Rehearsing Democracy: Enhancing Community through the Interdisciplinary Performance Improvisation Series *'Shared Agendas'*

Ali East (MPhEd)

University of Otago
New Zealand

Abstract

This article presents the inter-disciplinary improvised performance series *Shared Agendas*, an annual event at the University of Otago, Aotearoa New Zealand, as a vehicle for reinforcing effective democratic community interaction. I am referring to interaction that is inclusive, open, non-hierarchical, non-judgemental and socially responsive and responsible. In couching these inclusive spontaneous events as a form of academic meeting, where members work together to solve problems and find a common ground of understanding or agreement, I contend that the artists involved are practising the kind of socially concerned democratic process that we might wish for all groups, organisations or nation states worldwide. Dance therapist Adwoa Lemieux (1988) suggests that, within a danced improvisation, any difficulties and conflicts of interest are evident, physical, real, immediate and therefore immediately resolvable. In this form of community engagement, the conversation is directed towards co-operation, mutual sharing and communication between the performers, technical personnel and the viewers as active critical witnesses. Because of the intense engagement and preoccupation with the process by all participants, including the audience, this kind of performance meeting becomes what Schechner (1988) terms, a 'living entity' or microcosm of society. In describing this theatre of inter-relationship, I draw on the literatures of art and social justice theory, deep ecology, cognitive biology, somatics, perception psychology, education and dance in order to support this discussion.

Preamble

Around 20 years ago, as I was preparing to move to Dunedin from Auckland to take up my current position, I received a strange phone call on our yacht landline asking what I, as the new dance lecturer, was planning for Dance's slot in the Allen Hall Lunchtime Theatre programme. Having no idea what this was, I spontaneously announced that it would be called Visitations (since I thought my contract would be temporary), and it would be a totally improvised inter-disciplinary event (prompted by the kind of work I had been making and teaching) involving members of staff from across a number of science and arts disciplines and other local artists

(who I had yet to meet). And so what later became known as Shared Agendas—an annual improvised performance series—was born.

The name *Shared Agendas* came about when, a year later, I wrote a paper proposing this kind of cross-disciplinary activity as a legitimate alternative form of academic meeting (East, 1998). At the time, I was less concerned about the implications for social justice and *the practice of democracy* and more with how our spontaneous events might encourage deeper levels of cross-disciplinary understanding and collegiality amongst the academic community of performing arts.

We know that communities are created as people share common interests, goals and values and seek communion with each other in order to validate themselves as individuals and group members. In the case of *Shared Agendas*, we are critical thinkers, artists and educators seeking to further our art form and philosophical thinking—and to maintain our sense of community despite our busy teaching schedules and publishing obligations. We are researchers, some of whom are investigating artistic and educational aspects of improvised performance. As we seek to maintain a community of practice, we know that there are often deeply significant discoveries to be made from embarking on this largely non-verbal dialogue between artistic languages. These somatosensory realms have become the next frontier of dance research as we join forces with neurologists, perception psychologists and social justice theorists adding to dance's ever-widening academic sphere.

In this article I will contend that, in the words of artist Pablo Helguera (2011), "conversation [s, such as that between SA performers, are] the centre of sociality, of collective understanding and organisation" (p. 40) and that "opening a discursive space gives others the opportunity to insert their contents into the structure … [and] the freedom to shape the exchange" (p. 48). Similarly, Danielle Goldman (2010) contends that "the practice of improvisation is politically powerful as a mode of making oneself ready [for the active promotion of freedom, and] maintaining agency" (p. 142). As a dancer I am also aware of the body as a political site of knowledge and a contested place of personal ownership, freedom and power. In my view, rather than through military intervention or government decree, the body as a sensuous place of knowing is where democratic progress resides globally in the immediate future.

About Shared Agendas

I have co-ordinated the SA events since their inception and participated in every performance. While participants vary somewhat from year to year, a core of musicians and dancers have returned annually since Shared Agendas' somewhat accidental inception. They are comprised of staff and occasional senior students from the faculties of Dance, Theatre, Music and Design plus professional performers and visiting local and international guest artists. One interesting feature of the performances is that they are held each year over two consecutive days—our challenge being to treat each day's event afresh by exploring new material. New participants slot in and learn from regular members and, while the venue (a small teaching theatre with flexible seating) has remained consistent each year, the spatial configuration and scenographic elements change according to the whims of the participating student production team. While earlier events were structured as separate 'conversations' between selected dancers, musicians or technical staff, their names often drawn from a hat by an audience member, there has been a gradual loosening of the programme to the point where members simply show up, plug in or warm up and begin. In order to illustrate what may take place, I recount my memory of the most recent, May 2016, SA performance series.

> My colleague from Theatre Studies has opened today's event from a front seat in the audience with a spontaneous sermon about endangered species. I listen for a while then (completely unplanned) approach him on all fours, burying my head in his lap and roaring aggressively. He chooses to ignore me, and I eventually wander off the stage, which has now been entered by another dancer performing graceful 'humanoid' dance-like steps, runs and falls. The musicians, situated at all four corners of the stage, have begun a series of delicate interactions between them. Picking up on the dance action, the bass player introduces a strong rhythmic beat that draws more dancers into the space where we spontaneously build an ensemble of moves by borrowing, developing, repeating each other in time to the music … and so on.

Figure 1:   **Finding spontaneous agreement amongst *Shared Agendas* participants**
From left: Hahna Briggs, Alys Longley, Ralph Buck, Ali East, val smith.
Moving Communities Conference, November 2015. Photo: Chris Sullivan.

It would seem important also to mention the audience who come, some year after year, to witness and enjoy these events. While anyone is welcome they do not, in any way, represent a cross-section of Dunedin society. Instead, one might say they belong to the privileged culturally diverse middle class of the university's staff and student population. Their purpose in attending is based purely on personal interest and enjoyment—rather than any concern for democratic process. Yet, what they witness are dancers, actors and musicians with a wide diversity of physical abilities and ethnic backgrounds purposefully and playfully engaging with each other. Perhaps the subliminal message is that absolute freedom to choose does not necessarily produce chaos. That, where there is a common will, democracy will prevail—and all with very good humour!

Performing democracy

I named this article *Rehearsing Democracy* because it has always seemed to me that during this spontaneous participatory engagement with members of the university community we are modelling a way of being with each other that has all of the features of good governance, social responsibility and healthy community engagement. As we pursue respectful communication, there are, interestingly, virtually no explicit rules of conduct. Rather, these socio-cultural conventions evolve as part of the process and as we gather together moments before beginning

our performance. We may simply remind each other of the possibilities: allowing space for others to develop ideas; that doing nothing is a valid choice; that silence is also valid; that the technical operators are equal players who may choose to take lights out or move them at any time. Likewise, the videographer may film what he likes and even move around on the stage; musicians may dance, dancers may sing and actors may use a script from some other play. As dancers and musicians we exercise our right to follow or join with one person or another or to work alone, selecting from a common list of improvisational possibilities (such as repeat, develop, change, oppose or contrast, do nothing, be guided by a word theme, a scenographic prop or spatial arrangement or simply to follow our own somatic impulse or whim.

When taken to the extreme, absolute freedom to act without constraint or rules and even to thwart another's action could be considered to lead to rebellion or uprising. Here the ultimate unspoken agreement is to work together to find an outcome or resolution. Any extreme behaviour becomes only one of the actions that are taking place and may be diffused through being ignored or tactfully redirected by other participants. In a truly democratic process, elements of trust and support, cooperation and collegiality sit alongside provocation and discomfort or edginess while active engagement and dialogue are commonly stated agents of empowerment and transformation (Knight, 2015[i]).

Activities which stimulate the imagination invite new possibilities for 'performing' democracy. Bell and Desai (2014) cite dialogue, practice and performance, along with the establishment of conducive structures (such as, I add, SA events) and frameworks (such as critical race theory and global feminism) as key enabling factors for democracy. Wilhelm Von Rensburg (2004), in his editorial on *Social Justice – Education as Change,* suggests that while the perceived goal of social justice is equality, more specifically it is about full participation and inclusion of all. In her book *Dance in a World of Change,* Sherry Shapiro (2008) posits dance as a place to practice a "global aesthetics"—an ethical pedagogy that "moves beyond the individual or the self to connect to the other, recognizing the concreteness of an ethical existence in a shared world" (p. 262). As Shapiro attests, it is in the body that "our views of ourselves and others, our values and our manners of being are instilled" (p. 262). In other words, the body—the improvising, dancing, performing body—is, in itself, a powerful political site via which one may negotiate their life trajectory *with*, *around* and *through* other bodies and in the process practice, what might be called, a somato-political democracy of dance.

This is academic dialogue at its most intuitive and sensorial level, where there is no previously established agenda or, where the agenda is allowed to evolve spontaneously through largely non-verbal conversations between the artists. This engagement happens through the skin as a searching, sensing, feeling and sound-making practice. Its language is abstract, aural, kinaesthetic and visual and has its origins in fundamental animal neurological response—to sensory perception and pattern recognition. Neuro-scientist Antonio Damasio (1999) refers to our access to "subterranean levels of consciousness" (p. 319), and I confess that I have, at times, felt more plant-like than human during these exchanges. These multiple ways of exploring and understanding the world are akin to educationalist Howard Gardner's (1994) multiple intelligences. Gardner suggests that this kind of shared engagement in the arts can result in "communication of subjective knowledge between individuals through the creation of non-translatable sensuous objects [or gestures]" (p. 36).

Figure 2:   Intuitive somatic dialogue
During *Shared Agendas*, November, 2015. Moving Communities Conference event. Photo: Chris Sullivan.

In his seminal book *Democracy and Education* (1916), John Dewey wrote that "democracy is more than a form of government, it is primarily a mode of associated living, of conjoint communicated experience … where each [individual] has to refer his [/her] own action to that of others, and to consider the action of others [in order] to give point and direction to his [/her] own" (p. 87). He adds that true democracy is brought about by "combining increased individual freedom with a broader community of interest" (p. 87) or, we might say, the greater common good. A democratic process involves, he attests, the participation of members on equal terms; flexible structures decided on through interaction; and, importantly, an interest in a type of education that encourages social relationships and gives individuals control without introducing disorder (p. 99).

Playfulness and social responsibility

This interactive engagement is also characterised by playfulness—another axiom of this form of spontaneous performance activity. It is well recognised within early education that playfulness leads to discovery and is, I contend, as important for academic adults as for pre-schoolers. According to Madison (2012), to be playful means that it is safe to take risks, to act foolishly, to disregard any need for competence and to abandon competitiveness and self-importance. Gardner (1994) espouses a strong link between an individual's development through play and that of social responsibility when he states that "the play impulse [ultimately] becomes the art impulse … when it is illumined by a growing participation in the social consciousness and a growing sense of the common worth of things" (p. 166). In describing 'play' as "a free activity where one makes one's own rules" (p. 13) and where the performer is "author of his own actions" (p. 118), Schechner (1988) is linking play and individual freedom. While Dewey (1916) suggests that "work which remains permeated with the play attitude is art—in quality if not in conventional designation" (p. 206). It is part of any community building process. As one tunes their senses to the playful actions and sounds around them there is a diminishing of the ego-self into a merging of action/thought/sound/world, the result of which is often a kind of post-show euphoria that has been likened by writers, such as Francisco Varela (1999), to heightened spiritual awareness.

Figure 3:   Playfully reversing the viewer perspective
Participant Lisa Wilkinson (foreground) films the audience, val smith behind. Shared Agendas, event, Moving Communities Conference, November, 2015.

Working towards a common goal

In the SA events there would seem to be an optimum number of participants, usually around 10 or 12, beyond which things can get 'messy' and beneath which individuals have to work hard to keep the conversations alive. Likewise, Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi (1993) contends that there is an ideal sized group or 'social unit' within which members may practise "[working towards] a common goal, by doing what he or she knows best" (p. 286). The aim is making a difference to the group, company or community within which they live and work. In this working group (or "evolutionary cell", as he calls it), individual interests are merged with the best interests of humanity and life as a whole. In this way an "evolutionary fellowship" is established that has links with other groups and which models a way of working and being together (p. 287). Likewise, Suzi Gablik (2004) suggests that these working groups or "decentralised network structures" (p. 155), as she terms them, offer the possibility for artists to interact with each other and share information in

a democratic and cooperative atmosphere—becoming part of a bigger social network that transcends disciplinary boundaries (p. 153). The Shared Agendas group has been coming together to engage in a shared creative process for 20 years now. Some original members remain and many have changed from year to year. Guest 'players'—poets, sculptors, trapeze artists—have been invited in and their various artistic contributions have informed and shaped the work and expanded the group's capacity to work together. Fresh ideas add diversity and present new challenges and intrigue. There is a merging of group interests and a collective sense of working towards a common outcome—though this outcome may not be established from the outset, and only evolve as everyone works together and trusts that a resolution will be found.

When one of my colleagues first enters the space or initiates a musical riff, at the invitation of a patch of light introduced somewhere on stage, we are offering ourselves, opening ourselves up to a conversation. This may be taken up by others or allowed to exist as a solo until being replaced by something else. As participants adopt a state of 'alert attention' or 'heightened awareness' (Reedy, 1991), individual action is "at once intentional and reactive, causal and accommodating" (Blom & Chaplin, 1988, p.7). In their book *The Moment of Movement,* Lyne Blom and Tarin Chaplin (1988) write of an "organic emerging strategy that takes us forward in time, yet [which] only becomes articulated as we move" (p. 7). Members become a catalyst for each other—each bringing an individual perspective to the working process. Improvising dancer Michelle Distel (1995) adds, "With no pre-arranged cues … [the] demands [are] to stay alert, responsive and sensitive" (p. 42). Dance therapist and contact improviser Adwoa Lemieux (1988) writes of learning to trust this process and suggests that holding on to an agenda may narrow the focus and negate many possibilities. Within "a spectrum of 'appropriate and inappropriate' actions" (Reedy, 1991, p. 1) ideas may be floated and ignored and moments of shared interaction and agreement may involve everyone or one partner. In this democratic world, adaptation or change can happen instantly or slowly morph through time in the same way that life can be seen as ongoing and evolving, inconclusive and incomplete. The freedom to express change, to allow radical decisions, to work with uncertainty and to change plans in order to better serve the common endeavour (or, the overall performance) suggests an alignment with active democracy. The ability to express disagreement, to interrupt, or to be contentious without adverse repercussion, and then strive to find group consensus in a shared ending, makes these performances the ideal place

to practise being a democratic community. It is socially engaged art-making whose agenda is simply collaborative presence and 'atunement' in an atmosphere of individual freedom. The audience members are also free to shift their engagement between any number of simultaneous occurrences—and even to move into the stage space and join in, call out or to offer suggestions or critique. They become part of the co-production, as critical commentator, witness or reporter.

Finding a shared language

In order for communication to take place, social psychologist Michael Argyle (1992, as cited in Heim, 2003), points out that the inter-actors need a shared language and shared information, or shared ground. He adds that this shared ground is cumulative, that is, it builds up during the course of a conversation. Heim (2003) comments, "The logical content … is infused with and understood through the somatic, ethical and emotive qualities of the experience" (p. 196). According to Heim, spontaneous performative, imaginative, artistic acts provide a "'luminous clearing' in which motives, desires and obligations in the world can be compared, new values, subjectivities and ideas can be tried out" (p. 193). These, in my view, are moves towards the practising and performing of democracy. SA events are an opportunity to practice collegiality, to learn each other's artistic languages, or rather, to engage in a universal language of the senses to which all living organisms have access to some degree.

Figure 4:   Collegial engagement
During *Shared Agendas*, November 2015. (From left: Ali East and partner, Hahna Briggs, musicians Jeremy Mayall and Abigail Knudson. Photo: Chris Sullivan.

As participants range through the time space place of the stage, a spontaneous spatial mapping takes place between the players and elements present—the dance, sound and light scape. For dancers and musicians, pattern recognition is highly developed as visual, aural, and felt internally as memory of rhythm, repeated musical or muscular action, and externally as visual shape-making, repetition of an action or sequence of moves, spontaneous re-arrangement of bodies in and through space and particular conscious, emotive or psycho-somatic response to certain sounds. It is a multi-layered and multi-'languaged' conscious 'mapping' of the territory.

Similarly, the audience are engaged intellectually, if not physically, in an inter-relational multi-sensory and, at times, psychosomatic, processing and mapping of the events before them. David Rousell (2015) describes a perceptual cartographic network that is entrained in each of us, and which "allows for any number of passages from one form, space, idea or experience to another through chains of reference that are infinitely extendable" (p. 15). These interactive networks must, he asserts, be "charged by active embodiment immersed within a field of engagement" (p. 15).

Art and democracy

The aesthetic philosopher Ranciere (2004[ii]) suggests that "art can contribute to the enactment of democracy because it allows for the kind of disruptive, dis-incorporating process of political subjectification through which democracy occurs" (p. 57). According to Ranciere, "artistic practices and political practices are … related because they share the same materials and logic" (p. 57). Educator Jane Mc Donnell (2014) comments that while art may not always be democratic, it does open up channels for social comment that "disrupt and reconfigure natural logic" (p. 57). Our performed improvisations disrupt all expectations of logical or linear narrative and, instead, expose a human vulnerability, fragility and unknowingness that is, at the same time, assertive, highly conscious and, at times, potentially dangerous. The activity is a series of non-pre-determined meetings, conversations and negotiations that are worked out spontaneously and largely non-verbally in the moment—spontaneous and intuitive democracy in action. It is a ritualistic re-enactment of our solidarity. As David Kertzer (1988) suggests, "ritual can produce bonds of solidarity without requiring uniformity of belief"[iii] (p. 67).

Building on the ancient ideas of Socrates or, more recently, French philosopher Marc Sautet (1947–1998), whose café Philosophique[iv] conversations were conducted 'in the spirit of tolerance and openness', Pablo Helguera (2011), Mexican born New York artist of socially engaged art, suggests that,

conversation is the centre of sociality, of collective understanding and organisation [and that], organised talks [substitute SA improvised performances] allow people to engage with others, create community, learn together or simply share experiences without going any further. (p. 40)

According to Helguera, the ultimate purpose of any conversation is "truth and insight garnished through process" (p. 43), or making and doing. Opening up a conversational space offers participants the opportunity to contribute content and revise structure. There is freedom, he suggests, for each member to influence and shape the exchange (p. 48). This does not mean that there are no leaders, but that the leader may change from moment to moment. Knowing which role one is taking is part of the social responsibility and has connections with Paulo Friere's 'democratic accountability'[v].

Figure 5:   Inter-disciplinary conversations
Shared Agendas, 2011. Photo: Martyn Roberts

In line with my claims for our improvised events as a place to practice democracy, dance educator Karen Schupp (2011) suggests that the skills of

responsible citizenship can be taught in the dance improvisation classroom. She cites an awareness of personal decision-making processes (leading to 'informed decisions') and 'a valuing of multiple outcomes' as key to this aim. In her words,

> Responsible citizenship deals with accountability, the ability to make choices that reflect personal values, the recognition of the larger community and the skills to be a critical media consumer [and I add audience viewer]. Although used in a different context, these skills are similar to those developed through dance improvisation. (p. 23)

In a similar sentiment, Robert Turner (2010), writing on Contact improvisation originator Steve Paxton's *Interior techniques*, notes that "contact improvisation could, by showing the relation between culture and conscious experience, radicalize participation in all our relations" (p. 123). In giving weight during contact improvisation, one surrenders control. In receiving and supporting weight, one accepts responsibility, co-operation and trust.

In her book *I want to be Ready,* Danielle Goldman (2010) argues that "improvisation and survival are often vitally linked, which [she contends] constitutes an important part of improvisation's necessity and political power" (p. 142). Sighting various acts of black resistance, she comments that "there are many tight places where a failure to figure out how to move has damaging, if not dire consequences" (p. 142). Danced improvisations are a place to practise 'making oneself ready' "creatively [and] and without surrendering one's agency" (p. 142). In a similar sentiment, West African Congolese choreographer Faustin Linyekula argues for improvisation as "a survival tactic and a means of self-preservation rather than an expression of artistic taste" (Scott, 2010, p. 18). In his words, improvisation is "a state of living, surviving in a hostile world … one needs to know how to improvise to stay alive" (Linyekula, 2005, as cited in Scott, 2010, p. 18).

As a research platform

Shared Agendas events offer an expanded notion of the research environment and recognise that "theorizing is indeed creative practice" (Harris, Hunter, & Hall, 2015, p. 3). They recognise improvised performance as a legitimate academic cross-disciplinary engagement that "may be seen as part of a move towards multi-sensory, multi-perspectival methods" (Harris et al., 2015, p. 3). They also acknowledge that the research moment is a complete event in and of itself and not dependant on further analysis or any dissemination of results.

As a vehicle for inter-disciplinary research, Shared Agendas events become a medium for the organisation and validation of intuitive and sensory knowledge in ways that cut across individual, cultural and disciplinary difference, offering another kind of research platform within the university and providing a framework for reflection and critical exchange.

Theatre educator Jill Dolan (2001) reiterates the university's public responsibility and argues for artists and scholars as "public intellectuals" (p. 5). In line with the theme of this paper, she contends that "we should rehearse democracy through our productions and teaching" and "engage students in a critical understanding of democracy" (p. 8). In his book *The Evolving Self*, Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi (1993) suggests that "true education [and, I would add, true democracy] involves growing to appreciate the direct links that exist between actions and consequences—in one's body, in one's social network, in the planetary environment as a whole" (p. 274). In Denzin's (2003) words, this kind of "radical democratic pedagogy requires citizens and citizen scholars who are committed to taking risks, persons who are willing to act in situations where the outcomes cannot be predicted in advance" (p. 240). He suggests that this can lead to "a politics of new possibilities" (p. 240) and to "pedagogies of hope and freedom" (p. 241). His words resonate strongly with the kind of unpredictable performative acts within Shared Agendas.

Shared Agendas: A brief Survey of Outcomes

I have endeavoured to provide support for proposing the SA events as a vehicle for reinforcing effective democratic community interaction—where the conversation is directed towards co-operation, mutual sharing and communication between the performers, technical personnel and the viewers as active critical witnesses. I have described the artists involved as practising a somatically derived democracy.

At this point, I will briefly summarise some of the outcomes of this kind of spontaneous performance event as a means of practising being in or being part of *socially just* community engagement and invite the reader as an active participant, to add his/her own ideas:

- Shared ownership and decision-making. Ownership is with the group and any member may initiate an action or choose to sit out.
- Individual participants have the freedom to tell their own story, in their own disciplinary language and with the specific skills or abilities available to them (hence a valuing of diversity and inclusivity).

- Empathic engagement with others is fostered—within which contention or disagreement is accepted. This means tuning in, paying close attention, being prepared to let go of one's idea in order to serve the composition in its becoming. This engagement has the potential to continue once the performance concludes. As Harris et al. (2015) suggest, "Post- reading performance conversations also allow qualitative researchers to link their research to their teaching and larger open forums on pressing social issues" (p. 4).

- SA as a research platform for investigation into intuitive processes and the presentation of findings.

- Responsible community art/dance making (Gray, Baer & Goldstein, 2015) that challenges what Denzin (2003) refers to as an "aesthetic of objectivity" (p. 73). Denzin contends that "participatory aesthetics are achieved through community engaged work. [T]his *of*, *by*, and *for* a community [can] create art that is extremely powerful because it presents a raw unpolished aesthetic that dives right for the heart of a story or event" (p. 21).

- Rather than a theatre of deception, *Shared Agendas*, in its spontaneity and lack of prior rehearsal, becomes an extension of our normal daily activities, a microcosm of society (Schechner, 1988) albeit agenda-less, non-analytical, spontaneous, irreverent and uncensored.

- SA events provide an opportunity for members of each of the artistic disciplines to practise their craft in a critical public arena and to learn related artistic languages.

To conclude

Like life itself, *Shared Agendas* is an unpredictable yet purposeful series of events demanding acute attentiveness to the action of self, others and environment from moment to moment. In these events the questions and answers are in the moment of doing, generating new questions as thought-action—responses in an ongoing search for resolutions.

As with any community or society, these random inter-disciplinary performance acts can contribute much to a healthy academic community—given the support of an educational system that emphasises cooperative participation and trans-disciplinary action-based problem solving—that supports inclusivity and

accepts diverse teaching and learning methodologies. It becomes a kind of oasis within the, more common, academic world of disciplinary siloes.

Engaging in direct physical communication where participants can smell each other's sweat, sense each other's vulnerability, feel each other's softness and resilience and understand each other's shared humanness is the antithesis of the long-range missile approach to world relations or, for that matter, a distance-learning approach to education. It is multidisciplinary communication that is respectful, honest, inter-personal and radically free, open and playful. Like diverse species in an old forest—each pitched at its own place on the sound spectrum (Krausse, 1993)—dancers, musicians, visual artists, videographers, poets and actors can speak in their own language simultaneously, yet remain distinct. In this kind of academic meeting, there is no vote to be had since the process will simply continue until an agreement is reached or an ending found. Our annual Shared Agendas improvised performance events would seem to be a useful place to practice democracy in a playful community of shared interest.

Acknowledgement

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[i] Knight, H. (2015). Book Review of Bell, L & Desai, D. (2014) Social justice and the Arts. *Journal of Education for Teaching, 41*(1), 102-105.

[ii] Ranciere in McDonnell, Jane. (2014)

[iii] See - Kertzer, D. I. (1988). Ritual, politics & power. New Haven, IL: Yale University Press (p. 67, section on Solidarity without consensus).

[iv] French philosopher Marc Sautet (1947–1998) whose Café Philosophique arose from his desire to involve the general public in political and academic discourse. In Helguera, (2011) Education for Socially Engaged Art. A Materials and Techniques Handbook (p. 43). New York. NY: Jorge Pinto Books.

[v] Reference to Paulo Friere's Pedagogy of the Oppressed (1970) Democratic accountability in Education. In Helguera (2011): p. 52.