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Finding a New Route: Towards a Pedagogy of Devising

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Introduction

Because devising is as much about process as product; because, in devising, individual voices raise up together to create a whole; because contradiction and connection are part of the terrain devising traverses, we have elected to bring together three perspectives on XX Department of Theater's ongoing experiment in devising and new works creation. It is our hope that our case studies/autobiographies/historical positionings/questions can offer readers a way of seeing the kind of work that is at the heart of our project. We believe, with John Schmor, that "there are unique educational and artistic advantages to departmentally supported new works devised by students and faculty in intensive collaboration" (259). What follows is an examination of how, for us, this belief is enacted.

This essay is itself a kind of devising, offering contexts, backgrounds, and questionings from three distinct perspectives—context, chronicle, and case study. First, department chair A, whose own background in devising stretches across the Atlantic, offers a first-hand look at the genesis of devising in the United Kingdom in the 1970s and 1980s. Her experience in the field shaped the mandate for new works creation she brought to XX University, and presents a historical context for examining where devising came from and where it is going. Second, associate professor B chronicles the development of the formal program in devising at OSU and her own development as a teacher of movement, glimpsing the ways in which devising methodologies can be incorporated into a program's curriculum. Finally, doctoral student C offers a case study of her experience dramaturging the first major devised work mounted by OSU in order to examine the complex dynamics devising rouses between faculty and students. These essays speak to, past, and around each other, in the very way that devising itself

interweaves voices, texts, and movements. Together, they create a picture of our ongoing experiment.

Historical Musings: British Devising and Curriculum Creation

by A

New performance work is considered the life blood of the art form; at the same time it requires innovation and risk-taking. The conventional approach to new theatrical work has been script based: the playwright working in isolation to produce a script to be performed in a theatre. Although this is still a standard, viable and oft-practiced format, significant changes in the theatrical process and practice took place late last century. The recognition that theatre is an intensely collaborative art form involving a range of artists has displaced the playwright as the sole arbiter of meaning and creation. In its place is a much more collective sensibility where designers, actors and directors are accorded a collaborative artistic voice. In the following I reflect on the ways in which I have engaged in this transition by embracing change and challenges to my American training and education.

In 1978 I had the good fortune to be a co-founder of a fringe theatre in London. The three founders--myself and two British partners--created a company mission with a focus on new writing. The venue was called the York and Albany (located in Camden Town) while our company was called Mouth and Trousers Theatre. Mouth and Trousers created and produced a variety of new work in our small 70 seat pub theatre space. We also ran our space as a venue to be used by other small scale companies and during our four plus years of prolific activity we hosted and produced companies such as Monstrous Regiment, Three Women Mime, Sensible Footwear, Cunning Stunts, Pascal Company, The Dog Company, Blood Group, and many others. Looking back at the work of this period--late 1970's and early 1980's--it all seems new and unconventional: new plays, new improvisations, new physical theatre; new processes. Rarely did I see a company on the fringe which was producing established canonical plays.

Coming from the United States with a good deal of directing experience, I was immersed in a theatre world that was untraditional and raw and felt unprecedented in form and content.

One of the first pieces I directed for our new company was a piece I wrote entitled *Death of Harlequin*, a comic elegy to the commedia dell'arte character that was a vehicle for the physical talents of our actors. It was based on historical scenarios and in order to stay true to commedia origins, improvisation was central to the rehearsal process. Slapstick was the order of the day. Following this we produced Genet's *The Maids*. While clearly an established script, the production was not. The two sisters used doll/puppets throughout the rehearsal process and in production these dolls became ritualistic totems, alter egos to the sibling psyches. The dolls gave the piece a strange, off-kilter feel, clarifying the ritual element and physicalizing it in imaginative, startling ways. An important part of the process was for the two performers to make their dolls themselves, instead of assigning this task, in the conventional way, to a designer. The dolls were made from nylon tights material and eerily resembled the women who played with them. Thus the rehearsal process deliberately paralleled the world of Solange and Clare, who we imagined to have made their strange puppet dolls in their private fantasies of power and control, servility and submission .

While we never called this work as yet devising--we used obvious terms like experimental, physical theatre, theatrical, anti-realist, improvisation--the work was about process, finding ways that were new to us, that we felt were risk-taking, that were pushing limits. What it was not was Stanislavsky-based realism. We looked to Artaud, Meyerhold and Brecht for inspiration as well as the ongoing experiments that were defining the moments we lived in. Entwined with our eagerness for experimentation and boundary-breaking, was a commitment to feminism. Much of the work we made and witnessed was part of a long on-going project of women artists coming to terms with their tenuous place in the world, and a strong desire to interrogate this through examining and decoding the image of 'woman' on the stage. As a result, Mouth and Trousers strongly supported women writers and directors. We produced several New Writing Showcases, the majority of which featured work by women playwrights.

In 1980 I wrote and devised a new play for the company that addressed a range of issues. Entitled *Subjugation of the Dragon*, it featured the performance work of three excellent actors, calling on them to devise autobiographical material that became part of the script. A decade later I briefly wrote about the impetus for this project as follows:

Nine years ago, after the birth of my first daughter, I felt impelled to write a script for three women. A particular image haunted me, an image that fused the theatrical practice of auditioning with the old social prejudice that women are essentially deceivers, dissemblers, playactors. The image took concrete theatrical shape: a woman enters a darkened stage, a whistle blows, the spotlight flashes on, before the unseen judges she auditions with episodes, events, personal moments from her life. Startling questions unfolded in performance about the links between theatre and women. If you are a woman, where is the boundary between playacting and the 'self'? Don't society and culture condition women to internalise a means for survival which centres on auditioning, dressing up, wearing costume? (Ferris, 1990, x)

Working on *Subjugation of the Dragon* was one of those all too rare moments for me as a theatre artist where the initiating incident--the idea--informed and dictated the very process we pursued in rehearsal. As the actors in rehearsal shared their 'life moments' and together we shaped them for performance, we were all aware that the process was central to the making of meaning. The sense of collaboration, underscored by the fact that we were all women working together, was also crucial and invigorating. As Alison Oddey states, "Devised work is concerned with the collective creation of art (not the single vision of the playwright). . . ." (4) and for us this sense of collectivity was infused with political agency. Thus my early new work creation was part of the sprawling and diffuse fringe scene grounded in a process that was inseparable from my role as a woman.

In 1981 I was hired by Middlesex Polytechnic (now Middlesex University) in North London to teach and direct on their ground-breaking and innovative B.A. Performance Art degree. The first degree

of its kind in the UK, the BAPA (as it was called) was unique for its interdisciplinary approach to performance. When I joined the drama teaching team, the degree in-take each year was 25 drama, 25 music and 25 dance students. These 75 students divided their curriculum in three ways: first they took classes in their 'first study' (drama, music or dance), second they had interdisciplinary classes and performance projects, and third they could elect additional classes of their choice. While I taught numerous 'first study' courses in drama, I also focused a good deal of my time on the interdisciplinary strand. For example I developed a course entitled "Women and Performance" in 1982 that became a yearly offering with students from all three disciplines. A unique aspect to the Middlesex pedagogy was that nearly all the courses with traditional academic focus (theatre history, dramatic literature, etc) included a practical component, thus history and theory was being continually linked to practice. The "Women and Performance" course required essays as well as performance. The performance work often took the form of selecting a theme from the class and using the course readings to create an original short performance piece. I supervised these projects, but the students themselves were the creators and each semester these interdisciplinary courses presented a day of original pieces performed by the students.

It is no accident that devising theatre has developed most forcefully and with a strong sense of continuity and history in Britain. As Alison Oddey points out in her book *Devising Theatre, The People Show*, founded in 1966 by a cohort of artists who were interested in "experimental visual performance rather than productions of new plays and writing", is often considered the earliest British company to utilize devising on a regular, consistent basis. (Oddey 5) But I would suggest that such a beginning goes back a few years earlier to the Theatre Workshop and their ground-breaking piece *Oh What A Lovely War* which opened in 1963 at the Theatre Royal, Stratford. Often considered one of the most important British productions of the post-war era, "the War play", as Joan Littlewood referred to it, was created by close collaboration between herself, the actors in the company, and the production team. Drawing on the popular songs from World War I--songs that were incongruously upbeat and comic--Littlewood and her team juxtaposed this popular music with death counts, historic images on slides of the war, and newspaper headlines from the era. It was a difficult and grueling process, and at one point one of the

actors burst into tears and said to Joan Littlewood, "We're all lost. We're getting nowhere. Can't we just do a straightforward play?" Joan replied: "If we don't get lost, we'll never find a new route" (Littlewood 683).

In addition to the sense of history briefly noted above, I believe it is essential to also consider Britain's theatrical training and education. Again using Middlesex as an example, in addition to the interdisciplinary courses noted above were the practical projects. The BA degrees in the UK--like most if not all of Europe--are not liberal arts degrees as they are in the U.S.A. Instead, students study only their major subject. The standard length of a British Bachelor of Arts is three years. (There are exceptions to this such language degrees which are four years.) Practical projects occurred in each of the three years. In the first year, there were productions in the students' first study. As there were 25 drama students in their first year, we offered two productions that were both directed by faculty. Half the students performed in one, while the other half did design and technical work. This was reversed for the second production. This whole approach was antithetical to my American university training in which seasons of plays are selected and produced (often with little or no input from students); students auditioned and competed for roles and the lucky ones were cast. In contrast to this, the British production system had 25 students all of whom needed a significant role to perform as well as a significant technical/design role to execute. Plays were selected based on this requirement.

During the second year, the interdisciplinary aspect of the BAPA increased. Three distinct and different projects were proposed by faculty who would direct them. One was a musical theatre piece, one a classical text, usually with music and choreography, and one a devised piece. Students elected which project they wanted to work on. Again, as in the first year, there were no competitive auditions, but productions had to be tailored in some way to the talents and needs of the students. The autumn semester was spent in meetings and discussions on the devised work, and when students returned from Christmas holidays, the class curriculum was canceled and a three week intensive rehearsal process took place. Known as "Block Arts"--a block of time was created to allow the students total focus and concentration on these practical projects- these productions were often the highlight of a student's three year degree.

Being allowed to work full time was a luxury for both students and instructors alike. In the fourth week the three projects were presented in a small festival-like atmosphere. Performance times were staggered so that students in each of the projects could see each others' work.

During the years I worked at Middlesex, I was able to observe other faculty devise and create new work with students as well as having the opportunity to do so myself. One of the innovative pieces was created by John Wright who used Carol Orff's *Carmina Burana* as a score to creating a movement theatre work. The great advantage of working at Middlesex by virtue of its B.A. Performance Art degree was the ability- indeed the necessity--of using music and dance students, as well as music and dance faculty, in the creative process. Works that I devised included a movement theatre piece entitled *Five Visions*, based on the poetry of Bertolt Brecht and the music of his collaborator Hans Eisler and *Gothic*, a work that was based on the British Romantics, the poetry and prose of Byron, Shelly, Mary Shelley and Mary Wollstonecraft. My final devised work for Middlesex was *The Fall River Ax Murders*, based on the murder trial of Lizzie Borden. (see Figures 1-2) What many people in theatre see as debilitating constraints in the Middlesex process--i.e. having to accommodate the students who opted to work on one's project--I found invigorating and challenging. Faced with a cohort of 20 students--from different disciplines of drama, music and dance--I had to devise a performance piece using all their skills and talents if at all possible. Basing the work on the trial transcripts, Angela Carter's short story about Lizzie Borden (entitled "The Fall River Ax Murders"), plus various historical accounts of the murders gave us our starting point. Knowing that I also needed to use music in some way, I started by asking the musicians involved to score the sing-song children's playground chant- "Lizzie Borden took an ax, gave her mother 40 whacks, when she saw what she had done, she gave her father 41!" The singing/chanting of this piece became an important rehearsal warm-up and served as a productive impetus for improvisational work. In the final stages, it became the opening motif of the piece. Other music included the comic upbeat "You Can't Chop Your Papa Up in Massachusetts" which was fully choreographed by faculty choreographer Lesley Main. The choreography was inserted abruptly and with startling humorous effect during the part of the trial sequence, when the jurors rose solemnly and then burst into song and dance.



FIGURE 1: According to various testimonies, Lizzie Borden was ironing clothes prior to the murder of her parents. In this scene, all the women—the Lizzies—iron to the song “The Girl at the Ironing Board” and then begin to madly throw the clothing around the stage. *The Fall River Ax Murders*, Middlesex University, February 1990. (photo courtesy of A)



FIGURE 2: The jurors in the trial—incongruously and historically inaccurately—played by women in *The Fall River Ax Murders*, Middlesex University, February 1990. This important scene was developed by students through improvisation during the devising process. (photo courtesy of A)

While traditional directing can often be about containment and control, devising as a director is about letting go and encouraging organic, spontaneous growth. As Toby Wilsher of Trestle Theatre states:

The thing I've learned about devising, the real skill, is letting go of your ideas. Of having ideas and knowing, no matter how important they are to you, that someone else might not think they're that important. You've got to be prepared, the moment you speak an idea, the moment it has left your lips, to know it's no longer yours, because you've planted a seed in someone else's brain, it will take root there and germinate into something else, which is a joy and a frustration. (Lamden 21)

The Fall River Ax Murders provided students who took the "Women and Performance" course an opportunity to witness a full blown, devised piece that focused on issues of gender and representation. By having nine women who wanted to perform in the piece, it gave me the opportunity to explore doubling (in this case all nine women played Lizzie at some point in the piece) as a mode for articulating issues surrounding the role of women in the late nineteenth century. So Lizzie's story of her father's tyranny and society's oppressive restraints against women, became not a story about one person, but about many. The very process of devising allowed, and even encouraged, the foregrounding of gender politics.

For the final year of the BAPA degree, students generated their own projects and presented them much as we present undergraduate honors projects in our BA degree at Ohio State. The students at Middlesex, usually as a collaborative team, proposed a topic/script/piece of choreography/musical performance and in a written essay demonstrated the ways they will bring this work to fruition. A faculty supervisor worked with the student--or students--and attended rehearsals, giving feedback and advice. Many of these final year projects at Middlesex were devised pieces. In many cases, particularly for the drama students, these final year projects had a life beyond the degree, going on to festivals and being

further developed after graduation for performance on the London fringe. Indeed, a significant number of these projects helped launch careers in performance.

For example, when a group of Middlesex students graduated in 1981, they founded Trestle Theatre, a cooperative company dedicated to developing a unique style of mask theatre. Having worked together for three years under the supervision of Middlesex faculty John Wright, the students had used their degree to achieve focus and direction. Toby Wilsher, founding company member and past artistic director, states:

I went to Middlesex (Poly) with devising my own work in mind; finding other people with the chemistry to be creative together. I didn't want to be an unemployed actor at the whim of other directors and casting personnel. I chose to work with mask because it's about interpretation of gestures, and so non-alienating no matter what the class background of the audience. The work is about how I can stage the observations I make on life around me. (Lamden 20)

Trestle Theatre continues today acknowledged as one of the leading mask/theatre companies in Europe, noted for their devising work.

Another distinctive feature of devising in the British arena is that it is now taught at the high school level. A very useful book that was written for British A-level students is Gill Lamden's *Devising: A Handbook for Drama and Theatre Students*. Published in 2000, it provides models for the devising process as well as case studies of four professional devising companies. Of the four featured companies, two of them were founded by Middlesex University graduates (the already noted Trestle Theatre and Phelim McDermott who co-founded Improbable Theatre in 1996.)

It is clear from these 'historical musings' that by providing curriculum both at high school and university level, important work can continue into the professional arena. But even without a goal of professional work, devising has rich rewards for those who take risks to incorporate it in the classroom. The stage becomes a sanctioned space for communal sharing, an arena for both the strange and the

familiar. Negotiating such terrain requires, as Schmor states, “courageous resourcefulness” on the part of all involved. (273) Devising returns students and teachers to John Dewey’s obvious but groundbreaking educational maxim: learning-by-doing. A significant concept to be reminded of in our world where multiple choice and fill-in-the blank are still considered by some educational specialists as viable tools for testing learning.

It is important to end this discussion with a consideration for 'why devising'? As Alison Oddey reminds us, "A central reason for the large number of companies devising theatre in the 1970's was the strong desire to work in an artistically democratic way" (Oddey 8). This sense of democracy offers an alternative to the prevalent and still powerful text-bound literary tradition dominated by a hierarchal relationship between director/playwright and actors. At its heart devising is about giving voice and agency to actors and in so doing tapping into a creative force that has historically been little used and neglected. It is also about, as Joan Littlewood so aptly put it, getting lost and in so doing finding a new route.

Transition

When A became chair of the department of theatre in January 1998, she brought with her the British experience of twelve years of making, producing work and teaching and a desire to find such a ‘new route’ in American academy. Implementing a mandate for the development and production of new works of theatre, A touched off a series of experiments that built on already existing groundwork within the department. Since then, explorations in the new have been multifarious. Premieres of new plays and new play development have been an important and ongoing part of all of our work as theatre artists and educators. But, in the past few decades, there has been a gradual but increasing emphasis on performer-generated new work. This work arises when the actor on stage is also the creator of the material performed. It is this vein which XX University began to mine.

Moreover, the impetus to incorporate our mediatized culture in live performance has made it possible to work with highly sophisticated forms of technology to create an exciting interplay between live performers, computer technology and the audience. In 1995, Associate Professor D established at XX University a moving lights laboratory, the first of its kind at a major research university, through support from the Battelle Foundation and a university seed grant.¹ The lab was given further support through a grant from Vari-Light that provided equipment for experimentation and research. This lab offered design students the chance to experiment with expressing narrative through light in motion; it also allowed the integral use of such equipment in the new work development process.

Furthering the commitment to exploring the use of technology in new works creation, the department entered an extended partnership with The Advanced Computing Center for Art and Design (ACCAD) at XX University, culminating in such projects as the Roy Bowen Virtual Theatre and motion capture of major performers, including Marcel Marceau. This material is now archived at the Lawrence and Lee Theatre Research Institute. In 2002, ACCAD and the department of theatre collaborated on an interactive multimedia staging of Adam P. and Adrienne Kennedy's *Sleep Deprivation Chamber*, directed by A.

In 2000, the Office of Academic Affairs awarded the department an Academic Enrichment Grant in a university-wide competition. A, who led the grant writing team, titled the proposal "Performing for the 21st Century: New Works Laboratory." In garnering the over \$100,000 in support, the department formalized its commitment to a new works pedagogy.

Finally, and perhaps most importantly, the commitment to new works creation has permeated and shaped departmental curriculum, from introductory- through graduate-level courses. Faculty E, with graduate student input, oversaw the metamorphosis of the 800-student-

per-quarter Introduction to Theatre course to incorporate collaborative new works creation by every student. At the same time, she spearheaded The Writing Company, composed of undergraduates who write, workshop, and stage their solo works. Notably, recent undergraduate Laura Gale has taken the techniques developed in the Company with her to New York, where she has convened *Lift Every Voice*, an in-school creative dramatics program for underprivileged high school students. Most crucially, the MFA in Acting at XX University shifted from a traditionally focused program to one centered on new works creation, and, more recently, devising.

Always Learning: Devising as a Pedagogical Process

By B

As Schmor states in his article "Devising New Theatre for College Programs" in *Theatre Topics*, "...Ohio State University recently inaugurated an MFA program in alliance with companies like Improbable Theatre and SITI, devoted to intensive investigation of different approaches to devising" (Schmor 259). The development of this new program has occurred over a ten year period and was the result of many different influences coming together at XX University during that time. The process of shifting from offering a traditional MFA in acting to now offering an acting MFA which focuses on the creation of new works happened organically. The result has been a surprising success in terms of the support and interest we have received from professional companies and master artist/teachers, and it has buoyed our recruitment abilities by attracting top undergraduate students and returning professionals to our program.

This section of the article will provide the reader with an understanding of how we got to where we are today, the surprising origin of our pedagogical ideas, examples of how we

established a pedagogy for actor training and creation of new works, how we are making the most out of a relationship with a producing organization located on campus, the riches that come from persevering through the many challenging and often unforeseen problems that come with creating new work, and how a production system can support both traditional and devised work.

The seed that brought new works to the forefront of our department's consideration came from the personal interests of individual faculty members. In 1997 the notion of a focus in new works creation was championed by our new chair, A, and was later implemented by the entire faculty to be an essential part of our department's mission.

Currently I am the department's movement specialist, Associate Professor and Head of the Acting and Directing program. However, I began my tenure at XX University in 1994 as the department's movement instructor. Many movement instructors in theatre departments are often restricted to teaching stage combat, period dance, and/or some form of physical warm-up/training. All of these courses are essential but what made the XX University job so unique and what strongly piqued my interest was that they wanted me to teach the actors to "do what I do as a movement theatre performing artist." In other words, they wanted my work as a solo movement performer, to serve as the impetus for my teaching. Unlike many movement instructors, who primarily use movement training to support and enhance a script, I had the opportunity to fully utilize my own training trajectory. The following are the discoveries I made that serve as my artistic foundation and thus the roots of our new works pedagogy.

Being raised in Salt Lake City, Utah I had the privilege of beginning my dance training with Virginia Tanner, an innovator of children's creative dance. She gave me the tools and inspired in me a desire to physically express what I was seeing and experiencing in life, nature, a

poem or a story. She inspired what was to become a lifetime of study and a profession as a performer, creator and teacher.

I continued my education at the University of Utah (U of U) as a major in the Modern Dance Department and the Theatre Department. In my training I was learning how to specialize in both dance and acting, however in my own creations I was trying to bring both of these worlds together. I had one teacher who supported my multi-disciplinary interests of acting, dancing and choreographing, it was Ken Washington of the U of U Department of Theatre. He said to me, "Follow your passions, because that is what will ultimately make you happiest in life." It is due to my multi-disciplinary training and work that got me the job at XX University and has fostered the curriculum that we have today.

In 1985 I had the privilege of meeting Marcel Marceau and he invited me to observe his seminar held in Ann Arbor, Michigan. For one week I sat on a cold cement floor for eight hours a day analyzing every movement Marceau did and observed him teach. Sitting on the sidelines enabled me to clearly see what was important to him about his technique and style. By not participating I had the advantage of objectively seeing the difference between what he would do and what the students would do. I learned invaluable lessons by listening to the corrections Marceau made and seeing the adjustments he gave to each student. My dance training served me by developing in me a discerning eye for seeing minute detail in each movement. And my acting training gave me an understanding of how Marceau created the highly stylized physical forms with complicated, fully developed characters.

After each day of watching his classes I would go back to my hotel, stand in front of the mirror, and work the material on my own body for hours at a time. Trying to perfect what I was doing by remembering what he was doing, and applying the corrections and adjustments he gave

to the students. I realized that Marceau's work was the crystallization of what I had been trying to arrive at by combining dance and theatre. In his work, he is expressing the essence of character, thought, and emotion in a heightened poetic physical form.

While many movement teachers find Marceau's work dated, a style of performance from a previous era, I found it to be exhilarating and physically demanding. It was through Marceau's training that I first came to terms with fusing dance and theatre. This laid the groundwork for me as a movement teacher. From 1991 - 1993 I was working on my Masters degree at XX University's Department of Dance. My thesis question was: what specific elements from dance, mime and theatre are essential for my creative work? I and my ensemble of sixteen performers embarked on a year long journey dissecting dance, theatre and mime. What I came away with was a list of elements from each art form that I found essential to my craft. I also learned an invaluable lesson: it is extremely important that an ensemble share the same vocabulary. All of them may not be able to do all of the same techniques, but all of them must be able to understand the language and know why certain techniques are important.

While clarifying and articulating my pedagogy, I was also creating a devised work called *Uncommon Clay*. This movement theatre piece was based on the life and work of the French sculptress Camille Claudel. I had three women portraying Camille at different stages of her life: youth, maturity, old age and death. In the end, fighting for her freedom, Camille lives on through the work she has left behind and through the inspiration she brings to artists today. I had one man portraying Rodin and the entire ensemble transformed into many different characters and pieces of sculpture. One thing that I always wanted to include but did not have time to incorporate were the letters that Camille wrote while she was institutionalized. I knew I was not finished with this work.

This ongoing rehearsal period served as a resource for developing course material. As an assistant professor at XX University my initial movement curriculum was, on the undergraduate level: Introduction to Movement Fundamentals; Laban Effort Qualities; Mime - Etienne Decroux and Marcel Marceau technique and style; and Metamorphosis - animal to human transformations. On the graduate level I taught the same material; however, instead of the Metamorphosis course, I taught a Composition course. The department and I would bring in guests to teach stage combat, period dance and social dance.

In modern dance and mime creating new work (called "choreographing" in dance and "playwriting" in mime) is a vital aspect of learning the art form. Here performers learn multiple methods for creating work. I wanted to apply this multi-focus to training actors, to teach them many perspectives for creating work, such as starting with movement, sound, text, sites or an assemblage of material.

In each of my classes the students were required to create small studies, but in the Composition class they were introduced to specific ways that dancers, actors and mime artists create work. This introduced the students to the cross-discipline vocabulary that I had found so essential to my research as a graduate student. It also provided many opportunities for the students to learn how to give and receive positive, objective criticism; how to understand the intentions of the creator; and finally, instead of students saying statements like, "Well, if I were doing that, I would do...", it taught them how to give suggestions to the creator that could help him/her reach his/her vision.

Before I started at XX University, an established requirement for the final year graduate students already existed: namely to put together a solo showcase demonstrating their skills as actors. This was in addition to performing three traditional major roles during the same year.

After the closing of the fall main stage production and before the Holiday break, the students would pull together and perform their showcases in a short three week span of time. It was done with incredible speed and pressure and naturally some students floundered.

During my first year I was asked to supervise a student performance on Gertrude Stein. However I said I would do so only if we could lengthen the amount of time the student focused on her project. I saw great possibilities with the student's ideas for a literary adaptation, but I knew that providing only three weeks to develop the work, edit it, and refine the performance, was doing a disservice to her ideas. So instead, I asked to meet with her at the start of Fall Quarter and asked her to have a rough draft of the entire text she intended to use. I also asked if we could meet every week during Fall Quarter in order to use the entire quarter to develop the work. This process worked well, the student's work was a success, and she continued to perform the work after graduation.

The success of the Gertrude Stein piece initiated an emerging process for creating devised work in our department. Now we needed professional artists as examples of the work. In April 1995 we produced our first Marceau residency. For six hours a day for three days, undergraduate, graduate students and faculty members learned Marceau's technique, choreographic styles, and showed him works that they created in my mime classes. He was very impressed with how well prepared the students were in his technique and the writing of their mime plays. Since then OSU theatre has developed a long relationship with Marceau that has included master classes, lecture-demonstrations, performances, filming his undocumented work, motion capture of his signature works, and setting up the Marcel Marceau Archive in the Lawrence and Lee Theatre Research Institute. (see figure #3)



FIGURE 3: Marcel Marceau teaching students at the OSU Department of Theatre, 2001.

For the next round of third year solo showcases in 1995, many of the works came out of my Composition class which they took in the second year of their MFA program. This provided a much longer creative process time--if the student was so inclined to use it. However, there were still many last minute problems concerning students not completing their work, and anything having to do with production elements was a nightmare because the students would often change their mind or demand things at the last minute.

Therefore, in preparation for the following solo showcases (which we started calling projects instead of showcases, this eliminated the confusion between what XX University meant by the term and what other schools were doing by taking showcases to New York) I developed a new process: by the end of winter quarter of the students' second year, they needed to submit

their ideas for their solo projects to their advisor, and by the end of spring quarter, they were to construct a research plan of action for the summer that would enable them to come back in the fall with a rough draft of their entire solo project.

This expanded process worked very well and many of the solo projects were self-generated creations. These new works were polished and diverse and included a song and dance cabaret act, a work focused on female artists which include a reconstruction of a Mary Wigman dance solo, and a dance theatre piece with poems and songs. For the first time the solo projects had full production support which included lighting, sound, simple sets and costumes. And since the students had a longer set rehearsal schedule it was possible to establish deadlines for production elements. Each of these students took great pride and ownership of their work. Many of them also continued to perform their creations after they graduated.

By establishing this rehearsal time-table that allowed for the development, editing and refining of the solo projects, we had successfully engineered a system that worked. The structure both nurtured the creative work and contained it, giving guidelines and parameters that allowed it to work in the academic context. During this period of restructuring, the enthusiasm for creating original works was growing exponentially from the students, faculty, and audiences. At this point I felt confident enough to go one step further, to create a track in our MFA that would devote the entire third year to creating solo work.

In 1996/97, along with the support of the department and the assistance of my area faculty, we created a two track system for our acting MFA program: the Ensemble Track and the Independent Track. The Ensemble Track provided our students with traditional conservatory style acting training. While the Independent Track provided our students with the same traditional acting training for the first two years, but their third year they was focused on creating

original solo work. For the Ensemble Track student their thesis work was a major role in a main stage production. For the Independent Track student their thesis work was a solo creation. Due to the resource intensive nature of a new works creation, only two Independent Track students were admitted. In the fall of 1996 we had our first class of Ensemble and Independent Track actors.

Also during this pivotal year, we developed a strong relationship with the Wexner Center for the Arts, one of this country's leading arts centers located on the XX University campus. The Wexner Center regularly produced and commissioned new works from contemporary artists. We arranged for all of our graduate students to see their productions and the Wexner Center arranged for all of their visiting artists to conduct master classes (usually based on their process of creation) or lecture/demonstrations for our undergraduate and graduate students. This relationship infused our curriculum with first hand experience of contemporary cutting-edge performers so necessary to any new works curriculum. During this first year of involvement we saw the work of and had master classes with Kevin Kling, The Five Lesbian Brothers, Danny Hoch, and Anne Bogart and the SITI company.

My exposure to the SITI company led me to realize I needed to continue my own development as an artist. During the summer of 1997 I studied with them at their summer intensive in Saratoga Springs, New York. Then in winter of 1998 the Wexner Center was commissioning another work from the SITI company, so my department took advantage of this opportunity and arranged for a three-week intensive training residency.

After this intensive exposure, I asked Anne Bogart for permission to teach the Viewpoint Training and asked if she would mentor me through the process. I also asked Kelly Maurer, SITI company member, Suzuki specialist, and one of our three-week intensive instructors, for permission and mentorship with teaching Suzuki. They both agreed. This was accomplished

through phone calls and one-on-one meetings when they were in residency. This was the beginning of what has become a very fruitful, long relationship with Anne Bogart and the SITI company, which has included many residencies, performances, and the establishment of a SITI residency archive in our Lawrence and Lee Theatre Research Institute. In 1999 I expanded my movement curriculum to reflect this new knowledge. To this day it includes the Viewpoints Training and the Suzuki Actor Training on both the undergraduate and graduate level.

Other artists and companies we have had close and often frequent contact with through the Wexner Center are: Improbable Theatre (UK), da da kamera (Canada), The Wooster Group, Richard Maxwell, The Builders Association, Elevator Repair Service, and Goat Island Performance Group. Chuck Helm, the Curator of Performance at the Wexner Center, refers to our program as the "curricular counterpoint to the innovative programming" presented at the Wexner Center.

With the guidance of our new chair, A, the faculty agreed to have the creation of new work at the forefront of our department's mission. Furthering that mission, our department has been committed to producing our own guest artists who create new work, this has included: Bina Sharif, Pakistani solo performer; Robert Post, New Vaudevillian solo artist; Leandro Soto, Cuban-American performance artist; Benjamin Zephaniah, British performance poet; Spiderwoman Theatre, native-American theatre company; and Tim Miller, solo artist.

In winter of 1999 we had our first class of Independent Track graduate students performing their new works. During this process, the production staff and I confronted obstacles that encouraged us to establish clear and specific parameters for these Independent projects. Student work often tended to balloon, either in length or in technical requirements. We struggled to teach students the most significant skill of all in new works creation: that of courageous self

editing. When students (and this is true of many non-students as well!) create and stage their own work, objectivity tends (and rightly so, in certain stages) to dissolve as enthusiasm for the work burgeons. How students change hats, so to speak, from writer to actor to director to critic takes practice. But awareness of what an audience, ultimately, will receive is paramount.

I saw my role as a faculty advisor and mentor, but not as a director of the students' work. All of the Independent Track work was self-generated and self-directed with a great deal of advice and recommendations from me, the student's thesis committee, and guest artists. Quite often, after a long period of negotiations, when a student would continue to insist on doing something their own way, I would allow it. And once the performance was over, when the student had more objectivity, we would discuss what worked, what did not, how to fix it, and how to personally and professionally work more effectively in the future.

What I learned through this pedagogical process was that training a student to be productive in a traditional theatre program does not teach them the skills they will need to know in order to create, collaborate, edit, refine, perform, and produce original work. In order for these Independent Track projects to succeed it was essential to: 1) have the faculty in support of these projects and agree, in principle, to the value of them in the program, 2) everyone must be in agreement to the parameters of the projects, 3) the communication between the faculty and the students must be consistent about those parameters, 4) work as hard as possible to educate the students about why the parameters are in place, and how it will help them with their current and future collaborations and performance opportunities, and 5) teach the students early on in their training how to give and receive positive, objective criticism about their work. That way when it comes time for the student to try to objectively criticize their own work they might be more able to edit the work that has come so 'freshly off their bones'.

Between 1997 - 2003, we had four classes of Independent Track students. The types of work the students created varied from, using some of Mr. Schmor's terms and my own: literary adaptation of fairy tales, multi-character in a Rap/Hip-Hop style, multi-character based on contemporary freak show performers, traditional playwriting, autobiographical, and multi-media. (See figures # 4 and #5)



FIGURE 4: Giles Davies, in *Whu Is One*, one of our first Independent Track graduate students, 1999.

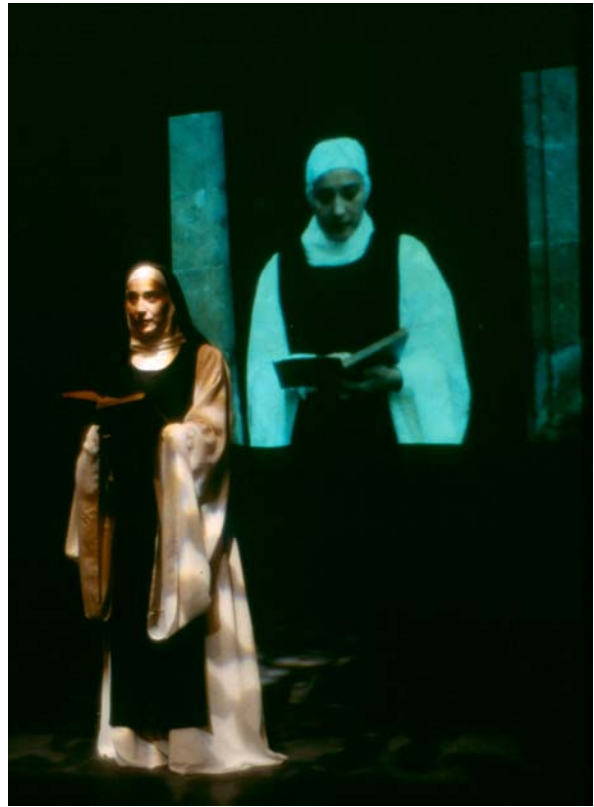


FIGURE 5: Angeles Romero, in *Sueño*, one of our last Independent Track graduate students, 2003.

Another very important aspect that was working in tandem with the developing course curriculum and the establishment of the MFA Independent Track, was that fellow faculty members and students were working on creating their own devised works. These creations

included *Interior Day*, performed in 1997, and created in collaboration with myself, F, our acting/voice specialist, and D, our lighting specialist. This work fit Schmor's term of clown/mask show: a full-length work made up of shorter pieces that varied greatly in style. In the beginning we established a very unusual premise: 1) the three of us, including the lighting designer, would create the work through a process of collaboration, 2) we would rotate the roles between us of creator/director, lighting designer, and performer, and 3) we would have all of the designers and dramaturg in our rehearsals from the very beginning. The designers, dramaturg and stage manager greatly assisted us in our improvisations by giving us invaluable feedback. Being in our rehearsals enabled the designers to have an evolutionary process with their own work. The entire process of improvisations and refining the work as a whole took over a year, and it was the first time that faculty members collaborated on creating a new work with full production support. (see Figure #6)



FIGURE 6: **B** and **F** in his treatment of the “Wooing” scene from *Richard III* preformed in *Interior Day*, 1997.

Furthermore, by including a lighting designer as a performer on stage, we broke the traditional boundaries of designer/performer collaboration. Our designer, D, was fully visible in her own light on the stage performing with us. (See Figure #7)



FIGURE 7: **D**, lighting designer, **F**, acting/voice specialist, and **B**, movement specialist, in *Fascist Table*, a highly theatrical intermedia event which examined fascism. From *Interior Day*, 1997

In 1999 I created a solo autobiographical work called *Breaking The Current: or, Ms. Toad's Wild Ride Through the Twists and Turns of the Psychedelic Journey Called Life*. This was my first text-based creation. Again, we had all of the designers, dramaturg and stage manager in the rehearsals from the beginning of the process. The dramaturg provided assistance in prompting me with questions that greatly helped the development of the script. The stage manager often functioned as a director and critic giving me feedback on what was and was not working. Once the structure of the piece was in place a director was brought in to help with the

coordination of the production elements and the refinement of my performance. This creation process took over a year and a half. (see figure #8)

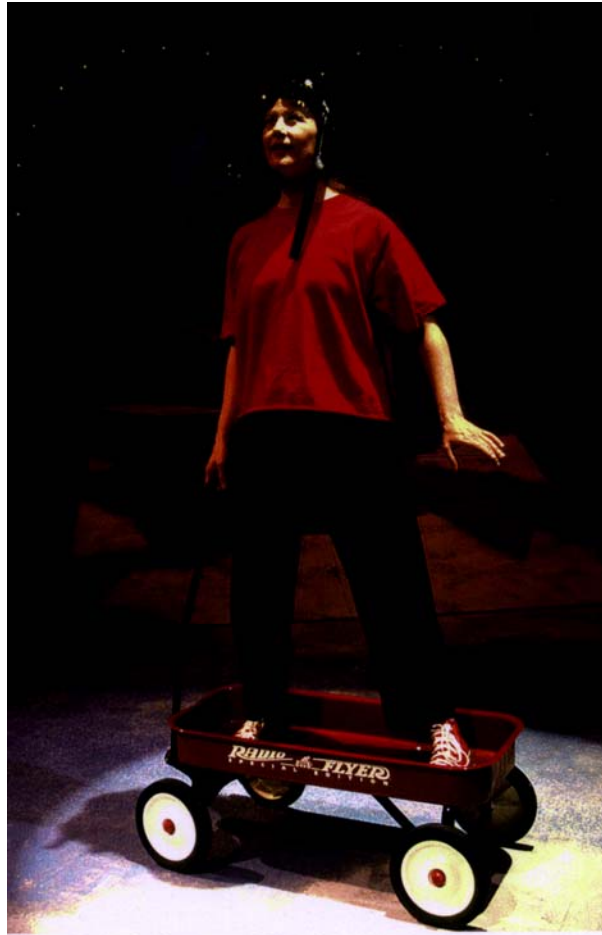


FIGURE 8: **B** in her solo autobiographical work *Breaking The Current: or, Ms. Toad's Wild Ride Through the Twists and Turns of the Psychedelic Journey Called Life*, 1999.

In 2000 the timing was right to return to a remaking of *Uncommon Clay* with full departmental support. My primary focus was to create a script which included the letters that Camille Claudel wrote while she was institutionalized. I worked closely in collaboration with the sixteen member ensemble, dramaturg, and designers to cull together the script. The entire process took close to two years.

By this time the department had established a system that aided in successfully producing original work. We provided a two quarter system for the development and performance of each new work. During the first quarter the material would be developed, and during the second quarter the work would go into our traditional rehearsal and technical time table.

We successfully repeated this system in 2002 when we produced John Giffin's (XX University Dance faculty and professional dance theatre choreographer) devised work *The Fire Still Burns*. This work was based on women who were fighting for the garment unions at the turn of the twentieth century. It ended with a dramatic and highly stylized depiction of the Triangle Shirtwaist Factory fire that cost so many of these women their lives. It was created through the intertext/process of collaboratively culling the script together from many different sources by the director, myself, and the cast members. (see figure #9)



FIGURE 9: The final scene from *The Fire Still Burns*, conceived and directed by John Giffin, 2002.

We continued with our two track MFA through 2002/03 at which time I became Head of the Acting and Directing program. With our relatively new cohort of acting and directing faculty in place, G - acting/directing, H - acting/directing, J - voice, and myself - movement, we ruminated for a couple of months about what was unique about us as an acting faculty and our program. We felt that what we did best was offer strong acting and movement training with a unique emphasis on creating new works. Therefore we set about to restructure our MFA in acting to reflect exactly that. With the support of our faculty, we eliminated our Independent and Ensemble Track system and unified our MFA into one program. Our new MFA in acting offers contemporary and classical actor training, strong movement theatre training, a focus on creating new work, experience in arts administration, video making, and community outreach development. Moving to a more comprehensive focus on new works not only makes our program unique, but it also directly links us to the innovative programming, guest artist residencies, and world-class contemporary performance that is produced and commissioned by the Wexner Center for the Arts.

By the end of their first year, our students had residencies with new work artists Robert Post, Reverend Billy, Jeff Solomon, Goat Island Performance Group, and Anne Bogart and the SITI company. We are not sure where the future will lead us. However, if the past year is any predictor it will be filled with a wealth of creative investigation, generosity of spirit, and surprising season productions.

Transition

Much of what XX University's devising pedagogy encompasses comes from our experience producing, departmentally, a full-scale, full-length devised piece. B first mounted a

piece entitled *Uncommon Clay* in 1993. With an entirely new cast and crew, B revisited the landscape of Camille Claudel's life in a devised production that developed over the course of a year. The challenges, successes, failures, and surprises of the experience ground the department's approach to the teaching of devising to the graduate students in its MFA Acting program.

As with A's approach to staging *Lizzie Borden*, B manifested the shifts in Claudel's character and life by casting multiple actors to play her at various stages of her life. The multivocality of such productions is integral to the act of devising itself. But devising presents exciting opportunities for more than just the performers: designers and dramaturgs, too, learn through the experience. The XX University Department of Theatre's commitment to new works creation permeates all areas of study. Certainly, and obviously, MFA actors are influenced by the programmatic thrust. But how devising shapes perspective, research, and writing for students in the design and academic areas of study is also worth examining. For C, now a doctoral student at OSU, dramaturging a devised work asked her to apply her skills in academic research directly to theatrical creation, rather than criticism or contextualization.

An *Uncommon* Process: Dramaturging for Devising

By C

When B convinced XX University to commit to creating *Uncommon Clay*, a full-scale movement-based devised production based on the life of sculptor Camille Claudel, I was lucky enough, as a masters student, to be brought on board as dramaturg. The role of the dramaturg in the most traditional of productions can be difficult to delineate; in a devised production, built from the ground up, the position becomes even more complicated to define. In some ways,

everyone creatively involved in the production—actors, designers, director—served as dramaturg, bringing information to the table and weighing in on narrative choices. So, my work as dramaturg expanded, and was more ongoing, more wide-ranging, and, ultimately, more integral than a typical protocol. I became a kind of de facto playwright, simultaneously providing text and serving as the advocate for the dramatic content of the piece.

My experience as dramaturg for *Uncommon Clay* redefined my relationship with my graduate colleagues, our undergraduate students, and the faculty who contributed to this production. Authority, always at question in a devising process, became, in *Uncommon Clay*, a mobile quantity. Although the piece originated with B's interest in Claudel's biography, my extensive research as dramaturg marked me as the go-to person for questions of content applicability and veracity. This is usually the province of the director or playwright; however, in the devising process, I became the textual authority.

Camille Claudel (1864-1943) was born in the village of Villeneuve-sur-Fère near the Champagne region of France. During her childhood, Claudel was drawn to sculpture, molding clay that she found in nearby fields. In 1881, Claudel convinced her family to move to Paris so that she could continue her study of the art. While there, she attended the Academie Colarossi and rented a studio space with some English friends. It was here that she met Auguste Rodin (twenty-four years her senior) who visited her studio and became fascinated by her work. Claudel became Rodin's pupil, an assistant in his workshop, his muse, a lover, and, eventually, a rival. From 1882-1891, the years of their collaboration, Claudel worked on several of Rodin's largest works, including the *Burgers of Calais* and *The Gates of Hell*. Rodin made several sculptures for which Claudel modeled. In contradistinction to much of his other work, these focused demurely on his subject's face alone. Several of Claudel and Rodin's works from this

period bear striking resemblances to each other, often focusing on erotic couplings, and have complicated questions of artistic attribution.

In 1892, Claudel broke away from Rodin financially and rented her own workshop; however, their romantic relationship continued for several more years. During this period of separation, Claudel created what have been considered her best works, many of which focus on dying passion and longing. After a display of her work in 1905 met with little popular acclaim, Claudel began a slow slide into a progressive derangement, locking herself in her studio, going out only at night, and breaking and burning many of her sculptures. In 1913, just one week after the death of her indulgent father, Claudel's brother, mother and treating physician committed her to a mental institution. Once institutionalized, Claudel's delusions became more acute as she insisted that "Rodin's Gang" was attempting to poison her and steal her artworks. According to her medical records, her mental state eventually improved, her mother and brother requested that she remain in the institution. She died there in 1943, at age seventy-nine (Caranfa, Paris, Riviere).

Our devising in *Uncommon Clay* fits somewhere between John Schmor's categorizations of "literary adaptation" and "intertext/process" (264). That is, we were not simply adapting or dramatizing a biography or novel; neither were we building a pastiche non-narrative piece. We used Claudel's biography as the spine of our story. The basic narrative of birth to death resonated with Claudel's creative process as an artist as well as with the degeneration of her mind and purposeful destruction of her own work. We then layered and intertwined passages of movement and bits of text. The movement was developed by B in deep collaboration with her cast, and drew extensively from her training in Viewpoints and with Marcel Marceau. The text was largely provided and excerpted by me. I drew from Camille Claudel's letters, her medical

records (which were translated by graduate student in French Angela Netzer), and various biographies which had been written about her. I also collated reviews of her work, both in the period and by later scholars and historians. To this, I added contextual material on the female artist, salons, the Academy, and mental institutions in the period. The two significant men in Claudel's life—Auguste Rodin and Paul Claudel—also became archives for me to draw from. Because of Claudel's stormy long-term affair with Auguste Rodin, I provided extensive material on his life and work, including information on his common-law wife, Rose Beuret. Camille's brother, Paul Claudel, was a prolific modernist writer, statesman, and Catholic convert. So, I tapped into his correspondence (especially with Andre Gide), his plays (including *Tidings Brought to Mary*), and his poetry. Finally, Henrik Ibsen's play *When We Dead Awaken* may have been inspired by newspaper accounts of the Claudel/Rodin affair; in any event, some of its speeches and scenes made fruitful points of departure.

In our process, the text that I obtained was used in two primary ways. First, I shared what I was uncovering with the director and design team throughout the process. Sometimes, we would make key choices about where to head next or how to shape the piece based on my discoveries. Second, and more significantly, I provided the central actors in the piece (the five women playing Camille, the men playing Paul and Rodin, the woman playing Rose) with individualized packets of information on their character. I offered them a biographical sketch, critical context, photographic and artistic images, examples of written work, and several pages of key quotation from their historical character that I found to be suggestive, confusing, exciting, engaging, or in some way stimulating. This material served as the basis for the improvisations that the piece was built from. Crucially, this was not a one-way exchange. Under my guidance, all of the actors did their own researching and reading as well. For example, much of the useful

material on French mental asylums of the period was ferreted out by Naomi Hatsfelt, who played Camille institutionalized. Sound designer Katie Whitlock, inspired to recraft the flow of an early scene, composed what was probably the most successful usage of text in the piece. So, the entire devising team had significant ownership of what was created; at the same time, especially in the case of a well-documented figure like Rodin, I had already done a sizeable amount of culling and so narrowed the scope (and the potentially overwhelming nature) of the reading done.

Because *Uncommon Clay* is mainly a movement piece, I found my research work to be most highly driven by images. Photographs, paintings, cartoons, and sketches were often the starting point for exploration. The structure of some of Claudel's and Rodin's sculptures became motifs in the piece. Moreover, the evocative content of Claudel's later sculptures (like her emaciated and blindfolded *Clotho* or plaintive *God Flown Away*) became stories in and of themselves, and helped us shape a Camille who, unlike Rodin or Paul Claudel, was neither well-documented nor literarily prolific. Textually, we were bound, and the gaps in Claudel's story were many; imagistically, we had much fertile material to work. The danger in this situation, of course, was that Camille was at risk of being swamped by her more articulate colleagues on the stage. We turned this tension between the visual and the aural to our advantage: in our devising, Camille's poised silent *working*, her evocative *presence*, set her at odds with the loquaciousness that threatened to drown her out. Her work, in essence, was her voice. Once she was institutionalized, Camille shifted and became highly articulate: without her work, she turned to words (fig.10 and 11).



FIGURE 10: The ensemble of *Uncommon Clay*, who alternately served as different iterations of Camille Claudel, as well as her sculptures, and her mentor, Auguste Rodin..



FIGURE 11: Camille's children, played as bunraku-type puppets, in *Uncommon Clay*, devised and directed by Jeanine Thompson, November 2001.

At my best, I was highly engaged in the entire devising process. My regular and frequent presence in the rehearsal room allowed me to respond both to what I saw and what I didn't see. I began to have a sense of the narrative we wanted to build and could offer piece of material to help shape that. I served as the friendliest of in-house critics, which should always be the dramaturg's role in production; in this case, I was invested in the unfolding work and got a chance to shape the script as it developed. In addition, I was able to respond to what the performers and designers needed throughout the process. Sometimes this came in the form of a direct request. Other times I was spurred to explore an area more deeply after seeing what a performer was discovering in improvisation. So, the give-and-take of the devising process enabled everyone involved to take initiative and ownership of the process, and, hence, the product.

Uncommon Clay had, through generous departmental support, a long genesis. We spent early parts of 2000 in workshop, with all designers and actors present, collaborating and exploring the potential stories we could tell. Over the summer, the director, design team, and myself together took what had been generated in the previous months and began to make choices about the final production. More research and experimentation was needed (it was at this point, for example, that I had the medical records translated), and we had the luxury of the summer to explore away from the necessities of the rehearsal room. When school reconvened in September, the same cast returned and were presented with a working script built from our earlier improvisations and experimentations. The script subsequently underwent five rewrites throughout the course of the rehearsal process, as we learned on our feet.

In our devising of *Uncommon Clay*, the actors, dramaturg, and designers served as generators of a sizable quantity of material. With constant input from her design team, B, as

director, had the arduous task of selecting amongst, editing, and cohering the work. In this process, the traditional hierarchies of production were set aside. This also necessitated setting aside the traditional hierarchies of academic study. Thompson was our professor, we were her students; in the rehearsal room, however, we were all collaborators. Ideally, anyway. One of the (delightful) difficulties of devising is how exhausting and enraging it can all be. Bernice Reagon Johnson, founder of Sweet Honey in the Rock, Distinguished Professor of History at the American University, and Curator Emeritus at the Smithsonian Institution, has said of coalition building, “I feel as if I'm gonna keel over any minute and die. That is often what it feels like if you're really doing coalition work. Most of the time you feel threatened to the core and if you don't, you're not really doing no coalescing” (356). During the process, I found myself returning to this sentiment again and again. We did not always agree; we were often frustrated with each other; but in that disagreement and frustration, we were doing real work. Aptly, for a piece about the immense struggle of one woman against social expectations, her lover's fickleness, her family's disapproval, her own madness, and, finally against the unyielding blocks of marble at which she chipped, our own process of creation was itself an (almost unwinnable) struggle. But out of the struggle came something, I think, beautiful.

Conclusion

Enacting a pedagogy of devising requires making the leap from discrete, contained devised *productions* to a systemic commitment to devised *teaching and learning*. Devising is part of our curriculum, not just a seasonal experimentation. This admittedly time-intensive approach does not always fit the strictures of a university system. More often than not, we approach our season selection as an educational, not a fiscal, process. As universities (especially state-funded ones) become more and more tied to their bottom line, making the choice to abjure “money shows” for devised experimentation brings with it certain risks. For us, however, commitment to devising brings us closer to the British system that A detailed; it crosses traditional departmental boundaries; it asks students to take a significant hand in their own learning. Most importantly, it takes the process of theatre-making as a pedagogical *modus operandi*, engaging students, faculty, and audiences in learning as they create.

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¹ The first computer-controlled stage lighting fixtures, called Moving Lights or Intelligent Fixtures (circa 1987), were initially used in the concert industry, particularly for rock concerts. These fixtures slowly started being used in more “traditional” theatre and are currently used in almost all major commercial theatre productions. The advantage to moving lights in a theatre production is that they have a deeper saturated color palette from which to choose and single fixtures can literally move and change colors, thus giving designers a great range of choices and artistic opportunities. Moving light technology is a particular powerful tool when devising new work as their kinetic ability literally becomes a partner with the actors. The lab at XX University offered design students the chance to experiment with high end equipment.