

Periodic Program Evaluation Report

1. Study program:

Master in Scenography, all year groups/the program in general

2. Participants:

Workgroup

Sodja Zupanc Lotker (external) – leader
Henrik Treimo (external)
Ingvild Holm (teacher)
Phillipp Schulte (teacher)
Sunniva Solberg (prod. leader)
Ulf Knudsen (tech. director)
Ingunn Fremmerlid (study unit)

Student representative

Liam Alzafari (Alumni)

Administrative support:

Unni Anita Skauen (study admin, secretary for the workgroup)

In addition, teachers Karen Kipphoff and Jakob Oredsson, alumni Hazel Barstow and present student Ingvild Isaksen have been interviewed.

3. Topics/Focus areas for the evaluation

The department in dialogue with the evaluation panel decides if certain topics should be focused in the evaluation, for example:

- Working life relevance
- Professional/Academic content and organization
- Implementation of teaching activities and supervision
- Forms and methods of assessment

Specify chosen topics/focus areas here:

Professional/Academic organization and Working life relevance

4. Evaluation of the process and source material:

The department must facilitate evaluation panel meetings and ensure access to relevant information and documentation, such as:

- Study plan with descriptions of topics
- Teaching plans/schedules
- Literature lists
- Student evaluations
- Alumni surveys or other documented contact with work life/society
- List of staff/teachers connected to the program with relevant competence

Give a short evaluation of the process and source material here:

The evaluation workgroup has operated throughout spring 2020. We have based our evaluation on a series of meetings, interviews with teachers and students, experience of individual members of the workgroup as well as other available material. During our meetings we have understood that the leadership is very keen on this evaluation and hoping it will help strengthen this new program - that is seeing a third generation of students graduating now.

The members of the working group were all active. We had very fruitful discussions in the group. The dynamics of people working for the program and external people worked very well: it created a possibility to question but also to understand issues in depth.

We have worked mainly online due to Covid-19 situation. But we do not think it has posed great problems for us. The interviews and meetings were conducted on Zoom without any technical problems.

5. Overall evaluation of program – and teaching quality:

Comprehensive and overall assessment of the quality of the study programme, based on the topics emphasised in the implementation of the evaluation

Scope: Maximum 3 pages

The working group has not found any issues that the teachers and the leadership are not already aware of and the teachers were open to brainstorming about improvements of the program. Most of the issues that should be improved are about making things more precise, creating awareness and clarifications. For this reason, besides the evaluation we include our recommendations.

The leadership has invited us to focus on the ‘working life relevance’ topic, and this is how we structured the interview questions. Here we include all the findings, since this topic is deeply incorporated with the questions of structure of study, communication, or collaboration.

Areas of quality explanation:

The focus on the program is expanded scenography. This new field comes from new practices connected to spatial and performative artistic practices that include a variety of formats (theatre performance, performative installation, sound walks, light installations and many more). This field combines strategies of stage design, architecture, visual arts and contemporary performance practices. We do not know of a similar MA program in the world with such innovative and wide scenographic span.

The strength of the program is in the diversity of profiles of accepted students and the diversity of approaches, forms, and formats that they undertake. The students come from architecture, theatre, visual arts, choreography, and other fields. The forms that the student projects take also cover a large variety: large scale productions, site specific choreographies, exhibitions, public space interventions, sound installations etc. The diversity of the formats itself redefines the traditional notions of theatre and scenography. And this is one of its greatest strengths of the program.

The program is a pioneering platform for exploring the expanded scenography and its forms. The expanded scenography field is a developing artistic field. There is a growing interest in this field within academia (new books and journals published, conferences, networks etc.). There are also growing production possibilities: theatre festivals, venues and different museums are showing growing interest in the formats connected to expanded scenography. These can take the form of commissioned work, independent projects or accompanying events such as educational and audience development projects. But still expanded scenography is a growing field with limited attention to the public and financial and other resources. And the students coming out of the school should clearly understand the possibilities for professional work and be ready to be pioneers of a growing field. The existing system of theatres, festivals and museums in most countries is still based on more traditional ideas of forms and formats. For this reason, the

critical/theoretical/dramaturgical aspect of the field is crucial for the program (a). But also, basic tools that would enable students to have basic ideas how to organize, curate, seek funding etc. Or at least understand scales of possibilities in resources, funding, spaces (b). Basic technical skills are a necessity, too. (c)) So, the profile of the student is an independent artist, an artist that can conceptualize and execute his or her own artistic concept or a collaboration within a developing field, where there are a lot of possibilities but also a lot of unknowns.

The program is interconnected to foremost international theatre and art institutions, festivals, and schools, with whom major projects and workshops are organized. This provides students with extremely valuable international experience and future international networks. The program is very well positioned within the international scenography field.

The teaching staff consist of international, multidisciplinary, highly qualified group of internal and external teachers that provide the students with latest perspectives on scenography and performance theoretically, dramaturgically and practically; teachers that are able to lead the students in works in all kinds of spaces and performative situations; a unique staff covering multiple fields with extensive international experiences.

Collaboration with external institutions provides the students to make their final project in professional environments and to gain experiences and contact for their professional work. This is an extremely ambitious aspect of the program that requires a high involvement of the staff.

The social environment is incredibly positive for work in performance. The school is small, the town it is in is small and the students (also BA and MA in Performance) and teachers are in tight connections. The school environment is flexible and adaptable, perfect for artistic work in a newly formed field of practice. The program (as the academy in itself) maintains a high level of internationality regarding the student body as well as the staff.

Areas of improvement explanation:

The three areas that we find important for making this program even better are: communication, organization of the studies and collaboration. In all three areas we see possibilities to tighten, upgrade and make more precise different aspects of an already particularly good program.

COMMUNICATION Tightening and clarifying the definition of 'expanded scenography': the focus of the program and what the students will learn seems to be one of the most important steps at this point. It is important to keep the width of the possibilities but to make a clear focus. The idea of 'performative environments made through collaborations' based on three main teaching topics performance, space and collaboration seems to be the right direction for a school of theatre background. It is important to announce this profile also on the school's website and to make sure that the website states clearly that this program is about learning how to make your own performative environment project (dramaturgy, practice and theory) and not so much about acquiring traditional technical skills that can be acquired at many other schools; it should also include clear definition of

types of projects student will be able to do during and after the studies based on the acquired knowledge.

We also recommend making the web page a bit more artistic and inspiring to reflect the actual spirit of the program (if it is not possible to use different graphics on the web at least the text and the photos can be improved).

We also recommend clarifying and carefully communicating parameters and scope of the final project before and during the studies. During the studies there should be more communication among the students, but also with teaching and other school staff on these parameters and scope. This communication should be organized in pre-scheduled meetings, a few times during the studies to enable the whole team (all the students, teachers, and staff) to collectively agree on the plans, and procedures around the organizing of the project.

ORGANIZATION OF THE STUDIES It would suit the program to make the relationship between the 'term workshops' and the MA projects, the two main levels of studying, more precise. The variety of workshops – some of them being directly connected to final projects and some of them not – should be kept, but the number of workshops being directly connected should be increased. They could be connected directly to specific research of individual students but also more broadly include for instance a workshop on collaboration or a workshop on communicating the project (to collaborators, venues and grant givers – verbalization as an important part of dramaturgy of the project).

Learning to verbalize seems to be an important skill for the future in the newly appearing field both for the development of the content and for the acquiring of financial and organizational support. In that sense the program should also deal with the problem that the Critical Reflection of the Master project is written by the student before the finishing of the described project. The Critical Reflection (as a task to fulfill in the last term and that must be practiced for) is one tool to practice these crucial individual communication skills.

While the international aspect and its possibilities are beyond doubt, the program seems to lack grounding in the school itself and in Norway. More projects locally, at school and in the country would provide the students with another layer of important networks, but also provide them with firm ground during the studies. This is especially important in the case of international students that have moved to Norway specifically for the program.

We would also like to recommend a more structured system of group consultations around the MA projects: moderated student brainstorming, feedback sessions with a group of teaching staff, and possibly an approval meeting with the whole team, all teachers and administrative and technical staff. These steps will provide students with a firm timeline of development, deeper involvement into projects of both students and staff, and clarity of the organizational, financial, and technical possibilities for the project.

COLLABORATION Grounding the program more firmly into direct collaborations between the students within the program, but also with MA in Performance as well as the BA level, would be beneficial to the teaching staff and to the students. Collaboration is one of the key aspects of performance/theatre making and it is a skill that needs to be acquired.

Collaboration can also be one of the key aspects that makes this program different to visual art programs working with performative environments (sound, light, media installations) for instance. The program should invite students to do MA projects collaboratively, work with each other and utilize the working potential of fellow students. Program should also include more workshops where students of the specific generation of the program can work with each other.

Moderating more collaboration with BA students and MA in Performance students, common workshops and other events provides students with important exchange of knowledge and practice and provides them with contact for future collaborators. Acquiring possible partners for future work is usually one of the most important aspects of any schooling, and especially in theatre, and there should be suitable focus on it. Also, very clearly shared understanding of 'expanded scenography' between BA and MA students of both Scenography and Performance would provide for more firm connections between the programs and provide for 'ideological' basis of communication.

The teaching staff is working on creating a firm network of institutions suitable for collaboration on final projects. These collaborations can have a variety of possible relations with the institution - students can work on a project of the institution, institution can provide space for the student project, but there are more complex relationships also. In starting a relationship with an external institution, it is important to clearly state the needs and desires of all parties involved (the student, the program and the external institution). This clarity at the beginning should provide for a smoother collaboration process, and mainly clarity if the focus is on (student's research or the project of the institution). The program should follow the collaboration and moderate the relationship throughout the process more, and help the student learn how to communicate with the professional institution. The institution should have a clear idea that they are working with a student, that they are there to tutor them and guide them when needed. Ideally the institutions representative should be part of the project from early on, to follow the development. The collaboration with the professional world on the MA project might involve 'only' collaboration with a professional from the field and not the whole institution, since some of the student projects are fit to exist in institutions and some have features of independent art project that are made to exist outside of this frame, or directly include critique of institutions.

The program is unique, adaptable, open, and experimental. The first three generations were breaking the new grounds. At this point we find the tightening of individual aspects of communication, structure and collaboration needed to make this unique program grow to its full potential.

6. Quality areas:

Name 3 - 5 concrete areas

1. Novel artistic approach to scenography
2. International relationships to art institutions, festivals, schools etc.
3. International, multidisciplinary, highly qualified group of teaching staff
4. Collaboration with external institutions on student projects
5. The social environment

7. Improvement points:

Name 3 - 5 concrete areas

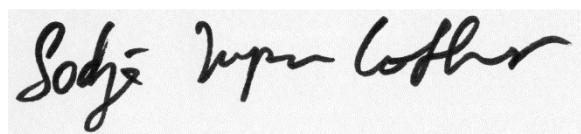
1. Communication of the focus of the program (defining expanded scenography and making it clear on the web)
2. Structure of studies (relationship of master project and workshops)
3. Collaborations (initiating more possibilities for collaborations between students, and with BA and MA in Performance; as well as making more precise the collaborations with institutions)

Date/Place:

May 8th, 2020

Prague, Czech Republic

Signature external program sensor:



Sodja Zupanc Lotker