

<b>Institution:</b> University of Winchester
<b>Unit of Assessment:</b> D35 Music Dance Drama and Performing Arts
<b>Title of case study:</b> Dramaturgies of Practice
<p><b>1. Summary of the impact</b></p> <p>This case study refers to the work of Synne Behrndt and stems from publications on 'Dramaturgy' and her practice as a dramaturg. The impact of Behrndt's practice and research is threefold: firstly it has raised awareness of a little known area and professional role in theatre production. Secondly, it has empowered dramaturgs in their work by providing emerging and professional dramaturgs with a language to describe and articulate their work, role and relationship to collaborators. Above all the publications have articulated the nature of their job and the skills and qualities that dramaturgs bring to a creative process. Thirdly, Behrndt's research has made a difference to professional theatre companies by introducing new dramaturgical approaches and models of critical dissemination to their process. Her collaboration with theatre directors has impacted on their companies' working practices, and has led to dramaturgy and the dramaturg becoming a fully integral part of their creative process and dissemination.</p> <p><b>2. Underpinning research</b></p> <p>Behrndt's research combines her professional practice as a dramaturg with publications on dramaturgy and the practice of dramaturgs, a profession that was at the time of her first publications still relatively unexplored within UK and (some) European contexts. In her work as a dramaturg she seeks to embed conceptual and research-based reflection in the practical process, in order to enhance the creative and critical potential of the performance. Behrndt's research is therefore driven by an interest in transferring knowledge between different contexts (the academy and professional theatre making): thus dramaturgical practice can be understood as a bridge between reflection and practice.</p> <p>Her book <i>Dramaturgy and Performance</i> (2008) (Ref 1) and the co-edited journal 'New Dramaturgies' (<i>Contemporary Theatre Review</i> 20:2 2010) (Ref 2 &amp;3) were published together with Dr Cathy Turner. The aim of <i>Dramaturgy and Performance</i> was to further an understanding of dramaturgy through a historical and analytical perspective whilst also highlighting the dramaturg as a creative and valuable role within theatre production. While the book introduced discussion of case studies that documented professional dramaturgs' work, the authors also acknowledged the importance of distinguishing between dramaturgy and the dramaturg arguing that a conflation of the two would limit an understanding of dramaturgy itself. The argument follows that dramaturgy exists even without the presence of the dramaturg.</p> <p>While dramaturgy is traditionally linked to theatre and drama, the book also made a case for a <i>flexible</i> and <i>expanded</i> application of the term and practice. Dramaturgy was posited as a flexible, open and slippery term that can be used differently depending on the context and field of study; for example, the book highlighted dramaturgy's application to other disciplines such as sociology and architecture.</p> <p>In a guest-edited volume of <i>Contemporary Theatre Review</i> these ideas were developed with a focus on expanding the application of the term. Behrndt's own article discussed how dramaturgy's introduction into dance studies has invited a re-examination of the implication of dramaturgy, thus arguing that dramaturgy signifies a <i>process of interpretation</i> and not a rigid method. The article also examined the reasons why dramaturgy and the dramaturg are often aligned with the presence of external authority and authoritative interpretation. This was done in order to challenge the view that the dramaturg would restrict and censor the artist in their creative endeavour (Ref 2&amp;3).</p> <p>Since 2003 Behrndt has worked with UK directors and devising companies (Ref 6). In this context she functions as a production dramaturg and participates in the project from its conception through to final production. Her role is to assist the director with research, and to translate theoretical concepts and research into creative performance material. In this role she transfers knowledge from the academic discourse to a practical art context. An integral part of her role in these</p>

## Impact case study (REF3b)

processes has been to produce, write and edit documentation. This documentation functions as a critical extension of the performance, providing a discursive context for the work and evidencing the research and dramaturgical discussions underpinning the performance, and it is made available to a wider audience through the company. (Ref 4&5).

### 3. References to the research

1. Behrndt, S. and Turner, C. (2008) *Dramaturgy and Performance*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.
2. Behrndt, S. (2010) 'Dance, Dramaturgy and dramaturgical thinking'. *Contemporary Theatre Review (Special Issue: New Dramaturgies)*, 20.2. pp. 185-196.
3. Editorial (Co-authored with Cathy Turner) 'New Dramaturgies' *CTR* 20.2 (2010)
4. Behrndt, S. (2011) Seven Portraits of Time and Change. In: Behrndt, S. and Harradine, D (eds.) *On Ageing: Reflections*. London and Winchester: A Fevered Sleep Publication made possible by the University of Winchester: pp. 10-21.
5. Behrndt, S. (2011) 'Shaping a Dramaturgy', in Behrndt, S. and Harradine, D. (eds.) *Invisible Things. Documentation from a Devising Process*. London and Winchester: Fevered Sleep and the University of Winchester.
6. Behrndt worked as dramaturg on the following projects:
  - Fevered Sleep/David Harradine. *An Infinite Line: Brighton*. The Basement, Brighton. 5-21 May 2008.
  - Fevered Sleep. *On Ageing*. Young Vic, London. 27 September – 9 October 2010.
  - Transport Theatre in collaboration with New Wolsey Theatre, Ipswich. *Invisible* Premier and Tour 13<sup>th</sup> October 2011 – 28th Jan 2012.

Fevered Sleep. *Above me the Wide Blue Sky*. Lancaster. Live at LICA: 22-23 February 2013.

Warwick Arts Centre, Coventry: 27 February-2 March 2013. Young Vic, London: 7-28 March 2013.

### 4. Details of the impact

Following the original English edition, which has sold over 2,300 copies, *Dramaturgy and Performance* has contributed to international debates about dramaturgy and the role of dramaturgs. Informal conversations with freelance dramaturgs and graduates who are developing careers as dramaturgs together with a statement by the dramaturg at Slovene National Opera Theatre (SDR) (Ref 6) suggest that the book has empowered and helped them assert a sense of professional identity and that it has enabled them to articulate their own contribution to the theatre production process. Dramaturgs' role within this process is rarely talked about and thus the role of dramaturgs can be somewhat invisible. This is certainly the case in UK theatre practice where the role is almost non-existent and rarely credited, though Behrndt's research is referred to on several web blogs (Ref 7).

While the book was intended for a UK and US readership, it has made a critical contribution to highlighting dramaturgical practice in other countries (Ref 1). DR commented that the translation of *Dramaturgy and Performance* into Slovenian was 'a gift' for 'theatre practice in this small country', and goes on to call the book 'an important step forward in the theory and practice which unites our visions of the professions' future and an important tool of communication between professional dramaturges, theatre researchers and performing art in general' (Ref 6).

Behrndt's research has offered ways of articulating dramaturgical processes beyond the so-called text-driven theatre. In a statement curator and artistic director of 'Prague Quadrennial' (PQ) remarks that Behrndt's 'research is quite crucial for my work as a dramaturg and a curator. Her articles, presentations and of course *Dramaturgy and Performance* have been an important support in my own research and performance-making. First of all Behrndt's work combines practical and theoretical aspects of dramaturgy that is often not text-based and thus hard to define and write about.' Lotker concludes that 'the work has been highly inspiring but more than anything helpful in defining what I'm actually doing' (Ref 5). In 2012 Behrndt was invited to co-convene PQ's practitioner Platform at Prague's Archa Theatre, focussing on highlighting dramaturgy's role in devising and experimental theatre. This event facilitated exchange between artists and dramaturgs from all over the world (Ref 5).

A key theme in the impact of Behrndt's research is *knowledge transfer* and combining

## Impact case study (REF3b)

academic reflection with practical know-how. The book's publication has led to invitations to speak at events to mixed delegations of international artists, practitioners, dramaturgs and academics (Ref 2). However, it has also helped underpin a project that explores new models of creative producing at the Basement, Brighton. In his invitation to contribute to the venue's international project on dramaturgical mentoring of emerging artists (2012 and onwards) director of Development at the Basement in Brighton describes the collaboration as an 'exciting opportunity to link up this practical, professional research with academic research in the same area' (Group Ref 2).

Behrndt's impact as a dramaturg is noted through her collaboration with professional theatre companies that hitherto did not work with dramaturgs. The Artistic Directors for Fevered Sleep (FS) and Transport Theatre (TT) both emphasise the critical knowledge transfer aspect of Behrndt's role. FS remarks that Behrndt 'played a central role in the conceptualisation, development and creation' of their work and that she had been 'instrumental in the development of a dramaturgical framework for these projects, which allowed the work to emerge through this mesh of research'. TT acknowledges the importance of the knowledge transfer remarking that Behrndt brought a 'wealth of expertise and knowledge to the rehearsal room which had a profound influence on the formation of the piece'. TT explains that the dramaturg helped facilitate 'objectivity and as a practitioner to forge new ground (...)' (Ref 4).

This knowledge transfer has enabled the directors to be conceptually ambitious and to consider new ways of approaching structure, content as well as the documentation of their work. The documentation that Behrndt has produced with FS has enabled the company to reflect upon their work and to disseminate their work to a wider audience and promote their work internationally. (Ref8&9).

Behrndt's integration of dramaturgical practice and reflection into professional theatre practice has made a difference to the way in which the companies approach their work and has meant a positive engagement with a critical and questioning audience perspective. FS remarks that Behrndt's involvement with the company's work 'has made it possible for the company to be more ambitious in terms of scale and complexity of its projects. It is beyond question that Synne's involvement has had an impact on the reach and success of the company's work' (Ref 3). 'Synne exposed me to new perspectives which enable me to develop as a practitioner' (Ref 4).

### 5. Sources to corroborate the impact (indicative maximum of 10 references)

#### 5. References to corroborate the contribution, impact or benefit (Normally maximum of 10 references)

1. The translation rights have been sold to Egypt for the Arabic translation. The Slovenian translation entitled 'Dramaturgija in Predstava' was published in 2011. Parts of the book has been translated into Polish and was published in the Polish journal 'Notatnik Teatralny' (Zawód: DRAMATURG), 58-59/2010, trans. Artur Zapalowski, pp.132-147.
2. **A grouped reference.** Invitations as speaker as direct result of publication of *Dramaturgy and Performance*.
  - i. 13/11/2008: Invited speaker at event 'The Witness as Dramaturg', organised by Amo&HancockKellyLive. Produced by Dance4 (UK) in association with Critical Path (AUS), held at Toynbee Studios, London, funded by Dance4/ArtsAdmin.
  - ii. 15-17/10/2010: Invited speaker to International Event 'Dramaturgy – between the Reality and Vision: Role of Dramaturgy', organised by Slovene Centre ITI in association with Maribor Theatre Festival, funded by Slovene Centre ITI, Ljubljana, Slovenia and Winchester University.
  - iii. 18-22/04/2012: Co-convenor for Symposium 'Devised Dramaturgy: Shared Space', held at Archa Theatre, Prague. Organised by Prague Quadrennial of Performance Design and Space in association with Prague Academy of Performing Arts, DAMU, HAMU a.o (Czech Republic). By invitation from Artistic Director of Prague Quadrennial of Performance Design and Space.
  - iv. Email from Tim Harrison from the Basement venue in Brighton to help facilitate public event to discuss dramaturgical processes for their Arts Council Funded project on

## Impact case study (REF3b)

'Creative Producing and Dramaturgical processes'. (05.04.2012 email)

3. Artistic Director, Fevered Sleep – Statement 2013 **(FS)**
4. Director, Transport Theatre – Statement 2013 **(TT)**
5. Artistic director, Prague Quadrennial, Czech Republic - Statement 2013 **(PQ)**
6. Dramaturg, Slovene National Opera Theatre, Slovenia – Statement 2013 **(SDR)**
7. **A grouped reference (web blogs):** <http://woyzeck.blogs.lincoln.ac.uk/2011/02/13/dramaturgy-performances-and-promenade-theatre/>;  
[http://www.academia.edu/932530/Methods for a New Dramaturgy of Digital Performance;](http://www.academia.edu/932530/Methods_for_a_New_Dramaturgy_of_Digital_Performance;)  
<http://exeuntmagazine.com/features/we-need-someone-who-can/>;  
<http://resonance.hexagram.ca/witchcraft/year3.php>; <http://sarma.be/docs/2872>;  
[http://www.jewish-theatre.com/visitor/article\\_display.aspx?articleID=2838](http://www.jewish-theatre.com/visitor/article_display.aspx?articleID=2838);  
[http://www.researchgate.net/post/Can anyone recommmend research on magic realism in theatre and dramaturgical research](http://www.researchgate.net/post/Can_anyone_recommmend_research_on_magic_realism_in_theatre_and_dramaturgical_research); <http://blogs.ubc.ca/normanstanfield/music-matters/performativity/>;  
<http://whatisdramaturgy.blogspot.co.uk/>;[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Robin\\_Deacon](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Robin_Deacon);  
<http://desertdramaturgy.blogspot.co.uk/2011/01/cathy-turner-and-synne-k.html>;  
<http://www.dramaturgnet.dk/index.php?id=23>;  
<http://adramaturginjapan.wordpress.com/tag/general-dramaturgy/>;  
[http://www.criticailapok.hu/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=article&id=38054&catid=24](http://www.criticailapok.hu/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=38054&catid=24);  
<http://www.e-teatr.pl/pl/artykuly/98705,druk.html>;
8. Harradine, D. & Behrndt, S.: *Invisible Things: Documentation from a Devising Process* (2011), published by Fevered Sleep & the University of Winchester. ISBN:978-0-9559082-1. Sold through booksellers and the company.
9. Harradine, D. & Behrndt, S (2012) *On Ageing: Reflections, Conversations, Research*, published by Fevered Sleep, with financial support from the University of Winchester.