

Transcript

ADN ReView (Vol 1) Critical Responses & Discussion

Presented by Asian Dramaturgs' Network

Organised by Centre 42

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[00:00:00]

Charlene Rajendran

Hello everyone and welcome to the Asian Dramaturgs' Network or ADN. My name is Charlene Rajendran and I'm one of the co-directors of ADN. I'm based in Singapore where I live and work. So good evening, good morning. Good afternoon, depending on where you're tuning in from. And thank you very much for joining us. We're really delighted to have you here on this online discussion to respond to ADN Re/View Volume One.

[00:00:33]

Charlene Rajendran

It's been a while since we've had an ADN event due to the changes that life in COVID-19 has wreaked on us. But we hope it won't be too long before we meet again, not just online but in person somehow.

[00:00:49]

Charlene Rajendran

I'm here to briefly introduce ADN to you before handing over to Corrie Tan, who's our moderator for today's discussion. And our three panellists Ness Roque, Nanako Nakajima and Peter Eckersall.

[00:01:03]

Charlene Rajendran

So what is ADN, or Asian Dramaturgs Network? Very briefly, it's a platform for gathering practitioners who are interested in dramaturgy, and the role of the dramaturg across the Asia Pacific region.

[00:01:17]

Charlene Rajendran

In 2016, our founding Director Lim How Ngean, who's currently based in Australia, collaboratively conceptualised this idea with Centre 42, which is our principal organising partner and held the inaugural

ADN symposium in May that year at 42 Waterloo Street venue in Singapore, which was at the time Centre 42's venue.

[00:01:43]

Charlene Rajendran

This was possible because of funding from Asia Centre, Japan Foundation, and the National Arts Council of Singapore. Since 2016, ADN has hosted seven other events: twice in Yokohama, once in Adelaide, Yogyakarta, and then back to Singapore in 2019. And we've had speakers and participants from very mixed contexts that not just mean different countries, but also people from established institutions and collectives, as well as freelancers and individuals, scholars, practitioners, researchers, performers, anyone interested in the terrain.

[00:02:23]

Charlene Rajendran

So ADN review is an e-publication that harnesses the insights, the stories, the perspectives and ideas that have emerged in these sessions or from these sessions. And we wanted to make them more available and more accessible, because we recognise that perhaps listening to a long recording online might not work for many people. And while we recognise the limitations of it only being in one language, which is English at the moment, nonetheless, we felt it was worth doing.

[00:02:52]

Charlene Rajendran

So with my co-editors, Daniel Teo, Chong Gua Khee and Dominic Nah, we've extracted some parts of the discussion that we think are most useful and relevant to ongoing discussions. And we hope that these will feed into other dialogues and raise new questions which need to be asked. We're pleased to say that Volume One has thus far been downloaded 290 times in 20 different locations worldwide. And we hope this will continue. We will be putting together two more volumes before the end of this year. And this has been made possible with support from the National Arts Council of Singapore.

[00:03:33]

Charlene Rajendran

So today's discussion is an opportunity to keep that dialogue moving and to update it as well perhaps because some of these ideas were hatched about five years ago, and may have changed since. The publication is not meant to be definitive, but generative or suggestive of ways to move the work and the discussions forward. So we really welcome your views during this discussion. And if you'd like to send us your thoughts, please do so on email as some of you may be listening to a recording of this and not able to listen to it live. So thank you very much for being here. And over to you, Corrie.

[00:04:15]

Corrie Tan

All right, thank you so much Charlene for giving us an overview of ADN so far. Really, thank you so much to everyone for joining us here today, this evening or morning, depending on where you are.

[00:04:27]

Corrie Tan

I'm Corrie, I will be very lightly and very gently facilitating this session. It's quite cosy. I think I see many familiar faces in the room. I'm really glad to see all of you again. And possibly, I might be enacting or summoning this dramaturgical figure in some way. They're accompanying the speakers or provoking them maybe. And I'm going to kind of introduce you to a structure that we're going to work through.

[00:04:53]

Corrie Tan

But first of all, I'm going to introduce our three speakers, all of whom are affiliated with ADN and have participated in its various symposiums, meetings and labs over the past five years.

[00:05:04]

Corrie Tan

So we have Nanako Nakajima. Hi, Nanako. She's a scholar and dance dramaturg, a visiting professor at the Free University of Berlin. Her dramaturgy work includes Mengfan Wang's piece with ageing dancers in 2019 and the Dance Archive Box Berlin in 2020. Nanako received the 2017 Special Commendation of Elliott Hayes award for Outstanding Achievement in Dramaturgy, from the literary managers and dramaturgs of the Americas. And she has been with ADN in 2016 at the very inaugural symposium that they held and also in Yokohama in 2017.

[00:05:41]

Corrie Tan

And then we have Ness Roque, who's an actor, dramaturg and educator from the Philippines. She was a core member of the Manila-based performance companies Sipat Lawin Ensemble, and she's part of projects artists community which is an interdisciplinary collective that integrates participatory art and research practices, community engagement and education and Ness is currently a grad student at the Tokyo University of the Arts during her graduate degree. She was also at ADN in 2017, and 2019.

[00:06:12]

Corrie Tan

And finally, we have Peter Eckersall. He teaches at the Graduate Centre, CUNY. He is the author and editor of many publications, so many I will just name a few, including Curating Dramaturgies, the Routledge Companion to Theatre and Politics and New Media Dramaturgy. He's also the co-founder and dramaturg of Not Yet It's Difficult, which is a group of artists in Australia who collaborate on the production of interdisciplinary projects. He was also at the inaugural 2016 symposium at ADN 2017 in Yokohama, so it's really nice to see a convergence of people who have worked with ADN across the past five years.

[00:06:50]

Corrie Tan

And finally, hi, everyone. I'm Corrie. I'm currently doing my PhD in Theatre Studies at the National University of Singapore and King's College London. In my other work, I'm a recovering theatre critic. I'm a facilitator, educator, and I'm a dramaturg for the long term performance project Tactility Studies with Gua Khee this year, and Bernice Lee in Singapore, and I'm very indebted to ADN, especially Charlene, Robin and How Ngean for throwing me into the deep end for dramaturgy and beginning my journey, so really glad to be here today.

[00:07:21]

Corrie Tan

So I'm just going to walk you through how our session will go today. So Peter, Ness and Nanako will each present on a specific topic, responding to ADN Re/View Volume One, and they'll speak for about 10 to 12 minutes each. So Peter will first go first to address our theme on mapping, Ness will explore on Asian, and Nanako will conclude on Inter/Intra.

[00:07:50]

Corrie Tan

And after that, there will be a quick conversation between myself and the speakers. We'll go for about 20 minutes, I may ask some questions, the speakers may ask each other some questions. And then we'll open up the session to the floor for everyone's questions and or other responses from the audience.

[00:08:10]

Corrie Tan

So you can feel free to type your question in the chat. If you prefer. If you really want to, we can also probably invite you to speak at certain points. And then after that, when we wrap we'll end with some exciting announcements by our hosts Centre 42. And that will be it for the night.

[00:08:24]

Corrie Tan

So we hope to wrap by maybe 10 o'clock at the very latest. But yes, I think I've spoken enough. So let's maybe begin with Peter.

[00:08:41]

Peter Eckersall

Thank you, everyone. And it's really lovely to see you all. Good morning from New York. It's a bit early here. So just trying to wake up a little bit. Thank you to the organisers for inviting me to participate in, you know, what is a wonderful ongoing event. I think ADN is one of the high points of the last decade of theatre and theatre theory, I think. And something that I think I'm very pleased to be a part of, but also something that I think is very generative, and producing some really exceptionally good work. So congratulations to all of you who have been involved.

[00:09:21]

Peter Eckersall

I've been asked to speak to mapping and I'm going to do a kind of PowerPoint here. And speak to this PowerPoint a little bit. What I want to talk about today is thoughts about mapping and dramaturgy. And I'm really trying to do two things in this short presentation.

[00:09:41]

Peter Eckersall

One is to bring some perspectives on mapping to the project and to the way that the issue of the magazine has been dramaturged or thought about in curatorial terms. But secondly, to think about how mapping itself is a really strong dramaturgical practice and has a long history in contemporary performance making.

[00:10:04]

Peter Eckersall

And in addressing that, I'm going to begin with some theoretical perspectives, move to some examples from the region, and then try and do a kind of very provisional and very early attempt at bringing some of the vectors in that we might think about if we were to map the formation of ADN.

[00:10:23]

Peter Eckersall

So firstly, I think we need to acknowledge the influence of Cathy Turner and Synne Behrndt work on Dramaturgy and Performance, that 2007 book. But here I'm actually referring to Kathy Slater's book from 2015 called Dramaturgy and Architecture, where she talks about the idea of spatialised dramaturgy. Those of you who know Kathy's work know that it deals a lot with performance in public spaces and site is a very important part of that work. And I think she gives us a kind of helpful introduction into thinking about the way in which mapping spaces is also something that relates to performance, and she uses the concept of architectonics in relation to that to bring a focus on the conceptualisation and production of space.

[00:11:18]

Peter Eckersall

We should also think about dramaturgy as a field. And here we'd be citing Hans-Thies Lehmann, and Elinor Fuchs as inspiration. The need to consider theatre as a three dimensional art form, where narratives are implicated in visual physical and spatial structures. So you can see the way in which we're beginning to address the concept of dramaturgy as a kind of mapping exercise and a kind of spatial exercise.

[00:11:45]

Peter Eckersall

A couple of other perspectives from Elinor Fuchs and Una Chaundhuri in 2002, and that remarkable text Land/Scape/Theater, in which terms landscape, territory, geography and map are introduced to the way that we can think about and theorise and also think, dramaturgically about making theatre.

[00:12:06]

Peter Eckersall

And of course, a lot of this work goes to Henri Lefebvre's work *The Production of Space*, a kind of sociological or dramaturgical recognition of the production of space as a sociological phenomenon, and a key work in bridging the use of dramaturgy in relation to the arts, with dramaturgy as a social formation, talking about the dramaturgy of events outside of theatre, such as political protests, or sporting events, for example.

[00:12:35]

Peter Eckersall

And then the final introduction, here is some language from Hans-Thies Lehmann's *Postdramatic Theatre*, where he talks about staging landscapes: beyond dramatic action ceremony, voices in space, landscape. And I think this keyword landscape is something that I want to bring forward in our discussion today. Because for me, it's a very helpful way in thinking about the kind of environment or the way we talk about a theatrical space, as a full space for a space that is full of these kinds of mapping possibilities. But also with the focus on landscape. It takes us immediately to environment and concerns about climate and the need to care for the planet. And so I think that there's a really valuable way of bringing some very important existential political questions into the discussion of mapping.

[00:13:32]

Peter Eckersall

So very rushed and very compressed, pointing to a couple of literary contexts or theoretical contexts for the discussion of mapping but in general, I think these texts are very well known to people who work in theatre studies or performance studies at least.

[00:13:50]

Peter Eckersall

And if you don't know, these are all key foundational texts in our field that have helped us think about how we get to a kind of mapping as a critical tool, but also as a dramaturgical tool.

[00:14:08]

Peter Eckersall

And I want to turn now to some maps of and in contemporary Japanese theatre and visual arts. And here, I'm trying to bring this question of mapping to a more regional connection.

[00:14:22]

Peter Eckersall

As those of you who know me know that I work a lot on contemporary Japanese theatre, my training was in Japanese studies. So these examples are from Japan. But these examples have a much wider application to the possibility of mapping in relation to dramaturgy and theatre in the region. And of course, in situating these maps, we can also look at maps in western contemporary visual arts that are common now.

[00:14:51]

Peter Eckersall

I've seen certain mapping exercises done in China, for example, in exhibitions there, and this is an exercise in trying to in some ways, join dots and put together different alternative ontologies for the production of work, acknowledging figures who might be left out otherwise left out as kind of more formal mapping processes or more hegemonic method mapping processes. And also, they draw attention to the circulation of subcultures, regional cultures, networks, and so on.

[00:15:24]

Peter Eckersall

So for me, the most important one in terms of my understanding of mapping in relation to the ADN production is Uchino Tadashi's Mapping/Zapping 'J' Theatre At The Moment, which was published in 2006 and then was republished in his book Crucible Bodies in 2009.

[00:15:49]

Peter Eckersall

In this essay, which attempts to map contemporary Japanese theatre along a number of different vectors — you probably can't see the detail there. But this is a very interesting attempt to create what Uchino-san calls a cognitive map of what is happening in Japan's theatre culture, at the present conceptualised in terms of four planes, the zone of activities, what he calls zones of activities and influence, each is discussed in terms of key events, influences, questions and form and these planes are the Seinen-dan school or the return to Shingeki - Shingeki is the Japanese way of describing the modern Western drama. Plane B is called the Little Theatre, which refers to small, so called underground or contemporary theatre groups. The plane C is contemporary dance and plane D is the return to Angura. And Angura is a word that comes from the English word underground, and refers to the kind of very avant garde or radical Japanese theatre from the 1960s.

[00:16:59]

Peter Eckersall

So, this is a kind of model of the dramaturgy, an analysis of a field of production, which I think is is very formative and informative of our current understanding of mapping to look back into the 60s and to the Angura period, this is a different kind of map produced by Theatre 68/70 - Black Tent that was published in their magazine Dojidai Engeki and also reproduced in David Goodman's production Concerned Theatre Japan.

[00:17:32]

Peter Eckersall

And this is a touring guide for a Japanese company, that artistic director of Satō Makoto, I think he's a person known to many of you. And it's a way of illustrating how a theatre company can imagine itself as a mobile travelling company with a tent on the back of two trucks. And, you know, this is kind of a map, but it's also a set of instructions for how to make your theatre reach a wider audience. And it's obviously about motion and mobility and, and so on.

[00:18:09]

Peter Eckersall

The final one here is not from theatre so much, but from the sort of intersection of theatre performance art and visual arts. And this is Akasegawa Genpei, Minari Nobuhiro and Matusda Testsuo. It's an image 'All Hell Breaks loose! Dada Kids Take Control' (Great battles of the world in Geijitsu) which is Geijitsu is a way of describing contemporary Japanese art from late 50s through to the 1980s perhaps, but very much focused on this very innovative and very formative period of Japanese art in the 1960s.

[00:18:47]

Peter Eckersall

And this is a map of all of the key players in well, not all of them, but a lot of the key players in that small, concentrated circle of artists and groups mainly in Tokyo, but also in other major cities and some regions.

[00:19:05]

Peter Eckersall

You can see many of the figures from the 1960s, they're sometimes capturing their very particular idiosyncratic kinds of work. And in the background, you see some of the cultural references and historical references, figures who are known to be certain politicians. You can see the image of the Diet - Japanese Parliament, which incited many protests in the 1960s in the background and so on. This is a very well known image, but I think it shows the kind of potential that we have for understanding these networks and these kinds of processes.

[00:19:44]

Peter Eckersall

So my final — sorry, one more — Also iconic is from Terayama Shūji and Kishida Rio's 1975 Production Knock, which was a well known immersive theatre project that took place over a weekend. For the price of the ticket, you were given a map. The map had a series of places that you would go to at various times during the weekend and see particular theatricalised activities, some of which were more drama based, some of which were more eccentricly dance-based or performance installation based.

[00:20:24]

Peter Eckersall

Some happened indoors, some happened outdoors, and most famously, was the scene that happened in a Japanese bathhouse where one entered a public bathhouse and only some of the people in the bathhouse were actually in the performance or attending the performance. There was a kind of classic mixing of performance in everyday life, which a lot of people have written about.

[00:20:50]

Peter Eckersall

So to that, if in the last two minutes I could think about and here this is very provisional, and perhaps very idiosyncratic, and maybe that's one thing to think about: maps are idiosyncratic. They're very personal. And this is certain, you know, bringing some things, some vectors to the map of ADN.

[00:21:15]

Peter Eckersall

Certainly, I think for me anyway, new dramaturgy is Marianne Van Kerkhoven's concept of a certain new kind of dramaturgical practice that emerged in the 1980s and 1990s in Europe. I'd already mentioned Cathy Turner and Synne Behrndt's *Dramaturgy and Performance* and the rise of dramaturgical theory. Those of us who are a little bit older would know that if we were working in theatre in the 1980s, there was very little discussion of a word like dramaturgy. Most of us really barely heard of the word.

[00:21:51]

Peter Eckersall

And I think we should acknowledge Lim How Ngean's PhD at the University of Singapore as a text that introduced some of the language and context for this topic to the Singapore landscape.

[00:22:05]

Peter Eckersall

I'd like to acknowledge *Dramaturgies, Australia*, which was a project that I worked on with Melanie Beddie and Paul Monaghan, where over a decade, we produced a series of ADN-like events to introduce the kind of vectors of dramaturgy to the Australian Theatre context, contemporary theatre in the region and the changes that have taken place around kind of new vision of contemporary performance.

[00:22:35]

Peter Eckersall

So moving from theatre to performance, and they're invoking a certain need for dramaturgy. Fuji Shintaro's dramaturgy project at Waseda University, I think, was crucial in bringing the whole gamut of voices around contemporary dramaturgical practice into the Japanese contexts.

[00:22:54]

Peter Eckersall

Institutions we've already mentioned, some of them Centre 42, Japan Foundation, TPAM, National Council of Arts in Singapore, sorry, National Arts Council in Singapore, and so on. The fact that a number of funding agents decided to make money available for these kinds of events is an interesting vector to think about, not only in terms of the the the gratefulness, we have further support, but why did they choose to fund these events when they did similar argument could be made for the Australia Council in the early 2000s.

[00:23:29]

Peter Eckersall

Then I think we've got questions around the genres and styles and the need to try and relate classical theatre's ritual with contemporary performance. The dissemination of this work by festivals is also a kind of mapping vector, and of course, the inclusion of contemporary dance.

[00:23:47]

Peter Eckersall

And finally, I just wanted to acknowledge the long term and deep roots of discussion around theory and practice in the Singaporean arts context, connected to by things like PSi Singapore 2004, but also the constant attention to the arts community and publications and debate about theory and practice that has been a feature of the Singaporean arts community for at least two decades.

[00:24:19]

Peter Eckersall

This is not something that we should take for granted. It's something that I think has been particularly important — the fact that it's been produced within that kind of hothouse of the Singapore environment. So there are just some initial thoughts. And thank you for your time. And I look forward to hearing the other speakers and the discussion.

[00:24:40]

Corrie Tan

Thank you very, very much, Peter, for that kind of opening invocation. I really appreciated that. You know, I think we often think of map or cartography, especially as a kind of authority to practice mapping the known and the unknown, or the stable.

[00:24:58]

Corrie Tan

And I really appreciated that you are also paying attention to maybe the para-historical, you know, things that, as you mentioned, don't come into the remit of hegemonies of mapmaking, but mapping affective relationships or affinities.

[00:25:14]

Corrie Tan

And I think a further question to think about is, you know, what goes unmarked or are left out of these maps? Or maybe are rendered illegible to even those who are looking like what goes in between? Or what are the desired paths, that the maps do not chart, like different shortcuts between people?

[00:25:34]

Corrie Tan

So I think it's also interesting to think about how if we think of Lefebvre in *The Production of Space*, that space is also a social construct, social space is a social product, and that we are building the world as we are mapping it. So it's quite interesting that one kind of informs the other in this endless loop. So thank you for that, that, that opening invocation.

[00:26:00]

Corrie Tan

And next, we'll have Ness, who I think will bring us to look at and maybe challenge "Asia".

[00:26:25]

Ness Roque

So hi, I'm Ness and I'm currently studying in Tokyo and living in Yokohama. And before coming to Japan, I lived in Manila, and in my hometown, in Pampanga. And so, I found it quite interesting how in the Philippines, Asian food mart or Asian groceries meant places where you could buy ingredients for Chinese, Japanese, or Korean cuisine. So it's primarily East Asia. And when I moved to Japan, Asian stores is where I would go to buy ingredients for Filipino cuisine. And that's also where I could buy Indonesian, Vietnamese, Indian, Thai ingredients. And so it feels funny to me how this switch is kind of flipped. And now that I am here in Japan, I think of myself as Asian, perhaps more than I used to.

[00:27:29]

Ness Roque

But to be honest, I don't really know what that actually means. And so of course, the question of Asia as a construct is huge and complex. And of course, this is also a question that we grapple with as we talk about Asia, and talk about Asia and Asian in the Asian Dramaturgs Network. So I thought perhaps I could apply some of the dramaturgical strategies that seem to be emerging within the conversations of ADN as captured in the zine. So I just wanted to take this as an exercise in dramaturgical thinking to see where it could lead us.

[00:28:14]

Ness Roque

So in the next few minutes, I will just show you my notes and I will take you with me as I briefly think through this idea of Asia and the Asian, using the dramaturgical strategies that I found in the zine, so it is in no way exhaustive as well so these are just some things that I I extracted.

[00:28:37]

Ness Roque

So some of the things that I noticed was that one of the dramaturgical strategies was thinking through translations. So well, as you could see in the cover as well, and as you can see in the cover as well, we think by translating the dramaturgy as well. So thinking through translations, I was thinking I was looking for translations of the word Asia, in different Asian languages. And funnily enough, they're all and most of them are just variations of Asia, Asya, Asha, Ἀσία. So while I was finding this out, I was like, that's quite funny. Asia is almost everywhere, in any language. And so I had to look through the etymology of Asia, of course. And then, of course, it comes from the Greek word for that as well. And so it used to refer to Eastern "what is east of Greece," and then it just meant as the western thinkers began to expand their idea of the world, they just started calling everything else beyond Asia, and then it kind of just stuck, right.

[00:30:11]

Ness Roque

So I probably knew this from high school, but forgot it. So anyway, this is something that I was going through. And then of course, while doing this, I am thinking through epistemologies, thinking through

this idea of Asia, evolving as a really, really old idea. And that has been evolving for so long. And of course, we are part of this narrative. So I'm not really sure where that strategy led me to.

[00:30:52]

Ness Roque

So I will just scroll to the next strategy that I did, which is what I noticed, was the strategy of thinking through mediation. So a lot of times in the zine, a lot of dramaturgs, were talking about how the role of the dramaturg is to translate the metaphor of dramaturg, as a bridge, to mediate different cultures, mediate different languages, different ways of working and different ways of thinking.

[00:31:29]

Ness Roque

And so when I was thinking of mediation, in terms of thinking through Asia, I kind of apply this through this idea of when we talk about Asia, we have to mediate so many structures and contexts, because for some people, when they talk about Asia, they are coming from a geographical or geological context of tectonic plates, and technical meanings of the land, that is Asia, the land and the islands that comprise Asia.

[00:32:19]

Ness Roque

For some, when we talk about Asia, it's about cultures. For some it's about identities. And so, we have to negotiate and mediate between Asia as philosophy, Asia in international relations, Asia in cultural studies, Asia in Asian studies, or Asia as methods, as they even call it and they feel like as dramaturgs who work within Asian contexts, when we work in performances, we actually have to be conscious that we are actually threading or mediating this these different lines.

[00:33:04]

Ness Roque

And so this goes to the next strategy that I noticed, which is thinking through doing so finally, of course, dramaturgs don't just work with texts only, or just with the pen and paper, they are in rehearsal rooms, they are in theatres or in streets, or anywhere, where a performance can happen, and so when I was thinking about dramaturgs and dramaturgy within the context of Asia, this is something that I found myself repeating.

[00:33:42]

Ness Roque

Like I wasn't sure if I could call myself like an Asian dramaturg, or what is an Asian dramaturgy but I felt like the safest phrase that I could come up with was like, "We are dramaturgs and these are dramaturgies" within the contexts of Asia. And so I feel like this word of "contexts" expands the idea of Asia in terms of our network of performance making. It includes the institutions that declare what Asia is - that fund, what Asia is, the network's - the friendships that we have within this region. So also the relations. So I was positive thinking through this, thinking through my practice, I guess that's what thinking through doing means.

[00:34:41]

Ness Roque

Also, another strategy that repeats in the zine is the dramaturgical strategy of listening. And I would just share some things that I've listened to, within the past month, that kind of offer perhaps different transnational ideas, or transnational solidarities. So for example, recently, I attended a talk by curator and writer Maria Pastor Roces, called "Post-pandemic Futures: Reclaiming Our Narrative: Inclusivity & Decolonization." So she was talking about how we could also look at Austronesian language speaking people, and the Austronesian language as a connecting point, or a common culture, or just a common history as well of this region.

[00:35:50]

Ness Roque

I was personally moved by this talk, she explains it better than I do, of course, but it's kind of like, I feel like, for the longest time, I felt like thinking of myself within Asia, in the Southeast Asian context, was quite important for me as a maker and as a dramaturg. But then, when I attended her talk, it kind of expanded it a little bit more, that I just realised that by thinking too much of Asia, and the Southeast Asian context, I kind of forgot to look at other possibilities of transnational solidarities and cultures. And so this was one offer from her. And then another thought that I attended was this thinking from Asia, "London, Asia, Art, Worlds" conference by the Paul Mellon Centre at Yale University, just last month, as well, and they talk about Asia as a coordinate. And I'm not really sure yet what this exactly means.

[00:36:56]

Ness Roque

But what I get from this discussion that they had was, or what I what I get from this, this phrase Asia subordinate is like, It also expands our understanding of Asia beyond the geographical point, but like, for example, acknowledging the diaspora, the Asian diasporic communities that don't fall into the geographic line of what is Asia today.

[00:37:30]

Ness Roque

So yeah, this was something that I am still kind of thinking about, and I wanted to share with everyone and this is how I kind of applied the theme. And like the things that I read from there, to think through the idea of Asia as well and the Asian, the Asian or Asians.

[00:37:57]

Ness Roque

And maybe I will just end my brief talk with the main question that I have after thinking through this, that's my final question "is what are our roles as dramaturgs in counter mapping?", so it also just like adding to that idea of dramaturgy as cartography, right? So, what are our goals as dramaturgs in counter-mapping in creating, imagining, post-colonial, decolonial, feminist, and queer presents and futures for/within Asian contexts, and then I just added Asian performance for performative contexts.

[00:38:50]

Ness Roque

So these are just like initial thoughts that I've had, as I was thinking through this question of Asia within the context of ADN. Yeah, so thank you so much. And I look forward to hearing your thoughts.

[00:39:04]

Corrie Tan

Thank you so much Ness, for this, it was really wonderful to see you bring us through your thinking process with you.

[00:39:12]

Corrie Tan

And actually, something that really struck me was kind of your practice of annotation, and annotating with or against the grain. And I often think of, I have a dear friend called Nurul Huda Rashid, who often looks at how Muslim women are represented in popular culture. And one of her practices is to annotate those kind of anthropological / ethnographic photographs that were taken of Malay women from this part of the world, and how they're posed for the for the violence of the camera, and act of kind of moving through these images and listening to these images as to annotate them, and make marks and bring a new texture to the image that was first presented to us, I really appreciate that you kind of walking us through kind of taken-for-granted maps, like the way we position, the geographic confines of Asia on a page and to really reflect on on how well we desire for Asia to be non monolithic. Maybe sometimes we just end up reifying, or making it a monolith, right. And I often ask myself, like whenever we ask "what is Asia?" I think about these inter-Asian debates. Do we end up reifying the concept? Or do we allow some measure of translatability to other parts of the world? So I think that's been the current debate in inter-Asia discussions also, that maybe sometimes overprivileged North and East Asia, over things like archipelago, Southeast Asia, or Austronesia. So I really appreciate you kind of disrupting that, that process for us. Thank you very much.

[00:40:51]

Corrie Tan

And finally, we have Nanako, who will look at "Inter" and "Intra."

[00:40:56]

Nanako Nakajima

Hi, I'm Nanako Nakajima. Can you hear me? Yes, I'm very happy to be here and thank you for inviting me. I'm very delighted to be here. And also thankful for all the members of the ADN. And I also enjoy reading E-Zines of ADN. So I'm very excited about how to present my comments on the part on "Inter". So I kind of combined it together with intra. So I have many quotes from E-Zines of ADN first, yes, so, my part about inter is titled as Navigating Liminality and Dramaturging the "Inter-." So, all the discussions are so interesting, but I quote only a few parts of the discussions and then this part is working on inter productions interdisciplinary, the intercultural and shades in between an applause it's

often like tricking into uncharted lands. So, this is already kind of difficult to get into. And I'm also in charge of intercultural Dance Project very often.

[00:42:14]

Nanako Nakajima

So I take some of the comments after into my own practice. So, the dramaturg Ken Takiguchi from Japan and also he was based in Singapore, Malaysia, and he introduces himself - his work - as a dramaturg is about finding and filling gaps. And also he says "In the rehearsal room of intercultural theatre, I think the translator will play a critical role to establish such a microcosm ... This kind of conceptualisations of the translator/dramaturg makes very good sense to me, because I started my involvement in theatre-making as a translator and gradually acquired the role of a dramaturg later, in a very organic way." So the role of translator is somehow very essential in dramaturgical work in his case, and also in my case, too.

[00:43:12]

Nanako Nakajima

And he also mentions that there's gaps between different generations. So after he did the research on the project, he discovered that the perspectives between the Japanese, and Malaysian, Singapore's are different. And so this gap is actually about intergenerational things. And I thought that it is also interesting that inter is not only intercultural, interdisciplinary, but also intergenerational. And that's because I'm also interested in age and ageing. So this is the kind of link to my interest.

[00:43:51]

Nanako Nakajima

So I go and move forward. Yes, so Ness, she just presented the talk. And then I also thought that that part of her speech was interesting to me. And she says, We cannot make a performance that asks the audience to be free and pray among themselves with the system of creating the work is not likewise. So a key point we have discovered is for everyone to have dual roles." I think her project in the Philippines and also in Korea, is to make an ideal government. And it's so much about the collective dramaturgy. And what they did is kind of to have dual roles, not only as a director, but also as a performer. And also she plays the role of dramaturg, but also as a performer. So that kind of mixing the roles in the project makes the situation more democratic, and more kind of not so much about power politics in. And I think that's most important to me.

[00:44:57]

Nanako Nakajima

And I think that part of Charlene's comments are also important and significant to me. And she says, "I want to propose that dramaturgs need to be good listeners, if not compulsive ones. That a large part of what dramaturgs do, particularly in interdisciplinary and intercultural work is skilled listening." So she says, a listening dramaturgy, and that's also listening was introduced by Ness in the previous presentation, and also Rustom Bharucha talked about listening too.

[00:45:34]

Nanako Nakajima

And what is also interesting to me is Charlene, also in other sections mentioned how to sit in the rehearsal studio, and not how to speak in a rehearsal studio. And I think this attitude of quiet listening and quiet sitting is very much connected, but still sitting and listening is not passive. It's more like a very active listening. And that's why I think she calls it a skilled listening. And listening is also political, what is missed, what is not missed. And it's actually the same as translation.

[00:46:08]

Nanako Nakajima

And then one more thing about Charlene's comments: "dramaturging the inter- then refers not just to what lies between betwixt and among, but is about being in the midst of different voices, languages, texts, entities." So actually, there are multiple voices in the project, and how to coordinate and design these different opinions and ideas and voices, to be in the same project is how I - how we work as a dramaturg in a project. And so, I take all these interesting comments to, in my case of dramaturgy.

[00:46:54]

Nanako Nakajima

So I go back to my own practice so that I can understand these comments further. And my work as a dance dramaturg. I'm interested in ageing. And I aim to theorise experiences of dramatising creations and presentation projects with ageing dancers across Asia and also in Germany. And so this is also a temporal thing, but also age is not only about age, but also ageing. So it's a process of getting older. And I organise different kinds of projects and also work as a dramaturg for some projects which are related to age and ageing.

[00:47:35]

Nanako Nakajima

In Kyoto in Japan, I organise the project of reconstructions of postmodern dance, even Rainer's piece "Trio, A" but together with different age artists. The performers and dancers are from their 20s to their 80s and their dance backgrounds are different. So it's not only a contemporary dance, but also Noh and Butoh and other backgrounds. And he is also involved as a Noh performer of Kita school in Kyoto and they dance together in that trio postmodern dance.

[00:48:13]

Nanako Nakajima

And in 2019, I just introduced the project with Mengfan Wang who is based in Beijing. And she has been working with the two retired revolutionary ballet dancers in China. And during the Cultural revolutions, they are very active as a classic ballet dancer, while Chinese ballet dancers, but now they are aged or they retire. And I mean, to come back to the stage is our project about age.

[00:48:48]

Nanako Nakajima

And I also have a research on my mum, this is the top page of my book. But this is the hand of Kazuo Ohno, who has danced for a long time until even 100 years old.

[00:49:04]

Nanako Nakajima

And my current ongoing project is with Pichet Klunchun, and will come January and then this project has been a kind of continuous project. And then they have developed a piece about Ramayana, together with four different dance masters in Asia. And so this is still in process and we are not ready for the premiere yet because of the pandemic. But they are masters of different age generations. And this is as much about the age and generation things not only master and students relationships.

[00:49:45]

Nanako Nakajima

So I take this first practical suggestion as input into the conceptualisations of the translator dramaturg into my own context as fluctuating identity politics, because it's also dramaturg's role as opposed to researchers. Dramaturgs offer creative ideas and practical theory for the future rather than a scholarly analysis using pre-existing theory and dramaturgs negotiate realities in the present time. We are not limited to recreating what happened in the past. So I think that's actually what's fascinating for dramaturgs because we are making the future, not only doing the analysis, analysing the piece.

[00:50:29]

Nanako Nakajima

And in my case, by moving across continents and learning the source and target cultures of my dramaturgical contributions, I aim to avoid a simple binary between native informant and local expert. Because I'm from a traditional Japanese background, I would be in a very difficult political position and I think that somehow moving around is the only way to blur the boundary.

[00:51:05]

Nanako Nakajima

And then listening dramaturgy and corrective dramaturgy if I may say that, and this is Charlene and Ness suggesting in the readings and I think it's as a dramaturgy of cultural and embodied histories. And this is also the happening in the performance study or the performance discourse, that the early discourse in performance studies have proclaimed that research on the Performing Arts in Asia should be theorised, whereas researchers based in Asia criticise Performance Studies scholar for their lack of interest in a specific culture histories, traditions and materials that vitalise and give meaning to the local context and historical details of performance. And then this tension is also yes, partly solved and partly still ongoing. But my aim is to legitimise the invocation of ageing in the realm of culture and history, thereby reconceptualising the historicalisation of dance culture, and the cultural relations of dance history. So that's my own interest and how I can do wrestling drama to do collaborative drama to get together with artists in the project.

[00:52:26]

Nanako Nakajima

So this idea was not actually not very original, but it's already said by Rustom Bharucha's book in 1993 Theatre And The World. He also gave a keynote speech at the ADN conference in Yogyakarta and he

also mentioned intracultural approach as opposed to intercultural. But in his case he calls some Euro-American theatre directors like Peter Brook, or Richard Schechner as interculturalists that they kind of yes, they dehistoricize Indian culture and to borrow other cultures to strengthen their own visions. That's what he wrote. And so, instead he proposes an intracultural possibility of exploring Indian culture.

[00:53:21]

Nanako Nakajima

And, yes, reflecting on that my intercultural and intergenerational approach in dance would be maybe the two points I mentioned. So, in dance, the intercultural approach allows me to establish myself somewhere between European dramaturgical tradition, and the Asian cultural tradition. So, performing arts categories are different, and constructions of dance are also diverse in each district. So I have to kind of refer to the European context. But at the same time, I come back to each dance tradition, what it means to be more, what the movement means, or what dance movement means.

[00:54:11]

Nanako Nakajima

So I find coming and going in between, and also as a travelling physically - now, it's more difficult, but I used to be travelling a lot - and as a travelling female dance dramaturg, my position is constantly changing between historical and cultural constellations, and especially in terms of age and gender. And I also realised that age plays a very important and also critical role in Asian culture. Well I don't know if I may call it as Asian, but some of the traditional Japanese theatre communities, and seniority system is actually that kind of director actor system. So I think Western says the big mother, big father play the role of directors, and in a way the seniors have a big power. And also it's related to gender.

[00:55:08]

Nanako Nakajima

So I, as a female dramaturg, get into that kind of art of theatre, or dance making. That means that could be a very critical moment. And I play with it, sometimes it's more difficult to work. But sometimes I play with this idea; my identities.

[00:55:30]

Nanako Nakajima

And then the last point that I want to make, is, instead of being a choreographer, in a modern sense, I position myself as a dance dramaturg, who will never become an author, but we share and negotiate what the future becomes. So I have no authorship, I have no copyright of the piece. And I think that people understand that but at the same time, the ideas of authorship are now very heavy ideas, and that is almost crushing. What art making is supposed to be, especially in European context, and now I think maybe the lease to be free from authorship is maybe the possibilities to be a dramaturg. And maybe that's something that we can get into as a dramaturgical thinking. And still, I'm still kind of thinking and, yes, it's an ongoing idea of my dramaturgy. But that's my reflection on the part of inter. Thank you.

[00:56:44]

Corrie Tan

Thank you so much. Nanako, wow. I'm still soaking all the same. The three presentations that people have just shared, I think, Nanako, what really struck me is a lot of the language that I feel that feels very familiar with feminist ethnography. When you talk about the native Informant or the expert, and moving between these sites, I think one of the big radicalities of what it means to be a feminist ethnographer is a standpoint theory that you write from where you are located, and from this deep personal experience with the community you're embedded within, and that there is a lot of mobility involved, that you work within the community. And then maybe you travel some distance away to reflect and to write and to digest, you know, what, what has taken place within the environment. And I think it's really profound to think about intergenerational mobility. And I would love to ask, I will probably ask a bit about that later.

[00:57:45]

Corrie Tan

But I think as a whole what strikes me about all three presentations, which I think really wove together in quite a lovely way is recurring ideas of moving between of mobility, different kinds of mobilities and off porosities that there are certain gaps or spaces, not necessarily get so many spaces that we inhabit very differently in each context. And that part of the mapping is also mapping what is constantly moving, or that is constantly mobile, which makes it very difficult. But I think also very exciting.

[00:58:28]

Corrie Tan

I was thinking about something fellow Performance Studies scholar Paul Ray was talking about when, when thinking about archipelago performance theory, where when we navigate an archipelago, each island or group of islands appears different depending on one's position. And that navigating involves a continuous reorienting in relation to multiple changing directions, speeds and positions. And it really feels like this is what the three presentations have been doing, like a reckoning with all these different mobilities.

[00:59:03]

Corrie Tan

So I'm just going to maybe start by asking each presenter a question to maybe kick us off. And then after that, feel free to ask each other questions. I feel like all your work really resonated with each other. And at this point because we have a little bit of time, I could also maybe invite the audience to start thinking about what you might want to ask, whether about what you shared, or what intersects with your practice. And again, you can type that in the chat. And I will kind of look through it and collect the questions as we go along.

[00:59:42]

Corrie Tan

But maybe we'll start with a question for Peter. And I've been thinking a lot about mapping in this new digital terrain during the pandemic. And - Peter is grinning! And I had two main questions. I think one is

that the speed like I mentioned that this terrain changes so quickly, and then how does mapping then not become quickly obsolete? You know, are we always trying to map what is already gone? Maybe we'll start with that. And maybe taking on from Paul's question, how does mapping account for those whose mobility might not be so smooth, or might not be able to easily move or travel? Yeah, Peter, any first responses?

[01:00:37]

Peter Eckersall

Thank you. Firstly, I think responding to these questions is incredibly difficult, because we're all still in the middle of something, and I don't know where the ends of it will be. And I think that we should, and there will be many ends, the ends are already multiple. And people experienced the pandemic very differently in different places. And so it's hard to make a set of comments that apply evenly in different places. But one thing, and it's a very prosaic thing is that many people report that their understanding of mapping becomes much smaller in the sense that mostly people who are in lockdown walk the neighbourhood, you know, in a kind of almost pre-modern way. So in a city like New York, where we're constantly running around, suddenly we're forced to negotiate a very, very local area, and perhaps even negotiated in ways that we didn't do in the past, like discover places that are open that you can, as necessary that you can buy the food that you need, or also, in a sense, the the kind of sensory immersion of the city stops in a way that makes you much more attentive to very small things. So I think one aspect of this is the smallness of mapping the possibility for very local kinds of almost psycho-geographies to unfold.

[01:02:23]

Peter Eckersall

The second thing is the global nature of this and I'm very unsure of the revolution of zoom. It enables us, for example, to have this discussion that we're having now across so many times in places, but it does so in a very flattened way. Technically, what's happening is that all of our presences are being reduced in a technical way in order to make the kind of bandwidth so there's a kind of, I mean, this this factor of the loss of bandwidth, I think, is something we need to think about. More critically than we have done in the past. And also, you know, Nanako was pointing to the importance of generations. And in my teaching, I've had quite a few conversations with students where we have a totally different reaction to this kind of space where I'm posing questions that graduate students just don't see as a problem. So I acknowledge the fact that there are different relationships to the technology itself.

[01:03:36]

Peter Eckersall

And, more generally, I think we need to think about the space time of the pandemic, which, although it's experienced very differently across geopolitical and economic and class, race, gender lines. It's also made for a certain kind of flatness in space and time that I think is actually quite difficult to think about, because I've often quipped that it's the perfect neoliberal economy in a way because it flattens everything and reduces everything to, to a certain kind of myth of sameness. So we've all got the same space on our square here, but our lives are very different. And that's not brought to the foreground in this kind of digital mapping that we're doing. So although it creates possibilities for conversations, and

certainly a lot of my colleague, Frank Hentschker has been doing. He runs the Segal Centre at the Graduate Centre and produces public programming on performing arts and during the pandemic he produced a huge amount of talks with artists from all around the world about theatre in the time of corona. And he concluded last week with a 24 hour marathon, which was done in partnership with a group of theatre makers and scholars in India. And they literally performed the discourse In The Time of Corona for 24 hours, and they went all around the world, there were people from every — I mean, pretty much the only place that didn't have a voice from was Antarctica — so you know, that's something that's only possible at this time. But at the same time, I think there are other things that we need to bring into the conversation and think about as well.

[01:05:36]

Corrie Tan

Thank you so much, Peter. Yeah, paying attention to the hyperlocal, but also, the flatness of the space. I think next I'd like to turn to Ness. And I think a lot about how you were also maybe in a different kind of mobility, where you've been in Japan for some time now, even in the Philippines is so close, and yet so far the same time. And I was wondering, in this location, dislocation how, what have your - if we think about something like Asia's method that you brought up, which was written by the Taiwanese Cultural Studies scholar, Chen Kuan-Hsing, and he thinks through how we can start building a network of taking each other as reference points, or a critical syncretism is how he puts it, that we pay attention to each other and to our neighbours and build these kinds of relationships of inter-referencing. And I'm curious about whether your vocabulary across languages, even how they've expanded during this time, or shrunk or if there are new additions to how you make sense of this kind of inter-referencing.

[01:07:01]

Ness Roque

Yeah, thank you so much. Yeah, it's been really a strange time for me, because when I left Manila, I kind of anticipated that I would be disconnected from the local scene happening there. But that didn't happen. So I actually found myself working in productions back home taking part in projects in the Philippines, based in the Philippines, and so really especially during the time of lockdown also in in Japan, like my idea of space was really worked because I just arrived - I felt like I just arrived and I haven't really explored around my actual area. And I was spending so much time online and my friends and my family were spending so much time online. So I kind of had this weird relationship with space.

[01:08:17]

Ness Roque

And also now thinking through this referencing within the region. So actually, this is a big question that I have because I'm like the dramaturgs nightmare. I'm directing a piece, I'm co-directing a piece for the Tokyo festival. So they invited me to co-direct a piece inviting performers across Asia through an open call. And so we received a lot of applications from Asia. And we're still going to devise the piece in September and then perform it in October, we don't know if it's going to be a physical performance in Tokyo if they can get their visas and they can come in or if it's going to be an online performance. But yeah, so I'm also thinking, I'm just really thinking through this, like, for example, even through the open call, we really tried our best to disseminate this open point. We're looking for performers from Asia, all

across Asia, but we just got responses from easy areas that were near Japan. Right. So this kind of already limits the kind of inter-Asia that I can interact with, in this project. So I hope that as I go through this project, making this performance leading up to October, I will have more thoughts and answers to these questions.

[01:10:03]

Corrie Tan

Yeah, I think it really strikes me that these kinds of collaborations become also like what Peter said, very hyper translocal, that you're connecting from very, very specific points and very specific context. Thank you so much Ness. And then finally, I see there are already kinds of comments and responses coming in. But maybe one final question for Nanako. I think you mentioned the kind of intergenerational work that you do. And you alluded to this a little bit. I'm so curious and thinking about hierarchies of seniority. And it really feels like there's a bit of this intergenerational mobility, that you almost have to travel between age groups, as well, not just travelling between sites. And I was wondering how you might as this travelling dramaturg also navigate the challenges or the hierarchies of age seniority? Like how is that navigator in a rehearsal space for you in the work that you've done?

[01:11:13]

Nanako Nakajima

Thank you, that's difficult questions, and also the ongoing tasks of managing in a Japanese context. Yes, I think it's more about the timing, and conversations and info like how much we see or how I think the way of communication may be not only through a certain age group, but also through the group, who tends to be very quiet. And so like, I kind of have already asked some kind of not assignment or somehow request already so that they don't feel that they are under represented also. So somehow, before we really meet each other, not designed but just like, I asked them beforehand, so that in a way that this assignment or this request makes them feel much better, to be together in the same space.

[01:12:23]

Nanako Nakajima

And I think that maybe I'm still struggling to do this. And, sometimes it could be too much. And it could be more organic, it may be like the things are much more like going to be in a group dynamics and organic way. But then at the same time, there are some considerations that I have to be prepared for. How much I talk, how much I ask. Probably nothing.

[01:12:59]

Corrie Tan

Yeah, I think this really kind of speaks back to what you mentioned of Charlene's work in that kind of active listening or sensing a place and knowing when might be a time to interject and then when to have restraint and that can really depend on the feeling in the room, which I think must be extraordinarily difficult online also, just thinking about the many online rehearsals that many people in this room as I've had to try to listen between screens or between mediation Ness was talking about, and maybe people can also share about that experience later.

[01:13:34]

Corrie Tan

Thank you so much for the quick responses. There are some responses from How Ngean. Thanks, How Ngean. So he says, one thought that strikes me is that as much as there is focus on mapping, re: the big picture, he is now drawn to notions of positionality. Locating one's dramaturgical practice, pinpointing what we do where we are as individual dramaturgs, and artists, and all three of our very illustrious speakers tonight. Yeah, all of you highlighted this in different ways in your presentation, so looking at claims, or nodes, or coordinates or positions. I think Nanako has spoken a little bit about how she cites herself as a dramaturg, and her moving proximity. But maybe to change this into a bit of a question. I'm curious about how maybe, maybe not, we can talk a little bit more about that. And also Peter and Ness, I'm curious what this locating and the specificity might not like in your own practice, as dramaturgs whether in whether they're reflecting on it now, or how that has evolved. Over the time, we've been practising as dramaturgs.

[01:14:59]

Nanako Nakajima

When I was working in Germany, or outside of my countries, some of the projects are connected to the cultural traditions or cultural identities, and then in a way that I have to be a native informant or I have to translate my own cultures to the people who are not familiar with the, with my own cultures. And that's also the translators will probably have cultural translations and negotiations happening all the time saying my dramaturgical work, but when I come back to my own location, so kind of local communities, I don't have to do that at some point.

[01:15:36]

Nanako Nakajima

But at the same time, like in the Japanese performing arts, each community is independent, so the traditions are not shared with the contemporary theatre artists. So sometimes I need to do kind of similar work, but it's not really native informant, but more like an expert or not expert, but still some kind of translating information is necessary. And this is, I think, this is not only about the inter continental intercultural, but also intercultural or intra, intra, how do you say, disciplinary or intra community? Can I say? So, I think it also depends on countries-to-countries and probably different countries have different cultural constellations. And Japan has a very specific structure of performing arts. So, I think that maybe that may be different in other contexts.

[01:16:39]

Corrie Tan

Thank you so much. Peter, Ness. Any thoughts or responses to Nanako?

[01:16:47]

Peter Eckersall

Yes. The answer is always yes and no to the dramaturgy, I think it is always about a very specific and local context. That always takes us to a very particular set of questions and a very particular set of situations. But we also work on a variety of projects that take us into very different arrangements.

[01:17:14]

Peter Eckersall

So the two projects that I've worked on recently, and the one that involves a Korean traditional musician, and a Japanese New York based performance maker-slash-visual artist, and that involves collaboration around music projection. And some classical texts from the Korean and Japanese poetic traditions are around the theme of emotions. And so it's more of a kind of visual performance piece with a music score. But obviously there's a really interesting set of complicated negotiations that take place in that working process and my role is very much somebody who mediates in a way between I'm working as an outside eye to as perhaps somebody also who is a more experienced theatre maker. And then the other people as well to bring a kind of theatrical structural item to that work. The participants have a very strong sense of what they want to do. But the question is how to do it. And so my role can be quite technical there and quite structural.

[01:18:30]

Peter Eckersall

But a very, very different project that I worked on is a series of filmic essays with the visual artist Alexis Destoop, which are based around the changing ecological, geopolitical space of the Arctic Circle, and particularly on the border of Finland and Russia. And there I'm working with somebody who has a long history, a really exceptionally strong visual artist and somebody who goes to communities and makes stories out of collecting sources of stories from those communities. And that was an interesting project for me because I initially came on board because he was thinking of using his competences as actors. And I was just simply going to come on in and kind of direct the actors to non-professional artists.

[01:19:24]

Peter Eckersall

But in fact, we ended up writing a whole kind of textual score for the piece. And so the work in a sense, became more traditionally dramaturgical, but that challenge for me was to think much in terms of a very geopolitical and historical situation, but also in relation to the primacy of visual culture. And the fact that the medium of this work was an extraordinarily powerful visual arts work. So that took me out of my experience as a dramaturg. And, and I was less in the kind of negotiation of intercultural or intercultural, and much more into negotiation between forms.

[01:20:09]

Corrie Tan

Thanks, Peter. Nessa, do you have anything you wanted to add to it? I realised we're getting on time. So I wanted to open it up to the floor after this response, if anyone else has any questions or comments, but yes Ness, go ahead.

[01:20:21]

Ness Roque

Yeah, maybe just, I can actually resonate with what Peter said, when I think of my position as a dramaturg. I don't really think of where I am, like my location. But more recently, I've been thinking of my position as mediator or translator between different mediums or different disciplines. Maybe because of my background, where I started as an actor, and then I studied literature. And then after that, I became a teacher. And then I worked in communities, I worked with scientists, I worked with different sorts of people. And then now in grad school, because the university I am in is heavily focused on visual arts, even though my own research is still in performance. And so I also get exposed to visual arts theories. And so I kind of move between these different languages and different ways of meaning making. And so this is why I feel like, especially when working in contemporary performance work, or like, just projects like community-based projects, I'm always kind of translating between these different aesthetics or meaning-making processes and languages between the collaborators and audiences. So that's how I kind of positioned myself recently.

[01:21:59]

Corrie Tan

Thank you very much. It feels like there's a lot of shape shifting that comes with dramaturgy. And I really do think that in thinking about mediating in the inter that a lot of being an intermediary really is part of the interface of being a dramaturg.

[01:22:16]

Corrie Tan

So I'm curious if any of our audience here - ADN friends, other practitioners, if you have any questions for our three panellists to respond to anything you wanted to bring up about what's been discussed, and you can either chat or you can unmute yourself and also speak directly that's easier for you. Anyone?

[01:22:45]

Corrie Tan

Okay, I'm actually really curious to follow up on what Nanako brought up on authorship. I think there's a thread we haven't quite unravelled yet. And I'm very curious what Peter Ness think about this notion of removing oneself from authorship of a work, I think very much in literature, we think of singular authorship, but I think now there are much more pivots or transitions to collaborative authorship, authorship, so I'm very curious what Peter and Ness might think about that.

[01:23:22]

Ness Roque

Yeah, I really resonated. I wrote a huge "authorship" on my paper. Because this release from authorship is something that I want to happen. Like, when I mentioned that, I feel like directing is like a dramaturg's nightmare. Because it really does, I feel so uncomfortable being in the room and like having this like position stamped upon me. Especially in a devising setting. And I don't know what else I wanted to say. But I just wanted to say that I resonated so much with - there's an emotional impact to that, that phrase that I immediately held on to when Nonaka said that.

[01:24:23]

Corrie Tan

Nanako go for it.

[01:24:28]

Nanako Nakajima

So what kind of role are you supposed to do when someone asks you to be a director? And I'm curious, because there are many things to do. But at the same time, there's something that they specifically want you to do, maybe can you explain? Thank you.

[01:24:49]

Ness Roque

So I think what's interesting also in this project is that I have a co-director, so they paired us. I am paired with a choreographer, whose background is actually in visual arts. So he's a sculptor. And then he started using his own body as a sculpture. And so that's how he started doing dance. And so his vocabulary also is not really from dance or theatre, but from visual arts. And then together, we were kind of given a grant to produce work. So that's basically that's it.

[01:25:32]

Ness Roque

But I guess because I'm working with a co-director, then I also have to negotiate what the director means. And of course, my collaborator also has his own ideas of what this word means. And so I think, for me, the constant struggle is kind of reminding myself that I'm not just here to support him. But I'm actually here to be offering more strongly actually, I don't know if this is good - what do you guys do?

[01:26:10]

Ness Roque

But anyway, this is a problem, because sometimes I feel like I leave the rehearsal room, and I'm really happy. But then sometimes I think maybe I should have been more insistent a little bit. Like maybe I was prodding too much about what he thinks and not offering too much about what I think. But I don't know yet. So I'm really looking forward to the rehearsals when our collaborators will come in, because right now, it's just the two of us. And we just finished screening our final list of performers. So I hope that when there are more people in the room, maybe I will find out what being a director means for me in this project with more people in the room.

[01:27:00]

Corrie Tan

Thanks for sharing that Ness. I think Charlene has a response, but I wonder if she wanted to pose it yourself? Or you want me to read it - ah Charlene go for it.

[01:27:10]

Charlene Rajendran

No, yeah, just just to make the link between what is being said and this tension and this conflict with leadership and notions of leadership that are not just a top-down structure, but the work of sense-making is now entering the discourses of leadership and the dramaturg is one who has been doing this for a long time, or people doing dramaturgical thinking have been involved in sense-making, which is a much more horizontal way of working rather than a vertical way of working.

[01:27:46]

Charlene Rajendran

And of course, then the word authority and the absence of the author or authorship that places a certain kind of rigid expectation on how to work rather than a creative expectation. I mean, the author is also a creative being, like the author-creator, which is not so I suppose ... it doesn't then contradict so much of what I feel Ness is talking about, which is a capacity to work more fluidly or flexibly, and with greater nuance, right. Because at the end of the day, there's a certain kind of leadership that's needed as well, a certain kind of directorial process that is needed as well. But how to then navigate this with the opening up of other possibilities.

[01:28:37]

Corrie Tan

Yeah, thank you, Charlene, for sharing that. I think we've another question from Ralph, did you want me to read it out? Or do you want to kind of pose it yourself?

[01:28:49]

Participant

Okay, yeah. Hello. I'm Ness's husband, actually, I'm a visual artist. So yeah, I'm just gonna read my question. So I'm seeing trends of art projects, or socially engaged art or interdisciplinary projects. So not necessarily performance, having dramaturgs either needing, needing dramaturgs or gaining from dramaturgs or dramaturgy. So I'm a visual artist and participatory art practitioner. I'm curious about what you think about this? Does it have something to do with dramaturgy developing in Asia? Or like contemporary trends or whatever? So, yep.

[01:29:27]

Corrie Tan

Thanks for that. Peter, did you want to respond to this perhaps?

[01:29:30]

Peter Eckersall

Sure. I think it's a really interesting question that you're asking. And it's, for me anyway, I think we are looking at a need to think more closely about the shared understanding of practice between curators and dramaturgs, when we think about what curators have been doing in the last two decades, not just in western institutional contexts, but in pioneering ways in many of the Asian contexts, and in other parts of the world. We see a really strong sense of interplay between the practices, but we also see some emerging challenges, because in many places this is not an exclusive comment.

[01:30:22]

Peter Eckersall

But in many places, visual arts have a stronger place in the cultural economy of the nation, they have more resources sometimes. And so we often see a kind of freedom to appropriate the Performing Arts in the visual arts context in more recent times without supporting the work of the artists adequately. I can't speak for all dramaturgs. But I've been working more in the visual arts space. And it's beholden to me to become more aware of histories and vocabularies of Visual Arts and as a result, one of my beefs, if you like, is that when I see performance in visual arts context, it's not well presented, it's not well looked after.

[01:31:11]

Peter Eckersall

And I think that there's a learning curve that needs to take place there. I think there are some really notable exceptions of this, you know, where there has been very good curatorial practice. And this is specifically in relation to the rising interest in having contemporary dance and the forms of social practice based performance in visual arts contexts. And so it's a very new area, and it's an area that will only grow in its interest for us. But my colleague Bertie Ferdman and I recently did a book on this question where we interviewed a whole lot of cultural practitioners working across these spaces. And so many times the questions that they're facing and the practices that they're engaged in, have a lot of common points, and there could be a much stronger conversation between the two fields. So I think it's exciting potential.

[01:32:15]

Corrie Tan

Thanks very much, Peter. I'm aware we're getting on on time and it always feels like this that the conversation is only just beginning. But I really appreciate thinking about other homologous practices. In other disciplines, we brought up the figure of the curator and I think many other scholars who work in this field have also been thinking about theorising curatorial practice very similarly to dramaturgy, almost, as the intermediary figure between public, artists, state even. So I think that's a very interesting note to kind of maybe segue this from.

[01:32:49]

Corrie Tan

But I think I'm so glad that we got to hear from everyone today. And it's so interesting, you know, how we've travelled, I think across the past five years, and this is really just Volume One, there's so much more material that ADN and the editors are working on, on, on putting out into the world. But I think about, you know, I guess we've moved from the earlier kind of offerings of vocabulary, just thinking back to the 2016 symposium, where we were really just kind of offering categories or trying to think around certain words across languages. And now it feels like that now that there is kind of a critical mass of vocabulary.

[01:33:26]

Corrie Tan

We're poking at certain terms or contesting certain things, rethinking certain ideas. And that feels quite nice as a reflection quite a few years on, some businesses to think about how ADN has grown over the past five years. So I think there was, this was a really nice reflective talk to really appreciate Peter, Ness and Nanako bringing their practices into the room and sharing them with all of us.

[01:33:52]

Corrie Tan

And thank you everyone for taking part in this conversation. I'm just going to pass back to Charlene in the Centre 42 team. I think they have a few quick announcements and other things you wanted to add.