

# 香港劇場年鑑 2016

舞蹈 · 戲曲 · 戲劇

HONG  
KONG  
THEATRE  
YEARBOOK  
2016  
Dance  
Xiqu  
Drama



香港劇場年鑑2016（舞蹈、戲曲、戲劇）

版次 2018年5月初版

資助: 香港藝術發展局

編輯及統籌: 陳國慧

執行編輯及資料統籌: 羅靖雯、巫書祺

專題論述編輯: 朱琼愛、黃進之、楊寶霖\*

專題論述校對: 葉懿雯

專題論述及資料統籌（舞蹈）: 林奕玲

專題論述及資料統籌（戲曲）: 盧敏樺

專題論述及資料統籌（應用戲劇）: 歐怡雯

資料搜集統籌（神功戲）: 張文珊

資料整理及校對（神功戲）: 張文珊、孫名慧

資料協作伙伴:

香港舞蹈界聯席會議－香港舞蹈年鑑編輯室、

香港戲劇協會、香港教育劇場論壇、

香港八和會館、八和粵劇學院、

香港中文大學音樂系（戲曲資料中心）、art-mate.net

協作伙伴: 香港戲劇工程

封面、內文設計: TGIF

網頁設計及程式編寫: AlphaSoft Design Ltd.

© 國際演藝評論家協會（香港分會）有限公司

版權所有，本書任何部分未經版權持有人許可，  
不得翻印、轉載或翻譯。

出版:

國際演藝評論家協會（香港分會）有限公司

香港灣仔港灣道2號香港藝術中心12樓1201-2室

電話: (852) 2974 0542 傳真: (852) 2974 0592

網址: <http://www.iatc.com.hk> 電郵: iatc@iatc.com.hk

國際書號 ISBN: 978-988-13599-0-2



International Association  
of Theatre Critics (Hong Kong)  
國際演藝評論家協會(香港分會)



香港藝術發展局全力支持藝術表達自由，本計劃內容並不反映本局意見。

Hong Kong Arts Development Council fully supports freedom of artistic expression. The views and opinions expressed in this project do not represent the stand of the Council.

\*藝術行政人員實習計劃由香港藝術發展局資助。\*The Arts Administration Internship Scheme is supported by the Hong Kong Arts Development Council.

Hong Kong Theatre Yearbook 2016 (Dance, Xiqu, Drama)

First published in May 2018

Supported by: Hong Kong Arts Development Council

Editor and Coordinator: Bernice Chan Kwok-wai

Executive Editor and Research Coordinator: Queenie Law Ching-man, Mo Shu-ki

Feature Article Editors: Daisy Chu King-oi, Nicolette Wong Chun-chi, Yeung Po-lam\*

Feature Article Proofreader: Crystal Yip Yi-man

Feature Article and Research Coordinator (Dance): Elaine Lam Yick-ling

Feature Article and Research Coordinator (Xiqu): Jacqueline Lo Mun-wa

Feature Article and Research Coordinator (Applied Drama): Au Yi-man

Research Coordinator (Ritual Performance): Milky Cheung Man-shan

Researchers (Ritual Performance): Milky Cheung Man-shan, Portia Suen Ming-wai

Research Partners:

**Hong Kong Dance Sector Joint Conference - The Hong Kong Dance Yearbook**

**Editorial Board, Hong Kong Federation of Drama Societies,**

**Hong Kong Drama/Theatre and Education Forum,**

**The Chinese Artists Association of Hong Kong,**

**The Cantonese Opera Academy of Hong Kong,**

**Music Department, The Chinese University of Hong Kong (Chinese Opera**

**Information Centre), art-mate.net**

Partner: **Hong Kong Theatre Works**

Cover and Content Design: TGIF

Website Design and Software Development: AlphaSoft Design Ltd.

© International Association of Theatre Critics (Hong Kong) Limited

All rights reserved; no part of this book may be reproduced, transmitted or translated without the prior written permission of the copyright holder.

Published by:

**International Association of Theatre Critics (Hong Kong) Limited**

Rm 1201-2, 12/F, Hong Kong Arts Centre, 2 Harbour Road, Wan Chai, Hong Kong

Tel: (852) 2974 0542 Fax: (852) 2974 0592

Website: <http://www.iatc.com.hk> Email: iatc@iatc.com.hk

# 從差異中突破——戲劇顧問在當代舞蹈的實踐

賴閃芳

戲劇顧問在舞蹈創作中擔當一個怎樣的角色？她／他能為編舞帶來甚麼？

二〇一六年開始為兩位編舞黃碧琪及曾景輝擔任戲劇顧問，作品分別為《太平山街71號》及《叁角厝》，在香港藝術節賽馬會當代舞蹈平台發表。我擔心自己一直在劇場的經驗與訓練出來的「眼睛」，未能應用在舞蹈上對編舞有所裨益。剛好二〇一六年十月臺北藝術節邀請了德國的戲劇顧問葛雷格·倫恩，舉辦為期三天的《動態的夥伴關係—舞蹈構成工作坊》，有幸獲選，我抱著上面兩個疑問去參加。二十人的工作坊裡，有一半是舞者，另一半是評論與研究背景的朋友。雖然跟舞蹈有關，但有趣是大部分時間，都是根據倫恩設計的練習在討論，多於身體上的實踐。短短三天，觸及的範圍卻很廣泛，正因為有舞者也有評論人，更能全面探討戲劇顧問制度在舞蹈創作的困難與應用。

倫恩是不來梅劇院的駐院戲劇顧問。他在劇院的工作，除了在年度製作中，與受邀的編舞合作外，還包括策展、觀眾拓展及青少年教育工作等等。在德國，戲劇顧問制度是常態；反觀台灣和香港，戲劇顧問的出現多數由於編舞在製作的需求，刻下的情況很不一樣，難以與倫恩在劇院層面的工作經驗直接比較。這裡我將集中討論他擔任過程導向的

戲劇顧問經驗，相信比較接近香港的現況。以下簡略了幾點較為重要的討論，並以自己實踐的兩個舞作為例子做回應。

## 差異的觀點

為甚麼編舞有需要一位戲劇顧問？倫恩舉了個例子說明：跟翩娜·包殊合作的戲劇顧問雷蒙德·豪戈本是位記者，因為訪問她而認識。而包殊需要他，因為豪戈的差異性，能賦予不一樣的元素於作品中。因著背景的差異，戲劇顧問較關心作品中語言、敘事及詮釋之間的連結。倫恩特別提出「質感」一詞，並認為深化作品及增加其層次是戲劇顧問的工作。他曾經與一位編舞合作，那編舞想在作品中利用魔術手法，但倫恩認為太單面，作品有深化的需要。在討論概念及發展動作時，倫恩嘗試找出脈絡並向編舞建議作品可能的方向，最後作品以魔術手法，探討更深層的歐洲難民與移民議題。資深的戲劇顧問嘉芙蓮·普羅費塔也有類近的觀察：「對編舞家而言，和戲劇顧問共事能打開新的可能性；有機會可以建立對話關係、擁有不同的影響，以及賦予素材深度或不同脈絡的可能性。」

再者，跨界的形式是當代表演藝術的趨勢：舞蹈、影像、劇場、音樂、文學跨領域地交織碰撞，創作過程及作品層次愈見複雜。這

種共同創作的模式將會愈來愈多。著重團隊合作及過程探索的去中心化創作模式，倫恩認為將「團隊中每個人的聲音納入作品中，比起成果導向的創作更容易與觀眾產生連結，在創作的實踐過程中提煉當代性。」<sup>1</sup>要能容納百川，藝術家要學習建立良好而有效的合作。而良好的合作，並不代表事事認同；倫恩認為合作團隊找到對的方式去提出異議，更能擦出火花；差異的觀點可以是創作的起點。

要讓差異成為優點，就要建立良好的溝通基礎，互相明白對方的語言。

### 語言的藝術

從倫恩設計工作坊內容就能看出，編舞及戲劇顧問最重要的技巧，是溝通與聆聽。始終我們也需要語言來了解並說明對方，更何況是來自不同的媒介？況且，就算無言如舞蹈，言語根本一直都存在：編舞亦會利用象徵及比喻、或指名身體部位名稱，來指導舞者作出準確的動作。三天裡，每一個練習都引導我們重新「學習」溝通：由介紹自

己到作品，到就著創作想法互相提問。創作過程是不斷邁向未知，倫恩比喻戲劇顧問的工作如同考古研究：「你知道要挖哪裡，卻不知道會挖出甚麼，真的挖出來也可能無法定義。」而提問就是考古的工具，用來不斷收窄範圍，最終達到作品的核心。提問是方法，問甚麼和怎樣問是關鍵。

回看自己在《太平山街71號》及《參角厝》的創作過程，我所問的問題，在創作的不同階段因應編舞的需要，而有所改變：

一、創作的初期，概念還是模糊，編舞還在資料搜集或找尋動作中，我的提問方向也較廣闊，目的是了解她 / 他所想為主，找出一個範圍。問題多以「你感覺是……」、「為甚麼你有興趣……」、「你想像 / 看到 / 聽到甚麼……」、「你想法來自……」等等。我會把討論過的內容都記下來，但非去統整，這時心智圖是較好的紀錄方法。就著她 / 他的想法，放在更大的社會或歷史脈絡中去討論，並指出想法有趣的地方，也會找些相關資料去補充。這階段是找出作品的種種傾向。

二、當概念已定，到創作舞蹈動作階段，我

1. 陳代樾。〈顧問的技術《動態的夥伴關係—舞蹈構成工作坊》〉，《表演藝術評論台》，2016年11月25日。  
<http://pareviews.ncafroc.org.tw/?p=22205>

則較關注動作/畫面的意義，目的是去連結或釐清編舞所編的與所想的。因此，問題都較為具體，我會盡量形容所見的，問題裡包括很多動作、質感、方向、速度、身體部位的詞語，例如：「這段動作有很多旋轉，但大都在同一位置上，舞者有用力向外推的感覺，這是否在回應你之前的一個想法？」這時我也會建議可能的舞段次序，嘗試歸納出幾個敘述的可能，讓編舞決定。

三、到最後整合階段，這時也是最敏感的時候，因為編舞已經投入了一段時間，對於某些動作與編排已有定案，而且演出日期迫近，壓力可能很大。這時我選擇問的問題，都是範圍內可改動的，並以加強作品的優點為主：「這一段是最感動/最印象深刻的，但燈光/音樂太快轉變到下段，能否拖慢？」、「這段慢的獨舞夾在兩段快板的雙人舞中間，給予觀眾呼吸的空間，能否加強這感覺，好讓觀眾準備下一段？」

若能重新開始，我一定會與編舞先就著其他作品討論，深入了解各自的美學、喜好及詞彙。因為在實踐時，我發現迷失在言語當中，尋求其他媒介的幫助（如圖像、影片或相片），來翻譯自己的或編舞的想法。例如兩位編舞皆認為舞蹈能說「故事」，我認同不過，而且剛好兩個作品都由短劇及小說作開始。但我後來發現，兩位心中所指

的「故事」，與我所理解的大相逕庭；非關角色、關係或故事發展。因此，我轉向就著較闊的「敘述」去討論作品結構；敘述可以是心理的、時序的、時間的、空間的、音樂的等等，與典型線性的故事結構不同，我以為較接近編舞所想。可惜，或許礙於我的戲劇背景，兩位也很抗拒，生怕作品會如戲劇一樣，變得太過清楚。但我一直所強調即是戲劇構作，建立有邏輯的敘述及結構，找出對觀眾有意思的關聯。我很相信希迪·拉比·徹卡奧維及艾甘·漢的戲劇顧問佳·古治指：「每個藝術作品都有自己特定的語言，而且試圖要和它的對話者建立某種溝通。在這個意義上，原來和語言的連結仍然重要。」顯然，我與編舞對意義的建構有著很大的分歧，而就「故事」、「敘述」、「邏輯」及「戲劇構作」的定義，也花了許多時間去釐清。

### 合作的關係

有參加者提及，戲劇顧問與編舞的工作關係很難拿捏，也牽涉兩人信任的程度。倫恩重申，戲劇顧問是以人為本的工作，並沒有一套公式可言。每個合作關係都是獨特的。他舉例說有位匈牙利編舞與他的戲劇顧問合作超過十年，而每天他們都在排練室大吵幾回，這獨有的溝通方法不可能在另一組合複製。普魯菲他則比喻為領航



《動態的夥伴關係—舞蹈構成工作坊》

照片提供：臺北藝術節



《太平山街71號》（2016）

攝影：Chan Lap Yee

員的角色，戲劇顧問的任務在於協助編舞在過程中找到他的路；艾甘·漢在合作時，也期望戲劇顧問能展現出憑編舞自己也無法了解和展現的那一面。但倫恩強調，戲劇顧問的工作不是去取悅編舞，他與編舞是平等的，更要相信自己的戲劇構作知識並勇於提出意見，挑戰編舞；同時，也不能因為戲劇顧問的話，讓編舞對自己的作品失去信心。因為作品最終是寫上編舞的名字，是屬於她／他的創作。雖然創作者想透過作品坦露所想，可惜在創作中因邁向未知伴隨的惶恐與不安，心靈脆弱無比。戲劇顧問又要具備同理心，卻不能因害怕衝突而當「啦啦隊員」，只附和編舞。其實，這份工作真有如行鋼索般，步步為營。工作坊其中一環節，要每組參加者討論及分享一個創作的概念。其中一組，當那編舞一開口說話就十分激動，聲淚俱下。她身旁的評論組員未及開口問問題，編舞已經說，這個作品是關於她的女兒，沒有討論的空間。她再問，編舞自己也回答不了。我當時在想，如果這是專業的製作，若我是那位戲劇顧問，那怎麼辦、怎樣跟這位編舞繼續走下去？

戲劇顧問對合作伙伴、對團隊、對工作環境的敏感是成功的不二法門，而解決方法又回到溝通技巧的部分：在適當時機問對的問題。我甚至認為，戲劇顧問在創作的各個階段出現的次數、在排練室坐的位置、說／不說意見、說何種意見、怎樣說諸如此類，都要留心。編舞跟我初步談合作模式時，已定下我出席排練的時間表。雖然本來希望我在臨近演出前多出席綵排，但實際執行時，編舞因著演出日子迫近和設計師／後台人員的加入等等，構成頗大心理壓力。我最後調動甚至減少出席的時間，或者改為討論錄影的綵排片段，希望安排到最合適及舒適的時間／環境，與編舞討論。

### 殊途而同歸

當然，過程中自己也有沮喪的時候，兩位編舞我也是首次合作；我與兩人的美學、喜好及思維有很大的分別，分歧少不了。不禁會自我懷疑，我與編舞在走著同一個方向嗎？舞蹈史上第一位正式的舞蹈戲劇顧問豪戈，到一九七九年才出現；舞蹈戲劇顧問的發展只有幾十年，但對於戲劇構作的討論出現得更早，只是以其他形式討論。學者羅倫斯·史維茲基比喻戲劇構作為建造構成；為作品建立

2. 卡塔琳·特蓮雀妮。2016。《戲劇顧問：連結理論與創作的實作手冊》，頁304。台北：國家表演藝術中心。

或疏理出的劇場構作如同建屋所需要的樁腳鋼筋。由啞劇舞蹈、宮廷芭蕾、現代舞，再到當代舞，每個年代都有不少編舞、作家、芭蕾指導就著舞蹈的「組成、結構、表達、作品和觀眾的關係——所有這些重要的戲劇構作事項」<sup>2</sup> 著書立說。或許因為舞蹈是種抽象的藝術形式，有需要通過書寫去探討其美學與結構。再者，舞蹈家一直自覺地要擺脫舞蹈作為娛樂的功能，不斷發展及改革，務求提升舞蹈的地位。由這角度看，戲劇構作的思考，在舞蹈中並不陌生；編舞與戲劇顧問的追求，殊途同歸。

這個工作坊及兩個當代舞的實踐，讓我以全新的視點去理解戲劇構作；對自己作為戲劇顧問的工作，更加清晰。差異構成了障礙，亦是挑戰。英國編舞喬納森·布羅斯建議編舞要找到「客觀看待『過於熟悉的東西』的技巧」。其實這建議對戲劇顧問，甚至創作團隊的每位都合用：能在主觀與客觀之間遊走，才有虛位聆聽建議。因著差異，衝突在合作中無可避免，但在衝突之後依然能夠繼續前行，才有突破自己、突破作品的可能。

---

#### 賴閃芳

畢業於英國艾賽特大學舞台實踐藝術碩士。賴氏為自由身戲劇顧問。為香港話劇團《紅》及《安·非她命》擔任文學研究。最近為天台製作《不是女僕》及一條褲製作首屆紀錄劇場節任戲劇顧問。

---

# We Are Different and the Differences Matter: Reflections on Contemporary Dance Practices from a Dramaturg's Point of View

Lai Sim-fong

What kind of role does a dramaturg play in the choreographic process? What could she/he offer to choreographers?

In 2016, I started working with two choreographers, Rebecca Wong and Terry Tsang, as dramaturg for their dance productions *Nook* and *Trinity* respectively. I could not help but worry that my training in theatre might not be useful in the choreographic process. It happened that the 2016 Taipei Arts Festival was organising a dance dramaturgy workshop which was to take place in October 2016. My application was accepted, and I was fortunate to have the opportunity to work with the guest speaker, Gregor Runge, the dramaturg of Germany's Bremen Theatre. There were 20 participants: Half of them were dancers, and the others were critics and dramaturgs. Even though the workshop was about dance, we spent a great deal of time on discussion based on the exercises given by Runge. Over the course of three days, we discussed a wide range of topics from the application of dramaturgical thinking in dance to the difficulties it presents, as there were both dancers and critics who contributed their insights from different perspectives.

Apart from production, Runge's work for Bremen Theatre includes curation, audience building and educational outreach. In Germany, dramaturg is a

regular position in a theatre company. In theatres in Taiwan and Hong Kong, the presence of a dramaturg is not common at all, and it is contingent on the choreographer's need while she/he is producing a show. For the sake of comparison, this article focuses on Runge's dramaturgical work in the creative and production process which is often process-led, instead of his work at the institutional level. In this article I will refer to some of the key points that were discussed during the workshop, and offer my response to them in the context of my collaboration with the two aforementioned choreographers.

## The importance of differences

Why does a choreographer need a dramaturg? Runge offered us an example: Pina Bausch's dramaturg, Raimund Hoghe, had been a cultural journalist, and the two met during an interview. Pina needed Hoghe because he was different from her, and he was able to instill different elements into her work. With a background in criticism or literature, dramaturgs pay greater attention to language, narrative and interpretation. Runge pinpointed the word "texture" and remarked that a dramaturg's job is to deepen the work by creating different layers of meaning. Runge once worked with a choreographer who wanted to use magic in the work; however, he believed that would

make the piece too straightforward. In the initial stage of conceptualisation and movement creation, Runge searched for the right context and offered suggestions about possible directions for the work. In the end, magic was used in the work to explore the issues of refugees and migration in Europe. Experienced dramaturg Katherine Profeta shared similar insights, where “for the choreographer, working with a dramaturg could open up new possibilities; it gives the choreographers the chance to create a dialogue, to be influenced and last but not least, to deepen the materials.”

Further, the cross-disciplinary approach is a popular trend in contemporary performing arts: The collision between dance, moving images, theatre, music and literature leads to a complex creative process and creates multiple layers of meaning in a single work. This kind of process-driven creative collaboration will be increasingly popular in the future. Runge believes that “the more voices/ideas the work contains, the easier it will be to connect with the audience. Contemporaneity is distilled and found easily in this kind of process-driven, but not product-driven work.”<sup>1</sup> Artists have to work effectively within

a group, and with people who are very different from themselves. Yet effective collaboration does not mean conformity. Runge thinks that if the artists find the right ways to disagree, it would ignite greater creative sparks. Artists from different backgrounds speak differently; they have to understand one another’s language to build a strong basis for communication.

### **The importance of communication**

From Runge’s workshop design, we know that the most important skill for choreographers and dramaturgs is communication. While dance is about movement, choreographers rely on language heavily during rehearsals, such as referring to different parts of the body and the use of metaphor in movement creation. Every exercise we did during the three-day workshop helped us to “unlearn and relearn” communication. Runge compared the dramaturg to the archaeologist: “You know very well where to dig, you don’t know what you will find, and not to mention to define what it is”. Questioning skills are akin to the digging tools of the archaeologist; they are used to narrow down the focus, leading one

1. Chen Tai-yueh. “The Skills of a Advisor: ‘Companionship in motion – a workshop on dance dramaturgy’”, *Performing Arts Review*, 25 November 2016. <http://pareviews.ncafroc.org.tw/?p=22205>

to the heart of the work. It comes down to what questions the dramaturg asks and the manners in which they are asked.

When I look back on the creative processes of *Nook* and *Trinity*, I see that the questions I asked changed according to the needs of the choreographers. There are a few phases in this process.

During the conceptualisation phase, the choreographer is researching and collecting materials. Most of the questions I ask are open-ended questions; the goal is to understand her/him, and to discern what is the creative direction we are looking at. The questions range from "What do you feel?", "Why are you interested in this?", "What is it that you are envisaging/seeing/hearing?" to "Where do these ideas come from?". Instead of defining the concept, I outline all the possible directions we could take, and write down all the details of our conversation. In such moments, mind mapping comes in handy. Based on the content we have discussed, I suggest different social and historical contexts for further discussion and research.

During the second phase, when the concept has been defined, the choreographer shifts her/his focus to creating movement and choreography. My focus also shifts to interpretation, symbolism and meaning.

I try to clarify what I see and compare it with what she/he is thinking. The questions I ask are more specific, and I use vocabulary like direction, texture, speed, and parts of the body. For example, I may ask the choreographer: "There is a lot of spinning on the same spot, as if the dancer is trying to break free from something. Is this a response to an idea you had earlier?" At this stage, I might suggest several possible modes of narration and sequences of movement for the choreography.

The third and the final phase is the most sensitive: The choreographer has invested a great deal of time in the work, and her/his conception and feelings about the choreography may have crystallised. They may also be under stress as the opening draws near. It is not quite possible for the dramaturg to suggest major changes to the work at this stage. Most of my questions centre around elements that could be refined, and the goal is to accentuate the strengths of the work. For instance, I may ask the choreographer: "This solo between the two duets is very evocative, but the lighting changes are too fast. Could we slow them down a bit?"

If I had the chance to start all over again, I would have spent more time learning about the choreographers' aesthetics, taste and choreographic language. In each case, the choreographer and I misunderstood



Companionship in motion – a workshop on dance dramaturgy  
Photo courtesy: Taipei Arts Festival



Nook (2016)  
Photo: Chan Lap-yee

each other's language frequently throughout the collaboration; sometimes I elaborated on my own ideas or the choreographer's with the aid of other media (such as images, videos or photographs). For instance, both choreographers believe that dance can tell a story, and coincidentally both works take literary texts as their point of departure. However, I discovered that the choreographers had a very different conception of "story" than I did; they were not concerned about characterisation, relationship or plot. I shifted my focus to discussing the narrative or the through-line of the work, which could be psychological, chronological, temporal, spatial, or musical. I thought the non-linear narrative structure would be closer to what they had in mind; on the contrary, both choreographers were reluctant to explore these concepts, probably because they were worried that it might result in dramatisation of the choreography. Guy Cools, the dramaturg of Akram Khan and Sidi Larbi Cherkaoui, once said that "every work has its own language, and it tries to establish certain kind of communication with the audience. In that sense, the connection with our language is still crucial." Throughout the rehearsals, what I emphasised was dramaturgy, which concerns the construction of a logical narrative and structure, and associations that embody meaning for the audience. The choreographers and I had very different views on how meaning is created, and we

spent a great deal of time on clarifying concepts like story, narrative, logic and dramaturgy.

### **The importance of cooperation**

A workshop participant raised an interesting question: How to sustain a good and trusting work relationship between the choreographer and the dramaturg? For Runge, the dramaturg's work is people-oriented and there is no one-size-fits-all approach. Every encounter is unique, and so is every working relationship. He mentioned an extreme example. There is a Hungarian choreographer who has been working with his dramaturg for over ten years, and they argue in almost every rehearsal. Such an intense way of communication is not common, and yet it works for them. Runge believes his job is not to please the choreographer, since the choreographer and the dramaturg are equals. He challenges and questions the choreographer without undermining her/his confidence. On the one hand, artists need to share their feelings and ideas through their works; on the other, they are always anxious about venturing into the unknown. The dramaturg should empathise with the choreographer but not shy away from confrontation. Profeta sees her role as a guide who helps choreographers to find their unique voice. For Khan, he expects the dramaturg to uncover potential in him that he is not even aware

of. On the second day of the workshop, Runge got us to pair up, where each group was to conceive a concept together. There was a pair that stood out among the rest: Once the choreographer started sharing her idea, she became so emotional that she could not stop crying. The choreographer said the concept was about her daughter, and there was no room for questioning it. Her partner, who was a critic, did not have a single chance to ask any questions. I looked at them and wondered: If I had to work with this choreographer, what would I do as a dramaturg to gain her trust? How could I assure her that I was not her enemy?

It seems that the basis for a trusting relationship is, again, good communication skills: To ask the right question at the right time. Apart from selecting the right questions, a dramaturg has to be careful about what to say and when to give a comment, how often they may go to the rehearsal or even where to sit in the room. While I had worked out a schedule with the two choreographers, we cut down the number of visits and switched to phone conversation and review of rehearsal recordings on some occasions, for instance, after the choreographer had had a stressful technical rehearsal. I had to constantly grasp the changing dynamic and look for the right moment to discuss things with the choreographers.

### **Turning challenges into opportunities**

There were certainly frustrating moments for me throughout the process. These two dance works were not only my first encounter with contemporary dance, but also my first collaboration with these two choreographers. I was well aware of our differences in terms of taste, aesthetics and thinking process. Conflicts were unavoidable. Sometimes I wondered if we were still on the same track. Raimund Hoghe, arguably the first dance dramaturg, began working with Pina Bausch in 1979. The development of dance dramaturgy may have been less than 40 years in the making, yet the discussion of dramaturgy in dance analysis has a much longer history. From pantomime dancing, ballet de cour, modern dance to contemporary dance, there have been in every era numerous choreographers, writers and ballet coaches writing about the dramaturgical aspects of dance such as composition, structure, expression and the relationship between the work and the audience, as Katalin Trencsényi pinpoints in her book *Dramaturgy in the Making: A User's Guide for Theatre Practitioners*. One main reason for that is that dance is an abstract art form which warrants extensive analysis on its aesthetics and structure. Besides, choreographers are making conscious efforts to free dance from its function as entertainment and revolutionise it, in order to elevate

the status of dance. Dramaturgs are concerned about structure or, as scholar Lawrence Switzky puts it, the architectonic of a building. From this point of view, the choreographer and the dramaturg have the same concerns and pursuits.

I reflected a lot on my own personality and working methods as well as the role of a dramaturg, after my participation in Runge's workshop and my collaboration with Rebecca Wong and Terry Tsang. Differences present both obstacles and opportunities. Choreographer Jonathan Burrows suggests there is a skill that every choreographer should develop, which is "the skill to observe something too familiar, objectively". This is useful to any artist, not just the dramaturg. Being able to shift between the subjective and objective perspectives, the artists give themselves space to listen to different opinions. Differences are no longer obstacles, but the momentum that inspires breakthrough in ourselves and our work.



### **Lai Sim-fong**

Lai Sim-fong graduated with a MA in Theatre Practice from the University of Exeter, UK. She currently works as a freelance dramaturg, and she was the literary researcher for Hong Kong Repertory Theatre's productions *Red* and *Attempts on her Life*. In recent times she has worked as dramaturg for Rooftop Productions's *Not The Maids* and the inaugural Documentary Theatre Festival.

