

Transcript

ADN Event Series 22: Bodies to Bodies Dramaturgies

Presented by Asian Dramaturgs' Network

Organised by Centre 42

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[00:00:00]

Lim How Ngean

Hello, everyone. I guess it's only apt for an event like this to say, good morning, good afternoon, good evening to all of you who's joining us from everywhere, I think, for this very special event with the Asian Dramaturgs' Network, called the "Bodies to Bodies Dramaturgies".

[00:00:30]

Lim How Ngean

My name is How Ngean, and I'm the co-director of the Asian Dramaturgs' Network. Very quickly, let me just tell you very briefly what we are about. The Asian Dramaturgs' Network was formed with the intent of mapping and networking the region's dramaturgical experiences and knowledge. ADN is collaboratively conceptualised with Centre 42 and held its inaugural symposium in Singapore in 2016. Since then, we have had many, many good various gatherings of dramaturgs, performance makers, arts educators, researchers from around the Asia Pacific region. And we have had our meetings in Japan, Australia, Indonesia, I've even done a workshop in Indonesia. I just want to acknowledge also that Centre 42 is our principal organising partner who's been very, very supportive in helping us to put together all these events. So again, welcome to this very special event of ours "Bodies to Bodies Dramaturgies" and before I go into anything, maybe give you a little bit of background history as to how we arrived at this particular dialogue session or event, as it were. What was happening was that we in ADN have been very much engaged in quite a few discussion panels, forums, roundtables, where we have actually been looking at talking about dramaturgy, dramaturging, and the role of the dramaturg, specifically with Asian perspectives in mind. And we thought that it was time to perhaps talk to our European colleagues, peers and counterparts, and to share ideas, if anything else to have an exchange of ideas. That was how we started to think, perhaps for the first time, we would try and put together a panel where we have two speakers from Asia side of the world, and then two from Europe. And it started at that level being just a little reductive but what happened was then we had the great opportunity of having Guy Cools involved to help us co-convene this particular panel. And what happened was that after a series of meetings, discussions, we decided also to do a sort of a matchmaking where we matched two people together. So today what you will have is two pairs of what we would term loosely as dialogues. And again, it's very exciting because the new format that we are

going for, not exactly the usual conventional panel where we have four speakers presenting and then talking about something for a particular subject.

[00:03:40]

Lim How Ngean

But here today, the format is roughly divided into two large sections, where we have dialogues between four artists, two sections: where one the first section is between two artists followed by another section between two artists, which we will introduce in a while. But to begin, I would like to actually introduce Guy Cools who has been very important in helping us to put together this particular event. Guy is a Belgian dance dramaturg, currently living in Vienna, Austria. Say hi and wave. He has worked as a dance critic, and dance curator. As a production dramaturg, he has worked with Sidi Larbi Cherkaoui and Akram Khan, amongst many others. As a dramaturgical mentor, he has been mentoring the Biennale Dance College in Venice, Italy, and the Atlas program of Impulstanz in Vienna. He teaches at different universities and arts colleges in Europe and Canada. His most recent publications include "The Ethics of Art" (2014), "In-between Dance Cultures" (2015) "Imaginative Bodies" (2016), "The Choreopolitics of Alain Platel" co-edited in 2019. And most recently "Performing Mourning. Laments in Contemporary Art" (2021). I just want to quickly introduce Guy here who will be helping me to sort of moderate and to introduce the rest of the segments. Very quickly, I'd just like to explain to you how we're going to go about this particular event. Like I said, there'll be two sections. One, we'll call it dialogue number one, and then there'll be dialogue number two. What's going to happen next is that I will be taking over dialogue number one, where I'll be introducing our speakers, and also a little bit about what they're about to engage in and what we can expect from them. And then we're going to go into a short break, followed by dialogue number two, where Guy will be hosting this particular session, where he will introduce the speakers and give a little bit of background about the dialogue that you'll be hearing from dialogue number two, and then right at the end, we will also have have a chance to gather some feedback and Q&A questions on from the floor to engage all four of us. Four speakers plus Guy and me in discussions and questions. Yeah? So, without further ado, we are now about to embark on dialogue number one.

[00:06:35]

Lim How Ngean

So dialogue number one has the title of "A Dramaturg's Silent Walk." In this particular section, Nia Augustina from Indonesia and Maja Hriesik from Slovakia, will address dance dramaturgy as a practice of tuning in and walking along with the dancer's body to uncover the complex personal and social histories inscribed in and on bodies. Their talk will also link together two very interesting concepts or terms, one, the German philosophic concept of 'Bildung' and the other, the Indonesian term of 'laku' and both of them, using these terms, will introduce the concept of silent walk as a metaphor of partnership, cultivation and walking alongside in the act of becoming. Here, I'll just add that the act of becoming here refers to the act of becoming the dramaturg, the act of becoming dramaturgy. Now, as for our speakers, let me just briefly introduce them and please raise your hand and wave hello.

[00:07:52]

Lim How Ngean

First, we have Nia Augustina. She is based in Yogyakarta, Indonesia, and established the Paradance Platform in 2014 where it is used to engage in nurturing young practitioners in the Indonesian dancefield through writing, curating and dramaturgy. Nia, also co-founded performance arts and performing arts critique and review website called gelaran.id with her husband Ahmad Jalidu in 2017. She has been co-curator of the Indonesian Dance Festival 2016 to 2020 and from February to March 2020, she visited Japan through the Asia Center Fellowship program to research a platform for young people in dancing. She's actually received a Masters in Mathematics Education 2015 and is currently working on gender equality and inclusivity disclosure through several institutions. And this has impacted her a lot or has given her new ways of thinking and approaching Performing Arts in her area.

[00:09:12]

Lim How Ngean

Then we have Maja, who was born in ex-Yugoslavia and is based in Slovakia from the late 90s where she completed M.A studies in aesthetics and M.A in theatre, directing and dramaturgy. She oscillates between dance dramaturgy, installation work and film, but also in creation and advocating and nurturing the better conditions of other freelance dance artists. She is a founding member of PlaST – a platform, which is running a dance residency space and advocates for better conditions and visibility of Slovak contemporary dance. She has also initiated quite a few workshop programs for emerging performers, and has been editor-in-chief of a Slovak dance magazine called Salto and curator and researcher at the Slovak Theatre Institute, curator of international dance festival Divadelna Nitra and presently has been doing a lot more dramaturgy for productions. I'm sure that we can see already there are some parallels between these two. So without further ado, I will now hand the forum over to Nia and Maya who will go into a conversation. Nia, Maja please take it away.

[00:10:35]

Maja Hriesik

Thank you so much for introducing. Hi, Nia.

[00:10:42]

Nia Augustina

So how are you? Maja?

[00:10:46]

Maja Hriesik

Well, I'm great. Although, of course, when we were in the private talk that was coming before this public talk, it was a little bit maybe more silent. But I'm very much looking forward for continuation of our maybe not only a walk, but going closer and closer and closer to our practices. I wanted, I wanted in the beginning to say that of course, the concept was very clear, matching similar experiences from a different context. But I'm very grateful for this opportunity because this dialogue with this particular intention makes this online talking a little bit more meaningful.

[00:11:41]

Nia Augustina

Yeah, I think so and also I am really grateful that we have the opportunity to talk. And I'm also surprised that we share a lot of connection, even though we have different cultural infrastructure privilege, maybe. But yeah, I think that's a really great opportunity.

[00:12:17]

Maja Hriesik

I guess you will notice that the theme that occurred in our talk comes also from the way both of us approach work. We were very silent in waiting for what the other side will offer. So how we started and how we thought that we could invite you into our dialogue was to try to show you how we were moving around each other and touching from distance the specificities of where we work. Yes, we start with sharing while trying to show some sort of roadmap, where we work and how we approach the work in order to find the common themes, common questions. Yes. Nia, could you after we talk too much could you try to also share what you find is defining your work, your approach to dance and dancers?

[00:13:31]

Nia Augustina

Maybe firstly, I think that an important thing on working in the dance field is that we work with bodies, which is that we are also facing the fact that the bodies have their own diverse constructions and contexts. And that's why also we have to really, really be conscious about that. Like, in my context, I work in Indonesia, which is in Yogyakarta. That's already the developed art scene there. So I have the privilege that I think I have to really be aware of. When I work with the young choreographers around Indonesia, they have different cultural backgrounds and also privileges. And also the construction in the social construction. So yeah, I think that's the first thing that I have to emphasise when we talk about working in dance.

[00:15:31]

Maja Hriesik

When we were talking that when you were trying to share with me, your last collaborations with choreographers are how different traditions were. So each time you were trying to explain because I am someone coming from outside, not knowing the traditions, you were trying to frame that artists in some sort of tradition, or some sort of cultural context that defines the questions, also. In that sense, I understood that each of your collaborations is quite a different one, it doesn't go in a straight line, I also realised how diverse the world is. I always imagined from the distance of Central Europe, that Indonesia is much smaller. And then when I did my homework, I realised that it's the size of my country. It's well, it is of course from this distance, everything. But I was really fascinated by the diversity of small, local, even, traditions. And also, what occurred to me very quickly was the presence of spirituality. And I don't mean that in the simplified way that Europe has lost its spirituality and Asia hasn't. Not in such a way, but that there were a lot of practices that are rooted still quite strongly in smaller communities. But once you want to find your place as a young artist in that tradition, there was really an urgency to ask the proper questions or to, to know where you want to take this tradition with you in order not to burden you with certain things that are part of the previous worlds or the way how relations used to be organised. So in that sense, yes. I'm fascinated by the dynamics of the scene and how you have to adapt to it.

[00:17:57]

Nia Augustina

Maybe I can talk about this with examples. So actually my experience in dramaturgy is kind of still young and raw. So, this is just like the little case and just really my experience. I work with several young choreographers. Maybe I will talk about three choreographers. Maybe we can kind of compare those approaches from the three choreographers. So, firstly I work with Ayu Permata Sari, which is from Lampung, Sumatra and her latest work is entitled "LOAD?" which is talking about her question related to the position of Lampung Pepadun women and girls in Lampung, which is Lampung Pepadun is one of the race in Lampung and also influenced by Islamic religion. So, after she came back from Yogyakarta, she studied in Yogyakarta, to kind of have a question related to her culture. And she asked me to be her dramaturg of which Sekar Handayani is the producer of this work. And as Javanese is, like I said before I'm from Java and from Yogyakarta, I am expected to know how women can solve the situation, but I cannot and I decide to go along with Ayu's growth and Ayu's question. So she can really dig into her needs and her question related to this, with her envoys, not mine. So this really has to do with time also. This has been going on for a long time, because I already know Ayu personally like years, like maybe seven or six years. So with this personal relationship to Ayu, I think I can navigate this kind of thing, because I already know how Ayu's structure of thinking and also I think that also has to do with the passion because somehow dramaturg have their own expectations that really have to...but yeah, I work with that with that kind of approach, because I know this is important for her and maybe her life in her community. Yeah. Yeah. Not just her but her and her community. So yeah.

[00:22:22]

Maja Hriesik

But exactly what you're saying this very important questions that need to be asked. And then modesty of you being there was something that was recurringly repeating in our talks, probably was also defined by working with a lot of emerging artists. But it is probably also because of a lot of changing issues or questions nowadays, and really fast development of many scenes, which are at the intersection of a lot of cultures. So, once you are part of the context of a very vivid and very complex art scene, it's much more even harder or important to ask the questions that you need to ask, and not the ones that the society, the art scene, that the trends press you to ask. And in that sense, we were always returning to the role of a dramaturg in the process of asking the questions. And maybe I would bridge it slowly, also to something that we wanted to open sometime in the middle of this talk. But you mentioning this, how important it is to ask her own questions. It reminds me how I remembered older texts that I wrote. I wrote it in the context of academia, where I was trying to explain what's the sense of dance dramaturgy in the curricula of dance academies. Because even though one would expect that in Central Europe or Europe dance dramaturgy would be more coined. It was also a very bizarre way of me self-legitimizing my work in the context of people who work with dance, but once I tried to do this, I came with a certain image or a certain concept that if you are searching for your own questions, you have to self root, or reroot yourself in all of those traditions, but finding your own root and asking your own questions. And in that sense, there is a really big need for dramaturgy and as such not as a dramaturg as a separate person, but as a process of also clarification and selection in everything that is already present. So we came somehow to also the concept of...I introduced a concept that I really love from German philosophy, which is called Bildung. It's basically it's the late 18th century term that was used in the Enlightenment period, where education was seen as really the clearest path to well being of society that

education, but informal education not as a part not only of institutionalised way, but as a ongoing, whole life, self-education and self-cultivation as a quality. So it occurred to me that only by talking to you and sharing or maybe comparing our work in different contexts, I understood how deeply I believed in this necessity of me also going through a bildung of this self-cultivation in any meeting with different kinds of dancers. Maybe just shortly, I would also mention that as how I already said, we really have a similar work line in the sense that we collaborate with often emerging artists, but for me, some of these emerging artists, we work continuously, so it's not so emerging but, but there is a certain line in those attempts to help navigate those first questions that professional artists ask and also this kind of work mingled with the work that is like continuous support. Creating continuous context for asking those proper questions, but also having conditions or umbrella under which you can ask those questions because my activities are very oscillating between the really dense dramaturgy work and advocating and helping and tuning for a really larger community for the whole Slovak dance community. I also realised that now during this pandemic when we are so online and we have spread the networks much, much massively that on the other hand, I changed quite strongly the way how I operate. Because although now we can be so mobile in the sense and now I can be with all of you and video Nia, but I realised I need to attach myself in the work of the dancers I collaborate with with a certain space and we worked very strongly for the last two years on building really a physical space, which can allow for much more dynamic exchange between different kinds of dancers. Yes, so, I am curious also about this. Because when I gave you the text to read about dramaturgy as a tool in also education in a way you came with this parallel. You took the term Bildung and started thinking about if you can find any kind of parallel or inspiration in this. Maybe you could share your thoughts.

[00:29:27]

Nia Augustina

Yeah, actually, I'm really fascinated with your article that's why I'm reflecting on that and come with this term "laku" which is — maybe I will share the screen because it helps me to — so, you can see this. So, I think this is the simple way to picture what is the laku. Laku actually originated as a Javanese word that was already permitted in Bahasa Indonesia, but already absorbed in Bahasa Indonesia and which is somehow in Javanese is still misunderstood as a mythical and unscientific way to get something. So, if you want to get something that you cannot imagine you can get, you have to do the laku. But somehow yeah, this is misunderstood as something mythical. But it has a more philosophical meaning as working beyond the physical work in purpose to growing on the process of being something. So I wrote this: Laku is a form, Laku is the activity of walking with a never ending process. If you've already been dramaturg, you can end the process but I think I feel maybe I've never been so that's why this process is still coming with dramaturg, because every single time I work with a new choreographer it's also a new growth, but it's already with the baggage that I already have before. So it's kind of always growing, but never been. So, this is growing into the working process. And this perspective also cannot spare that with daily life. We can spread the profession as dramaturg as a person in daily life, but I think if we already grow the perspective in the dramaturgy work, we also absorb that or internalise that into the perspective in our life. So it's also growing on a daily basis. So that's why I think this term is really picturing what I experienced and has a connection also with your article that you shared to me. So, yeah, and also in laku, there is no right or wrong to do this, but it's more ethical or unethical. You know, so yeah.

[00:33:43]

Maja Hriesik

I had my own explanation for the practice I do. But your optics or or how you looked at it: introduce the activity, which is physical form. And this fascinated me because dramaturgy is very often conventionally seen as a wise brain in the room, or eyes, very sharp eyes, but it's not very physical. It's usually, of course, generally seen as something different than dance, it's something beyond or out of the body of dance, and seeing the work somehow from this general wise thing. So it's deep body. Dramaturgy is bodiless, but I'm strongly opposed to this feeling, although I don't dance with my collaborators, but I really liked the physical activity deeply down rooted in the practice, because I feel it that way that it is really going. My body, following the body, and research or very, very, usually painful questions or intimate, heavy loaded questions coming out from the dancers, entering my own body and my own, also drama, body drama, and me walking along and taking all those questions and resonating. And because of me being in the movement together with the dancer, the questions cannot be known before, then this interaction happens. So on the way of the walk, so for me this beautiful, beautiful image of different kinds of exchange that you can have with your friends, or even with your children, I experienced that with my son, that he tells me more things, when we are just walking towards school than if I asked him what's happening in the school. So in the process of moving forward, and then like this image of going somewhere without even knowing where you are going, but you're moving forward, that you are sharing this presence and these activities together. And then these really important body questions are now — I'm quoting something that you said, during one of our meetings before — that the dancers need to during this walk, find the questions that their body needs to ask. So, we mentioned this because we were talking about how easy it is to impose already clear questions for us or for someone who is more experienced to the dancer, or how also even dancers can adapt something that is not there and seeing that they're asking their own question, but I really loved how you said this thing that you need to allow for them, for their body to ask the question, the real question that they need to ask.

[00:37:17]

Nia Augustina

Yeah, I think that's also maybe because of the consciousness of this laku, I'm also more courageous to work with young choreographers because it's really beautiful to see them growing and also me growing within the community also. So after the project is finished, they still bring the perspective that we share during the project in their community. So that also hopefully can grow the community. So it's not, because somehow as dramaturg, we have expectations that what you did on the stage can inspire the audience. But I think it can be the audience is just five or six. But after you finish this project you can bring this perspective that we share within the community. That's why I think that's why it's really, really great to work with young choreographers because we can see that growing. Maybe you also, as you said, in our conversation, work a lot with young choreographers.

[00:39:14]

Maja Hriesik

What you're saying also explains — I was asking myself this question because I'm collaborating more and more with ex-students. But it's not that I would like to collaborate only with younger choreographers all the time, it's the thing that a lot of my friends from the past or collaborators, choreographers, not all of them are still open to this image of growth. And I'm reading also the comments in our chat, that I like

this also image of moving forward and it is so easy when you find your own, let's say, someone finds his own practice, and then feels very comfortable in what he or she has found, and is not open for the growing process in the future. So for me, in that sense, dramaturg, I don't see myself, although I think I can do that, but I'm not so interested in this structuring of the work. So when you are invited as a parachute in the last period of preparations of a production, and then you are supposed to just provide better solutions, so that the production is more clear, and that it can communicate better what the intelligence were. So for me, in that sense, the walk and growth and going forward, that makes me feel alive, that makes my body understand why I'm doing this work, which is very invisible, very frustrating, sometimes not very vivid, or clear what you're doing, it's because sometimes it's psychotherapy or sociology, or just being silent. But, it really helped me talking with you, to clarify also the position of my body and the need of the move, I'm obsessed with moving. And if I stay for too long in certain conditions, in certain positions of the body, I have a pain in my body. So like using this metaphor, I also understood the necessity for myself in my dramaturgical approach to keep open different routes there. And if there is a collaborator that is also willing to go and explore in such a way always from the root from the beginning, then it's great and it doesn't have to be again, just an emerging one. But now, maybe for the last part. And I remember I asked you a question, because I came to this understanding about my own body and how it is involved in the work but I asked you also, what does it do to you personally and to your own body that you are dramaturging?

[00:42:29]

Nia Augustina

Yeah. I think we already talked about this.

[00:42:38]

Nia Augustina

That's a really, really great question. Because somehow we think that as a dramaturg we serve, serve, serve the choreographers. But I think I feel a lot of growth in my body also, related to the levelling need to control or judge something very quickly, like I said before, when I work with Ayu maybe I have to really negotiate with her question and with her needs, rather than push my expectations. So that's really losing my need of control and judgement and also growing the sensitivity with the diverse angle of something, of everything. And this really helps me develop my basis like I've talked to you before. Also, I think I have to say that, hopefully with me and the choreographers in this way we can grow together, because I feel that hopefully the dancer and the choreographers go that way.

[00:44:19]

Maja Hriesik

I think that this growing together or a need of our own individual growth to be open to different kinds of scenarios, which, once you are experienced, or you're thinking so much of so many contexts or questions, one would want to fasten certain things or make them go faster. So there is always this negotiation between the pressure of responsibilities or the time or the pressure and then the need also to dissolve the pressure and allow yourself to not pre-jump to any kind of conclusions, but also with yourself. What will resonate with you because you really don't know how this collaboration is going to have an impact on you. But I really share with you this thing that I hope that the process is mutual and that the growth happens together. And that's why I guess the relationships are usually...I never

experienced that lately when I approached it like this, that the relationship with choreographers doesn't become that they're my best friends in my daily routine and we go to holidays together, not that way. There is this very strong match, and that we can start always from the same spot and go again further. And that I hope is the result of the collaboration, not only the production that we did, but the quality of that communication and this being sensitive to what each of us is at the moment sensing, going through.

[00:46:36]

Nia Augustina

Yeah, I think I'm also interested to hear how the dramaturgy also impacts your body or your life.

[00:46:49]

Maja Hriesik

Well, as I explained to you that my motivation to go into dance was something I didn't really do very consciously, it was an attraction. But mainly because I couldn't dance I had a physical impairment that stopped me from this kind of activity. And I found that dramaturgy basically is my inner dance and each collaboration with the dancer and their bodies makes my body be more flexible because I have this problem that my spine is not flexible so it resonates and reverberates my body and makes it move more so by each question and growing process it seems as if my body is growing so I'm older and older but I feel younger and more flexible. The joints are more flexible and the mind is really in tune with the body. Okay, we are ready with the time. Did you?

[00:48:05]

Lim How Ngean

So, you guys are pretty on the dot with the time you can still continue for the next three minutes? If not, then I'm sure we have many questions to provide you guys too. But yeah, use up the time you want to. You've got three more minutes and then we can open it up to everyone.

[00:48:24]

Maja Hriesik

I would really say we want to thank everyone that is adding and becoming part of our discussion about these metaphors of how you can define this practice. We didn't even know that we wouldn't be talking about the practice, of course, because when Nia and me started learning more about each other, we were trying to search and listen to what we already did. But this metaphorical way of talking about our practice, we soon realised that we really see it very similarly. And I like the verbs or the terms that appear also in the chat. It's also walking and falling and falling into and through and solved by walking. Thank you, Katelyn. There are so many immediate other images that come with this procedural way of seeing dramaturgy. And it is an activity that has to be done intentionally and has to be done in a certain rhythm as well. That fascinates me because once you walk with someone or alongside, you can't walk in your own tempo. You have to tune with either to the sounds that are around or to the energy beside you.

[00:50:02]

Nia Augustina

Yeah, I also just see questions related to the direction of walking from Susan, also, not necessarily forward. It's also the question of how we can define forward. I think I already have this defined knowledge related to gender issues, for example, and I work with young choreographers that are working on that issue, but her or his needs is not as radical as I am. And I'm walking with them in their own tempo. For me, it's still forward, because forward for me is also growing the sensitivity related to the need of other people or the diverse perspective. Because if I'm still in control, even though my knowledge is by definition or by construction is more forward than them, but I think walking with them in their own tempo is also forward for me because I can get a diverse perspective, and that impacts my body and my mind. I think that's also forward for me. So, yeah, I think the definition of forward we can still question that.

[00:52:16]

Maja Hriesik

Now, when we are hearing these small images, I realised that it was a paradox to me that we talked so much about bodies, and we haven't seen more than this to our bodies. We never went from the camera. This is the sign of how strong dramaturgical imagination is because we tuned into our bodies without even seeing them. Only from the screen. Yeah, yeah.

[00:52:52]

Lim How Ngean

Thank you. Thank you Nia and Maja. Wow. Yeah. Any last words you have? And last reflection before we open it up to the floor for some questions and feedback and comments.

[00:53:14]

Maja Hriesik

Well, I guess it's quite clear that what interest does was this becoming. You said in the introduction, that was also that we were talking about becoming, and becoming in the process of dramaturg, becoming is also, by each collaboration, you become some different kinds of practitioner. But it's funny that we started with this supportive side from that, that we are supporting someone to become something but we slowly return to ourselves to our own practice, and somehow realise that this act of becoming is the dramaturgy, is becoming. That it is something that doesn't exist basically when it starts. It's being built and worn over the course of walking.

[00:54:09]

Lim How Ngean

Well, thank you. Now before I hand it over to Guy, who will help to moderate the next 15 minutes, I just want to quickly flag up that there has been already a question that was posted in the general room. So I'm going to start it off. And then Guy can take it from there because I'm also quite excited to hear what he has to say or give his feedback and commentary about what we've been listening to. The question comes from Corrie Tan and it's actually specifically for Nia. In our previous or past meetings and symposiums, our very first one actually at ADN, there was that concept that Helly Minarti from Jakarta, who is now in Yogyakarta also introduced us to, the Indonesian term of the 'pendamping', the dramaturg as a 'pendamping' or 'pengganggu'. 'Pendamping' in Bahasa Indonesia or Bahasa Malay, literally means someone who is by your side. And as Maja said just now, to use the term again,

alongside right, 'pendamping', someone who can support. But more than just support it's someone beside you and we sort of during that particular meeting talked about the word 'pendamping' meaning almost like a kindred spirit. That's one, then there is the other word that was used for the dramaturg in Indonesia called the 'pengganggu', which actually means quite the opposite. 'Pengganggu' literally means interrupter, disturber, interlocutor. And this person will always counter and undermine the situation with different questions, right. So the question from Corrie is that putting the word 'pendamping', 'pengganggu' and now we have a new word 'laku' in the process of dance dramaturgy, I think Corrie was trying to ask them how do you see these three terms in your practice? And by extension of the conversation to someone like Maja, you can also please feel free to give your thoughts. But we should just hear from Nia first. Yeah.

[00:56:39]

Nia Augustina

Yeah. So I think the simple explanation is 'pendamping' and 'pengganggu' part of the laku of dramaturgy. So when we become dramaturg, we are also doing this 'pendamping', and also 'pengganggu'. Yes, that's the simple explanation.

[00:57:11]

Lim How Ngean

Yeah, I just want to quickly then draw attention to Sekar, who is with us, who is actually producing Ayu's performance load, where if I can find it, now, where is it. She pitched in with her explanation of laku saying that it's the Javanese attitude in life that always puts self-consciousness in every aspect of life with a specific purpose. So laku can be a key to experience ourselves in certain situations. That is her understanding. And from what I gather here then, one of the key elements of laku is also empathy. Right? And that's why the word [and damping] and [Panggang Gu], or these two sort of contradicting terms sit within as laku being the bigger concept.

[00:58:09]

Nia Augustina

Yeah.

[00:58:11]

Lim How Ngean

Great. Maja, do you have anything to add to that?

[00:58:16]

Maja Hriesik

No, I want to thank you for bringing this also disruptive and provocative element, because we started the talk in this very friendly, not war-like atmosphere, the dramaturg or something, somebody only who asks a very gentle questions or it doesn't question anything. So thank you for that because obviously. And I like the last comment that came in our chat, that if it wasn't from the position of someone being there, alongside whatever disruption or provocation would be very disruptive. But the sense of coming from someone who is already inside and very close, the provocation or disruption is much deeper or

worthwhile or simply taken into account, if it wouldn't be taken in account, it would be seen as this aggression.

[00:59:20]

Lim How Ngean

Two last things before I hand it over to Guy, the idea of the dialogic and of course, discourse because in this course, the questioning for me is productive. It is to build on something, it is never to diminish. Yeah. So the idea is that whatever conflict provocation that we have, it is to build on this particular project that we're doing this particular dramaturgy that we are on a journey of. Thank you guys, let me hand you over to Guy.

[00:59:52]

Guy Cools

Thank you for this great dialogue. I mean, How Ngean you already did part of what I wanted to do, I want to kind of give my kind of how I received your dialogue and where that came from. And then I would like to read some more of the comments in the chat, just to make sure that they are recorded, because there's some really great comments on that. We already used some of them, so I don't have to repeat them. For me there's two things I just want to repeat that I felt were really powerful. In the conversation, like Nia said at one point, we accompany the artists growing but then we are growing ourselves. And in the end, we do it also to help our communities grow. So this kind of layering, through this concept of laku was really powerful. And we're talking about growth. I just want to remind that in the preparation, there are two other metaphors that we kind of used that for me are also very much connected to this idea of growth, which is the idea of transformation. And the idea of being a shapeshifter as a in this process of accompanying both the artists as a shapeshifter but also the dramaturg as a shapeshifter who has to each time finds reposition herself in relationship to particular artists to particular contexts. And then I recognize myself a lot in this idea that I also have ever worked with a lot of artists of different generations. Where I am in my life, now, I have a preference to work with younger emerging artists. And I think it's what both of you said because you see the growth more or the potential more. And so there's more satisfaction. And one of the things I want to throw in the discussion and maybe also you can reflect on it, that there is something, there's a paradox in the way that success in the arts markets, in my experience, often forces people to get stuck in a certain way of making a certain form and then blocks that kind of growth process and kind of more puts pressure on us to repeat what we already know or what we already have done before instead of continues this lifelong learning process. So this is a question maybe we can address later on. And then the last thing that I think Maja ended her discourse is saying like dramaturgy is my inner dance. If I walk with the other person, my body also kind of gets physically engaged, which is also very much how I experienced my journey in dance dramaturgy. I had a very ill body from young onwards, I never thought I would go into dance. It kind of accidentally happened. But then for me now, I also define dramaturgy not as much as a somatic practice, as it is an intellectual practice. And I also know that just by walking with the artist, my body without having ever had any training has become also more physically engaged and healthier in a way like that.

[01:03:29]

Guy Cools

So these are just two things I keep from your talk that I want to quickly read a couple of the other comments that haven't been mentioned yet, because I think there were some great ones. Let's go back to there just to have them in the chat. I think it was Susan who started saying — Susan Sentler — say like, "laku" feels like a fluid shared palimpsest. Nothing ever lost, always absorbing. Something submerged at times some surface in the moment. So that and she continued in a later message, Susan saying that "it's like in somatic work, it's like being a companion, no one leads no one follows. They are there as a soft, porous scaffolds, such as air can be a companion". And then there was this long question by Corrie that How Ngean already addressed, comparing the concept of "laku" to the concepts that Helly Minarti introduced. And then Katelyn reminding us back to the European term that might be important to bring. Katelyn just brought up to this conversation like solitude to unblock yourself by walking. So to other readers, many other great comments there.

[01:04:54]

Guy Cools

But, so, yeah, maybe two questions for you from my point of view and if anyone in the room has all the questions, I put them in the chat or put your hand up. So, this first question is this: the idea that how do we, how can we continue to stimulate this attitude of growth when we deal with this pressure of also being successful in certain kind of arts market system that then forces us to repeat forms is my first question. And the second question goes back a little bit to this concept, this notion of walking with and then also being a provocateur. So, this tension between for me was also both in your practice, I know that you have come also up in the previous context in being very receptive to the context the artist, but also being an activist. The dramaturg as activist and trying to improve the context, the conditions not only for individuals, but for the whole community. So, either of these questions that you feel to address would be interested in.

[01:06:13]

Maja Hriesik

Thank you. Nia, do you want to start? What are your thoughts? Well, thank you for bringing the theme of art market and the role of dramaturg or a body of dramaturg there, but I want to be an optimist that it is also the presence of the body of the dramaturg that can allow for the protest against being pressured into already tried out solutions, because by being someone who is seemingly more passive, there is this need of going through a different kind of quest or a walk so in that sense dramaturg is a very important element to question also the route what are we going the same route again? Or how about taking a different paths at this point so providing with, with certain disruptions in the route and helping help, helping the partner in that walk have courage to. Even though we have shorter time like we know we have to go through this walk with — this hike — can take only for four hours, but nevertheless, let's try and go a different path. We might not risk that much like getting lost, but maybe even what if we get lost? So yeah, I would say I would stop here. Remaining metaphorical.

[01:07:55]

Nia Augustina

Yeah, I don't know how to answer that. But I'll try. Because I think the purpose of success is also really diverse. It's okay, if the community really pushed us in the one, one definition of success related to the art artists. But I think for myself, I can see that artists growth perspective, is my success. So maybe this

kind of romantic utopian thing that ignores the community, but I don't know, I feel that maybe sometime we have to embrace this kind of definition. So yeah. And related to the activism also the same for me. Like, for example, in the latest work that I talked before in Ayu's work, when it's present that in one of the festival, there is a lot of comments that said, if your culture is like that, why don't you just like get out from that culture. But this is really if she out this really not her needs and not her community needs. That the need is the transformation, even though it's this slowly. So Ayu's question is really important, even though it is really slow. It has the term of transforming the community. But it's okay, it's their pace, their community's pace. Ayu's pace also. So, that's also, maybe there's also the sense of the activism in the dramaturgical work. Yeah. Because they don't need to go out and destroy the culture and go back. They need to transform the culture and that's how we navigate this work like that, so yeah.

[01:10:54]

Guy Cools

There are two questions in the chat that I'd like to bring in and then maybe we have to round it up here. This one by Miranda Lawrence, saying, Have you have moved from the metaphor to the material? Have you ever taken a walk literally, with an artist you're working with? Or would you do this as part of your dramaturgy practice? And if so, what might it bring or do? And then maybe also just read the other question, and then each of you can choose one that you want to answer? There's also one by Charlene. Thank you for the provocative conversation that gets me thinking about spirituality and dramaturg of the spirit so to speak. I'm curious to hear your thoughts and how this idea could relate to what Guy's raising about growth as well as what it has to contend with in relationship to the controversies of culture that prevail in relation to the body and religion. What is acceptable or pure, and so much movement and dance is now looked on suspiciously by certain spiritual, religious eyes. So walking as a practice.

[01:12:06]

Guy Cools

So walking as a practice has been integrating in your practice, and how did this notion of spirituality and then compare to religions also having a very sometimes limited view on the body and what is permissible and what is.

[01:12:35]

Maja Hriesik

These are beautiful comments where this dialogue can continue. And maybe not to take more time from our second pair, inspirational talk and maybe they will take inside I think some of the things that are here, so thank you very much for taking part in our dialogue and building the things we came with forward.

[01:13:03]

Lim How Ngean

I'm just gonna do a quick chip in to Charlene's question which actually would relate more to Nia's work, especially with Ayu. Just a little bit of context because of where Ayu is situated in Lampung, which is a very religious, Islamic region. Ayu's work actually constantly questions the social, cultural and even

religious constructs of what's happening to her community. So that happens. And of course, I think what Nia said about Ayu being the activist and Nia alongside her as dramaturg being the activist, that I think is slowly happening, especially in a very sensitive area, like Lampung. I know Ayu personally also so I'm going to say now that when I first met Ayu, she struck me as any contemporary dancer, very free, and, and liberal and free with the body in terms of movement, and she's comfortable with her body. But the fact remains that when she goes back to a hometown in Lampung, she has to wear the Jabbar to cover her head, and she has to cover all her extremities to hide, to be modest, according to the Islam religion. But in her way, she's also trying to question some of the practices - social and religious practices - that have been happening in Lampung. So I'm not sure whether this answers your question, Charlene. But the fact remains that, especially with Ayu, it's quite poignant, to bring about this whole idea of the body and the religion and the purity and what is accepted.

[01:15:04]

Guy Cools

Yeah, I think a big part of the next dialogue, which is exactly focusing on intimacy and eroticism, and how we can dramaturg that in very specific cultural context. So I think it's a great moment. Thank you again, Nia and Maja, for your dialogue for sharing with us. And also, we should go into the break. You'll take a 10 minute break, and we gather again, at like 30, like after the half hour with everyone for the second conversation between Sara and Pupe.

[01:15:46]

Lim How Ngean

Thank you

[01:15:51]

Guy Cools

So, I have the pleasure to introduce the next dialogue which will be between Sasapin Siriwanij, and Sara Vanderieck. I'll introduce them both individually and then also the topic and the format of their discussion and then they will take over. It will be a very short introduction.

[01:16:12]

Guy Cools

So Sasapin 'Pupe' Siriwanij began acting in 2005 while she was also studying an M.A and B.A in English literature. She's a core-member of B-Floor Theatre since 2009. And she co-founded For What Theatre and has produced, directed and performed with many other Thai theatres and international collaborators. In 2017, she was awarded Best Performance by a Female Artist by the IATC-Thailand for her work "OH! ODE" and this performance is also later invited at the Maxim Gorki Theater in Berlin. Sasapin's interest focuses on awareness and empowerment to the body and physical exploration. She was also invited as a scholar at the International Forum at the Theatertreffen, Berliner Festspiele, and a specific participant in the young curators Academy by the Maxim Gorki Theater in 2019. And she's also the current artistic director of the Bangkok International Performing Arts Meeting (BIPAM). And I also know that on a personal level, she has been commuting recently between Bangkok and Canada, Montreal.

[01:17:28]

Guy Cools

Sara Vanderieck is a Flemish-Belgium dramaturg future director, she studied her Master's degrees in Theatre Directing in Brussels. And then, after being for a while production and tour manager, she became in 2009, the artistic assistant to Alain Platel, for several of his productions. In 2012, she joined the artistic direction of De Grote Post which is an art centre in Ostend and she has worked as a dramaturg on creations of different artists including Serge Aimé Coulibaly, Bára Sigfúsdóttir and Lisi Estaras. She also works within the research platform ANKATA in Burkina Faso. She's a member of the dramaturgical platform Cliniques Dramaturgiques, which was initiated by the FDA in Montreal, and she's an associated dramaturg to La Bellone, which is a research centre in Brussels as well. And finally, she was also a guest lecturer at the Toneelacademie Maastricht in Holland.

[01:18:41]

Guy Cools

As we explained in the beginning, the idea was to have a series of dialogues and these dialogues have been the two parties have, have been having this dialogue ongoing before opening it up to us today in a larger setting, and they also could decide proposal topics themselves and the format of presentation. And Sara and Pupe came to this definition of the title of the presentation as Getting (too) Close? an exchange about dramaturgy, erotic and the intimate. And they will also try to experiment with some of the dialogue formats, share with us some of the dialogue formats that they've been experimenting with in the preparation which will include also a written dialogue in a Google Doc and I think they will start with that but I'll leave the floor now to them.

[01:48:39]

Guy Cools

So thank you for this experience. Again, while also following the content of your conversation, I was also so much aware of the different rhythm, both in the writing reading in creates compared to the talking, listening. And it was nice. I mean, maybe not always easy, but it was good to see to have again, these other options of how to organise the dialogue. So maybe my first question that you could kind of comment on, also in the preparation, there were some really clear thoughts why you wanted to share this way of communicating and dialoguing with us in the first place. And that are also related to your understanding of dramaturgical practice like that.

[01:49:36]

Sasapin Siriwanij

I think I can start, because this format kind of somehow came from the previous work that I did, which I did with my friend, Kai Eng, a Singaporean dancer, and choreographer. And somehow, I think How Ngean and Yan Ling saw this and was interested in this format so I offer this as a starting point of our conversation, my conversation with Sara. And it's really quite surprising that very quickly, we understood how to work around this format without explaining or making a lot of agreement between us. It just flowed very naturally somehow. And I think this format, to me at least, is very special, because it's very familiar, everybody's using it, you use it for very professional reasons these days, but when you turn it around as a personal platform for your dialogue, then it becomes somehow super, super intimate, in a way that I'm not quite sure why but texting on other platform does not feel like this,

maybe because of this time stretch in between, when you actually see your partner writing. And you see, to see the pacing, you see the deleting the auto corrections, all these things, I think it gives it it gives you this extra sense of the existence of that person beyond the letters themselves. So that's kind of my experience.

[01:51:11]

Sara Vanderieck

I think for me, too, it was the main thing that intrigues me is sharing this live energy while you are doing it. So the different tempo of typing and showing also how you correct yourself or how you get stuck in a thought and then have to go back and the visual translation of how a brain works. I have to say, in this version, we have been more polite towards each other's writing than we have previous ones in the two previous ones, we would also start writing in between each other's phrases, sometimes not correcting each other's phrases, I don't think that's something we did, but like, just in the middle of a thought adding another one. And so it was a bit. Now it was a bit more like one talking then one and then another one in the previous ones we had. We were at some points talking at the same time, and then also taking a break to read what the other one had been doing while you were doing something. So the rhythm was a bit more complex in the non-audience version.

[01:52:28]

Sara Vanderieck

And I'm not sure for me if it has to do with an audience or with the time that has been said, because the two previous ones we did were much longer. And we were kind of relaxed to get into it. And then we did, I think two times over an hour if I'm right. And that's really something that brings extra qualities to this kind of mean to a lot of conversations. But to this one, it adds complexity if you have a bit more time. And if you don't have to give content in every phrase you're writing, that's something I noticed. And then related to the content we ended up working around. I am not sure because for me, of course in the past, let's say year and a half, it has been a very activated content in what I'm doing. But I do have the feeling that because we started with this format, because that was the starting point for our exchange. Let's see what we can do in this Google. And I have the feeling that it did make the exchange of this material a bit more easy with a completely unknown person because I had no idea if she would be shocked by what I was sharing or would it be inspiring or it could have been a really huge block. That happened and it's a possibility I also considered. But I think because we weren't seeing each other's faces. And because we were writing it created on both sides an openness to share things that you wouldn't so easily share, talking with the image of your face with an unknown person, I think I would have needed a longer getting to know the other artists time before I would put certain things on the table.

[01:54:38]

Guy Cools

I'm also curious to know, at what point or who proposed this idea of reenactments and link to that as another question. I've been using it myself as a dramaturgical practice, especially when I'm accompanying somebody who was making a solo work. And it's kind of often about issues of identity, that instead of kind of having a long talk about it, I just did with my normal trained body, I just kind of reenact what I saw. And then this often gives much more information to the other person than a long

analysis or worthy feedback session. So I was very fascinated also, the choice of the reenacting as a way of dialoguing and how, yeah, how you experienced it. I mean, you already addressed it a little bit in the talk, but maybe you can go a little bit deeper into that.

[01:55:36]

Sasapin Siriwanij

I propose that because I think kind of like Guy, it's, when we work primarily with the body, linguistic conversation hits a dead end somehow. And you I think, you feel it in your brain, you feel it in your everywhere, in your face, when you look at the screen and I feel like it's not that it gets boring, but I feel like you can only go so far with talking and cerebral it out. So when we were figuring out for the second time that we would meet, live and chatting, I offer that I could, I could start with this reenactment. And then we see what comes out of it. This is the wonderful thing that I really liked with Sara and our conversation is that we always begin with, let's see what comes out, i don't know what's happening, let's like, throw in something and see what comes out of it. And it grew into a beautiful conversation every time. So yeah, and I think it was clear enough what Sara did in her performance that I could grab the structure very quickly, although very roughly, and recreated that in my own environment, and in the full version, you will see that it wasn't exactly to imitate what she did. But it's more like just following the structure of the action. While for the environment, for example, I just did what I thought was a similar contribution or equivalent if I could, because in the end, I prepared a tea. Prepared a tea set and then poured some tea, got into this kind of ceremonial outfit. So I adopted this idea of a ceremonial act. And I use candles instead. And then I kind of messed around with candles and incense and lighting candles and, and things like that. So it was that and I think yeah, it's just that the dialogue is inherent in the body as well as words. So I guess that's why I offer this. And also it's kind of the only thing I know how to do. To, to just offer my body because I also perform so I'm like, maybe I try it out and I feel it in my body and so we could continue to not just talk about it, but also feel this content that we're on.

[01:58:10]

Guy Cools

Maybe How Ngean can also join in the conversation. Meanwhile another question that you already saw. Now in the chat you're very much talking about your personal experiences of being naked and feeling more or less exposed of like the level of comfort that you had in this in this act. I also like this this tension between being naked and the act of undressing as being two different things. But also in the preparation I remembered you also started to address that topics like nakedness, eroticism, intimacy, they're also so different in different cultural contexts. So I was wondering if this has also been part of your previous dialogues and conversations, not only your individual personal experiences, but how they situate in your specific context and the differences there.

[01:59:12]

Nia Augustina

You want to start?

[01:59:15]

Sara Vanderieck

Yeah, we touched upon it, not into deep depth yet. Because there was also just so much time to dive into it. I have to say, for me personally, it's something also in the reenactment that becomes very clear, because of course, when you act, an act of stripping for someone else. And even if you take the order I created of what happens when in this act of stripping, you do it in your own way. And there are clear differences, for instance, in things that I do very slowly, because it's a moment that I don't really feel fragile or uncomfortable with that part. I have to say, I worked on it for a long time, of course, so I also treat my own fragility, much more now than the first time I did it. But even there, you can feel choices that are more linked to the personal cultural environments of what would be more taboo or less taboo to share. So there, I could feel some differences there. We didn't delve into it deep enough to know if it's a private personal difference, or a cultural, like Thailand/Belgian difference, this is something to discover. I also discovered a big similarity we have that's why I put it in the short three minutes also like the bending over position. That's one where we spoke about. It's a very important one for me in the whole performance because of course in the whole, I don't do it three times, immediately after another. It happens along but it is a very conscious choice to repeat it. Because it is a very, very cliché image that is used throughout Western culture to show a female body like a lot of paintings of baiting women, a lot of really erotic like pornographic imagery goes to that direction. And it's used both to like the very naive view of she doesn't know we are watching and now she bends over to put a sock or to drive her foot with a towel, or in the pornographic way it's a very conscious way to show the entrance. And this was very touching to me to see that we both clearly chose to share that image of our body and the other ones where it becomes more about frontal nudity and more about breast yes or breasts no, there were more differences on all those levels and not on that one. So that was very, that's one I would like to keep on communicating about with each other because I find it a very fascinating image.

[02:02:24]

Sasapin Siriwanij

For me it was a safe position because I do feel very exposed with my frontal body naked. Although I decided to dive into it and then even though I was already completely naked, but if there could be a moment where other movements of the actions I was doing, somehow put my arms in front of my body that somehow it covered my breast then I feel like I can breathe a little bit and so it's a big comfort to turn around and mess with the chair and fold the clothes and just show the back because that's really safe for me somehow. And I told Sarah about this other previous performance that I did where I was also almost completely naked I had my panties on and I began the performance on the third floor of a really small space so the audience walked into this space and they faced my frontal naked body and everybody was in like a kind of frozen a little bit stunned and didn't know what to do and they were slowly moving to seating positions with really a lot of awkwardness in the air that I could just feel everybody could feel it. But then the performance went on, I became slowly covered by other materials by another friend of mine. And then when we did plan that the breast would be the first one to be covered. And you did feel the air, the relief, the ease in the air once that's like covered. So I think for my culture, it's very clear what's sensitive and not, what's taboo and not at least, and I could not, it did not occur to me ever to expose my lower parts, for example, in Thailand, I don't think that's even possible, or I have to think very hard about if I will do it. And talking more about context, there are quite a few performances that I've had and actually elaborated in my head that I will do about intimacy in my body, and I just kind of folded that and put it away because I, I couldn't find an appropriate or safe way more like a safe way for me, and also for the audience who will participate enough to make it come true. So

there's just like a couple of projects like that I just have not found a way to, to realise yet about the body and the intimate.

[02:05:05]

Guy Cools

We should go move on to the last and third part interacting with the audience, shall we stick to the original idea of inviting them in the Google Doc? Or should we do it here live it's up to the two of you, and also maybe How Ngean, kind of moderate this part a little bit more?

[02:05:26]

Lim How Ngean

Can I just say that actually, in the interest of time, perhaps a better way to go is just in zoom for now. Because I really want to hear Sara and Pupe talk more about whatever they have been engaging in, especially with the topics. Before we go into the questions, there are some very interesting comments that in a while I'd like to bring about, but I just want to add in. And it's, it's funny how we were talking about cultural taboos, or social norms, right. And when I was watching the three minute clip, I was a little disturbed myself, not because of the nudity. But it struck me that I felt as if I was watching a camera surveillance, a camera in surveillance. And what was even more interesting after a while was it was a camera, camera surveillance, not just a particular spy camera. After a while it felt like it was a camera recording a strip search. And I do wonder if it has anything to do with the fact of where we are in Asia, Southeast Asia, the states of surveillance, the states of policing, that we all are conditioned to a large extent. It was more that the nakedness and the nudity of the body was associated with shaming the body from an aspect of some kind of crime, actually, whether it's a moral crime, or a material crime, right? It had nothing to do for me with whether it was profane, or intimate. But yeah, it struck me I did not realise that I was behaving or reacting that way, to the whole incident, to the whole three minute clip, actually. And I wonder, of course, the idea of this particular reenactment that we know for a fact is a recorded one, seen through a screen right? The whole idea of a reproduction. And as opposed to watching a live naked body right in front of us whether that will be more confronting in terms of the body per se, rather than all these other conditions, social norms, that come into play.

[02:08:16]

Sara Vanderieck

Yeah, maybe in a reaction to this I should explain a little bit what the setting of the original performance was, because the original performance which was made during the pandemic in an illegal way in Belgium, we were not allowed to meet people and not allowed to perform. But by coincidence, I had access to a huge empty space. And I was researching intellectually this material and in that space, a box was built, a wooden box, about, let's say a metre and a half by a metre and a half on the floor and two metres and a half height completely closed. And I performed in that box. And the audience with sitting outside of the box. Little audience, one to six persons maximum sitting separately if they were more than one spread out in the room, and they watched my performance on video monitor, which was next to the box, so they could hear and they had headphones. So the voices you heard now were talking straight into their ears, but in a volume where you could still hear my live action. So for instance, preparing the tea in the end, the teapot makes noise, the water boils all of these natural sounds you could hear so there was a confusion between what was the soundscape sound and what was the

natural sound. But so the camera angle of the surveillance camera and watching this woman on a video screen was always an element of the reality of this performance. The only difference now is when I watched Sasapin do it, she was in Bangkok, and I was in Belgium, and there was no reality like I could, in my case, people could have gotten up and stepped into my room physically. In this case, that was not a possibility.

[02:10:28]

Lim How Ngean

Yeah, I'm glad you gave that context because one of the aspects was also then dramaturging something like that, right? Where there is always then what are the affects and the effects that you want to achieve? Because I have notes here before it went into the whole surveillance, the first few seconds, because it was camera angles and everything else, there was also then the aspect of voyeurism. And once that spy, and from what you're saying the original performance or event seem to actually want to create that affect and effect for that particular one. I guess I want to echo one of the questions here by Maja which is that she's also curious about the connection between the intimacy of this act of the and the eroticism, created by this reenactment as well as the connection with the ritualistic elements. So what is the association between — I mean, the ritualistic aspect, part of it is to take off each item of clothing, right? But then there is also the tea ceremony, right? So what brings all this together for the two of you or in terms of what was happening in terms of the association?

[02:12:05]

Sara Vanderieck

Shall I go first? In the original one, the original creation, my starting point was a comment by a friend who told me that being naked in front of an audience for her was not intimate. But undressing in front of an audience was too intimate an act to do. So like if she would already be naked and the light would go on, and people would see the body it would not be private, but the act of undressing would be private. So this triggered for me, of course, the whole questioning of why and made me want to try. Can I undress in a non-private way for an audience? How do I do it? How do I change my private way of undressing into performance? So this was the first step. And then this format of having people watch me through video monitor has been very interesting for a very long time when I was preoccupied by making the images of that female body which is mine, but which became a female body for me to use. And at some point, I did go back to something that is very important for me in performance art, or stage art is the connection with an audience. I would never ever do the work I do outside of a community I need to relate to a community and be in contacts. And so I added the challenge for myself like okay, once this body is undressed, can you take it out to meet the people who are there to meet you, physically. And so I started to research what can I do because I wasn't interested in stripping live in front of an audience this was too far away from everything I wanted to research visually. And so the tea came in as first of all a counterpoint for the erotic because it's this kind of very, in our Western culture, this kind of tea processing is like something very spiritual, very pure so I also performed it's really slow and detailed but then, in the end of the performance, which is not in the video footage I have, I came out with two cups of tea, wearing a kimono over my naked body. So everybody just saw me undress and put it so they know the body underneath was completely naked. I came out and I offered a cup of tea to one person in the audience, and I sat down in front of that person and had the tea connecting

with that one person. So that was why the whole ritual thing was something I created to be able to meet somebody in reality after this whole trajectory.

[02:15:14]

Sasapin Siriwanij

Okay, interesting, because for me, it's similar but because I was alone in my room, I didn't have an audience but Sara, which actually she was watching it live. So we did a Zoom session and I did it live on Zoom for her. Again, I think because the undressing part left me really really vulnerable that apart from finding safe positions that made me feel safe, the ritualistic elements also held ground me in a way that it's almost like I could step out of myself and my own worries and shame and vulnerability into the space. Into the environment and the ritualistic feeling that I took on helped to compose in many levels. I actually composed the candles on the table, I composed the stuff on the table. But also I could compose my own mental structure, I composed my emotions as I was doing this ritual in that performance, so actually, it has this kind of like journey of instead of just your cell and being really kind of tangled up inside, the ritual brings you out to connect to the environment in that way and clears things up, clears your thoughts, made it clear for me even what I was doing. So taking myself outside of myself to watch myself again like this. And I could see okay, this is actually what I'm doing. This is actually what Sara's watching, what the camera is probably recording.

[02:17:05]

Lim How Ngean

I just want to add on now to Nia's comment. I'm not sure whether she's wanted to ask for comments from two of you. But her comment links to this idea of what Pupe and Sara been talking about. The fine line between intimacy, eroticism, the everyday, and then the whole idea of the morality coming into play, right. Shame, judgement and all that. And she says that yesterday that she was really conscious of her own body in a very uncomfortable way while watching the reenactment. But at the same level, she says that she felt that she was getting to know both of you better. And there's this tension, the tension that both of you are talking about right between the ritual of the material of this tea, which can be seen as spiritual, but then there is the ritual of the undressing. And I think that's what Nia's also feeling as a spectator. For most of us actually, in Asia, there is always Yeah, that tension coming into play. I'll just very quickly relate a story where when I dramaturged Pichet Klunchun, this critically acclaimed Thai contemporary choreographer, and he was working on a choreography where it required his dancers to do very physical contact improvisation, based on traditional Thai form, right? The first few times during the rehearsals during the special studio times where they were experimenting, the younger dancers kept doing this to apologise before they would do the content improv, because they were literally touching. And in one of the biggest tenants of traditional Thai performance is that there is absolutely no physical touching. Even when a couple showing love is always shown in a distance with just the hands, or you touch your own heart but never touching. So it was getting very frustrating for all of us, including Pichet, right, because everyone was being too polite. Everyone's too, too polite and everything. He exploded, he had a series of very violent outbursts where he was getting angry with dancers, dancers kept apologising more, because they have made him angry, it was a very difficult position for me too, because trying to juggle everything. But these to me, the real sensitivities of dramaturging different cultures, the intercultural dramaturgy, especially when it comes to this realm where the two of you have

boldly gone to intimacy, eroticism, and the naked performing body or the performing naked body, right. Maja has actually talked about stripping and becoming,

[02:20:35]

Guy Cools

Maybe this is a good moment, also timewise to open it up, and also try to create these links between the two conversations. I was just reflecting that there's something about the quality, which I think is also just about the time investments that there wasn't before and that Sara and Pupe and Maja and Nia I've met before several times, now opening up to each others. And that maybe there's also allowed some seed planted for after these dialogues continue. And I recently had a similar experience last week where I was invited as a participant in Canada. And we also had several conversations before we went online. And as a result, I mean, the feedback we got also felt both more specific and more deeper into topics then when this would have been just the first time we met in this environment. So I think it's a just the process of preparing it. I think is something that is for me also an important thing. And then picking up with Maja said there's maybe this connection between stripping and becoming in the sense that is becoming accumulation, or is it taking away layers and like peeling the onion and becoming more like naked in this but it is another parallel that I felt in both conversations, although each is so specific. I think Maja said at the end of the conversation with Nia that it's walking with is very much about adjusting your tempo and your rhythm and and Sara and Pupe were also talking about yeah, how do we synching to each other literally, like in front of the screen and the camera and trying out this reenactment as a way of dialogue? So maybe this is my question to all four of you. Because it's also in my own reflection a very important thing. How do you do that as a dramaturg accompanying somebody else's work? This notion of sinking in, of adjusting your rhythm without losing yourself for instance completely in this?

[02:23:03]

Maja Hriesik

Well, if I can. Well, this second part also brought in the question of putting yourself in the game also a non-stripping yourself because often by accompanying certain research or questions, one can stay very much in the safe ground as a dramaturg. But what I loved here was going straight into a very intimate and disclosing type of connection also by getting in a different time, pace and the whole so being there as I think Pupe said that you could see how the thoughts were formulated and then erase and add. It also, you would allow the other one to enter also your cerebral way how you cope with it, but you are there putting yourself as well, in the same way exposed with your own body, and that I find it very interesting continuation of this relationship, and what you put in what you risk or what you disclose.

[02:24:24]

Sara Vanderieck

I can relate to that, in general, not only in this practice where I literally put my body up front, normally I don't do it verbally, I accompany other artists putting their bodies up front. And for me with time, something that becomes very important to my practice, or I start to name it, it's not that it wasn't like that before, but I name it more and more is this game we play with like, I think there is a part of you that needs to look in the mirror very terrifically, to be able to be a dramaturg. You know, you need to focus on who you are, what your cliches are, what your taste is what your distaste is, like, all these elements

that form your you, the better you know them, or the better I know them, I will speak for myself, the better I know how to accompany somebody else, because of course, my preferences and my cliches and my taste is not necessarily important to the trajectory of the artists I'm accompanying, we can have a really close connection artistically. In which I am using only 5% of my private universe that is so important to me. And these 5% of mine can be super important for the trajectory of other artists, like the meeting prepared I have is like we connect on a lot of levels and then you don't really have to correct yourself very much into that risk taking because there's a lot of space that is in connection. In other processes, I noticed that the tactic of slowing down and asking myself okay, but is this something you want? Or is this something that is interesting for this process is helping me to work along the artists I'm accompanying. So sometimes it's about this risk taking of putting something out that is fragile to you or that feels private to you or to share not knowing; not to take the position of the dramaturg, who knows but to take the position of the one who is searching also. But sometimes I find that it's also correcting your ego and your needs for your material to end up in this world. Because you are not the one creating you are co-creating but it's not your work.. If you want to make your work, make your own work. So that's a game with experience that I consciously apply more and more in my practice.

[02:27:23]

Nia Augustina

Maybe for me, I said that I feel in a way uncomfortable, but in a way in another way like more intimate with you guys because maybe the intimate things comes from that I realise when I was watching that you both give trust to me personally as spectator with those private — in our construction — is a private things. So I think that's also in the dramaturgical concept. The trust is also there within us as dramaturge, and also the artists and also the community around. So yeah, I think that's really reflecting also that concept, intimacy and private intimacy and trust. So yeah, I think that's really great. Thank you.

[02:28:41]

Sasapin Siriwanij

I think what is already shared by Maja and Nia are already very enriching and I really agree with everything. I would just add an aspect properly only particularly from my community that the trust is very important. But in, in this way where there's a lot of a tendency for doubt, self doubt in my community in my society at the moment, I think for for many reasons, and sometimes a dramaturg, or working serving, dramaturgically means being, having this trust or being this platform for trust that the artist can boost his or her self trust, by having a dialogue with you, and also trusting your own instincts. So it's like continuing from what Sara said, it's balancing between putting your ego out there, but also, you have to know, what are like, the right instincts or the right knowledge — I'm not sure I'm not even sure if it's knowledge but more like the right instincts, intuitions, that you know is good and useful and you trust that in yourself, and then feed that back to the artist. So that's one about trusting. So there's, there's also just saying there's both sides of not putting yourself too much out there, but also giving yourself space as well. So there's like this constant balance between these two. And also, I feel like it's quite important to, to help, to accompany the process using your mind, and then your body, and then back to your mind. Because with your mind, you look and you think and you have concepts and ideas and criticism and many things. But then if you approach the work or try to understand the work with your body, I think you'll feel different things. And in order to not lose yourself, as we posted at the

beginning of this session is coming back out, after you put your body in there coming back out, and then use your brain, your mind again, to look at what just happened. So I think this kind of keeps in check that to know that you always have these at least two tools of the mind and the body to work, to interact with the work.

[02:31:07]

Guy Cools

There's a beautiful comments from Jaclyn in the chat, which not going to read because it's quite long, but it's about the tension between again, the intimate and erotic and the being naked versus the undressing. And she brings in another word that kind of somehow also creates this link between the becoming and undressing or the nakedness. That is revealing, no. I think a lot of processes of artistic becoming, our processes of slowly revealing ourselves as artists in relationship to the world and, and then how do you accompany that process of revealing so that yeah, that's first of all, it's possible. But also that then the sharing of this revealing is also to hold the space for that and the support for that. So to me, it's a conversation. So it's obviously a question. So maybe just to add on that.

[02:32:21]

Lim How Ngean

I just want to add on to what we've been talking about in terms of the similarities of the two dialogues, right. And this thing about being alongside nudity, intimacy, it brings me then for me in a way that all four of the speakers today, the two dialogues, actually, in many ways touch on the idea of vulnerability. Sara brought up a little bit about that, when she talked about how she as dramaturg only reveals or is only invested 5% of her personal time or personal or personality or the personal aspect into the world, whereas the artist is probably putting in 100, if not 90%, right of that works. And that is where for me the interesting thing about vulnerability come from. As a very short example, the experience of one of my first dramaturgical projects where a dancer broke down in front of me and said, why are you pushing me and asking me all these questions? It's really making me so nervous about this project. I felt bad. I didn't know how to — I was young well, in terms of the work I was young, this was 10 to 15 years ago. I apologised and I thought oh dear, am I gonna have to do some serious counselling here? But it also showed me that yeah, that if the choreographer, the dancer is willing to take the journey with me and be vulnerable, usually I think something good will come out of it. And I think, my question, there is the question, actually, to, for viewers and even to Guy, how do you balance that respect for that vulnerability? How do you also try to make use of that vulnerability to strengthen whatever dramaturgical direction you're trying to help with? I think it's something that I want to learn how to do well, because at the end of the day, whether you like to hear it or not, sometimes the dramaturg does have to play the role of the counsellor and the private nanny to a certain extent, but how do we then always bring it back to the professional, which is difficult, because the personal for an artist is also where the artistic come from, right? So here as dramaturgs, we are saying we are objective, we are the third eye, we are standing away neutral, Sara made a face, which I also agree, there is no complete neutrality, because we bring along our politics, our politics, our own activism, everything baggage, as Nia says, how do we also then temper that with saying, okay, the dancer is at this point where this dancer is vulnerable? But actually, there's a lot of good in it, how do I make use of it? How do you balance that? Anyone to start.

[02:35:48]

Sara Vanderieck

Maybe I will explain my face. Because it's the worst aspects of my character, you can read everything on my face, sometimes it's nice, sometimes not at all. I try not to take that position. I try to put myself in as much fragility as I can myself within the process. So of course, within a creation process, there are personal issues on the table, and there are people panicking, sometimes blocking, and it's something to work through. But I, myself, can be in that same position, I can also be receiving elements coming from the rehearsal space are from the stage that blocked me. And that put me in a point where I have no idea how to deal with it. And what I tried to do is to, to stay present also in that feeling, so not to take the position of the one who is going to solve all the problems and to explain everything. But again, also in this, what I was trying to share before, within the big question of is what I am doing at the surface of this creation, not only of the artists creating but the creation in general, like if my personal private panic would be blocking the whole thing, then I might hide it. Also, it's a choice also what to share and what not to share in the working space. But yeah, I try to be very much in the moment, I try to be very sensible. And I tried to share my own fragility. without it becoming the first element in the space. Of course, the creation is not about me. But that's how I try to deal with it. And so I'm never neutral, I don't have the ambition to be neutral.

[02:38:20]

Lim How Ngean

Neutral is such a it's an overrated word, especially in dramaturgical efforts. Anyone else would like to contribute? I like to hear from how people deal with this vulnerability fragility like in a light was I will say that it is two ways

[02:38:50]

Sasapin Siriwanij

Um, I think for me, whenever I serve an artist in a dramaturgical way it is usually coupled with working as a producer, or something like that. So in many times, I think I expect myself and also other people in the production expect me to be the mother, somehow, like what Sara says she, she wouldn't be, but I feel like I don't know if it's a mistake about my own perception, but I feel like many times, I do have to act as the space of embracement of many things. Although I would not be the person who say what's right and wrong, but if something sensitive, or emotional or vulnerable takes place, and I feel like I will take care of it somehow does not mean that I will fix it, but it's seen and acknowledged in the space. And I think maybe that's a good start. And to not go and fix it right away. But start with acknowledging it and letting the other person know that you acknowledge that this happens. And then my philosophy for many things in life is that if you don't already can't think of what to do, then it's time to stop thinking. So go away for a bit and give yourself the time and when you know what to do, you will come back. You will be able to think when it's the right time to think and if you cannot, then it's time to stop and go away. But then kind of I think it's making it clear for everyone that okay, this is seen this is heard, but we don't know what's going what's going to happen with this let's let's go away for a bit and then we come back together when when we know when somebody has an idea of what to do about this probably not from me, but also maybe from the actor or the director.

[02:41:03]

Lim How Ngean

Okay Guy, is there something you want to say?

[02:41:06]

Guy Cools

Yeah, just wondering whether — I'm happy to continue the conversation, but I also think we have to slowly come to a close I understand very quickly so yeah, that's why I was so just want maybe to invite Maja and Nia if they want to add something and allow us to wrap it up like that.

[02:41:23]

Maja Hriesik

I don't want to repeat what was already said because there were so many layers of this talk but I thought of another one the relational pops up into my mind that we were talking so much about dramaturgy in relation to other body, we started there in relation to becoming this element of not being there alone without a context of that communication is crucial. So, it's not about I like that there is this shift in talking about dramaturgy from certain rules that work out because when I was starting, when I was a student of dramaturgy, we will start with rules. How work is composed and what are the model dramaturgy. So, in that sense, I am feeling comfortable that it is moving towards this kind of talk I mean that you cannot take away this particular connection to a particular collaborator and yourself from it of course, in relation towards yourself in that very moment that is happening.

[02:42:46]

Nia Augustina

Yeah, I think for me, back to what we already have in the conversation that for me, dramaturgy is as a dramaturg to be working alongside with the choreographers and dancers. So, I think embracing the vulnerability also the face of that I agree with what has been said that we can take care of that, but maybe we cannot really fix that, but we can taking care of that so care is one of the act that we can or approach that we can do. And also, I think related to the subjectivity and objectivity I think we all have to embrace our subjectivity, it is really great to have a subjectivity. But just conscious about that. So I think the dramaturgy also has to do with the consciousness and consciousness is part of that.

[02:44:16]

Guy Cools

If you allow me I kind of add to that also, I was asked to kind of wrap up in going back to the beginning of the conversation and reminding a couple of things that I think were important. One of the things I really valued today was the specificity because sometimes when we have these meetings to talk about our profession, we stay always, like, general level. And I remember Maja and Nia starting the conversation with talking about Asia, Europe, Indonesia, Slovakia, I mean, these are already much too large entities. And inside, there's a lot of diversity and specificity. And I think the four of you by sharing this, like their own practice, but also in dialogue with each other, prove that there's always about this subjectivity and specificity in the end. I give my own example, like, also, Europe is not a homogeneous entity. I mean, I grew up in Antwerp, but I spent a big part of my professional career in Ghent. These are two cities, they're 60 kilometres apart, there's a river in between. And since the Middle Ages,

they've been competing politically, economically, culturally, and you can't have two artistic communities that are more different. I mean, in my experience like that. So to go back to that reality that every context is very unique, and how we relate to that context is also our so this will be the first part. The second part, which I think this, this, this, this morning, proven to me is the importance of diversity of dialogical practices. And we've seen them happening in the moment, and also has when we go into a dialogue with somebody else, that we have to adapt not only our walking rhythm and– but also forms of dialogue. And I've been experimenting in my past with some choreographers, we need to go on a walk to have a conversation. It's the only way we can do it with other choreographers. I mean, we send still handwritten letters across the world. Because the writing again, slows down or resonance. There's also different ways of doing that. And just this element of time that it's time and people also mentioning, like, if you go into a conversation, like in Google Docs, it needs time to get to a level of intimacy to a level of trust to a level of so the fact that we also that this event was part of a longer journey, I think was extremely important. And sometimes we get this in this because of the fasteners and okay, we do these online things, and then we go to the next thing, but it's all in the preparation and in the before and hopefully the after. And then the last thing that I wanted to say and also both on a personal level, I mean, thanking the Asian Dramaturgy Network and Centre 42 also on a personal level, I've become quite self critical. Like reflecting that the word dramaturgy, the notion of dramaturgy. And also the practice is very Eurocentric, or part of the European tradition, and trying to open up and this whole discussion about laku and finding other concepts in other words, that are raised to specific cultural context, I think is a big enrichment. And hopefully this was just one other step in creating this web of different practices that we can learn from each other and we can support each other in developing our own specificity in the profession that we have.

[02:48:18]

Lim How Ngean

Great, thank you. I want to personally also thank first Guy who has been very, very instrumental in helping me helping us to put together this amazing dialogue session. Thanks to Sara, Pupe, Maja, Nia for making this work. Very quickly. I just want to say that yeah, the conversations that happen between Sara, Pupe Maja, Nia took place what two months ago? Or, when they first met was about one and a half, two months ago. We were all new to each other. We didn't know what was going to happen. But they took it away. They ran with it. The two pairs ran with it. And I have to say that as a first time trying out a format like that, thank you so much. And well done, guys. I mean, there's a lot here, a lot here. And I'm so glad that this is on recording, because we need to view it again and again and again, to see where and what we missed out. There has been a lot happening, yeah. And I'm glad also that this has been just as productive for Guy, who is going to spend a little bit more time with us online. Hopefully, we can also learn more about these dramaturgical consciousness, as we always like to put it in ADN, yeah.

[02:49:49]

Lim How Ngean

So before we go, I like to also quickly flag up that this year from last year, we've had quite a few events, starting with the reviews that we did with our publications that were online. If you go to Asia Dramaturgs' Networks website, you will find that we've had documented quite a few of our meetings, conferences, proceedings rather, transcripts of everything we've done also, many of the reviews are based on these transcripts. And then this particular Bodies to Bodies Dramaturgies is the first of three

events that are happening where we are boldly and hopefully successfully trying out new formats of speaking, dialoguing, discoursing, whichever way right. So the other two events that are going to happen will happen on the 12th of March and the 13th of March, where we will be spending some time with artists. One, which is looking at durational and digital dramaturgy. Specifically, we'll be looking at a dance also but the body obviously is involved and that's for 12th March 2pm Singapore time. And then on Sunday 13th of March 3pm Singapore time, we're quite excited to be able to talk to the Asian Performing Arts Lab, APAL who is set up in Germany, in Berlin actually. And we'll be talking to the artists who've set up a really interesting little residency where they dedicate their residency spaces, or space to Asian born or Asian artists living in Germany. So on that note, I'd also like to quickly thank Yanling, Eugene and Jaclyn for helping with this quite a durational event in itself, yeah. And again, thank you so much, guys for sticking with us. We hope to see you again. I think that's all from us for tonight.