

# ALEXANDRIA NOVA SEMINAR: TIME, TEMPORALITY AND ETERNITY IN THE ART OF DIRECTING ONLINE SEMINAR SAT 13 – SUN 14 MARCH 2021.

Registration at: <https://www.uniarts.fi/en/events/time-temporality-and-eternity-in-the-art-of-directing/>

## Introduction

Working with time – observing, sensing, manipulating and sharing it – is an essential part of the art of the director. The director works with time in the rehearsals, leading processes that build up during weeks, months and years. It is the responsibility of the director to “be contemporary”, that is to understand what meanings are present in a specific time and context. The director manipulates time in the performance with rhythm, structure and composition of time. Performance time is also a special kind of time that points to the lived past, and over time and space into eternity, as well as to the future. The transient now -moment that can be shared in theatre with the audience is at the core of the director’s work. On the other hand, theatre is a vanishing art form, the moments of theatre disappear as do our lives.

In this online seminar we will discuss time, temporality and eternity in theatre from many different angles. On Saturday, the program starts with a panel where the seminar speakers shortly present their perspectives on the topic of time. The first presenters in the program, *Pauliina Hulkko* and *Kevin Kuhlke*, deal with the time from broader theoretical perspectives and after them we have - as parallel sessions - the case-studies of *Davide Giovanzana* and *Mareike Dobewall*. The seminar day concludes with an open discussion where all the participants are invited to share and reflect. As evening program there is a concert “*Three paradoxes of motion*” by musician and scholar *Juho Laitinen* followed by a chance to hang out more informally in the Open Café.

On Sunday the program will focus on contemporary and political perspectives on time. The program starts with the presentation of *Anna Volkland* and continues – as parallel sessions – with the points of view of *Arno Vinkovic* and *Sanna Ryyänen*. After that there’s again open discussion. As the last content of the program Alexandria Nova network will present it’s work.

Throughout the seminar there are possibilities for the participants to talk and meet with each other more informally in the Open café.

***Welcome to share and discuss time together with other directors and theater makers!***

Seminar is organized by the Alexandria Nova network and hosted by Uniarts Helsinki, Theatre Academy. Alexandria Nova is a network of North European directing programmes that develops the art of directing and its pedagogy. Seminar is held in Zoom-platform and it’s in english. Please, register for more information and to receive your entrance link at <https://www.uniarts.fi/en/events/time-temporality-and-eternity-in-the-art-of-directing/>.

# Program

Times in UTC (For example: Helsinki UTC +2, Berlin UTC +1h, New York UTC -5)

## SATURDAY MARCH 13<sup>TH</sup>

11:30 am UTC Open café

12 pm UTC Opening of the seminar by director Riko Saatsi

Panel with the seminar presenters

1 pm UTC, 45 min:

Pauliina Hulkko (FIN): Minimal Means, Maximal Time: The Temporal Potential of Minimalism for Scenic Composition

*\*15 minutes break\**

2 pm UTC, 45 min:

Kevin Kuhlke (US): Navigating Rivers of Time in the Eternal Permanent Temporary of Live Theater

*\*30 minutes break\* + Open café*

3:15 pm UTC

CASE STUDIES (parallel sessions), 45 min:

Davide Giovanzana (IT/CH/FIN): Lehman-Trilogia. Directing an epos: time crash as rehearsal process, as theatre language, as dramatic structure

Mareike Dobewall (SE): Spatial temporality in site-sensitive creation of musical performances

*\*15 minutes break\**

4:15 pm UTC OPEN DISCUSSION (moderator: Riko Saatsi)

4:55 pm UTC Closing the seminar day

7 pm UTC Concert (30 minutes concert + Open café)

Juho Laitinen: Three paradoxes of motion

<http://www.tulkinnanvaraista.fi/juho-laitinen>

## SUNDAY MARCH 14TH

11:30 am UTC Open café

12 pm UTC Opening the seminar day by director Riko Saatsi

12:15 pm UTC, 90 min

Anna Volkland (GER): Time (pressure) in professional theatre work and how we'd like to work together

*\*15 minutes break\**

2:00 pm UTC

THE CONTAMPORARY AND THE POLITICAL (parallel sessions), 45 min:

Arno Vinkovic (EU/HR/BE): Political time and eternity in the contemporary performing arts

Sanna Ryyänänen (FIN): tba.

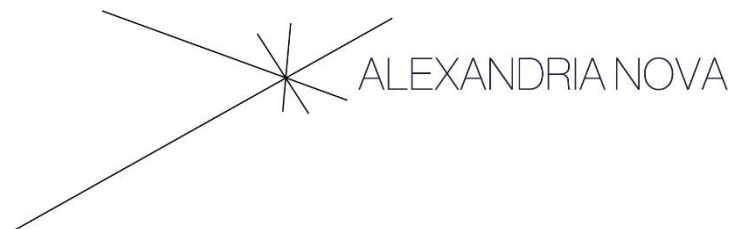
*\*30 minutes break\* + Open café*

3:15 pm OPEN DISCUSSION, 45 min (moderator: Riko Saatsi)

*\*15 minutes break\**

4:15 pm UTC Alexandria Nova Bridges, 40 min

4:55 pm UTC Closing the seminar



# Presentations

Saturday March 13<sup>th</sup>

PAULIINA HULKKO (FIN):

MINIMAL MEANS, MAXIMAL TIME: THE TEMPORAL POTENTIAL OF MINIMALISM FOR SCENIC COMPOSITION

*"The act of subtraction is: to invent content at the very place of the minimal difference, where there is almost nothing" (Alain Badiou 2007)*

In my presentation, I discuss directing, its art and practice, in relation to Minimalism, reduction and time. First, I examine how time and duration were understood in the historical Minimalism (approx. 1965–1972). Thereafter, I attempt to interpret the temporal aspects of Minimalism in terms of stage directing and scenic thinking today, the main emphasis being put on the scenic composition. The examination is carried out with relation to both theory and practice. The aim of the presentation is to focus on specifically time-related questions of composition and delineate a framework, i.e. means and techniques, for processing these questions on the stage – and in the spirit of Minimalism.

## *Biography*

Dr. Pauliina Hulkko is a director, dramaturge and artistic researcher who currently works as the professor of theatre work running an acting programme at Tampere University. Hulkko calls her performances 'material theatre', which combines various materials and different forms of expression. Her pedagogical and research interests extend from performance, dramaturgy, composition and the history of performance to questions of ethics and the performer.

KEVIN KUHLKE (US):

## NAVIGATING RIVERS OF TIME IN THE ETERNAL PERMANENT TEMPORARY OF LIVE THEATER

Reflecting on my experiences as a director and teacher of directing in light of my rudimentary understanding of Time as a concept led me to arrange Time into four different but intersectional categories; Horizontal Time, Vertical Time, Theatrical Time and Chronological Time. For a director these four categories exist as different rivers that are constantly running parallel to and periodically intersecting with one another. How an audience experiences each river at any moment depends partly on how a director frames its relationship to the other rivers that flow through the production and dramatic narrative. Learning how to navigate, shape and make use of these rivers to create “meaning” on stage, along with learning how to create the liberating illusion of timelessness for the actors within the rehearsal process, are important skills for a young director to develop.

This talk will examine the parts of the directing process that reside in each of these four categories, how they interface and how they can be used to create meaning and dimensional depth inside the constant present tense of live theater. I will draw on examples of how I have worked with them when directing a production of *The Bacchae* and while preparing to direct *Three Sisters*. It will also include a description of how I use Time oriented improvisations based on Six Viewpoints and the Afro-Haitian dance form *Yonvalu* to alter the actor’s relationship to Time as a way to enhance their creative process.

### *Biography*

Kevin Kuhlke - is an Arts Professor and former Chair at NYU’s Tisch School of the Arts' Department of Drama, specializing in acting, directing, improvisation, and physical theatre. He acted with, among others, Anne Bogart, Robert Wilson, Mabou Mines, and The Builders Association, Directing and acting work includes over fifty productions in various venues including The Atlantic Theater Company, Seattle Rep, The Public Theater, Lincoln Center, La Mama, PS 122, Franklin Furnace, The Huntington Theater Company, Theater for a New Audience, Boston Center for the Arts, The Atlas Center for Performance and New Media, Danspace, The Reykjavik City Theater (Iceland), New York Museum of Modern Art (MOMA), Los Angeles Institute of Contemporary Art (LAICA), American Repertory Theater (A.R.T.) Institute, Moscow Arts Theater Institute, and International Theater Festivals in Warsaw, London Institute of Contemporary Art (ICA) and Baltimore (TNT). His play *Winesberg; Small Town Life* was produced at the Perseverance Theater. His play *My Eyes, Your Eyes* and his adaptation of *Salome* both with original music by Cynthia Hopkins were produced at Tisch. His Huntington Theater production of *O,Pioneers!* was televised nationally by American Playhouse P.B.S. He has taught master classes in acting and directing in Greenland, Cuba, Denmark, Germany, Holland, Switzerland, England, and in several American graduate training programs including CalArts, Naropa, and A.R.T. He trained with, among others, Jerzy Grotowski, William Esper and Mary Overlie. He is affiliated faculty with NYU Abu Dhabi and the Icelandic National Theater Conservatory. He is a former director of the Tisch Experimental Theater Wing, the founder and director of the Tisch International Theater Workshop (ITW) Actor Training program in Amsterdam, The Tisch Actor Training Program in Berlin and the International Theater Workshop in Iceland.

DAVIDE GIOVANZANA (IT/CH/FIN):

LEHMAN-TRILOGIA. DIRECTING AN EPOS: *TIME CRASH* AS REHEARSAL PROCESS, AS THEATRE LANGUAGE, AS DRAMATIC STRUCTURE

How to direct an epos? How to keep the freshness of the work with the actors when the rehearsal process last three years? How to keep the interest of the spectators when the performance last almost 4 hours?

How to give the feeling to the spectators that the performance they are watching is not simply a show but that they are actually experiencing something crucial about the reality in which we live in?

By focusing on the notion of “time crash”, in the sense of several temporalities colliding or co-existing simultaneously, this presentation will discuss the theatre project Lehman-trilogia premiered in August 2020 at Espoo City Theatre. It will explore the presence of “time crash” during the rehearsal process, in the performative language and in the narrative as theatrical solution. “Time crash” follows the discussion of hybridization of work culture, of fragmentation of the acting process and how to re-consider Aristotelian drama in a post-dramatic theatre landscape. Eventually the presentation will discuss if the notion of “time crash” could be considered as methodology for structuring the rehearsal process, directing the actors and for triggering spectator’s attention.

Lehman-trilogia is a co-production between the Finnish National Theatre, Espoo City Theatre, Tampere Workers’ Theatre (TTT) and Teatteri Metamorfoosi. The performance included only three actors (Timo Torikka, Juha Sääsä, Jussi Lehtonen) and a musician (Maija Ruskanen) who narrate 164 years of contemporary history, from 1844 until 2008, and give a human face to the abstract term of the economy and show how a dream became a monster eating itself.

The performance Lehman-trilogia (Lehman Trilogy) written by Stefano Massini tells the rise and the downfall of the Lehman Brothers, one of the most important and influential bank in the world. By following the saga of the three Jewish brothers, the play depicts the salient moment of the history of the modern America. It is therefore a multi-layered epos blending the history of the banks, the merciless laws of market, the building of the American dream myth and especially the transition towards the dematerialisation of the work.

More info:

<https://espoonteatteri.fi/en/performances/lehman-trilogy/>

<https://www.metamorfoosi.com/lehman-trilogia>

<https://www.facebook.com/watch/?v=429001628469916>

### *Biography*

Davide Giovanzana is an Italian and Swiss theatre director, theatre teacher and researcher based in Helsinki, Finland. He has been working in several countries with different theatres and theatre academies. He has concluded his doctoral artistic research in 2015 at the Theatre Academy of Helsinki, Finland. His doctoral thesis *Theatre Enters!* investigated the phenomenon of play within the play and the dimension of the self-representation.

In 2017 he received the title of Honorary Professor of the Latvian Culture Academy.

From 2017 to 2019 he has conducted a post doc artistic research, *The Imagination of Violence*, examining the representation of violence in the everyday life.

In 2020 he was nominated visiting professor in artistic research at the Theatre Academy of Helsinki.

In 2021 he will start working as Lecturer in Acting at the Tampere University.

MAREIKE DOBEWALL (SE):

## SPATIAL TEMPORALITY IN SITE-SENSITIVE CREATION OF MUSICAL PERFORMANCES

Spaces have their own temporalities but creating performances we too rarely use this site-specific quality. In this presentation I will share how I work with the temporality of a space, and how the consideration of space-specific temporality contributes to the creative process in performance creation. Based on the site-sensitive practice that was developed over the past five years, I will share methods that help bringing more awareness to the temporality of a space and that contribute to a unique spatial experience for the audience.

Each space holds its own time. When working in a site-sensitive way the specificity of temporality has to be considered in the creative process. In my spatial musical performances, the attention to the unique temporality of a space guides the musical composition.

To raise awareness for spatial temporalities, a sensitisation is needed. The process to learn a space's temporality starts from "tuning in". This form of attention is related to listening. The sensing of space-specific time is addressed by a method that I call "arrival". This is a conscious encounter with what is already present in the space. The "arrival" also helps to choose consciously what of the outside acquired energy to bring into the creative process. Space-specific time is shaped by the architecture, volume and materials of the space. In my musical work this becomes evident in the reverberation and in other ways the space reacts to different sounds, like frequency-dependent reflection. The temporality of a space can demand for a certain timing and rhythm. Attention to spatial temporality leads to a space-caring way of working. The performers explore their material in dialogue with the space. The acknowledgment of the temporality in turn supports all elements that are in active negotiation with the space. This stimulates a relational temporality that respects the ground-time of the space. When using these methods spaces are recognised as co-creators.

### *Biography*

Mareike Nele Dobewall is a director and scenographer. Since 2017 she is doctoral candidate at Stockholm University of the Arts. Her research explores the scenographic potential of acoustic sound in site-specific performances. She creates spatial musical performances purely acoustic, with live performers in a site-sensitive way. Her recent work has been at Reykjavík Opera Days (IS), Theater Freiburg (DE), Instituto Cultural Cabanas and Laboratorio de Arte Variedades (MX).

## EVENING PROGRAM (CONCERT OF 30 MINUTES + OPEN CAFÉ)

### JUHO LAITINEN: THREE PARADOXES OF MOTION

Juho Laitinen is a musician and postdoctoral researcher with a particular interest in the avantgarde practices of the 1960s. His main instrument to pursue this investigation is the concert series "Tulkinnanvaraista". Currently he is involved in a production of Cornelius Cardew's large-scale music theatre work "The Great Learning".

His performance at this time reflects on the three paradoxes of motion presented by Zeno of Elea, the pre-Socratic Greek philosopher who lived in the 5th century BCE. They all deal with infinity, which ties them together with the theme of this seminar.

To illustrate, he shall perform three musical works by Giacinto Scelsi, Takehisa Kosugi and himself.

<http://www.tulkinnanvaraista.fi/juho-laitinen>



Sunday, March 14<sup>th</sup>

ANNA VOLKLAND (GER):

## TIME (PRESSURE) IN PROFESSIONAL THEATRE WORK AND HOW WE'D LIKE TO WORK TOGETHER

In (hopefully) a mixture of lecture and also more interactive parts, we will focus on time as a very precious and influential production resource that shapes every process of creating a new theatre work: the form in which we're working together and the kind of 'product' itself. The amount of time given is surprisingly often unregarded as an important factor for creating theatre works – while it decides on how directors/theatre makers can organise the mode of practice, on how the relationships of the people involved can be formed or can develop and on the hierarchies that will emerge among them. So who found out or decided that 6 or 7 or 8 weeks (the usual time frame for rehearsals in German city theatres) for each theatre production should be enough? Why is this crucial factor 'production time' not negotiable for most theatre makers? (And which processes are included in 'production time'?)

There's for sure a strong interrelationship between (short) time given and the pressure that is felt and acted out (often by the responsible director) during the production and especially the rehearsal process.

But there's an institutional production logic: A fixed time frame (as in most theatre institutions) asks for „efficient“ ways of production – and „efficiency“ will be achieved most likely through bureaucratic forms of organisation with i.a. split of labour, authority given to special positions and defined rules. On the other hand, collectivist forms of working together with the ideal of equality of each individual involved in the working process need lots of time. Collective work and time pressure are contradicting. Also a collective can't be established quickly, it needs shared experiences, its own (hi)stories.

The idea is to reflect on the expert knowledge and thoughts of the participants with time given and needed in production and rehearsing processes and for developing good working relationships. We could ask: Is there anything good about having „too little time“? Is there such a thing as having „too much time“ in theatre work?

The background for these 'explorations' and discussions will be a brief introduction to models of working collectively (also in directing) and the younger theatre history, especially the so called „Mitbestimmung“ (co-determination or worker participation) in public German theatres in (former) FRG and GDR. These former attempts to work together differently, in a sense of democracy and with strong personal, but shared commitment were often evaluated as „failed“ – because theatre „as art“ would not work out with „average commonsense decisions“ made by a group, but rather it would need the strong, visionary and uncompromising authorship of one artist (namely the director). Another 'truth' is that „strong“ directors can rehearse faster. I'd like to offer a frame to discuss the meanings of slowness for alternative ways of creating theatre work together – and how to demand the time needed.

Designed for all theatre makers who are interested in questioning working practices and institutional structures.

## *Biography*

Anna Volkland studied Dramaturgy (diploma 2009, with a thesis about „theatre without stage“) and Dance Studies and worked as a dramaturg for dance, theatre and interdisciplinary experimental theatrical forms. Since 2014 she’s also a theatre scholar with research focus on Institutional Critique in German state theatres since the late 1960ies and was research associate at Berlin UdK until 2020. There she was also co-initiator of the biennial symposium „Performances of [femininity] in the Performing Arts“ (2016, 2018, 2020, tbc.) or since 2017 co-host of the qualification programme Artisit Training for professional theatre makers in (Berlin) exile. She taught at Berlin University at the Arts (acting theory, theatre history, extended critical performance analysis or interdisciplinary artistic practise) or for example at the directing department at Hochschule für Schauspielkunst „Ernst Busch“ Berlin. Some more information (until 2019) @ <https://www.udk-berlin.de/en/people/detail/person/show/anna-volkland/>

ARNO VINKOVIC (EU/HR/BE):

## POLITICAL TIME AND ETERNITY IN THE CONTEMPORARY PERFORMING ARTS

In the theoretical framework I adapt the economic/design policy of planned obsolescence in the field of the political narrative represented in the contemporary performing arts. My initial curiosity came from watching recent performances which covered the issues associated with the Me Too Movement, Black/All Lives Matter Movement, Anti-immigrant movements, Anti-Lockdown protests, Climate protests and other similar political protests or social movements whose aim to influence stakeholders at different levels in changing certain policies. In the variety of performing and nonperforming formats I have noted the directing decisions which tried to merge the narrative of the piece with the current political/social movements. I will put this into perspective and try to understand the context and the consequences of these directing decisions. Question which I will address are: 1. Does mentioning certain political issues and social movements in contemporary arts has any political significance or are they just fashion? 2. What is the historical perspective when approaching these phenomena and what does the current approach provide – can Ibsen’s Nora be considered today a #metoo superwoman or has the audience just received a bad cocktail of unharmonized narratives? 3. Will the covered topics be soon obsolete and what are the mechanisms of making them last for eternity? In this presentation, my starting point is the definition of the political time as the directing decision of placing the main narrative into a certain political context. Moreover, I will follow up on the theoretical framework by including the practical examples from my completed works and present my directing decisions in setting up the political time. After the presentation there will be a time for a short discussion.

## *Biography*

Arno Vinkovic is working as a Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms Project Manager in Brussels. He completed his MA degrees in philosophy, sociology and political sciences at the University of Zagreb, University College London and Bauhaus University. While working in numerous governmental and non-governmental

international organisations he researched, edited publications, initiated and managed projects covering the topics of education, new media, creative industries, civil engagement and human rights. He founded a theatre group where he has written and directed award-winning plays that merge his artistic approach with politics, humanities and social sciences. Before becoming a Global Cultural Fellow (University of Edinburgh), he worked in numerous national and international theatre projects in Croatia and Germany. He thinks politics is the ultimate performance art.

## ALEXANDRIA NOVA BRIDGES

The Alexandria Nova network explores what the art of directing is and how it is taught. The project, to be implemented in 2019-2022, will provide chances to students, teachers and professionals in the field of directing to share their thinking and knowledge across national borders. This is central to the development of the art form, as in many countries study programmes are very small.

In this Q&A -session the networks members share their thinking behind the project and summarize their concrete goals. They will also discuss with the participants about the role of international collaboration in developing the art of directing and it's pedagogy.



With the support of the  
Erasmus+ Programme  
of the European Union



More information about Alexandria Nova:

<https://alexandrianova.eu/hey-hae-hei-hallo-hej-hoi-labas/>

<https://www.uniarts.fi/projektit/alexandria-nova/>

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