

Reflections on the Theatre Workshop

The lecture ponders on the status of the 'workshop' in theatre and performance education. Around the world, it is increasingly possible to gain access to numerous performance methods, schools or styles of artistic practice through the workshop format: often short and intensive, experimental group sessions where the emphasis is on familiarization with a certain topic or embodied practice and on skill acquisition. This has democratized many practices, making them relatively easily accessible and increasing their outreach. However, the growing predominance of the workshop format raises a number of questions around its institutional backings, its pedagogical principles and the way in which a certain artistic practice is nurtured and propagated. The political economy of the workshop is also increasingly underpinned by its so-called 'multiplier' role in training potential trainers and offering a teaching qualification.

The lecture investigates the implications of the workshop format for arts education. Reflecting on my own experiences as a practitioner and facilitator of the Theatre of the Oppressed methodology as well as on the contemporary emphasis on linear skill formation in the Humanities within tertiary institutions of higher education, the lecture dwells on the conundrum of learning 'know-how' at the expense of not learning 'know-what'.

Bio:

Sruti Bala is Associate Professor in Theatre and Performance Studies at the University of Amsterdam. She teaches courses in the BA and MA programmes focusing on theatre and performance theories, art and activism, translation in performance and participatory art and has a longstanding interest in performance pedagogy. Recent publications include: *International Performance Research Pedagogies: Towards an Unconditional Discipline* (co-ed. with Milija Gluhovic, Hanna Korsberg, Kati Röttger; Palgrave Macmillan, 2017); *The Global Trajectories of Queerness: Re-Thinking Same-Sex Politics in the Global South* (co-ed. with Ashley Tellis, Brill/Rodopi 2015); 'Humorous Approaches to Art and Activism in Conflict' (special issue of *European Journal of Humour Research* co-ed. with Veronika Zangl, 2015) and *The Gestures of Participatory Art* (forthcoming Manchester University Press, 2018).