

PROCESS AND UNFOLD: THE CONDITIONS WE PRODUCE

Research Workshop
6th and 7th of February 2026
Tanzhaus NRW & FFT Düsseldorf

Friday, 6th of February

Tanzhaus NRW

2.00pm–2.45pm

**Leon Gabriel (Bochum) &
Balindile ka Ngcobo
(Bochum)**

Opening and Introduction

2.45pm–3.45pm

**Martine Dennewald
(Tio'tia:ke/Mooniyang/
Montréal)**

Decolonial Festival Practices –
Joys and Pitfalls

4.15pm–5.15pm

Mark Fleishman (Cape Town)

Immanent Actions: The Work
of Re-hearsing as Decolonial
Artistic Research

5.15pm–6.15pm

Ekaterina Trachsel (Gießen)

The Empty Studio is Never Empty
– Doing, Teaching and
Researching Rehearsal-Practices

Further Information

Program & Abstracts:
www.dramaturgies-afterlife.de

Contact:
dramaturgies-afterlife@rub.de

Saturday, 7th of February

Tanzhaus NRW

9.30am–10.00am

Morning Exchange

10.00am–10.45am

**Felipe dos Santos Boquimpani
(Bochum)**

Theatre's Decolonial Condition:
Liberal Cultural Policies and
Transnational Asymmetries
(PhD Project Presentation)

11.00am–12.30pm

Artistic Inputs

by Cultural Academy Tarabya,
Artists at Risk, and Irmeli Kokko

Part of
We Are At Work

1.00pm–2.00pm

Sandra Umatham (Wien)

Giving What You Don't Have: Some
Thoughts on the Contradictory
Conditions We Produce

2.00pm–2.30pm

Closing

Concept & Organization

Katharina Frölich, Leon Gabriel,
Paul Umut Kahla, Balindile ka Ngcobo,
Felipe dos Santos Boquimpani

Location

tanzhaus NRW
Erkrather Straße 30
40233 Düsseldorf

Registration

The workshop is open to the public.
Interested guests are more than
welcome, but kindly asked to register:
dramaturgies-afterlife@rub.de

251 R TAM R DRAMATURGIES
IN THE AFTERLIFE
OF VIOLENCE

Transnational Theater between
Global South and North



**tanzhaus
nrw**

[tw] Institut für Theaterwissenschaft
Ruhr-Universität Bochum

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Workshop "Process And Unfold: The Conditions We Produce"
6th & 7th of February 2026, Düsseldorf

In cooperation with Tanzhaus NRW and Forum Freies Theater Düsseldorf as well as the event "We Are At Work" (Fonds Darstellende Künste and Bündnis Internationaler Produktionshäuser).

Organized by the Emmy Noether Junior Research Group „Dramaturgies in the Afterlife of Violence: Transnational Theatre between Global South and North“ (www.dramaturgies-afterlife.de)

This workshop deals with the working methods being developed in the performing arts. It examines the encompassing procedurality of artistic creation that cannot be reduced to its products. But the workshop also analyses the function of the institutions that enable and empower art – and at the same time also limit and 'gatekeep' what is considered relevant, advanced, or even art at all.

Two terms stand at the centre of this investigation: 'process' and 'unfold'. These notions have in common that they are both not only active or passive. Indeed, artists, individuals or groups *process*– that is, they transform, interpret and navigate– ideas, materials and experiences, yet to deal with processes goes beyond mere intention. Rather, within artistic processes, something unfolds–in and with bodies, materials, and structures. And such an unfolding might be the central feature of what is called "performance as research" (Fleishman/Halligey 2025; Arlander/Barton/Dreyer-Lude/Spatz 2018; Haß/Lindholm 2020). As a core element of the hidden artistic work that cannot fully be understood if one only focuses on classical analysis of performances, rehearsals have received more and more attention, valuing their potentiality (McAuley 2009; Matzke 2014; Buchmann/Lafer/Ruhm 2016; Roselt/Trachsel 2024). Meanwhile, such processes are informed by shared social practices (Bishop 2012; Kraus 2018; Schuh 2019) that in turn are interwoven with techniques of power (Foucault 1976; Egert 2025).

Beyond a voluntaristic description of the artist's work as a (group of) genius unbound to histories and localities, the workshop addresses the infrastructural, institutional, technical, and discursive conditions that already anticipate the frameworks for artistic processes. We consider how curators and artists are currently striving to work through these conditions. What is the potential of artistic research for the transformation of art institutions and infrastructures in this regard? How can rehearsals and residencies be planned and strategically structured in this regard–particularly when it comes to transnational cooperation between Global South and North? Can best practices be identified here? How do these methods deal with the existing asymmetries between artists from underprivileged structures and European institutions? Therefore, the workshop also looks at those practices in

the arts that critically examine colonialism, extractivism, or other forms of exploitation and subjugation in their very own *modi operandi*.

From a German and European perspective, it might be about time to question the limits of the so-called 'Free Scene', developed decades ago against the hierarchy of traditional ensemble theatres. Whereas this hierarchy still exists today, the international 'Free Scene' of what is considered 'Contemporary Performance' has—for better or worse—itsself developed a framework of control that privileges process over product, small artistic cores and strong networks, as well as a performative kind of academicized knowledge generated relationally. This dispositive of the "networked theatre" (Aggermann/Siegmund 2020) started on the European and northern-transatlantic level, but has increasingly become globalized by incorporating artistic expression from the so-called Global South, such as from Africa, Latin America and Southeast Asia. Yet considering this increase of transnational cooperation, it makes sense to interrogate this process and its ability of transformation. How much transnational 'infiltration' and criticality does the 'Free Scene' actually allow?

As the current debates about the analysis of dispositives instead of mere performances and about the infrastructures of the (performing) arts lay open, cultural production is embedded into working conditions shared by other disciplines as well as its very own history. How much freedom do artists have in a broader cultural space where financing depends less on ticketing or communitarian embedment than directly on the rules of cultural (trans/inter)national policies, cultural management, and curatorship? What are the contradictions in the curating of disruptive aesthetics from the Global South, bringing them into European or North American cultural institutions, and how are these contradictions currently unfolding?

Considering that artistic freedom is legally anchored in modern institutions to function as a leverage for national democracy, the workshop reflects on the extent to which transnational critical practices can disrupt the global asymmetries inherited from colonial and imperial histories through which this very concept of art first came about. At the same time, it considers how the decolonial trend has in parts been captured by 'recognition of differences' as an imperative (cf. Kunst 2023): To self-merchandise already exploited bodies and their brutalized lives under identitarian self-representation. Against this background, the workshop asks whether and how ambiguous aesthetic strategies such as anonymity, catachresis, irony, and interpellation can be worked through the transnational network itself, rather than merely represented within it.

Ultimately, to examine the conditions of production is an at first seemingly simple, yet central question for artists and curators themselves: How do you work? Or, how can you *not* work? Why do you engage in a form of criticism particularly *in* and *with* art (and not, let's say: journalism or political activism)? What possibilities does this

offer, and where does it encounter contradictions in your work and production conditions?

Ultimately, the workshop investigates two fields: a) the procedurality of theatre and performance and b) the discursive authority of institutions. Together, both fields create a tension between the open experiment with materials on the one side and the framing of art via themes, focal points, definitions, or trends on the other.

Workshop with Martine Dennewald, Mark Fleishman, Ekaterina Trachsel and Sandra Umatham in collaboration with **Tanzhaus NRW and Forum Freies Theater Düsseldorf as well as the event "We Are At Work" (Fonds Darstellende Künste and Bündnis Internationaler Produktionshäuser).**

Organization: Katharina Frölich, Leon Gabriel, Paul Umut Kahla, Balindile ka Ngcobo, Felipe dos Santos Boquimpani

Further information: <https://dramaturgies-afterlife.de/event/third-research-workshop-process-and-unfold-the-conditions-we-produce-6th-and-7th-of-february-2026/>

The workshop is open to the public. Interested guests are more than welcome, but kindly asked to register: dramaturgies-afterlife@rub.de

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Contact to organizers:

Jr.-Prof. Dr. Leon Gabriel, leon.gabriel@rub.de

Balindile ka Ngcobo, M.A., balindile.ngcobo@rub.de

Felipe dos Santos Boquimpani, M.A., felipe.dossantosboquimpani@rub.de

Programme:

Friday, 6th February, tanzhaus nrw, studio 7 (Erkrather Str. 30, 40233 Düsseldorf)

13.45–14.30: Leon Gabriel & Balindile ka Ngcobo (Bochum) – Opening and Introduction

14.45–15.45: Martine Dennewald (Tio'tia:ke/Mooniyang/Montréal)– *Decolonial Festival Practices and Their Pitfalls*

[Coffee/Tea Break]

16.15–17.15: Mark Fleishman (Cape Town) – *Immanent Actions: The Work of Rehearsing as Decolonial Artistic Research*

17.15–18.15: Ekaterina Trachsel (Giessen) – *The Empty Studio is Never Empty – Doing, Teaching and Researching Rehearsal-Practices*

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Saturday, 7th February, tanzhaus nrw, studio 7

09.30 – 10.00: Morning exchange

10.00–10.45–: Felipe dos Santos Boquimpani (Bochum) – *Theatre's Decolonial Condition: Liberal Cultural Policies and Transnational Asymmetries*

[15 mins move-over within tanzhaus nrw to central stage]

11.00–12.30: Artistic Inputs – *Three international perspectives on artistic residences* by Cultural Academy Tarabya, Artists at Risk, and Irmeli Kokko (part of the event **"We Are At Work"**)

[Coffee/Tea Break, move-over within tanzhaus nrw back to studio 7]

13.00- 14.00: Sandra Umatham (Wien) – *Giving What You Don't Have: Some Thoughts on the Contradictory Conditions We Produce*

14.00 – 14.30: Closing session

[Lunch]

Martine Dennewald (Festival TransAmériques)
martine.dennewald@fta.ca

Decolonial Festival Practices – Joys and Pitfalls

Located on unceded Indigenous land in Tio'tia:ke/Mooniyang/Montréal, a highly diverse and multicultural city within the French-speaking enclave of Quebec, Festival TransAmériques (FTA) is an international performing arts festival dedicated to the most contemporary expressions of dance and theatre. Its curatorial choices, organisational processes and education/outreach projects are based on an ongoing examination of its place in a complex and evolving colonial matrix. What does it mean to present artistic work in a spirit of fairness while recognising the asymmetric relationships the Festival participates in? How can programming decisions contribute to a paradigm change that would take us from extractivist practices to reciprocity, hospitality and shared power? Which examples of solidarity practices in other performing arts festivals around the world can help us move forward?

Martine Dennewald, a programmer and festival maker, has worked in institutions with varying leadership models and systems of governance in Europe and North America, where she and her teams have explored change processes around anti-discrimination and decolonial practices that she hopes to continuously improve.

Mark Fleishman (University of Cape Town)
mark.fleishman@uct.ac.za

Immanent Actions: The Work of Re-hearsing as Decolonial Artistic Research

In this presentation I will explore the relationship between theatrical production and artistic research focusing on the rehearsal as a common element of both. I will begin by revisiting my earlier work on the difference and indifference of performance as research – concerned then with questions of evolution, scale, duration, repetition, difference and capture – now with a specific focus on immanence. I will then move on to engage the idea of a decolonial artistic research practice in conversation with Fanon, Kafka and Seloua Luste Boulbina, and with specific reference to my work with Magnet Theatre in the context of a post-apartheid South Africa.

Mark Fleishman is Professor of Theatre at the University of Cape Town. He is also a co-artistic director of Magnet Theatre, an independent theatre company established in 1987. He has created and directed many performance works for the company over the past 38 years and is involved in development projects in urban townships and rural communities using theatre as a tool for social justice and transformation. His articles have appeared in the South African Theatre Journal,

Contemporary Theatre Review and Theatre Research International as well as in numerous edited collections. He is editor of *Performing Migrancy and Mobility in Africa: Cape of Flows* (2015), co-editor of *Making/Doing/Thinking: Methods for Performance Research* (2024), and three recent special issues of the South African Theatre Journal, two on *Translation & Performance* (2019 & 2020) and one on *Reimagining a Classic: Reflections on Antigone (not quite/quiet)* (2023). Between 2019 and 2025 he was principal investigator on the project *Re-imagining Tragedy from Africa and the Global South* funded by the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation.

Felipe dos Santos Boquimpani (Ruhr-University Bochum)
felipe.dossantosboquimpani@rub.de

Theatre's Decolonial Condition: Liberal Cultural Policies and Transnational Asymmetries

In my contribution I suggest that the increasing relevance of the decolonial paradigm in the national and transnational theatre between Brazil and Europe is not only related to the political claims of postcolonial and postslavery (global) justice but conditioned to the social-economic development of the former Third World further into the Western liberal order. To support this thesis, I'll mention a series of works I am considering for my PhD thesis, focusing on the work of Idylla Silmarovi and her staging of CAÇADA (eng. HUNT). In the contrast between her own aesthetic program and the framing conditions of its coming onto stage, the silencing of the former becomes evident. On the one hand, while the aesthetic discourses value pieces produced upon the questions between the lived experiences of the very performing artists and the world they inhabit – struggles on territory, racial brutality, alternative environmental and spiritual knowledge – the professional specialization of programmers and curators safeguards specific terms of cultural representability in the networks of festivals and international theatre houses. On the other hand, the cultural policies that enables this functioning at the institutional level is sustained by the liberal cooperation between private sponsorships and State subsidies or tax incentives, without any of which the field becomes unviable. As this intertwinement between politics and economy complicates the decolonial program for delinking, calling rather for infiltration strategies, it also contemplates some distinct interests across the postcolonial asymmetries, while putting new pressures onto the cultural policies of the former metropole. If that is true, what could be the end of transnational decolonial theatre?

Felipe dos Santos Boquimpani (M.A.) is father, artist, and PhD candidate with research interest in representation theories ranging from epistemology to political theory, analysis of artistic processes and forms of work, decolonial strategies,

cultural ethno-anthropology, and forms of social memory. The main research question of his PhD project "Equivocations of Decolonial Theater" focuses on how aesthetic and epistemological anti-colonial strategies are specifically developed through transnational artistic processes. As an artist himself Felipe is a trained theater director, experienced light designer, and performer.

Ekaterina Trachsel (Justus-Liebig University Giessen)

ekaterina.trachsel@theater.uni.giessen.de

The Empty Studio is Never Empty – Doing, Teaching and Researching Rehearsal-Practices

During an artist talk held as part of the THEATERFORMEN 2025 festival's student campus, Florentina Holzinger described the empty studio as the most monstrous aspect of the rehearsal process for *A YEAR WITHOUT SUMMER*. I would like to propose the following hypothesis for discussion: What is really scary about the empty studio is that it can never truly be empty. All forms of artistic research and rehearsal (as well as the associated observation and research) are shaped by ideas (and sometimes ideologies) about the so-called "rehearsal process", "the process of artistic research", and "the work of artists" in the context of the performing arts. During the workshop, I will share notable moments from my professional experience in these three areas, with the aim of encouraging the group to engage in a productive discussion about this hypothesis. These areas are: 1. my own artistic practice as a theater maker with the VOLL:MILCH collective; 2. observation and descriptive work in rehearsal research; and 3. teaching practice and supervising students' artistic projects. Through these examples, I hope to stimulate a conversation about what (or who) "haunts" us when working and researching on and about rehearsal stages, and how we can engage with the impossibility of "emptiness" and "neutrality" in these working spaces in a productive, critical and reflective way.

Dr. Ekaterina Trachsel is a theater scholar and theater maker. Since October 2022, she has been a postdoctoral research assistant at the Institute for Applied Theater Studies at Justus-Liebig University Giessen. Trachsel studied at the University of Hildesheim, and she is a founding member of the theater collective VOLL:MILCH (vollmilch.me) and the interdisciplinary arts and media collective NOTA e.V. (verein.nota.space). Her research focuses on contemporary dramaturgies, the production and reception aesthetics of the process of de-montage in theater, institutional change and theatrical staging of monstrous bodies and orders. Her doctoral thesis "De-montage in contemporary theater" was published in 2023 (Georg Olms). She published the anthology "Üben üben" (Brill Fink, 2024) together with Jens Roselt, and the anthology "Staging Monstrous Bodies: Questioning

Normative Orders" (Routledge, 2025) together with Michael M. Chemers and Gerald Siegmund. As part of her current postdoctoral project, she is researching the "feminine" and/as the monstrous in performance, theater, and related arts.

Sandra Umathum (HZZ Berlin)
umathum@me.com

Giving What You Don't Have: Some Thoughts on the Contradictory Conditions We Produce

My contribution begins with what often precedes professional artistic work: education at art universities. These institutions are intended to support the development of individual artistic practices and distinctive artistic signatures, and thus to prepare students for a specific market. The Inter-University Center for Dance Berlin (HZZ) is regarded as one of the most important educational contexts for innovative forms of dance and choreography in Germany and Europe. Students come from all over the world; only a small number are from German-speaking countries. I held a professorship in theory and dramaturgy at HZZ for almost four years, and my reflections will be based on my practical experiences as a teacher in an environment in which Western and non-Western aesthetics, concepts of art, and criteria of evaluation and assessment meet—and often clash. How do students prepare for a market they simultaneously seek to criticize or resist? How does the market already shape their work while they are still students? And what does it mean, as German or West-European teachers or curators, to evaluate work that attempts to exceed or undermine one's own (Western) standards and criteria? My contribution seeks to highlight the contradictions that often arise on all sides—between good intentions on the one hand and entrenched habits or the demands of the universities and the market on the other.

Sandra Umathum is a theater scholar and dramaturge. She studied theater studies, English, Italian, and philosophy in Berlin and Vienna. In 2008, she received her doctorate with a dissertation on intersubjective experiences in exhibition art, entitled *Kunst als Aufführungserfahrung (Art as Performance Experience)*. From 2010 to 2012, she was a visiting professor of dramaturgy at the Felix Mendelssohn Bartholdy University of Music and Theater in Leipzig, and from 2013 to 2018, she was a professor of theater studies and dramaturgy at the Ernst Busch Academy of Dramatic Arts in Berlin. Her research focuses on the theory and practice of contemporary theater and performance; performance and disability; performance and/as documentation; and contemporary forms of dramaturgy.