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Redactioneel

Vijf is het derde priemgetal. Elk veelvoud van 5 uitgeschreven in het decimaal stelsel eindigt op een cijfer '5' of een cijfer '0'. Vijf is het tweede van de vijf bekende Fermatgetallen die priem zijn. Vijf is een automorf getal. Vijf is een Fibonaccigetal. Een vijfhoek is een geometrische figuur bestaande uit vijf rechte zijden en vijf hoeken. Vijf is dus een vijfhoeksgetal. Vijf is een vierhoekig piramidegetal. Vijf is een Catalan-getal. Vijf is een getal uit de rij van Padovan. Vijf is het atoomnummer van boor. In China geldt 5 als geluksgetal. De Grote Vijf wordt voor diverse vijftallen gebruikt. Zo zijn de vijf gevaarlijkste diersoorten in Afrika de buffel, de leeuw, het luipaard, de neushoorn en de olifant. De vijfde colonne betekent dat er bepaalde krachten aanwezig zijn die voor de vijand werken. Ook wordt gesproken over de vijf boeken van Mozes in de Thora of Pentateuch, de vijf voorschriften in de boeddhistische ethiek, de vijf punten van het calvinisme en de vijf zuilen van de islam. En hier slaat 5 op het vijfde deel van de serie Danswetenschap in Nederland.

Wordt vervolgd.

Can creativity multiply within a collective and devised theatre work?

by Sveinbjörg Þórhallsdóttir

To what extent can creativity multiply within a collective art-making situation, in this case, a Devised Theatre⁹³? This subject caught my attention while working collaboratively with three performers working in Berlin at the creation of the piece *No, He Was White*, produced by Panic Production, which was premiered and performed in 2005 in Berlin, Germany and in Reykjavík, Iceland. Studies of theories on creativity, collaboration and Devised Theatre helped identify the subject along with personal experience from making the piece *No, He Was White* and with interviews of two of the collaborators provide illustrative material throughout the argument in order to relate methodology to the collective experience of this finished product (Þorhallsdóttir, 2007).

Creativity and collaboration

The concept of creativity is based on theories by Peter Abbs (1989, 1994), Robert J. Sternberg (1999), Rex Li (1996), David Best (1992) and Mihály Csikszentmihályi (1996), all of who are well-regarded researchers or professors with reputations for studying creativity. On one hand there is a difference of opinions in their writings. Not necessarily do they agree on its origination or definition. Take for example Abbs who does not consider people creative until s/he has produced work that has given him/her the criterion of creativity in his/her society, whereas Best argues that it is the inner subjective mental process that is the criterion of creativity rather than what is produced. According to Li, new creative knowledge is a reconfiguration and reorganization of existing knowledge. Csikszentmihályi argues that it is not possible to know whether a thought is new except with reference to some standards. On the other hand in spite of their differences, they all seem to agree that creative thought results in new knowledge and that one can only be significantly creative on the basis of tradition.

Examples from interviews with Ariane Mnouchkine, director of the Théâtre du Soleil Company, referenced from the sourcebook *Collaborative Theatre* (1999) by David Williams, was the key source for this MA-thesis. It influenced me to research the topic of the dissertation. Mnouchkine talks about the aim in her company to move beyond the stagnant, static situation of directors giving orders and actors/artists following them by creating a form of theatre where it is possible for everyone to collaborate without directors, technicians and so forth in the old sense. These interviews were an important source for the argument that creativity can multiply within a collective.

Other sources that supported and underpinned the argument were ideas from John Steiner (2000), Paul B. Paulus (2003), Bernard A Nijstad (2003), Warren Bennis (1997) and Keith Sawyer (2007) who all suggest that the lone genius is a myth; instead they have emphasized the important role of social factors in creativity.

⁹³ Described bij Dymphna Callery as: 'Responsibility squarely put on the shoulders of the new actor for the creation of a new text and new theatre.' (Callery, 2001, p. 159)

Other sources came from writers and practitioners of Devised Theatre such as Alison Oddey (1994), Tina Bicat (2002), Chris Baldwin (2002) as well as Dymphna Callery (2001) who all have released books detailing their rich experience and insights, both theoretical and practical, suggesting how to do interesting and creative theatre.

The intention of my research was to proof to myself and to others with support from theories and ideas from respected writers and practitioners that working collaboratively can have more results towards creativity. Although I strongly believe that it does not mean this is always the case. Certain facts need to be taken into the picture. Csikszentmihalyi proposed in his book *Flow* (1990) that an intrinsically highly motivated state is achieved when people are engaged in an activity where the challenges match their level of skill (Sternberg, 1999, p. 301). In our case, in the creation of *No, He Was White* (2005) we were all motivated by the excitement of working together in collaboration due to the respect we have for each other and we were also challenging ourselves by working without any director and giving space to let creativity emerge within the group.

Group Creativity

The role of social factors in creativity and the democratic approach in the working process caught my attention when researching for the MA-thesis. I realised as mentioned before, the importance of the fact that a creative thought results in new knowledge and that one can only be significantly creative on the basis of tradition. Csikszentmihalyi argues that there is no way to know whether a thought is new except with reference to some standards, and there is no way to tell whether it is valuable until it passes social evaluation (1996, p. 23). Therefore he further explains that creativity does not happen inside people's heads, but from the interaction between a person's thought and a social cultural context.

In a collective work, development of innovation will increasingly require group interaction at some stage of the process. If we look around us, most organizations and much of the scientific process now rely on the work of teams with diverse skills and knowledge (Paulus & Nijstad, 2003, p. 3). Although, it has to be said, most writing about creativity has focused on individual creativity with little recognition of the social and group factors that influence the creative process. Isolation and individual reflection were often cited as key factors for creative accomplishment. In *Group Creativity* (2003), Paulus and Nijstad write about the possibility that the reason group creativity is not always highly accepted and less effective than solitary or individual brainstorming could be, because group contexts can lower accountability and individual motivation to perform at a high level. Groups that share information tend to focus on common rather than unique ideas. But they point out that Alex Osborn, one of the early proponents of group creativity, in the 1940s began to promote group brainstorming, a process of exchanging ideas in a non-evaluative setting. Osborn believed that the unfettered exchange of ideas would stimulate additional novel ideas among group members. Therefore, he believed that group idea exchange would be an effective means of enhancing creativity. Experimental research did not support this perspective and demonstrated that group brainstorming was less effective than solitary brainstorming (Paulus & Nijstad, 2003, pp. 4-7).

Although sharing ideas can be stimulating, there is a danger that it can also limit one's ability to think diversely. This can be avoided by ensuring that the

group is made up of members with diverse expertise and backgrounds despite the fact that diversity can have negative effects on both emotional reaction and cognitive processes. Differences among group members can be sources of conflict and frustration in the early formative phases of group interaction, and can carry over to subsequent operational and performance phases (Paulus & Nijstad, 2003, p. 6).

However in most projects in which I have participated, brainstorming is recognized and used in the early stages of production. I believe that brainstorming, as one of the group techniques, must have taken group work in each domain to the next level in the creative process within a group. In our case the first week we met in Berlin to brainstorm and get ideas flowing, was very important for the working process. First of all to go further with the possible concept and planning and also to shake the group together and develop trust, which is essential to make collaboration work.

No, He Was White

The primary motive for making a piece can be to create something with a particular group. This was the case with *No, He Was White* after we had found a common language through experimental improvisation, which fuels devised work (Callery, 2001, p. 163), observe each other and share knowledge and experience. We developed ideas into tasks that we gave each other through improvisation. Here we had an opportunity to get to know each other better and consciously develop inter-sensitivity in a way that fostered the creativity of the group as a whole.

We acknowledged the risk associated with this process, as there was no director to point out 'misses' to us. But the hits were more important, and sometimes they make up for the inefficiency and failures that one can realize, especially in the case of improvisational performances. I now believe that the most innovative teams are those that can re-structure themselves as a response to unexpected shifts in the environment, no longer requiring a strong leader to tell them what to do. Moreover, when like-minded people find each other, they tend to form spontaneously, a group emerges (Sawyer, 2007, p. 17).

Our aim, as well as trying to work collectively with respect for each other, was also to attain a certain quality, this raw and sincere quality, from the scenes with our view and style, and to have rich dialogues and interaction that could lead to intrinsic creativity. We wanted to be in our fullest possession, and we wanted to continue to experiment and break the traditional model of creating a piece - consciously because we knew what we wanted, although we knew of the danger of not having a director, but we were willing to try.

In *No, He Was White*, we managed to solve particular problems, although we did not agree on everything all the time, there were also times when discussions did not lead us anywhere. Some days were better than others, and at times we were simply tired or not in the mood to be creative. In spite of minor problems, we managed to create the piece and we were all pleased with the outcome. But that does not necessarily mean that we all will work together again. This was an opportunity that led me to new discoveries towards creativity in many ways. For my part, I am sure that our collaboration changed my way of thinking as an artist. It opened new doors for me towards creativity and it helped me challenge myself to do things I used to fear of doing as a performer. In this collaboration I felt I needed to be on my toes and deliver something interesting. I was challenged by the different artistic views and how wonderfully open they were

and not afraid to express themselves. To us, this piece was not supposed to be a formal or a typical piece with its formal composition tools, fancy lights and expensive set or costumes. It was an opportunity to break the form and to face the audience with raw innovation and unpredictable theatre. I liked that idea, as I had become bored from watching unoriginal theatre and dance works. I would never have experienced this on my own as a creator. For the first time I could really identify that I enjoy much more working in a democratic way, sharing ideas with others instead of creating on my own. I realize that our strength came from our difference as individuals, which probably explains, this exciting atmosphere within the group. I sometimes ask myself what that was. I cannot fully say, but I had never experienced such a thing before, and it felt both good and alive.

Conclusion

In collaborative work, artists learn from each other by teaching what they know, observe each other and share their knowledge and experience. It is an exchange, but not always an easy one. In *No, He Was White* we felt that interaction can multiply creativity and devised work when the chemistry, knowledge, common vision and passion exist within the group. This group of individuals was a source of inspiration, where ideas emerged for joint thinking, from conversations, and shared struggles to achieve new insights.

One realizes and learns after such experience, that our voices and our ideas are found through the voices and the interaction of one another. Although, like Abbs suggested in the *Educational Imperative*, that we have to listen to our own voices and recognize the self in us to become creative individuals, the more we become members of a cultural community infinitely larger than the self (1994, p. 226). We need, as individual artists, to find a good balance between our innate creativity and the evolving procession of styles, techniques, living works and so forth. With this balance, an artist can continue to explore ways to extend his/her creative abilities. In collaborative or collective work there is an opportunity to widen one's perspective towards creativity. To get to know others with a similar background as to oneself can be such a pleasure. But, to get to know people with different backgrounds, ideas, experiences and perspectives on art, and on life in general, can give a person further self knowledge and provide further possibilities, which is underpinned through my research for my MA-thesis and from the experience we had while creating *No, He Was White*.

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