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## Studies in Theatre and Performance

Explorations of 'The Russian Avant-garde Theatre: War Revolution and Design', an exhibition held at the Victoria and Albert Museum, Sunday 19 October 2014 -Sunday 15 March 2015: a conversation between Melissa Trimmingham, Donatella Barbieri and Amber Jane Butchart, 24 January 2015

--Manuscript Draft--

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**Melissa Trimingham and Donatella Barbieri**

**1. Costume and scenography in the twentieth-century avant garde**

AJB: I want to start with a quotation from Oskar Schlemmer at the Bauhaus. He said: ‘the history of the theatre is the history of the transfiguration of the human form’ (Schlemmer (1925) 1961, 1996:17). This is something we heard a little bit about earlier in John Bowlt’s talk. It’s an ethos you can really see in things like the costumes for ‘Victory Over the Sun’ (which was obviously earlier than the Bauhaus) as well. For me the ‘transfiguration of the human form’ is really the crux of the shift from the more naturalistic elements of the Edwardian/Victorian stage. I wanted to ask you what you think Schlemmer meant with this statement, and why did it become so crucial a hundred years ago?

MT: That quotation comes from ‘Man and Art Figure’ (Schlemmer (1925) 1961, 1996:17) in 1925 which is the definitive theoretical statement that Schlemmer wrote about costume. I think identifying ‘the history of the theatre’ as ‘the transfiguration of the human form’ points to the history of the ‘essential’ theatre, the theatre he that he wanted to pursue- theatre that opposes naturalism. The history of non-naturalistic theatre, in which the body may be used in a much more sculptural way goes back, as Schlemmer maintained, to seventeenth century court ballet with masks and so on, and indeed as Donatella argues in her book, it goes back centuries before that. But that kind of theatre begins to be *recognised* and *identified* at the beginning of the twentieth century in contrast to stage naturalism. And it begins with visual artists and sculptors and so on turning to the stage space to experiment with their own ideas and fascinations. They were trying to pulverise art down to its essence, to really understand all the elements- form and mass and dynamism and space itself- the kind of research that we see Vladimir Tatlin doing in the ‘teens in Russia with his corner reliefs using abstract shape and volume adhering to and suspended on angled surfaces. Artists treated these more abstract elements as the essence of art, and they started to explore them in the three-dimensional stage space. Then what do you do with the human body in that situation? How do you treat it as a sculptural element when theatre is so much to do with life, story, narrative, character, and so on? Schlemmer was experimenting in quite extreme ways of dealing with the body through costume; and his particular way of transfiguring the human form was because he saw a kind

of idealism in the body and its natural geometric shapes. It was the perfect gestalt that he could build on. First of all he did the very beautiful and strange costumes of *The Triadic Ballet*. It was his greatest work in many ways, the one that everybody knows about, and it is highly *visually* appealing: but you have to realise that those costumes were really hard to move in. They were geometric forms, an extension and idealisation of the geometry of the body riveted on to the body. The dancers hated them because you couldn't move in them, however beautiful they looked. Later on the Dessau stage in the Bauhaus he began to work with costume in a different way – he freed up the body in a sense, using heavy padded costumes that followed the body shape. It's really important that they're heavy. The weight and texture of those costumes made the dancers very haptically aware in the space –for example, how big the space was, what the lines of tension were and so on, and so did the full head masks, which again transformed the actor on stage. If you perform in a full head mask, it forces you to have a different kind of poise on stage: you have to turn your head in order to be able to see, and that's very different to a naturalistic glance. Others tackled 'transfiguration' in different ways. For the most famous of them, Gordon Craig and Adolphe Appia, the body was a problem. Craig particularly as I'm sure you all know, came out with this famous notion of needing an über-marionette. Of course he didn't mean that he wanted a puppet, he simply wanted an actor who was more spatially readable, like a performer on a Robert Wilson stage – an actor who could be used as part of that whole picture, part of the meaning that comes about through figure and scenography working together.<sup>1</sup> On the Russian stages, if you look at the work of somebody like Alexandra Exter, she is approaching the space in a three-dimensional, rhythmical way rather than a two-dimensionally, and she's very much looking at costume to fit the body into that stage dynamism. The really crucial thing here is the way she solved the movement of the organic body through costume. It was the body movement that so troubled Craig within his unified stage picture, and who only found partial solutions. The Bauhaus hit the same problem- once the organic moving body stepped into the geometric and unified visual scenography at the Bauhaus, problems started! The Bauhaus students would make wonderful mechanical stages –geometric cut-outs for example moving across the stage-and Schlemmer said 'That's too easy'. He maintained that a single step by the organic, living human body is far more complicated than moving bits of scenery around, and how do we deal with that living organic force, a visual image that we instantly empathise with, that affects us in unpredictable ways? It can easily disrupt and even spoil your beautiful static 'picture' stage. He talked about how on the stage (and he was thinking especially of his own 'blank canvas' stage spaces) just a tiny movement of the finger can read as very significant: and that's the difficult, powerful and beautiful thing to deal with, the uncontrolled dimensions and forces of affect in audiences that that human motion provokes. The Futurists were trying to deal with dynamic motion in their paintings with simultaneous movement– but on the stage you actually *got* movement, and what do you do with it?

DB: Unlike futurist expressiveness, the naturalistic costumes we are accustomed to, place few obstacles on the body. In the depiction of characters drawn from a believable everyday reality, costume creators are intended to be invisible, the co-conspirators in the creation of illusion. (This is a skilful process nonetheless, requiring, for example, physical reinvention of history in an assemblage of contemporary bodies, historical proportions and modern materials.) In contrast, the work of the Russian avant-garde gives itself over entirely to the creating, in each production, of a new visual and embodied language for the body on stage, which eschews naturalism entirely, and delights openly in its own artifice. The result can be more real, as well as more theatrical, than the reassembled naturalistic costumes. As such it performs through an expanded, expressive and affective scenographic reality.

AJB: Melissa, you mentioned Futurism. Something else that I find particularly fascinating about this era is that there are a number of avant-garde art and design movements flourishing throughout Europe at the time. We've talked about Constructivism today, but there are also many different movements such as Suprematism, Futurism, Expressionism. In relation to theatre, how are these elements connected and what kind of cross-fertilisation was happening?

MT: The first thing to realise is that all these 'isms' seem very clear now looking back, but I don't think it was nearly as clear as that at the time. I remember when I first started researching this period looking at an intriguing group photograph that was taken in Weimar in 1922, which commemorated a meeting of the Dadaists and the Constructivists. I wondered what on earth they had to say to each other. To me then they seemed like diametrical opposites, but now I understand that at the time this was the avant-garde, people were exchanging ideas. I think that they did have a common language, in the sense of, as I've mentioned, the idea of pulverising art down to its essence. This manifested itself to each artist in different ways. Hugo Ball for example, in Munich, who was an Expressionist at heart, was quite mystical about 'essences'— he was trying to touch the metaphysical 'unknown' if you like. He left Munich to found the Cabaret Voltaire in Switzerland, and met Tristan Tzara: and Dada I feel then turned into a much more eccentric and novel kind of enterprise. But you never really understand the original impulse behind Dada unless you look at Expressionism and what was going on in Munich around the start of the First World War. Wassily Kandinsky was in Munich too, and he was quite mystical in inclination, but he had also been in Russia and had come over with a lot of the Constructivist ideas. So I don't think it was nearly as clear then as it seems to us now. They were however united by this common language of abstraction. I think if we don't understand the basics of what abstract art was trying to do, we can never understand any of these 'isms'. An artist might be absolutely fascinated in knowing the scientific basis for colour, how it's perceived and so on, and they might also at the same time be dabbling in more mystical areas. Science and mysticism ran alongside each other, so someone like Kandinsky, in 1913 devised theories about colour in 'On the Spiritual in Art', and these ideas absolutely parallel those of the Gestalt psychologists, Max Wertheimer and his colleagues. They were writing at the same time, but apparently not knowing each other's work- or certainly Kandinsky didn't admit it if he had read them.<sup>2</sup> So there's a kind of zeitgeist of the time where people are all trying to research art and really understand the forces behind it as in Tatlin's abstract corner reliefs. Once you've understood those basic principles you can look at all the 'isms' and you see a kind of common core- their trying to grasp 'essences'. Of course there are different nuances -in Futurism, they were much more interested in speed and dynamism than others. But the idea of movement and time disrupts some modernist agendas seeking unity and essentialist narratives. The mathematician Henri Poincaré was recasting paradigm models of the universe very different from the Euclidean geometries that the Bauhaus enjoyed, and which artists like Marcel Duchamp got very interested in. There's this idea that there's a tremendous mystery, an enormous mystery, terribly exciting, but it could be worked out if they really got down to it.

AJB: Within Russia during this period, as well, alongside this sort of political upheaval, there's a real synchronicity of talent across graphic design, clothing design, set and costume design. Practitioners are working in many different areas. Why do you think this was such an era of creative multi-tasking?

DB: I would point to the centrality of the body, as a shared, discursive element in these various practices, which are driven by visual artists whose work was intent on the creation of a new world, and on stripping away the past. The bold presence of the visual artist translated, on stage, to bodies that refused to sit back, and be decorated within acceptable canons, as they had been in the theatre

of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. For example a close study of Mikhail Larionov's designs for *Chout* in the V&A archives<sup>3</sup> reveals that the realised costume often *preceded* not only the interpretation of the story in the rehearsal room, but often its devising. In my research for the book I have found several examples throughout history of the material costume preceding and guiding the process of choreographing the performance. This is the crucial idea that I encourage MA Costume students to explore. It's about finding new and old ways in which performance, as a visual, sensory and embodied practice can develop through the costumed body. The collaboration between designer and performer, right from the start of the rehearsal, is critical.

## 2. Pedagogy

AJB: What part did the radical art schools like VhUKTEMAS<sup>4</sup> and Bauhaus play in artistic cross-fertilisation, and do you think that they enabled these kind of movements and practices, or do you think they were a product of them existing before?

MT: I think that it depends where the art schools are and who you're talking about. Many artists taught in the Russian school, as they did in the Bauhaus; but VhUKTEMAS was much bigger than the Bauhaus, which is the art school that I really know about. The Bauhaus was actually very small, with only about a 1000 graduates in its 13 years of existence. And when Gropius went over to America he did a 'PR' job on the Bauhaus and cleaned it up its image, ignoring the earlier Expressionistic and rather eccentric period led by the teacher Johannes Itten who exerted such a huge influence there, with his macrobiotic diets and Mazdaznan religion. Gropius presented the institution as a Modernist, clean cut, go-ahead art school at Dessau that was absolutely central to the origin of the Modernist movement. And in many ways of course it was very important because the artists, the people who trained at the Bauhaus, did disperse all over the world: Katerina Ruedi Ray has analysed that in her book on globalization and the Bauhaus (Ruedi Ray 2010). Even so I'm not sure how influential the Bauhaus actually was at the time in Europe, particularly the architecture and so on; the Bauhaus didn't spring from nothing.<sup>5</sup> Before the War, Gropius was working with architects like Peter Behrens who contributed so much to the modernist 'Bauhaus' architectural style. The Russian art movement it seems to me centred on education, the vital pedagogical programme of people like Anatoly Lunacharsky. They held an exhibition in 1925 in Paris, and we've heard from earlier speakers today what an impression that made on people. Answering a bit of your earlier question about the cross-fertilisation, we tend to think of Russia as way over in the East, but I think it was a 3 days train journey to Paris- not impossibly lengthy- and it is amazing the kind of traffic back and forth that did take place. Tatlin in the early teens for example went over to Paris and visited Pablo Picasso's studio and saw all the Cubist work. You can see where he got his inspiration for work that he went on to do in the teens. So yes, there were these focal points but it's hard to estimate how important they were at the time. I'd say VhUKTEMAS was a more important focal point for artists in Russia at the time, than say the Bauhaus was in Europe, very much so, and its Constructivist teachers and artists were also hugely influential in Western Europe.

AJB: And Donatella, this was an incredibly fertile period as we've seen within the context of the avant-garde in Europe. Do you think that we can see a legacy of this in theatre or costume today?

DB: The Bauhaus has been critical to the development and dissemination of artistic methods and pedagogies that have gone onto revolutionise a number of different fields through ex-students who have themselves become teachers. An equivalent model in theatre, and in the teaching of acting, can be found in the methods and pedagogies of Ecole Jacques Lecoq, in Paris, which, since the 1960s, has re-established the body in movement as the centre in performance making through teaching practice. A particular aspect of Lecoq's pedagogy is the Laboratoire D'Etude Du



Mouvement (LEM), in which designers, architect and performers work together to develop new forms between the rehearsal room and the workroom, through movement and through made, wearable objects in a context of dynamic plasticity.

Both the Bauhaus and the LEM demonstrate how the protected creative space of the school can provide unique experimental processes. In contemporary design teaching, productions such as *Opus No 7* by the Dmitry Krymov from the Russian Academy of Theatre Arts, in Moscow, part of the 2014 Barbican's offering for LIFT, the London International Festival of Theatre, and aspects of the Prague Quadrennia, emerge from the collaboration between students and teachers. Commercial theatre can deny the opportunity to experiment. When it comes to looking at new ways to practice, new methodologies, the college or university may still, even in the present climate, provide a more liberating environment than mainstream theatre. The dynamic plasticity of space and body disseminated by the Bauhaus and by Russian avant-garde is evident in some of the schools from the ex- Eastern Block countries. In Prague for example, where I have spent a great deal of time observing work in the Prague Quadrennia, the link to the 20<sup>th</sup> century avant-garde can be detected in the experimental work of students at DAMU, a theatre school that considers theatre as visual art practice.

### 3. Practice as Research

AJB: I am wondering about how your own practices in both pedagogy and research connect to these historical ideas of the early avant garde?

DB: These photographs (Figures 1-4) are of my ex-students' costumes where we see how some of the ideas of the early twentieth century Avant-garde practitioners feed into and inspire contemporary work. This work was made for 'Revolutions in Costume at the V&A', which was presented in the Raphael Rooms in 2012. I think their work exemplifies the way these various strands of research (Russian avant-garde, the Bauhaus, LEM and DAMU) come together.

Miss Havisham (Figure 1a) in Charles Dickens' *Great Expectations* designed by Panos Lamprianidis, drags around the stage a deformed skeleton completely at odds with the delicate dress of decaying lace and muslin, which holds onto the performer by grabbing her around her ribs. After she suddenly frees herself from it, Miss Havisham stares at the abandoned carcass of the lifeless past she had been carrying around for decades. The metaphor is later extended to her heart, turned to stone, as layers of the character's history are externalised through the costume. The opposition of bones and skin-like muslin not only permits a dynamic material embodiment on stage, but also speaks about the human condition, through shape, form, layers, textiles, unravellings, and movement. This is a good example of what Amber quoted earlier from Schlemmer, the 'transfiguration of the human form'.

Clio Alphas (Figure 1b) utilised skin as a metaphor with even greater emphasis. She adapted Kurt Vonnegut's novel *Slapstick* into a performance piece titled *This is Not What I Asked For*. Her performance explored one of the characters, The Mother, without words. Every movement in the costume, made out of latex, was rendered audible and was the soundtrack, amplified by microphones placed on the dance-floor. The skin-like costume produced a body able to deform and reassemble itself into a sequence of forms while also capturing light through the translucent, elastic latex. The obstacle/costume co-created the performance. The piece is the story of a woman who doesn't accept her own disabled children, pulling at her skin and reshaping her body, until the final image is the moment of acceptance and stillness. The use of sound here directly deriving from the materials again parallels Schlemmer's work- Melissa has written about this (Trimingham 2011:146-

7). My next two pictures show a sophisticated development around the ideas which derive from the early avant garde's innovative approach to the body- its transformation on stage, its integration into the total scenography. The result is affective, moving, empathic.

Vana Giannoula's interpretation of Eugene Ionesco's *Rhinoceros* (Figure 1c) represents the bearing down of anonymous hierarchical structures onto the lowly, individual office worker. Expressed through the formality of multiplied business suits, seemingly containing invisible bodies, it exposed the dehumanisation of controlling power structures. The performer became a modern day, urban rhinoceros through the costume, in the silhouette he created and the movement this generated.

The last image (Figure 1d) is Giulia Pecorari's *Non-Existent Knight*, devised from Italo Calvino's novel, via a body-less Knight and a soundtrack of abstracted bells, communicated the sense of loss of the novel, which was written following World War Two. The slow-moving form celebrated the 'missing' the body of the performer by amplifying her every movement, and as she edged away from her initial spot she exposed a hole cut in felt of the floor. The space became engaged with the movement of the performer, extended and amplified through materiality and costume. It was interesting to observe how much empathy the performer could communicate through movement and costume, the latter rendering the body invisible.

AJB: And could you link this image of yours, Melissa to the practices we've been discussing?

MT You mentioned history- I'd like to preface any discussion on practice as research in regard to history by saying what it can't do. It cannot enable us to see the past through any other eyes than those of the present. What it can do is embody those ideas anew, in such a way that we might come to understand our own roots in the past. It gives us partial insight, a truth, through having experienced something similar- remembering always that we experience it in our own time and culture, not that of the past. At least this was very much my experience of using practice as research to clarify work I found initially very confusing and opaque-that of the Bauhaus stage.

This photo (Figure 2) was taken when I was presenting on both Oskar Schlemmer and my autism research at the Barbican summer school during the exhibition 'Bauhaus Art as Life' in 2012. I was demonstrating how my work with autistic children<sup>6</sup> still owes much in its realisation to early twentieth century ideas, here ideas about the haptic effect of costume, springing from Schlemmer and the Bauhaus. I was demonstrating one of the costumes that we used in 'Imagining Autism'. In that project we worked as facilitator/performers one to one with autistic children in five different immersive environments. Some of the children were on the severe end of the spectrum with no speech at all. This 'Foxy' costume is from the Forest environment. It proved to be a very useful costume for working with these children.<sup>7</sup> Autistic children have a lot of sensory issues. Very often they will be hyper/over sensitive, for example to touch; or equally they may be hypo/under sensitive to touch, whereby they might feel like they are in danger of floating away- that's how I imagine it anyway. Children hypo-sensitive to touch may like to be strapped in a chair for example to feel safe; they can hate the texture of clothes, or conversely they can simply ignore touch. It's the same with sound, they can be very sensitive to it or very under sensitive and so on. But because this costume was so heavy, and you can see the way it's padded around the hips, as soon as you put it on, you feel very differently. Schlemmer's costumes were the same, and I would say someone like Exter in *Aelita* helped the performers such as the Queen of Mars so much through the sheer extraordinary physical nature of the costume. It weighs upon your body in a particular way. Foxy has got this lovely long swingy tail as well, which the children would swish around, because although we had a facilitator dressed up as Foxy, the children were very free to play in that environment. So we'd take the

costume off and they would try it on, and the same with Foxy mask. When you put that mask on instantly you're much taller and it just physically makes you feel different. In this photograph I was demonstrating how one girl with virtually no speech at all began to start embodying the fox through feeling this costume.<sup>8</sup> She began to develop a kind of empathy with the fox character through moving like Foxy, but also she then began to respond to us as facilitators in other situations. That's just one way that we use costume in that work with autistic children; we use a lot of puppets and objects as well, in fact the whole environment is harnessed to communicating with these children.

All that I've said about the Imagining Autism environments and all Donatella has described shows really how much we owe to the early twentieth century- it was a scenographic revolution by visual artists – that began in Russia-that opened up possibilities of the stage through integrating the body.

### **Methodology and costume research**

AJB: You both specialise in practice-based research as we've seen, which leads me to a couple of questions. Firstly, do you think we'll ever see any of the avant-garde productions that we've been talking about restaged anytime soon?

DB: I am not a fan of reconstruction because I think that as we've heard today, so much of what was happening was to do with the very specific socio-political context of the time. We can always learn from history and historical objects but theatre happens in the present and the body in particular exists in the here and now, it is never a historical document. I read avidly, and research archived objects to learn from artists whose work is so inspiring, so as to draw out meaning we can actually apply *now*. The work in the archive, looking at objects and the documentation of past performances can be really interesting as you develop an intimate relationship with something long gone. I believe in this intimacy- particularly with something long gone: as we are here so we must somehow translate it.

Reconstruction can be problematic as all you can feel is awe of a way of working that is gone; and actually there is a big role for theatre in the here and now. Ecological issues, war, social problems in our contemporary world, preoccupy us with a different urgency. The Russian avant-garde artists worked at a time of war, but they saw themselves as working towards utopia, looking into the future with hope. Whatever they lived through, they absorbed and countered it with their work, and often with a sense that they were part of a shedding of past injustices.

MT: I agree. I think it's an illusion that a reconstruction gets you closer to what the piece was. When I first started looking at the work of Oskar Schlemmer people were saying, why don't you try and reconstruct it? But it wouldn't have told me what I needed to know. I needed to try and find out what actually made his work 'tick'. So I had to find parallels, and I used things like puppets and materials and built up costumes to find out what he was about, and I think that's a much more useful approach to practice as research than trying to reconstruct. Of course it's quite interesting sometimes to see a reconstruction, for example of 'Victory Over the Sun', and you can see a DVD of this in the exhibition, but I think you still tend to look at with a kind of sense of mystery, thinking what on earth is going on? Whereas if you really take it apart and try to work on some of the things from within, whether it's part of an MA or PhD or your own work, it tells you much more.

AJB: And how important is the process of abstraction of the human form through costume for understanding the theatre of the period we've been discussing, the avant-garde theatre?

MT: When I did my practical research on Schlemmer I wasn't trying to 'abstract' the human form. It was obvious to me that what was really important to him was this concrete haptic sense of the body in the space. I'd done a great deal of performance in built up costumes<sup>9</sup> and I know how costume transforms you; when you put it on, you relate to the space differently. So that was really my starting point, and I didn't think 'I've got to abstract the body'. And I started using puppets, different scales of puppets and finding out the relationship of the body to that kind of object and so on.

DB: I just want to add that I think that the abstraction of the body is about embedding the gesture, and the space, into the costume.

MT: Abstract sounds very distant doesn't it, whereas really we are talking about the embodiment here of material form.

AJB: Finally Donatella, you have a book coming out called *Costume in Performance* and Melissa has a chapter in it. Can you let us know more of what we can expect in it?

DB: As long as there's been a body performing there's been a costume being made and worn: and naturalism, as discussed earlier, offers only a limited view on the subject. *Costume in Performance* challenges this notion that all costume is 'doing' is simply dressing a character. If that's all there was, it would just disappear the moment the actor takes it off. Yet there is so much more to it. As we've been saying just now, the work of these artists [in the exhibition] has not just disappeared into thin air. In the collections of several departments of the V&A, there are many other cultural objects that record performance through the costume, for example in statues, paintings, garments, texts, and various types of other documents. They help us begin to ascertain the roots to our work as costume designers. For this reason, the book contains two hundred colour images, many from the V&A, but others from all over the world, including some from Russia. Each chapter includes examples of contemporary practice, which is linked via costume to its roots. It expands exactly the concepts we have been talking about today –understanding costume through the living, performing body.

AJB: And finally Melissa, just a very brief outline of the chapter that we can expect from you?

MT: The book's arranged thematically not chronologically, and my chapter is called 'Agency and Empathy: artists touch the body', concentrating on affective embodiment. I'll be looking at early modernism and especially Hilde Holger and the dancers around the Viennese period in the 1920s because they are not very well known. I will be taking it through to the present, for example Robert Wilson, because again he has a very sculptural use of costume. So it's basically central to everything that we've been talking about today.

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<sup>1</sup> Simon Donger identifies this as the 'Scenographic Body' (Donger 2011, 34-5).

<sup>2</sup> See Trimmingham 2011: 37-8.

<sup>3</sup> See Barbieri 2012a. The Encounters in the Archive research project included the encounter and the analysis of Mikhail Larionov's costumes for the Ballet Russe's *Chout* (1921). See also *Re-Encounters* (Barbieri 2012b) on costume designer Nicky Gillibrand's response to Larionov's costume in the project specific website.

<sup>4</sup> VhUKTEMAS was an acronym for the Russian state art and technical school founded in 1920 in Moscow.

<sup>5</sup> See for example Maciuika (2006).

<sup>6</sup> <http://www.imaginingautism.org> Imagining Autism was an Arts and Humanities Research Council (AHRC) funded arts/science collaboration between Drama and Psychology at the University of Kent (2011-2014).

<sup>7</sup> Foxy's costume 'coat' was adapted from a costume designed and made by Lisa Ferris for a production of *Cats* in Marden Theatre, Kent.

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<sup>8</sup> This is described in detail in Trimmingham 2013, 233-6.

<sup>9</sup> Melissa Trimmingham was a founder member of Horse and Bamboo Theatre, Lancashire and worked for them between 1981 and 1989.

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## Figure Captions

Figure 1a. Miss Haversham. Adapted from Charles Dickens *Great Expectations*. Designed by Panos Lamprianidis, performer Eve Pearce. Photography by Alex Traylen.

Figure 1b. *This is Not What I Asked For*. Adapted from Kurt Vonnegut *Slapstick*. Designed by Clio Alphas, performer Jiska Morgenthal. Photography by Alex Traylen.

Figure 1c. Interpretation of Eugene Ionesco's *Rhinoceros*. Designed by Vana Giannoula, performer Dani Monkiki. Photography by Alex Traylen.

Figure 1d. Adapted from *Non-Existent Knight* Italo Calvino. Designed by Giulia Pecorari, performer Megan Saunders. Photography by Alex Traylen.

Figure 2. 'Foxy' from *Imagining Autism: Performance and Intermediality as Interventions for Autism Spectrum Conditions 2011-2014*. Costume adapted from design by Lisa Ferris, demonstration by Melissa Trimmingham at The Barbican Centre, London: *Bauhaus: Art as Life*, 2012.

Figure 1a



Figure 1b



Figure 1c





Figure 1d



Figure 2



**Authors:**

**Melissa Trimmingham** (University of Kent) researches into visual artists' and the stage; she was one of the first to base her doctorate (2002) on practice, researching the stage of Oskar Schlemmer at the Bauhaus. Her work has recently taken her into applied theatre creating immersive scenographies for autistic children as co-investigator on the Arts and Humanities Research Council funded project *Imagining Autism*.

**Donatella Barbieri** is a costume researcher who has pioneered the study of costume in performance using practice-based research. She has developed through her practice and teaching an approach to movement through worn form, and she is currently writing a book **Costume in Performance** on the expressiveness of form and material in costume, looking to examples from across history as well as from early 20<sup>th</sup> century and contemporary productions.

**Thanks to Amber Jane Butchart for her thought provoking questions that shaped this discussion.**

**Amber Jane Butchart** is a fashion historian looking at the intersections between dress, politics, performance and society. She is an Associate Lecturer in Cultural and Historical studies at London College of Fashion and a former Visiting Research Fellow at the University of the Arts London. She is currently researching a book on the influence of film costume on fashion, due for publication in 2016.