

## Afsluttende rapport ved forsøg

Forsøgsstationen – værksted for professionel scenekunst.

For at dokumentere forsøgets udbytte og konklusioner, beder vi jer svare på nedenstående spørgsmål. Spørgsmålene (bortset fra fakta delen) er vejledende, og du er velkommen til at komme med flere relevante oplysninger, eller vedlægge andet materiale af visuelt eller auditivt format, som kan hjælpe med at beskrive forsøgets grundlæggende idé.

Rapporten skal fylde mindst 7.000 tegn inkl. mellemrum og sendes til Forsøgsstationen senest 3 måneder efter endt forsøg.

Den afsluttende rapport vil, sammen med intentionsrapporten, arkiveres i vores database, og dermed være tilgængelig for Forsøgsstationens andre brugere, eller udefrakommende med interesse for forsøget.

### Fakta

- Forsøgets titel: The Laughing Game
- Forsøgets hovedspørgsmål (et spørgsmål): How can I transform my existing research on laughter into a solo performance - into a sounding, physical, visual and thought provoking encounter with laughter?
- Kontaktoplysninger på den forsøgsansvarlige samt dennes evt. teater:  
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- Navne og faglig baggrund på de medvirkende i forsøget:  
Choreographer/Performer: Antoinette Helbing  
Outside Eye: Jan Vesala, Katrine Johansen
- Tidsplan for forsøget: Week 2 & 3 2020 (6.1.-17.1.2020)

### Proces

- Beskriv forberedelsen af forsøget:  
As preparation I read literature around laughter and physical empathy. I focussed especially on the physical research around laughter – trying to understand what happens in our bodies while we're laughing. And focussing less on the social and psychological aspects since they seemed less relevant in relation to a solo work. My biggest source of inspiration turned out to be the wonderful book "LAUGH RIRE LACHEN" by Antonia Baehr, who as well did create a solo work on laughter in 2008. In anticipation of a feeling of loneliness and a desire to exchange, I decided to start my day with a morning training that I would open up for all members of Forsøgsstationen plus guests that I invited myself. The target group were people interested in using movement and voice simultaneously. The morning classes turned out to be quite popular with an average of 10 people attending everyday – people were so generous to dive into my proposals and by that gave me lots of inspiration, ideas and energy to continue my working day with. I can clearly recommend this way of opening the working process when in forsøg!

I prepared the concept of my morning classes – understanding what can be useful as warm up and which exercises would serve me research.

Then I was reviewing material from my previously conducted research in 2018/19. I checked it for its relevance in relation to creating a solo work. From there I tried to understand what is missing – which aspects I didn't look at and could be worth investigating when wanting to create a solo. And I felt that there was a full scene missing.

Last step was collecting theoretical ideas that I wanted to try out in the studio during the forsøg.

- Beskriv forsøgets konkrete etaper.

My forsøg consisted of one constant: the daily training. I started every day with an open morning training from 9-10. Basically every day I received inspiring words, lovely scenes, tons of laughter sounds and movement and a big amount of energy from the participants of the class. I noted all the thoughts they expressed during the sessions and reviewed them later once I was alone in the studio.

As a first step I retouched the physical material from my previous research – aiming to get a feeling for its relevance and its potential place within a solo. I changed the physical scores to adapt it to my body and my very personal way of experiencing laughter.

Once that was done, I started to rework the choreographic score. Going into depth with dramaturgy of the different parts. Getting a deeper understanding for what the parts communicate and how I could use them in a solo.

I started running the material in blocks to see if there was something missing. Realizing that there was a scene lacking that would work with the sound of laughter in a very artificial way. As I kept on reading books on laughter theory I encountered a section in “The importance of not being earnest” explaining the way we breathe while laughing. According to Wallace Chafe typically one inhalation is followed by 1-12 exhalations that are done in a very uneven rhythm.

That information inspired me to create a new scene. My score for that scene is to improvise around stopping at any moment in the middle of laughter. The stops can be either during the moment of inhalation or exhalation and can last from almost unnoticeably short to extremely long, which creates a sometimes funny and sometimes quite weird expressions that focuses on the bizarreness of most laughter sounds and especially on the facial movements.

A crucial step happened in the second week and I had to make a decision on how I would like to relate to my audience. I felt that all the material I had produced so far, was not possible to be performed facing the audience while being placed on stage. The 4<sup>th</sup> wall and/or a normal audience setup was simply disturbing. At that point I made the choice of inviting the audience onto stage.

The last step was the sharing with a small audience, when I opened up for a work in progress showing on my last forsøgs day. This felt very brave, fulfilling and informative at the same time.

- Beskriv de øjeblikke hvor noget nyt opstod i forsøget; hvad var bevidst og hvad var tilfældigt og fik det jer til at ændre fremgangsmåde eller skifte metode?  
I had invited specific artists into the studio along the way to perform the raw material for them and

hear their thoughts on it. These showings kept on feeling weird. More like not sharing. Too artificial. Too exposed. Too little of the social aspects happen that surround laughter as a social construct. That was the moment when I decided to try to have people surrounding me and giving up on the idea of having a "front". Which made the biggest change and suddenly all my material made sense and started communicating. The choice of using the audience as my scenography to play my social game, was a new thought that spontaneously arose through the *forsøg* when I felt stuck with what I had found until then.

Another thing that arose out of a gut feeling was my wish to keep stuck to my original material and to work it deeper and more specific. I had expected that I would feel the need to develop and experiment with freshly created material. But I found myself digging and investigating the old stuff and re-defining it.

- Hvilken form for kommunikation benyttede I internt? (f.eks. foredrag, samtale, observation, stilhed, skrevne ord, fysiske tegn etc.)

I worked mainly with analyzing through observation and speech. These applied to my morning classes, but also when I invited guests into the studio. During the classes we worked mainly with self-observation and sharing the thought in talking sessions following the exercise. I often invited Jan Vesala in – who had already been part of the previous research. Occasionally we would change roles, meaning that Jan would perform my material for me and I could observe from the outside. Which we again would analyze through feedback talks – kind of giving myself feedback on my own work.

As part of my practice, I wrote all thoughts, findings, questions, feedback and analysis in my notebook, which I reviewed on a daily basis.

- Hvilken form for refleksion benyttede I undervejs? (f.eks. samtale, logbog, digitale optagelser). Also here the main mean was conversation – although it was often in the form of a monologue. When I was alone in the studio I worked a lot with filming myself and reviewing the filmed sequences. I looked through the filmed material every evening as preparation for the next day. Finding my working hypothesis, new questions, new exercises, new inspirations and simply giving notes to self.

## Konklusion

- Blev en tese bekræftet eller afkræftet?  
Yes, my thesis "Laughter is a deeply fascinating topic with high potential in performativity" was confirmed.
- Blev en hypotese bekræftet eller afkræftet?  
My hypothesis was "The Laughing Game, which originally was meant to become a trio between a musician, an actor and a dancer, has potential to be reworked into a solo work. This hypothesis was confirmed.
- Blev noget opfundet?  
Yes, I found another way of redoing the traditional way of observing theatre through the 4<sup>th</sup> wall. Instead I invite the audience on stage to experience the work together with me and all closeness. Instead of a dance piece I decided to create a dance installation, where the audience will be my essential scenography and form the piece by their natural and spontaneous reactions.

## Efter forsøget

- Har forsøget ledt til ønsker om fortsættelse af dette forsøg eller nye forsøg?  
I surely wanna keep up holding my laughter sessions. People seemed happy, curious, challenged,

worked out and connecting to each other.

I kept on working on my material during the weeks that followed my forsøg – resulting in a premiere on the 26<sup>th</sup> of February. Even though the piece has had its premiere, I don't consider the work done. I will still rework the piece based on the things I learned through playing it with 65 people around me and I will keep on following my curiosity on laughter.

- Vil dette forsøg få Indflydelse på en arbejdsmetode, et samarbejde, fremtidige produktioner?  
One realization that was very impactful on me, was that opening up my process seems very useful for me. Opening my morning training gave me energy, new input, more people new about my work and lots of dialogue around the topic.  
Inviting for a showing was scary, but also very giving. I will definitely learn for future processes to be at least as open. Sharing is simply win win.
- Har dette forsøg afstedkommet nye og andre ønsker om måder at undersøge og forske på?  
Actually not. I'm still very saturated and fulfilled from my forsøg and it will take time for new hunger for more research to arise.