

Summary of 9/28 discussion about integration of “practice” into program.

In General :

1. The question of Practice-as-Research: In the meeting, students showed a strong interest in including diverse activities that are not geared towards academic publishing within the program curriculum as well as its extra-curricular possibilities. However, it should be stressed that there was a wide agreement in favor of maintaining the program's focus on academic publishing and completing a written dissertation. In other words, students are not generally advocating a practice-as-research methodology for the program. Rather, what students seemed to aspire for is a way to complement the study program with a) a hands-on learning-and-research experience that suits theatre and performance studies' focus on corporeality and its investment in artistic/cultural production; and b) opportunities for students to acquire relevant skills, contacts, and experience that will benefit them upon graduation - whether within the context of the academic job market (which often demands “practical” theatre experience), or in alternative career paths.
2. What do we mean by “practice”: The conversation seemed to favor a broad conception of ‘practice’ - one that isn't necessarily focused on (embodied) art production. We recognized activities such as translation, curation, archiving, dramaturgy and community-organizing as no less “practice-oriented” (and no less interesting) than the better-recognized options of, say, directing, authoring, or devising a performance. So the question of ‘practice’ seems to have an important institutional dimension: being a theorist in a theatre, for instance, is also an instance of practical work. It might be therefore advisable to think in terms other than “practice” such as public scholarship, extra-academic work, applied theory, or more.

What might be done (Student and Faculty)

1. *Reaffirm and restate the already-existing possibilities of ‘practical’ work, by make the practical (M.f.a) courses available to students more visible, and more accessible.*
Perhaps compile a list of such available courses - and if necessary, work to expand such a list. (This applies immediately to courses at Hunter college and Brooklyn College, but the IUDC (meaning, other NYC universities and programs) should also be a part of the discussion.
2. Re-instate some students wish to conduct practical workshops as part of their teaching assignment. This can take the form of devising a performance, conducting an acting class (as is now the case), but also, perhaps, other, innovative forms of practice-as-pedagogy which have yet to be articulated.

3. Compile a list of students interested in doing practical work, which specifies the students' experience and interests.
4. Introduce the possibility of dance-focussed students to teach dance classes at CUNY dance programs (such as Hunter, Queens, Queensboro, and Lehman's).
5. *Introduce the possibility of acquiring credit points for 'practical work' as an "independent study" project.* This could be formulated through a discussion with a supervising professor, and students will provide theoretical and pedagogical context that makes the case for their activity to be regarded as ph.d-level learning, and awarded as such.
6. Formulate long-term relations with institutions producing theatre and/or performance work that places scholars-in-residence. (perhaps with the segal center? That is its stated mission, after all). What we can offer such institutions is our students intellectual labour (and capital), a connection with our students, contextualizing and theorizing their work and processes; building archives, organizing lectures, discussion plans, and lastly, publications. (Anything else?) What students will get is access to rehearsal processes, as well as institutional knowledge of production and artistic management process.¹
7. Search for funds: Some of such work might also be eligible for CUNY and other city funding. We should try and compile a list of relevant funding possibilities.
8. Follow Museums: Some relevant work might have been done between the Art history department and museums. We should inform ourselves about their processes and arrangement, and think about talking with museums directly, seeing the trends in performance.

¹ Possible Institutions/groups include: The Public Theatre, the Armory, The Wooster Group, HERE theatre, LAMAMA, PS122, Lincoln Centre, Bric, Chocolate Factory, The Assembly. We also thought of museums and the NYPL. We should communicate with these institutions to see what are some needs we might be able to accomodate.