political thresholds, suggests that indeed one might be teaching without a (any) future ahead. The future, as this example suggest, might be understood as conditional. 'If' no longer provides a placeholder for imagination, but a respite from struggle.

We are struggling against the future, or at least a certain temporal framing of it. As Rebecca Schneider and Nicholas Ridout put it, 'precarity is life lived in relation to a future that cannot be propped securely upon the past' (Ridout and Schneider 2012, 5). We struggle to live within the shape cast backward by a speculative future: a future imagined by capitalist speculators. Adding to the structural precarity of employment in higher education, pressing ethical-political challenges need to be addressed regarding modes of teaching, knowledge production and circulation, and being together in the classroom and beyond. But our ability to imagine different futures is shaped by the forces of the present. As Franco 'Bifo' Berardi has observed, 'the idea that the future will be better than the present is not a natural idea, but the imaginary effect of the peculiarity of the bourgeois production model' (Berardi 2011, 18). A linear pathway of progress, growth, and accumulation is quickly running out of road.

We might like to think that the dawn brings a new day. That it cleans the slate. The Nishnaabeg word for dawn is *biidaaban*. In her writing and in her public talks, Nishnaabeg artist and writer Leanne Betasamosake Simpson dwells on the etymology of this word, as taught to her by Susan Blight, as taught to Blight by the late Kitchenuhmaykoosib Inninuwag elder Alex McKay. *Bii* suggests the future, as it is actively coming at us; it also means the full anticipation of the future, that you can see the whole picture' (Simpson 2017, 193). *Daa* is home, but as a verb: where we are living in the present. *Ban* is a suffix that is added onto a word or a name, to indicate that it doesn't exist anymore, that the person has died. *Biidaaban*, then, holds the past, present, and future in relation. 'Home, or the present, is the collapsing in of the past and the future,' Simpson says (2019). This etymology describes an escape plan: 'It is this present, this presence, that will create flightpaths out of colonialism and into magnificent unfolding of Indigenous place-based resurgences and nationhoods' (Simpson 2017, 193).

Precisely because they have already faced extinction and continue to be an example and authority of futurity-without-a-future, we might turn, humbly, as students, further towards Indigenous peoples and systems to think or unthink the future, to remember that there is not 'the future' but many futures in many tongues. 'The indigenous world does not conceive of history as linear; the past-future is contained in the present,' writes Silvia Rivera Cusicanqui, drawing on her work on Aymara cosmologies in what is now called Bolivia. 'The contemporary experience commits us to the present—*aka pacha*—which in turn contains within it the seeds of the future that emerge from the depths of the past [*qhip nayr uñtasis sarnaqapxañani*]' (Cusicanqui 2012, 96). Seeds are planted for a future, yes, but without control over how they sprout or grow. They are planted for futures, and in hope, but also they are planted by paying attention to the act of planting – and they are carried when planting is not possible. What if each of our pedagogical moments was an encounter, in which we make soil together, pee in it, spit in it, and message ourselves? What if the temporality of teachings is adjusted

according to weathers, internal and external? We bring our unruly selves in shapes that do not stack neatly. We are allowed. Histories seep in. And, maybe, we are ready to begin. Perhaps that's the way in which futures show up: we can help each other become ready to begin, again and again and again.

'Radical' pedagogy

All contributors to this text are teachers, and some of us are students with others within the group. This text is, in this way, a pedagogical artefact that teaches in multiple directions and orientations. We all meet here, on the page, and agree that if there was no future, we would not teach. Or, we would not teach in an institution that demands hours of work on administrative tasks, evaluative structures and attempts at 'objective' quality, truth, art. But we would teach, in the sense of working forward together towards an unknown, teaching as a space of collective curiosity and communion. We would bring our families to the teaching space and our student communities to the home.

Such times, perhaps futureless times, seem to call for a pedagogy that fills the in-betweenness of both our research and our careers, of our 'home lives' and our politics, as if these could ever be distinct spheres. It is about time for art education to work more closely with civil society, to facilitate the expansion and articulation of demarcated areas of struggle, allowing for cross-fertilisation of practices of cultural resistance. In light of such slipperiness, art historian Grant Kester's query within his discussion of collaborative art practices might be appropriate: 'How does one reconcile the utopian or transformative insight disclosed by creative [and pedagogic] practice with the actuality of lived experience?' (2011, 14). From the standpoint of considering art education and everyday life, interdependent realms of permeable social processes and cultural practices, one possible response to this, and to the previous questions, might be to seize the opportunity to simultaneously mobilise these spheres, and displace their common borders. This twofold movement – of travelling and dwelling within and across diverse contexts – can be a crucial navigational principle for teaching as 'if' there was no future. For example, in contrast to training for 'future literacy,' we imagine the contrarian *Foresight and Futures Illiteracy Framework (FFIF)*, which will look at different ontologies of (un)learning as well as epistemologies and forms of collective learning, co-learning, and co-unlearning that address issues of uncomfortable knowledge (Rayner 2012), access to education, social justice and change with a focus on strategies of collaboration, durational approaches, and methods of developing unconventional collaborative partnerships to realise the utopic and the unthinkable.

We would practise teaching in cahoots. 'We' are always in cahoots with our past selves, younger selves, emergent selves, and an attention to varying ranks and experiences requires less division but more care in collaboration between varying stages of scholars. *Cahoots* is a funny word with a rather mysterious etymology. *The Wall Street Journal* attempted to curate the wandering history in reaction to the phrase's reemergence during the 2020 impeachment trials of US President Donald Trump. The article quickly surveys how some scholars have suggested 'cohort' as its root, or perhaps the French word '*cahute*' meaning a small cabin, or even a nineteenth century New England

phrase ‘cahoo’ meaning a pothole – where being *in cahoots* would suggest companions working through struggles together (Zimmer 2020). The contemporary definition of ‘in cahoots’, meaning partnership, colluding, or working together, often in secret, is what spurred our interest in its application to the concerns of performance studies graduate students. Teaching in cahoots means resisting the solo scholar and the lone discipline and instead embracing uncertainty, collaboration, collisions of fields, multihyphenates, and forging new assemblages of unlikely interlocutors. If there is no future for graduate students, there is no future for performance studies.

For example: we can sit in a circle within a studio, participating in a breathing practice where one individual initiates a hum and passes it on to the next before running out of breath, thus creating an uninterrupted cycle of collective breathing. This exercise, inspired by the collective voicing practice of Japanese sound and performance artist *m a m o r u*, underscores the performative intertwining of ‘vitality and morbidity’ in our contemporary era, where access to breathable air is increasingly diminished for marginalised populations (Tremblay 2022, 9). Scientific studies suggest that inadequate inhalation can exacerbate levels of anger, contributing to the collective accumulation of rage, hatred, and violence within society (Caldwell 2024). To counter the society of breathless speed and the cult of rage, engaging in this collective breathwork fosters a sense of communal solidarity and contributes to shaping a collective voice or voicing, a formless hum. We must be fully in the here-and-now to sustain the breathing act, and in this sense, the practice enables participants to experience a sense of more-than-human temporality, a continuity that is in contrast with the fragmented and ‘intermittent temporalities’ (Bourriaud 2016, 51) characteristic of anxiety-driven contemporary existence.

For example: the pedagogues of the Norwegian Theatre Academy are having to wrestle with the literal message of ‘no future’, as art education is shut down by its board due to institutional budget cuts and governmental priorities. The irony is, that with institutional finitude, the impact and life of the school has only become stronger and more vibrant. Students and teachers are now dislodged from their roles, roles which traditionally reassert a linear passage of knowledge, presupposing a singular (‘employable?’) future. Instead, together we live in the dissonance of code-switching, as fellow protestors on the street, teachers/students and members of a diasporic family of alumni. Practicing collective precarious living is a methodology of moving towards multiple futures. Practically, it suggests expanding beyond courses based on ‘skills’ or ‘methods’, which link directly to a promise of ‘delivery’ or ‘arrival’, and towards exploring pedagogy as a space activated by questions. Pedagogy as an ephemeral space which we all can invite, as (a) future(s). This practice does not reject capitalist frameworks of the larger reality, but in understanding ‘Norway’, ‘teacher’, ‘student’, ‘school’ all as frames or scores, to be performed, and by performing shift them.

For example: we see students devise work in relation to a newly written text which grapples with questions of post-apocalyptic realities. We make events that are not linear, but spiral, deconstructed, assembled as a collage. They are not about making a ‘show.’ They are making space, for worlds, for worlding. They open worlds draped loosely between past and future. They are highly dependent on the particular individuals who are involved, and yet, we can imagine how the performers could be other bodies, or

how we who are watching could step into the different performative tasks proposed. This is performance not as an act of virtuosity, but a way of working with bodies and materials that might make space for alternative ways of being – places that it might make sense to be when the apocalypse comes.

For example: we might acknowledge the impossibility of safe spaces in precarious futures, but still labour together towards transgressions that allow us to face realities looking towards possibility. bell hooks (1994) proposes that a practice of freedom, an education that instead of (invertedly) reenforcing domination, widens our capacity for liberation – it does not teach to follow and conform, it instigates shared responsibility, it teaches reciprocity and care and, consequently, it excites. So perhaps, in countering a mono-subjective culture of domination, ‘imagining otherwise’ might help affirm a futurity for all. It might help reorient the role (and limits) of pedagogy as part of a culture of politics, or political culture, that defines democratic practices and promotes social justice by actively challenging oppressive and discriminatory perceptions of difference, and by transforming the socio-political conventions and cultural assumptions of their systems of representation.

We no longer know who will be in the room from one week to the next, or how they will be there – and indeed it is now clearer that we never could. We do not know if they will be caring for others, if they have been arrested for protesting, if they are unwell, if they are streaming us into their room they share with many others. We do not know what has brought them to ‘theatre’ or ‘performance’, at this time, in times like these. We do not know what they are carrying, how they identify, what allegiances they sustain. For those of us who have been teaching for some time, we need to mourn the possible ‘death’ of methods, skills, and approaches that guided us through our careers, and the ‘birth’ of alternative strategies that make life and art more sustainable in precarity. In other words, a commitment: commitment imagines a future, but it takes place in the present, where it rehearses such imagination through care and responsibility, experienced in our being together. In lieu of the future, we devise this text.

Notes

1. The ‘we’ of this article is a collective of individual, hence multiple, perspectives assembled for and through the research. As described in the methodology section of the article, this ‘we’ has been assembled through a process of co-authorship and co-editing, in which contributions have been spliced together and re-ordered, and any first-person singular pronouns have been changed into first-person plural. The intention of this method is not that a universal ‘we’ is conjured, but rather that the process might produce a conjectural superposition, holding contradictions and diversity within itself, as well as gestures of inclusion and exclusion (as do all instances of ‘we’ everywhere). This is against the premise of individuated thinking, and towards an articulation of a collective body that needn’t imply sameness. To be sure, ‘we’ do not speak representationally, but in relation.
2. See the forthcoming collection *Performance Pedagogy: Objects, Transfers, Formations*, edited by Cervera, Damian Martin, Lane, and Schmidt.

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