



University of HUDDERSFIELD

University of Huddersfield Repository

Spatz, Ben

Citing musicality: Performance knowledge in the Gardzienice archive

Original Citation

Spatz, Ben (2013) Citing musicality: Performance knowledge in the Gardzienice archive. *Studies in Musical Theatre*, 7 (2). pp. 221-235. ISSN 17503159

This version is available at <http://eprints.hud.ac.uk/id/eprint/19732/>

The University Repository is a digital collection of the research output of the University, available on Open Access. Copyright and Moral Rights for the items on this site are retained by the individual author and/or other copyright owners. Users may access full items free of charge; copies of full text items generally can be reproduced, displayed or performed and given to third parties in any format or medium for personal research or study, educational or not-for-profit purposes without prior permission or charge, provided:

- The authors, title and full bibliographic details is credited in any copy;
- A hyperlink and/or URL is included for the original metadata page; and
- The content is not changed in any way.

For more information, including our policy and submission procedure, please contact the Repository Team at: E.mailbox@hud.ac.uk.

<http://eprints.hud.ac.uk/>

Citing musicality: Performance knowledge in the Gardzienice archive

Ben Spatz, City University of New York

Abstract

This article draws on previously published multimedia documents to explore the notion of musicality in the work of Włodzimierz Staniewski and the Gardzienice Centre for Theatre Practices. In addition to offering a close analysis of several documented moments – including performances, work demonstrations, expeditions and gatherings – it tests the ability of multimedia documentation to capture performance knowledge, arguing that the work of Gardzienice is a paradigmatic example of ‘practice as research’. Taking the archive as a crucial dimension of the dissemination of knowledge, the article uses multimedia citation to examine the specific contributions of Gardzienice in the context of musicality as a relation between the theatrical and the musical. The article demonstrates that the stability of the archive allows for a detailed explication of performance knowledge in a way that is not possible from live performance alone.

Keywords

musicality

rhythm

documentation

practice as research

Staniewski

Gardzienice

Prologue

Five knocks, and a small crowd of peasants rushes onstage through the big doors, yelling and ringing bells, their eyes wide, their expressions grotesque. ‘We!’ they shout together. A man in a dark coat removes his hat and continues the introduction: ‘We, the members of Plato’s family, know only that which is solemn, joyful, holy, sublime, heavenly...’. He continues speaking rapidly of lofty things until an old woman, cupping her ear as if hard of hearing, shouts back: ‘What?’ The man repeats himself. This time the old woman repeats his words, appending her own comment: ‘Aha!’ As if in response, another man stands and brays like a donkey: ‘Hee-haw! Hee-haw!’ The final vowel of this outburst is taken up by the entire group, which transforms it into a melodic ‘Amen’, complete with extended melisma and choral harmony. Just as the song fully blossoms, another woman blurts out an exclamation: ‘I immediately cry!’ Melody and rhythm are stopped in their tracks, the man in the dark coat begins his speech again, and the entire cycle repeats – four times in all.

Figure 1: Plato’s family at the beginning of *Metamorfozy* (Gardzienice Centre for Theatre Practices 2006). This excerpt is from Gardzienice (2004), with added subtitles.

The company is Gardzienice. The man in the dark coat is Mariusz Gołaj; the old woman Ania Dąbrowska; the donkey Tomasz Rodowicz; the tearful lady Elżbieta Rojek. The man who knocked on the door to summon the group into the space is Włodzimierz

Staniewski, founder and director of Gardzienice since the late 1970s. The performance is *Metamorfozy*, a ‘theatrical essay’ loosely based on Apuleius. Lasting only a few seconds, this extraordinary sequence enacts a complete summary of the birth of music from speech: from spoken text into semi-musical exclamation – then a rhythmic, onomatopoeic cry – and finally into full-fledged song – then back again to speech. Linking sacred and profane, theatrical and musical, Greek and Polish histories, this moment – which begins the performance – contains and concatenates a wealth of knowledge, experience and composition. How to read its depths? How to articulate its value? How to place it in the context of other performances, other companies, and other experiments within and beyond theatre itself?

Performance knowledge and the multimedia archive

I witnessed that fragment of *Metamorfozy* many times during my eight-month apprenticeship to Gardzienice in 2003 and 2004, sometimes from the audience and sometimes onstage as a member of the ensemble. However, to refresh my memory, analyse details, and check the translation from Polish to English, I had recourse to a CD-ROM recently produced by the company, which was given to me during one of their visits to New York City (Gardzienice Centre for Theatre Practices 2006).¹ The disc includes several various work demonstrations and slide shows, as well as excerpts from performances, including a well-edited version of *Metamorfozy* produced for Polish television (Gardzienice Centre for Theatre Practices 2004), with subtitles in English to allow for international reception. These multimedia documents augment my living memory and provide a more stable reference point from which to discuss Gardzienice’s

work. Unlike the countless live performances of *Metamorfozy* presented around the world since 1997, the television adaptation can be cited and discussed by a larger community, which can return to consult it as often as necessary. Hewing closely to the stage version – except for one sequence, towards the end, which combines indoor and outdoor settings through cinematic montage – the video excerpts of *Metamorfozy* enable a kind of analytical rigour that is inaccessible in live performance.

Documentation is a crucial issue in contemporary discussions of performance and performance knowledge. As Adam J. Ledger et al. observe, ‘Few other research topics in theatre and performance have attracted such sustained discussion as that of documentation and its uses’ (2011: 162). Ledger et al. trace the issue of documentation back through Brecht’s *Modellbücher* to the very ‘pictures on urns’ that Gardzienice has used to reconstruct ancient Greek movement and gesture. Yet contemporary audio and video recording technologies capture movement and song in a way that no painting or papyrus fragment ever could. Indeed, the explosion of such technologies during the twentieth century is one of the major contexts for contemporary theatrical performance. It is against this background that interest in actor training as a dynamic and diverse area of embodied knowledge has emerged. While live theatre and performance have often been contrasted with film and video, current discourse on the epistemology of performance increasingly relies on recording technology as evidence for the knowledge content and research outcomes of such practices. Thus, for example, ‘university degree requirements or governmental systems for validating research activity have made documentation a key issue in practice as research’ (Ledger et al. 2011: 162).

I want to examine the existing multimedia archive of Gardzienice's work from this perspective, asking whether and how audio-video documents like the one mentioned above can be understood as outcomes of a multi-decade research project undertaken by Staniewski and his colleagues. In approaching Gardzienice's work from this angle, I do not mean to dismiss the importance of live presentation and teaching as the basis of the company's work since the 1970s. Instead, I want to add another dimension to our understanding of how a theatre company may produce socially and culturally valuable work. In addition to live performances and workshops, Gardzienice's work has given rise to a multimedia archive that is now quite substantial. What can we learn from this archive that we might not learn from any number of attendances at Gardzienice's performances or participation in their workshops? What purpose can the multimedia archive serve that live encounter does not? What could 'practice as research' in UK and US academia learn by taking Gardzienice as an example of sustained and innovative research in performance? What can Gardzienice's work and documentation teach us about what Robin Nelson calls 'the problem of knowledge' (2009: 113)?

As of this writing, YouTube's statistics indicate that over 72 hours of video are uploaded to its database every minute, with over four billion hours of video watched each month.² Audio-video documentation related specifically to embodied practice and performance is growing as well, though perhaps not in such staggering proportions. The publisher Routledge has been responsible for some of the most interesting developments in this field, of which Staniewski and Alison Hodge's *Hidden Territories: The Theatre of Gardzienice* (2004) – written with Alison Hodge and bundled for sale with a CD-ROM produced by Peter Hulton and Arts Archives – is one of the earliest examples. More

recent examples of the book-and-disc format include Phillip Zarrilli's *Psychophysical Acting* (2009) and Giuliano Campo and Zygmunt Molik's *Zygmunt Molik's Voice and Body Work* (2010). An even newer model for the multimedia archive is the online database, as in the Routledge Performance Archive (2012) or Odin Teatret's digital *Odin Story* (2012). The research projects documented in these publications are longer-term and larger in scope than those associated with academic practice as research. In my view, they provide a crucial historical and epistemological context against which smaller projects, such as those discussed by Ledger et al., should be understood.³

The key feature of documentation, as opposed to live performance, is its stability for purposes of citation. This allows for an engagement that is not limited by the constraints of time or space. As Ledger et al. note, after a close reading of one video fragment from Zarrilli's *Psychophysical Acting* (2009), 'viewing research practice comparatively in this way is clearly impossible in the situation of live performance' (2011: 171). While there is undoubtedly much that recording technology cannot capture from a live event, multimedia documents also make possible types of analysis that live performance does not: in particular, detailed comparison across history, geography, and cultural context. For this reason, Hulton, who produced the discs for both Staniewski's *Hidden Territories* (2004) and Zarrilli's *Psychophysical Acting* (2009) – as well as many others contained in Exeter's Arts Archives – has strongly criticized the commonplace idea that performance is 'defined by disappearance'. He writes: 'We need a portrait of presence, not a discourse of disappearance... Archives and documentations are not defined by their attempt to rescue things from oblivion, but are provocations rendered a-new into present reality each

time someone encounters them' (Zarrilli 2009: 341). I would argue further that the archive provides crucial insight into performance as a knowledge-based practice. The existing multimedia documentation of Gardzienice's work could be a useful starting point for imagining the future of the scholarly multimedia archive. What would a critical edition of Gardzienice's archive look like? How might one select, annotate and make available these materials with an eye towards future reference? How could the citation of multimedia documents expand our understanding of Gardzienice's work, highlighting what is unique to them while also making useful comparisons with other practices? I will begin to answer these questions through reference to the *Hidden Territories* (2004) CD-ROM. This is a published work, easily available for purchase from Routledge, and therefore constitutes part of the scholarly archive as much as any printed book or journal article. Although it contains neither the most recent nor the highest quality documentation of Gardzienice's work, it is the most easily available. For the purposes of this article, it is important that any reader can easily obtain the excerpts I cite and examine them to confirm or trouble my analysis. The possibility of returning to a cited source is a fundamental dimension of rigour in the production of scholarly knowledge. In what follows, I attempt to articulate some of Gardzienice's knowledge as contained in its multimedia archive, thereby offering a possible model for practice as research outcomes on a larger scale.

Citing musicality

What is special or interesting about Gardzienice's work? How does their approach differ from that of other song-based theatres? What is 'musicality' for Staniewski? What is the knowledge content of the performances created by Gardzienice and how does this relate to their practices of actor training, or to their history of expeditions and gatherings, as described by Paul Allain in *Gardzienice: Polish Theatre in Transition* (1997)? I use the word 'technique' to denote the epistemic content of practice, the transmissible knowledge that makes repetition, composition and performance possible. While a full explication of technique in this sense is beyond the scope of this article, it can be understood without too much difficulty as that which travels from one moment of practice to another, across time and space and between bodies.⁴ As Allain notes in his important study, the articulation of technique is closely tied to the demands of pedagogy. As Gardzienice began to offer workshops to students and theatre artists around the world, and to integrate actors from other countries into their ever-changing ensemble, the individual capacities of performers like Rodowicz and Gołaj were not enough: 'Ways of moving, acrobatic techniques and the resources used for finding energy in moments of exhaustion had to be clearly transmittable to others. They could not belong solely to a private, inaccessible world' (Allain 1997: 66). I call this the articulation of practice in terms of transmissible knowledge or 'technique'.

If Gardzienice's work is capable of 'radically refreshing our image of musical theatre' (Kolankiewicz cited in Allain 1997: 79), this can only be as a result of those aspects of its work that are potentially transmissible. There will never be another Staniewski, another Gołaj, or another *Metamorfozy*. What interests me here, however, is the transmissible: that which constitutes knowledge in a rigorous sense, the research outcomes of years of

practical investigation. In particular, I want to examine the notion of ‘musicality’ that is so important to Staniewski. In so doing, I draw on my own experiences with Gardzienice, as Allain does in his book. But I also refer the reader to specific examples in the multimedia archive that illustrates the knowledge contained in Gardzienice’s work. By citing the *Hidden Territories* (2004) CD-ROM, I will be able to explore the notion of musicality at level of detail that would not be possible without such a concrete multimedia reference.

Staniewski defines musicality as follows:

Everything which sounds beyond the ‘edges’ of the codified system is musicality.

This is as valuable a source of inspiration for theatre work as music itself. [...]

This is because music represents a certain level of abstraction, whereas musicality can be immediately identified as something that sits inside of me, or something that I hear in real life. Musicality is me. Music, as with any abstract product, loses its relationship with its evoker, its author, and its source. (2004: 64)

In this passage, musicality refers to the complex play of sound as it unfolds in everyday life, including noise and irregularity. Staniewski’s comment may be compared with David Roesner’s recent definition of musicality as a ‘catalyst between theatre and music’ (2010: 294). Roesner describes the work of an actor who interprets a spoken text both psychologically and musically. Such actors, he writes, ‘enrich the mimetic performance with a poetic dimension’ (Roesner 2010: 296). Arguably, the mimetic dimension of theatre allows it to directly resemble ‘what I hear in real life’, where sounds carry forth

all the complexity of that which evokes or authors them. Music, on the other hand, is regularized or formalized, and in this sense abstracted from its source.

The fragment of *Metamorfozy* described above is a precise example and incarnation of musicality in this sense. Indeed, as I suggested, this short and highly crafted sequence of utterances can be read as a textbook illustration – hence the phrase ‘theatrical essay’ – of the passage from theatricality to musicality. Gołaj’s spoken text is purely ‘acted’ or ‘mimetic’, delivered in conversational rhythm, as one might ‘hear in real life’. Through a series of successive steps, this spoken rhythm gains rhythmic, melodic, and finally harmonic structure until it becomes song. The spectator, in Roesner’s terms, is compelled ‘to oscillate between a theatrical and musical perception’ (2010: 296) and to move with the performers from the register of mimetic storytelling – ‘We, the members of Plato’s family...’ – to that of choral song.

Roesner’s notion of musicality as an oscillation between theatre and music perfectly expresses Gardzienice’s work. While Roesner invokes an actor using musical and psychological principles simultaneous in the crafting of performed speech, Staniewski in *Hidden Territories* describes how a student might learn to move back and forth rapidly between the two: ‘The pupil sings a fragment of *Katolophyromai* and then immediately whispers to a partner, as if in the graveyard situation, and back again’ to the song (2004: 70). The song ‘*Katolophyromai*’, reconstructed from a papyrus fragment, is sung in ancient Greek on a ten-count rhythm. In this context, it represents the abstraction of music, while the act of whispering to a partner ‘as if’ in a graveyard is a typical example of narrative association: a ‘psychological’ or even ‘Stanislawskian’ approach to acting. The whisper breaks the song not only because it is a whisper – and hence cannot have

melody – but also because its rhythm will be dictated by the image or association of the graveyard. The student switches back and forth between a formal or abstract approach to rhythm and one that is grounded in the rhythms of everyday speech. Oscillating between song and image, the student learns to play and produce a productive tension between theatre and music in the realm of musicality.

Selections from the Gardzienice archive

I will now analyse several brief excerpts from the *Hidden Territories* (2004) CD-ROM, using the concept of musicality to draw out particular strands of performance knowledge or technique that undergird Gardzienice’s work and which, I believe, have the potential to be useful to other artists working in other contexts. I begin with two fragments from televised adaptations of their renowned performances *Awwakum* and *Carmina Burana*. I then examine two excerpts from demonstrations of training exercises. Finally, I consider documentary footage of one of Gardzienice’s rural expeditions, as discussed by Allain in Chapter 3 of his book. In this order, the excerpts move from the context of a formal theatrical event, through the distilled presentation of specialized actor training, to a context in which boundaries are blurred between aesthetics, cross-cultural performance, social interaction, and ethnography.

An actual staged performance is the most obvious context in which to search for the knowledge and expertise possessed by a company like Gardzienice. The opening moments of *Awwakum*, like those of *Metamorfozy*, involve an extraordinary layering of theatricality, musicality, and full-blown music (18:10-20:20).⁵ The televised version begins with nine piercing notes on a violin, followed by a choir singing ‘Alleluia’. The

first half of the word is harmonious, sung by multiple female voices. These are joined for the second half of the word not only by male voices but also by a metallic, regular, thumping sound that disturbs the harmony. Pause. The choir sings ‘Alleluia’ again, following the same structure. They are clumped around an upright pole, atop which a man is draped, with two figures close to him making iconographic gestures. A third ‘Alleluia’. The thumping grows louder, and the choir’s vocal quality grows harsher. Pause. Suddenly, five heavy footsteps are heard – two men walking together – and the sound of a door creaking loudly open in the same rhythm. The violin returns, this time sustained, playing Prokofiev. The two men speak rapidly above the violin, quoting the Polish poet Adam Mickiewicz. Pause. Voices and violin again, then the choir with another ‘Alleluia’. Pause. The percussion returns: it emanates from an Orthodox censer. One of the men continues speaking, more quietly now, until he is cut off by an abrasive whisper from the other.

Figure 2: The ensemble at the beginning of *Awwakum* (Staniewski and Hodge 2004).

The density of these few moments continues throughout the recording of *Awwakum*. It is worth noting in this context that sound has the power to alter space in a way that movement does not, because hearing is not directional as sight is. A group of people moving together, no matter how precise or forceful their gestures, is still experienced as occupying particular points in space. In order to see them, one has to look in their direction and open one’s eyes. The sounds produced throughout *Awwakum*, on the other hand – like music everywhere are not limited to one location even if they clearly come

from the bodies of the performers. One does not have to turn towards the sound or adjust one's ears in any way to be impacted by the sound, which literally surrounds one in the space. Sound is atmospheric: it changes space itself, rather than being located in space. Gardzienice makes every possible use of this fact, in turn crystallizing the atmosphere through regular rhythms and then just as quickly shattering those rhythms. In the excerpt just cited, every basic tool of musicality is used: melody and harmony, instrument and voice, tone and whisper, speech and song, regularity and irregularity, cacophony and silence, shifts in vocal colour, etc.

Vocal colour is an important aspect of musicality that appears throughout Gardzienice's *oeuvre*.⁶ On a basic level, particular songs or traditions may be associated with certain vocal qualities, which may be no less essential to their cultural meaning than the more conventionally recognized dimensions of rhythm and melody. More complexly, the resonance of the voice can be altered within a song or even within a single note. A simple but powerful example of sophisticated work on the musicality of vocal colour is found in the televised version of Gardzienice's *Carmina Burana*, at the end of the song 'Floret silva nobilis', sung by Anna Zubrzycka (37:03-38:23). At first a solo, the song is gradually filled out by the chorus. However, the soloist initially sings with a vocal resonance that is completely different from the others, so that her melodic line remains separate and distinct. The melodies are concurrent, but they produce little harmonic resonance (complex sound waves vibrating and interfering with each other in space). Only during the last note of the song does the Zubrzycka change her vocal quality so as to blend with that of the chorus and allow a more resonant and vibratory harmony to

appear. Her face and throat visibly relax as she shifts from a hardened and slightly nasal quality to one that is more open.

Figure 3: Anna Zubrzycka with another performer in *Carmina Burana* (Staniewski and Hodge 2004).

This delay is certainly not an error, as it might be in the context of a musical concert. Rather, it seems calculated to create a dramatic shift from the isolation of the soloist to the power of the harmonious ensemble. That rich harmony is immediately broken once again by a non-musical cry, only to return a few seconds later as the ensemble takes up a Georgian liturgical song that is particularly rich in harmonies.⁷ Roesner observes:

In contrast to music, where any choir aims to sound as homogeneous as possible, letting the individual voice hide in the overall collective sound, the theatrical chorus provides an interesting paradox: on the one hand it gives the impression of a collective, sometimes even a uniform mass and on the other hand features the individual at the same time by consciously exposing the small deviations within the uniformity. (2010: 300)

This short excerpt from Gardzienice's *Carmina Burana* shows how virtuosic skill in orchestrating and performing 'small deviations within the uniformity' of a choral song can evoke narrative and emotional associations through complex and layered musicality. It is also worth noting that vocal resonance is far less amenable to notation than melody

and rhythm. The multimedia document captures here what a written score could not. Through this new kind of archive, an important dimension of performance knowledge becomes newly available to epistemological processes across time and space.

Another important element of musicality, the interplay between regular and irregular rhythms, can appear in physical as well as vocal work. Above, I have pointed out how the irregular rhythm of speech may be contrasted with regular rhythms created by footsteps, other percussive sounds, or songs. Grzegorz Podbieglowski and Joanna Wichowska illustrate a physical equivalent of such musicality in their ‘Mutuality Composition’, a demonstration of training exercises that can be understood as a concrete research outcome of Gardzienice’s practice (55:38-58:20). What makes the demonstration unique is not the various jumps, lifts, and weight-sharing acrobatics performed by the two actors, but the work on rhythm that underlies them. The sounds produced by the footsteps of Podbieglowski and Wichowska combine with sharp, intentionally audible breaths to continually set up and then break regular rhythms of varying tempos. The rhythmic sensibility demonstrated by the two performers is not that of folk dance, with its ceaseless regularity, nor is it the linear build-up and climax of gymnastic sports. Instead, Podbieglowski and Wichowska use percussive sounds to communicate nonverbally – not about which actions they will perform but about the rhythm in which they will perform them. As Staniewski writes: ‘All the time the body is in motion, neither slow or fast but reflecting the rhythm of the breath’ (2004: 87). What might easily be thought of as ‘physical training’ is here also training in rhythm.

Figure 4: Grzegorz Bodbieglowski and Joanna Wichowska, ‘Mutuality Composition’
(Staniewski and Hodge 2004).

In another video excerpt of training, Rodowicz – along with company members Dorota Porowska, Joanna Holcgreber and Marcin Mrowca – works with a group of students on a sequence of harmonies from the Ukrainian song ‘Oj Borowaja’ (50:45-52:27). In the latter part of this brief segment, we see how each voice in the song has been linked to a specific movement pattern. Though perhaps simple from a choreographic perspective, these movements are richly linked to the song in such a way that the performers do not have to separate the physiological processes of voice and movement. Rather than combining separate ‘tracks’, the experienced Gardzienice performers demonstrate a thorough integration of gesture, dance and song. In an age where film and television musicals use dubbing and lip-syncing to enable the complete detachment of auditory and visual performance, followed by their technological reassembly via edited montage, Gardzienice demonstrates a radically different approach: one that is firmly grounded in the unity of the body and the relationship between sound and source that Staniewski calls musicality. At one moment, Holcgreber reveals a particularly striking embodied integration of song and movement, leaping back and forth from one foot to another within the rhythm of the song (51:48-51:56). The students here are not being asked to accomplish a song and a separate dance simultaneously. Rather, the movement of the outer, visible body is seen as a key to more deeply activating the inner, singing body – and vice versa.

Figure 5: Joanna Holcgreber and students in a choral exercise (Staniewski and Hodge 2004).

The *Hidden Territories* (2004) CD-ROM also includes documentary footage of Gardzienice during expeditions to eastern and southern Poland in the early 1990s (11:10-16:40). Is it possible to discern anything like ‘performance knowledge’ or ‘performance technique’ from these documentary fragments? How might we distinguish such knowledge from everyday social interaction, cross-cultural communication, or ethnographic encounter? First, we see the Gardzienice ensemble at an outdoor ritual event. A loaf of bread is broken by a man and woman in traditional ceremonial garb and shared with them. In return, they offer a brief song that culminates in rich harmonies. Next, we see the company at a ‘gathering’ or party in a small building, possibly someone’s home. Rodowicz is playing his flute; Gołaj is dancing; even Staniewski is dancing. Unless we can recognize them individually, it is hard to tell who is with the company and who is part of the local community. Finally, we see the ensemble at an Orthodox celebration at the holy mountain of Grabarka.

From such brief fragments, I am not sure we can draw much concrete understanding beyond what Allain and others have said about Gardzienice’s expeditions and gatherings. We can, however, catch a glimpse of the attitude with which the company undertook these projects. In the open smiles of Staniewski and Rodowicz after they sing in the first excerpt – or in Gołaj’s dancing with a woman he may or may not know – it is evident that they are enjoying themselves. At one point, Gołaj seems focused on learning the steps from his partner. These excerpts document the sense of exchange that motivated

Gardzienice's expeditions, and the fact that they did not hold themselves apart either as performers or as ethnographic investigators. It is also clear how their own musical performances allowed them to circumvent the conventional role of cultural tourist, by making and not merely witnessing cultural offerings. In *Hidden Territories*, Staniewski enumerates nine 'rules' of an expedition (2004: 44–45). With more filmed footage to watch, it might be possible to flesh out these rules and to see how they worked in specific situations. This could be helpful for anyone looking to organize expeditions or gatherings along similar lines today. Even if such knowledge is not 'performance knowledge' strictly speaking, it is undoubtedly a kind of embodied knowledge that relates to theatre and performance.

Figure 6: Włodzimierz Staniewski and Tomasz Rodowicz, on expedition in the Carpathian Mountains (Staniewski and Hodge 2004).

Lines of enquiry

Other excerpts could be chosen and other aspects of Gardzienice's richly specialized performance knowledge elucidated. In this way, the multimedia archive allows for a kind of comparative analysis that is different from – but no less rigorous than – that which derives from live encounters with performance and pedagogy. The excerpts of *Awwakum* and *Carmina Burana* cited above are a useful starting point for comparisons between Gardzienice's work and other forms of musical theatre, revealing much that would not be evident from a comparison of written texts or musical scores. The work demonstration of

Podbieglowski and Wichowska could be compared to any number of other training films, from those documenting aikido and Contact Improvisation to those of Grotowski's *Teatr Laboratorium*, Odin Teatret's training, or the work of Tadashi Suzuki. In the future it may also be possible to examine the multimedia documents of Gardzienice alongside those of companies influenced by their work, such as Teatr Zar, Teatr Piesn Kozla, Studium Teatralne, and Farm in the Cave. I have previously compared Gardzienice's work with that of Grotowski's Italian Workcenter (Spatz 2008b). How much more rigorous and substantive could such a comparison be if it were possible to examine multimedia documentation of both alongside one another? Rather than focusing on what multimedia recording fails to capture, we might do well to seriously consider its potential for historicizing and diversifying the comparative study of performance technique as knowledge. The multimedia document may not capture the essence of a live event, but it can make some kinds of embodied knowledge epistemologically available in unprecedented ways.

Gardzienice's work continues to change and develop. One excerpt from the *Hidden Territories* (2004) CD-ROM shows Elzbieta Rojek demonstrating a series of 'rhythmic gestures inspired by Greek vases' (58:25-1:00:17). In the more recent CD-ROM mentioned at the beginning of this article, the young performer Julia Bui Ngoc performs the same basic exercise.⁸ However, Bui Ngoc brings to this exercise a strong background in Asian martial arts, which is clearly visible in the addition of flowing, virtuosic transitions from one gesture to the next. The difference between the two excerpts says everything about what static images – like those on the Greek vases – are unable to tell us about ancient Greek dance. Like the papyrus fragments of ancient music, they are only

traces that record a few aspects of what was once a living practice. Videos like those cited here are necessarily selective as well. But if we are looking for performance knowledge, they can tell us far more and offer greater detail than any previous documentary technology. Bui Ngoc's work represents a new and unexpected flow of embodied knowledge into Gardzienice's work. The company's continuing research in modern reconstructions of ancient Greek materials is clearly evident in the differences between these two video excerpts.

Figure 7: Julia Bui Ngoc demonstrating a position found in ancient Greek vase paintings (Gardzienice Centre for Theatre Practices 2006).

The multimedia archive is not only useful for purposes of synchronic and diachronic comparison, although this is invaluable. It also provides a background against which new research projects can be framed. Current discussions of practice as research in academia sometimes lack historical context because they do not see the work of Stanislavski, Grotowski, Staniewski, and other pioneers of embodied performance technique as historical precedents forming an essential context for current research. As Hulton reminds us, multimedia documents are 'provocations rendered a-new into present reality each time someone encounters them'. This recognition allows us to ask a new set of forward-learning questions: What kinds of research projects might be designed, taking Gardzienice's archive as a starting point? Which aspects of Gardzienice's work suggest future lines of enquiry? What new avenues of embodied exploration could expand the understanding of musicality outlined above? How might Gardzienice's work on regular

and irregular rhythm be applied to other themes, texts and musical genres? How might expeditions be organized today along similar or related principles to the ones set forth by Staniewski?

Between 2004 and 2008, I organized several short ‘urban expeditions’, first in Wrocław and then in New York City, drawing on my experience and knowledge of Gardzienice’s work. There is much to say about the potential for urban expeditions along such lines. However, I want to end this article with a different anecdote. While I was in Gardzienice, I trained extensively in a gestural vocabulary based on Greek iconography. Developed by Joanna Holcgreber and Anna-Helena McLean, this reconstructed *cheironomia* was composed of precise gestures, each of which signified a specific word or name: a kind of sign language that could be used to ‘dance’ whole sentences.⁹ I performed these gesture-signs in the show *Elektra*, sometimes separately from the main chorus as a translator into English and German. Six years later, in 2010, I was working in New York City on a solo performance called *Rite of the Butcher*.¹⁰ As part of the movement work for this piece, I developed a kind of choreography based in evocative gestures of the arms, which I called ‘martial dance’ because of their force. I worked on this for over a year before I realized that my approach to gestural dance derived partly from my training in Gardzienice’s *cheironomia*.

In this way, performance technique can lie dormant in the body, bubbling up to the surface without conscious awareness. However, there were also significant differences between my gestural work in 2010 and that in which I had trained in Gardzienice in 2003. I had removed one kind of specificity and replaced it with another. In my current work, the gestures are fewer and their shape more improvisatory. Instead of

refining gesture-symbols, I work (for example) on expanding the gestures from very small to very large over a period of several minutes. This apparently simple idea comes from Maximilian Balduzzi, an Italian teacher and performer with whom I have worked for the past four years.¹¹ In my body, knowledge from Gardzienice mixes with other knowledge to produce new knowledge, new technique. The lines of enquiry do not end.

References

- Allain, Paul (1997), *Gardzienice: Polish Theatre in Transition*, London: Harwood Academic Publishers, Rpt. 2004, London and New York: Routledge.
- Campo, Giuliano and Molik, Zygmunt (2010), *Zygmunt Molik's Voice and Body Work: The Legacy of Jerzy Grotowski*, with DVD, London and New York: Routledge.
- Gardzienice Centre for Theatre Practices (2004), *Metamorfozy: Television Adaptation*, directed by Włodzimierz Staniewski, with musical compositions and arrangements by Maciej Rychły, Lublin: Telewizja Polska, Gardzienice Centre for Theatre Practices.
- ____ (2006), *Gardzienice: Practising the Humanities*, CD-ROM, created by Włodzimierz Staniewski, edited by Joanna Holcgreber and Maciej Znamierowski, Warsaw: Dialog and Instytut Teatralny.

- Hulton, Peter (2009), 'Book review of *Documentation, Disappearance and the Representation of Live Performance* by Matthew Reason', *Studies in Theatre & Performance*, 29:3, pp. 340–42.
- Ledger, Adam J., Ellis, Simon K. and Wright, Fiona (2011), 'The question of documentation: Creative strategies in performance research', in Baz Kershaw and Helen Nicholson (eds), *Research Methods in Theatre and Performance*, Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, pp. 162-85.
- Nelson, Robin (2009), 'Modes of practice-as-research knowledge and their place in the academy', in Ludivine Allegue, Simon Jones, Baz Kershaw and Angela Piccini (eds), *Practice-as-Research in Performance and Screen*, New York: Palgrave Macmillan, pp. 112-30.
- Odin Teatret (2012), '*Odin Story*', www.odinteatretarchives.com/odinstory. Accessed 22 December 2012.
- Roesner, David (2010), 'Musicality as a paradigm for the theatre: a kind of manifesto', *Studies in Musical Theatre*, 4:3, pp. 293–306.
- Routledge (2012), *Routledge Performance Archive*, www.routledgeperformancearchive.com. Accessed 22 December 2012.

Spatz, Ben (2008a), '*Iphigenia in Aulis* at La Mama: Microculture and musicality in the work of Gardzienice', *Slavic and Eastern European Performance*, 28:2, Spring, pp. 81–89.

____ (2008b), 'To open a person: Song and encounter at Gardzienice and the Workcenter', *Theatre Topics*, 18:2, September, pp. 205–22.

____ (2011), 'Ben Spatz. Movement Research @ the Judson Church. 2.21.2011', www.youtube.com/watch?v=wrW81-geLhg. Accessed 22 December 2012.

____ (2013), 'Technique, practice, research: Foundations for an epistemology of embodiment in physical culture, performing arts, and everyday life', PhD Thesis, New York City: City University of New York.

Staniewski, Włodzimierz and Hodge, Alison (2004), *Hidden Territories: The Theatre of Gardzienice*, with CD-ROM produced by Arts Archives, London and New York: Routledge.

Zarrilli, Phillip B. (2009), *Psychophysical Acting: An Intercultural Approach after Stanislavski*, with DVD-ROM created by Peter Hulton, London and New York: Routledge.

Contributor details

Ben Spatz holds a doctoral degree in Theatre from the City University of New York, where he currently teaches acting, theatre and performance technique. He worked with the Gardzienice Centre for Theatre Practices from 2003 to 2004, touring and performing in *Elektra* and *Metamorfozy* under the direction of Włodzimierz Staniewski. Ben's artistic work has been shown at venues including the Abrons Arts Center, Lincoln Center Rubenstein Atrium, Judson Church, United Solo Festival, and HERE Arts Center. His writing has been published in both academic and artistic journals.

www.urbanresearchtheater.com.

Contact:

262 Kingsland Avenue #3R, Brooklyn, NY 11222, USA

E-mail: bspatz@gc.cuny.edu

Notes

¹ The company was in New York City to present a newer piece, based on *Iphigenia in Aulis* by Euripides, at La Mama ETC – see Spatz (2008a).

² These figures are taken from www.youtube.com/t/press_statistics, accessed 24 December 12.

³ Ledger et al. discuss three recent practice-based Ph.D. dissertations from the United Kingdom and Australia.

⁴ A more complete theoretical and historical argument for technique as knowledge is the subject of my doctoral dissertation (Spatz 2013) and current book project.

⁵ All time code references in this section are to the *Hidden Territories* CD-ROM (Staniewski and Hodge 2004).

⁶ This was also a central, long-term interest of Jerzy Grotowski, from the ‘resonators’ of *Towards a Poor Theatre* to the Afro-Caribbean songs of the Workcenter of Jerzy Grotowski and Thomas Richards. See also Spatz (2008b).

⁷ The unaccredited song is ‘Tsmindao Ghmerto’, sung here without words.

⁸ The file is ‘pyrriche ostatnia i wykład’ in Gardzienice (2006), recorded in Greece in 2006. Through an accompanying slide presentation, Staniewski suggests that ancient Greek dance movements might have been informed by the fighting arts of the period.

⁹ For photos of the *cheironomia*, see Gardzienice (2004: 90–91). Joanna Holcgreber performs a fully choreographed sequence of the *cheironomia* in *Elektra*, in the file ‘przemienność ostatnia pl’ in Gardzienice (2006).

¹⁰ For an early version of this movement work, see Spatz (2011). This version does not involve the gradual shift from small to large described here, but similarities to and differences from Gardzienice’s *cheironomia* are evident. More photos and videos of *Rite of the Butcher* are available at urbanresearchtheater.com.

¹¹ Balduzzi’s physical training is the subject of another article I am currently developing, which contextualizes Balduzzi’s work within the archive of citable multimedia documentation and frames them as outcomes of ‘performance as research.’ Information about Balduzzi’s work is available at massimilianobalduzzi.com.