



SECTION 1:
ADVOCATING FOR PRACTICE
AS RESEARCH

INTRODUCTION TO PAPERS REPRODUCED IN SECTION 1

Part I starts with 'Knowing performance: performance as knowledge paradigm for Africa', first published in 2009 in the *South African Theatre Journal (SATJ)* and Mark's first published article to argue for the value of PaR. Mark had been using artistic practice as a mode of research from the start of his career as a scholar and teacher of theatre and performance in the early 1990s. The initiation of the MA Theatre and Performance course at UCT in the early 2000s stands as a key moment in the consolidation of processes for furthering PaR in dialogue with postgraduate students and colleagues based in South Africa. In 2006, Mark was one of the founding members of the Performance as Research working group within the International Federation for Theatre Research (IFTR), which held its first formal meeting in Helsinki that year. 'Knowing performance' came out of this international dialogue on PaR over the period 2001-2009, as well as from Mark's artistic practice as research in this period, which resulted in the theatre productions/projects: *The Clanwilliam Arts Project* (2001-2018), *53 Degrees* (2002-2003), *Onnest'bo* (2002-2006), *Rain in a Deadman's Footprints* (2004-2005) and *Cargo* (2006-2007).

The second article in this section, 'The difference of performance as research', was first published in 2012 in *Theatre Research International (TRI)*. To Mark's mind this 2012 article is a more refined, distillation of the ideas that he expressed in 2009. I (Alex) motivated for both to be included because as a PhD candidate and early career researcher, I found both useful in different ways.

The 2009 'Knowing performance' in the *SATJ* starts with a useful definition of performance, summarising key performance studies scholars' understanding of the term, but then extends their definitions to consider performance as a way of knowing. The article proceeds to synthesise, critique and put into dialogue philosophical discourse on knowledge production to challenge European and north American models of thinking that privilege the textual and the analytical in a split from the embodied, material and sensory. 'The difference of performance as research', published in *TRI* in 2012, offers a summary of the thinking from the 2009 'Knowing performance' article, but then moves on to more extended philosophical considerations of PaR.

As an undergraduate or postgraduate student starting out in theatre and performance studies scholarship, especially someone who is coming from a practical artistic background, the 2009 article offers an excellent introduction to what we mean by performance in performance studies and how performance might serve as a way of knowing. Critically the 2009 article is an introduction to performance and more specifically to performance as a way of knowing framed within an African, rather than European or North American, context. The article contests the hegemony of certain strands of European and North American scholarly lineages and expands the European and North American influenced field of performance studies with an African perspective.

Where 'Knowing Performance' is about the *why* of PaR, in his 2012 article 'The difference of performance as research', Mark delves more deeply into an argument for

how PaR serves as a way of knowing. In 'The Difference of Performance as Research', Mark proposes that PaR uses embodied repetitions over time and on micro and macro levels, in search of difference in the repetitions. The micro is the repetition of smaller actions, particularly in devising and rehearsing: "bodies, movement, sound, improvisations, moments" (Fleishman, 2011:30). The macro is the repetition of larger actions: "events, productions, projects, installations" (30). Mark draws primarily on Henri Bergson's notion of "creative evolution" (1944) and Gilles Deleuze's (and Félix Guattari's) interpretation of Bergson through the notion of difference and repetition (Deleuze, 1994; Deleuze & Guattari, 1987). Broadly this line of thinking proposes that living, in other words the ongoing making of the world, is enacted through repetitive action. Paradoxically, repetitive actions reinforce ways of being, behaviours and identities, but also inherently create an opening for change or 'creative evolution' in that no one action is exactly the same as any other. Every repetition is slightly, and sometimes even radically, different. Fleishman proposes that artistic performance, with its own repetitive nature, serves as a way of slowing down the speed of real-life daily repetitions, to make the differences between successive repetitions evident and thus available for more self-aware engagement.

The play on words in the title 'The difference of performance as research' is a key to understanding how the 2012 article works in relation to the 2009 'Knowing performance' and it sets up the possibility for further word play in the 2015 paper, 'Beyond capture: the indifference of performance as research'. The 'difference' alludes to how PaR differs from other research methodologies for learning and knowing, and its value as a way of learning and knowing, as established in the 2009 article. The 2012 article then builds on this 'difference' as a methodology, by highlighting the 'difference' between successive repetitive actions in everyday reality. Finally, there is a third sense in which we can understand the phrase 'difference of performance as research': this refers to how artistic performance as an activity differs from artistic performance *as research*. It is to this sense of the 'difference' that Part II contributes significantly as authors consider how they turned their artistic craft to serving their research interests.

Where the first two papers in Section 1 argue for what PaR can do and how; the last two papers in the section consider how PaR might be limited through the imposition of external restrictions and, related to this, how there is an inherent limit to PaR, which relates to the extent to which it is possible for us to account for what it does.

'Beyond capture: the indifference of performance as research' was a 2015 presentation Mark gave at the International Federation for Theatre Research annual conference. It discusses how – because artistic PaR is a creative, emergent, embodied and relational process – the knowledges and understandings it discovers exceed what can be pinned down through analysis and reflection. PaR is in this sense 'indifferent' to us as researchers. It is a relational process on its own trajectory, creating, evolving and producing a multiplicity of effects, while we as researchers try to keep up with it, tracking, observing and inevitably exhausting how much we can 'know' of what we have set in motion.

'Artistic research and the institution: a cautionary tale', is a paper Mark presented at the 2020 Arts Research Africa conference. This paper considers PaR from the perspective

of institutionalisation. It describes how the legitimisation of artistic research within the academy (the very thing the papers in Section 1 argue for) leads to it being bounded by measurable criteria, and to the instrumentalisation of the measurable criteria. This in turn allows artistic products to be recognised as research outputs so that the producers of the outputs can access institutional funding and advance their careers. In this process PaR becomes reduced to the same 'text-based' criteria as all research and researchers may fool themselves into thinking they are doing something innovative with their PaR, when they are in fact rendering it measurable in the same way as journal articles and book chapters 'count' as research. The point for Fleishman is that the value of PaR lies in its 'difference' and its 'indifference'. In other words the power of PaR as a methodology for learning, understanding, interpreting and being in our world is that it is different from other forms of research because of its embodied, creative, relational and emergent nature; and because as a process, it is indifferent to our accounts of it. PaR produces more than we can wrangle into neat metrics.

These critiques caution us to stay with the radical potential of PaR and not to instrumentalise its institutional, capital-driven recognition, nor to lose sight of how much it might surface beyond what we can anticipate or account for. Arguably, these cautions and advocacies extend to all forms of research in which the processes of learning and making are also practices: this can apply even to conventional ways of reading and writing. As Henk Borgdorff suggests, there is *phronesis* (2012:47), or knowing through doing, in all research activities. Attending to this, the practice of all research challenges us to stay at a constructive and ethical edge of research frontiers, for knowledges and ways of being that are more inclusive, just and full of potential beyond what we can measure or imagine.