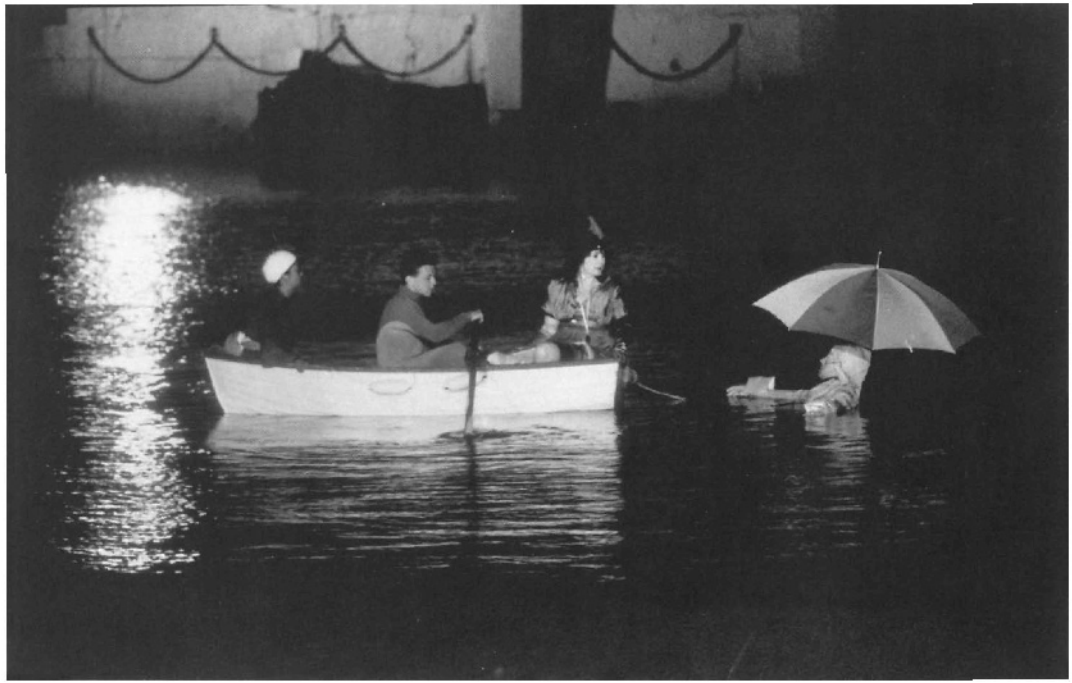

2 Joanna Neary, Paul Finlay, Cindy Oswin, and Trevor Stuart in 'Fifty Five Years of the Swallow and the Butterfly'. Lumiere & Son, 1990. (Photo: Hilary Westlake.)

and indeed be the very reason why a group has congregated around a particular issue, interest, or kind of theatre. Even experienced professional companies may need to re-address their function and purpose in devising theatre at regular intervals. As a general theory, I want to conclude this chapter by highlighting the questions that can be asked by any group or company starting work together:

1 What is it you want to devise, and why? What kind of theatre do you want to create?
2 Who are you devising for, and why?
3 What are your initial aims and objectives as a company for this project?
4 Is your content or subject matter the starting point for the work? What are the source materials?
5 Is the form or structure an important preliminary area for exploration?

# 3

# PROCESS

## Ways and means of making theatre

> If you have something you wish to say, it is not so difficult to find out how to say it.
> (Hilary Westlake, Artistic Director of Lumiere & Son)

The most fundamental requirement for devising theatre is a passion or desire to say something, a need to question or make sense of a starting point that encourages you to investigate further through a variety of processes and close enquiry. It is essential to identify the potential tools of devising that can be used to search, shape and structure the investigative route to be taken. It is also necessary to make early decisions with regard to how the group will operate throughout the devising process. This involves choices about how working structures relate to recognised roles or responsibilities of individuals within a company, as well as selecting the most appropriate approach to the work or employing processes that seem relevant to the particular situation.

Implicit in the organisation of every devising company's operation, whether an artistically democratic collective or a hierarchical structure of skill-sharing and specialisation, is a unique set of working relationships between individual specialist members that are different to the production hierarchy often associated with the literary theatre tradition. How then are the conventional roles of director, writer, and designer used in an alternative way by companies devising theatre? What are the ways and means of making a theatrical performance out of a non-uniform arrangement of variable contributing areas of expertise? Which processes are most commonly adopted as part of a devising methodology?

## THE DIRECTOR/DEVISER

I want to address these questions by looking at how different companies define the particular roles that give rise to specific processes of devising and working practice. How does leadership determine the process of creating a performance? This depends on whether a group functions hierarchically or democratically; whether there is a director or not. I wish to describe two examples from the area of experimental theatre to illustrate differing roles of leadership in the devising process. The People Show is a group of visual artists who work without a director. Founder member Mark Long states the belief that 'At some point in the creative, collaborative process, you do arrive at a group certainty. That is not to say that you are all necessarily driving towards exactly the same objective, but there is a line of agreement.'[1]

The People Show has always had a strong underlying philosophy of everyone having a definite visual comprehension of costume and set construction, as well as an understanding of building and lighting. The work has always been very technical, involving use of props and effects. This is vital to the company's sense of a strong, creative, collaborative process, and important to every artist's understanding of how to devise a People Show. Long comments: 'Otherwise, you're denying yourself certain colours or certain paints. It's important for people to comment on other people's areas of work in terms of light, sound, or acting.'[2]

The devising company for 'Burning Horizon – People Show No. 97' (1990) included a designer, a painter/photographer, a sculptor, a visual artist who sculpts, two musicians, and Long, who describes himself as a Jack-of-all-trades. This show involved everyone in the group being responsible for something in the set, and included nearly all group members in physically building it. Long has described the show as very symbolic, a juxtaposition of images rather like a Magritte painting.

At the start of the 1980s, Long described a general pattern of working for The People Show thus:

> we talk for a week and discuss a hundred things and just maybe one of them will happen. When you look at a People Show, you'll see half a percent of everything that

> was talked about – most of the time is spent in getting rid of things.[3]

Without a director, the process of communication and criticism becomes vital with the making of the work. Long believes that the artists themselves are the best critics, and that an inability to criticise each other is an unhealthy option. Artistic decisions are made out of a constant re-assessment by company members of the work, and a ruthless determination to preserve both individual interests and the development of the product.

Similarly, Forced Entertainment are keen to continually evaluate and debate the development of ongoing process and product. In contrast to The People Show, Forced Entertainment's practice is to have two directors, sharing responsibility for rehearsals, performance quality, steering meetings, and the eventual form of the show. Having worked together over a long period of time, company members have developed a full awareness of their strengths or weaknesses, and how they can contribute to each other. People know what each other's positions will be, as Tim Etchells observes:

> If you're pleased with an idea you'll take it to Robin [Arthur], because he'll generally pull it apart, which is good. You make sure you don't see Robin until you want that to happen to your idea. You make sure you do see him when it's vital that it happens.[4]

Terry O'Connor believes that the role of director is also about helping the performers keep in touch with what they were originally doing: 'Helping them find a new definition of the show they're touring, so the show retains an integrity and freshness.' This company does not assume collective responsibility for everything, and perhaps a weakness in company development has been to play to the strengths people have built up, which narrows opportunities for learning new skills. Roles are essentially defined for the company, but can vary according to the project.

Both these companies have a clear, established working practice in relation to how either no leadership or two directors can determine the devising process. This is often not the case when a freelance director/deviser is employed by a theatre-in-education company for a specific project. Coventry's Belgrade

Theatre-in-Education Company is a department of the Belgrade Theatre, but operates a policy of internal democratic management structure where every company member is expected to contribute fully to discussion and decision-making. Brian Bishop is a permanent member holding the position of head of department, and is responsible to the artistic director of the Belgrade and the Theatre Trust for all aspects of the company's work, which is planned collectively by all long-term members at weekly company meetings. Everything is regarded as everyone's responsibility, so that each company member is committed to and caring about all areas of work. The company provides a free service to all Coventry state schools, and creates 'original work designed to enable young people to question and change the world in which they live'.[5] Devising is defined by the company as a collective way of arriving at a finished product through discussion, improvisation, and writing.

## Outside the company

In early 1990 the two sub-companies were both devising programmes with freelance director/devisers. The sub-company who devised the special schools programme 'Monkey' for primary-aged children of varied severe learning difficulties felt that they were all coming from different directions, and yet to a certain extent presumed they were all coming from the same. The sub-company included several freelance members with a range of theatre-in-education experiences, which meant finding a way of working together as a new group of both freelance and permanent members. Everyone involved with this programme acknowledged the difficulties of the devising period. Freelance actor Sarah Westaway points out:

> What's interesting about the problems we encountered during the devising process was that we started by looking at it as something different. That's when we started blocking ourselves. Also, we decided early on that we wanted to move away from celebratory or environmentally based stuff, and that we wanted to develop a different approach to special schools' work without really knowing what that meant in itself.[6]

It is evident from this example that constant clarification of

original aims and objectives are vital in the early stages of any new group's work. They provide the basis for the process to unfold, grow, and change. Permanent company member Steve Nolan illustrates this point further:

> I think it has been a process of cutting back on what we've had, a developing and cutting process really, trying to get to the essence of things. This is my fifth consecutive freshly devised piece of theatre and no two have ever been the same; the process of devising has never been the same twice.

Westaway describes the role of the director in the project as a way of developing theories of process from experience within a context of understanding art, how the world functions, and how people learn. The devising process of 'Monkey' presented many problems for the company, which were increased when the director took sick leave and the group had to take on the role of director/deviser together. Thus, all company members had to look more closely at what they were doing. People felt freer to contribute ideas and take a more active part, which suggests an important need to clearly define what is required from both freelance director/deviser and each individual member of the group.

All sorts of expectations are tied up with the process of devising and should be clarified at the start. A company may employ a freelance director for a variety of reasons. One reason might be that a company is having problems with devising as a result of clashes between new and established group members, which confuses or muddles the company's perception of where it is heading. The director is brought in to help give the process a direction. Gail McIntyre, formerly a director of Leeds Theatre-in-Education Company, is now a freelance director. McIntyre has worked with several theatre-in-education companies in this capacity, and emphasises that the role is more than just the creator of a product. McIntyre stresses that as an outside director, 'you're not integral to the company development in its total sense'.[7]

Alternatively, a freelance director/deviser may be needed to initiate and lead a group through a devising process, which was part of McIntyre's brief when working with Red Ladder on a youth clubs piece in 1988. Another reason is simply that a

company requires a different input or set of skills at a particular time; as McIntyre observes, 'they wish to draw on another skill that isn't present'. McIntyre believes that it is crucial for any freelance person to know the expectations of the company, and to be clear about everyone's roles within a project. McIntyre comments further that most companies expect a freelance director/deviser to lead and initiate the process: 'you have to keep checking the ground and negotiate. Have you done what they wanted and expected? Perhaps challenge it.' The excitement of freelance directing/devising for McIntyre is having control of the work, feeling inspired by the process, creating the product, being committed to the material, and working in an exploratory way with either form or content.

## Clarification

Any group of people coming together with a wide variety of backgrounds and experiences needs to develop a new approach to a devised project in theatre-in-education. Aims and objectives must be identified in terms of children's needs, the company's needs, a learning area for the piece, and initial decisions related to form, content and methodology. If this is not established from the outset, difficulties may occur in terms of direction and knowing where to go next in the devising process. It is vital for any director to understand their role and functions within the particular set of devising circumstances, whether it is a collective process or not.

A theatre-in-education company with both a hierarchical structure and team approach to the devising process demands clearly defined roles and relationship between company director and theatre-in-education team leader. This is exemplified in the case of Greenwich Young People's Theatre, whose policy is to provide a professional theatre-in-education service for local schools, as well as offering 'a comprehensive programme of theatre/arts activities for young people in their own time'.[8] The director of the company, Chris Vine, describes the devising process as essentially eclectic with numerous possible starting points. Viv Harris is the theatre-in-education team leader, who leads a sub-company on a particular project and directs the final product. Harris recounts an example of a typical devising process within the company:

> we would discuss, test out on the floor the educational aims and holding form that we've chosen to explore those aims with. People will then come up with ideas which you test out on the floor. This can be done by breaking up into groups of twos or threes, going off and coming back with ideas that you share with the rest. It may be focused by the director or the writer, having done some particular research beforehand, but would still be very much there for the company to take on, developing their ideas and coming up with different proposals.[9]

## Collaboration

Devising theatre is often a difficult, problem-solving process, and creating a participatory theatre-in-education programme is no exception. The team leader may liaise with the director when devising the participatory section of the programme. Part of the team leader's role is to focus ideas or research for the team to take on, and develop and come up with different proposals. In the case of 'The Edge of Reason' (1989–90), the programme was devised with a group who knew where they were heading through the clear leadership of both team leader and director.

Vine led a series of sessions on participation with the team related to key questions about the meaning of freedom. Harris explains: 'Chris proposed a direct, interactive way of involving the young people in the key concept of freedom and we agreed on the two questions to be put at the beginning of the day as a focus for the programme.' For Harris, however, this was a frustrating process as lack of time prevented her involvement with the participation because of more pressing production problems, such as technical decisions or lighting design.

Harris observes that one of the most difficult aspects in devising the whole programme was the link between play and participation. The team set out to maintain a developing relationship between play and participation throughout the devising process, but as Harris states, 'the impact of the play, the input it was to make became a priority and the participation was set to one side until the programme was very close to opening'. For both team leader and director, the problem arises of how to integrate and develop both aspects of play and

participation within a limited time frame, whilst utilising the relationship and expertise of both directorial roles within the devising process of a theatre-in-education programme.

## THE WRITER/DEVISER

In the same way that leadership or the role of a director varies in every devising company, so the role of a writer is significantly different from the conventional initiator and author of a script. The writer's role is often specifically located within a company's practice, and has a particular relationship to the devising process. The ongoing debate of authorship between writer and devisers often draws a fine line between writer's theatre and a devised product. If a freelance writer is employed specifically to research a subject in collaboration with the company to write a play, then clearly this is a different task to that of the playwright who works alone to fulfil a commission or charge to write a play on a determined subject. The former activity is dependent on others' ideas and research, the latter is a single activity requiring no interaction with people whatsoever.

One of the major areas of debate in the Theatre Writers Union is the writer's relationship to devising, which is discussed in the article 'Devising as writing', where Julie Wilkinson states:

> Many companies generate their work simply by devising, but people (in the union) are very wary of it as a way of working. The union gets a lot of complaints about devising companies claiming to have done what they've done, and arguing about who the work belongs to – who has actually done the work. We get a lot of enquiries about how writers should approach companies who devise.[10]

With regard to issues of authorship or script control, the Theatre Writers Union supports the belief that whoever scripts the material within the group is the author, regardless of whether the play has been group devised or not. Problems of script control were experienced by Kathleen McCreery, a member of the mid-1970s Red Ladder Theatre Company who devised *Strike While the Iron is Hot*, which was published in 1980 as part of a collection of plays on 'Sexual politics in the theatre'. In

the article 'The (Woman) Writer and T.I.E. Part II', McCreery comments, 'Four of us in the company actually wrote the play, yet I didn't even know that the play was being published. . . . I was not asked for permission, not paid. And then we had to **buy** our own play in print.'[11]

Some playwrights, however, are keen to use the devising process with a company as it provides the opportunity to collaborate with a group, sharing ideas and creative space. The 1970s saw many companies, notably in theatre-in-education, acknowledging the playwright but also describing the piece as being 'devised by the company'. Gay Sweatshop clearly outlined the relationship of writer to devising process when they invited Michelene Wandor to script their material of scenario, story and characters. Kate Crutchley and Nancy Diuguid describe Wandor's role of 'writing original material where necessary, editing and tightening and reorganising material we already had' in an introduction to the script of 'Care and Control' contained in the volume *Strike While the Iron is Hot*.[12] This was discussed with the company who had researched and improvised the material beforehand. The programme for the show included the individual acknowledgements of researcher, devisers and writer.

Caryl Churchill is also clear in her role as writer for Joint Stock in the introduction to 'Light Shining in Buckhamingshire':

> The play is not improvised: it is a written text and the actors did not make up its lines. But many of the characters and scenes were based on ideas that came from improvisation at the workshop and during rehearsal. I could give endless examples of how something said or done by one of the actors is directly connected to something in the text.[13]

This description of Churchill's role as writer in relation to the company represents a direct contrast to collective writing, where a group combines all their ideas and views, which often results in 'get-it-all-in-ism'. Steve Gooch describes this process as leading to 'some incredible rambling, shapeless shows, but from time to time the very rawness of the experience described, or the very originality of subject-matter and treatment, made the consequent productions real eye-openers'.[14]

Groups that write collectively have often been accused of producing poorly crafted plays that suffer from a lack of cohesive style and clear single vision. The difficulties of translating the whole experience of the group into a final script are expressed in Libby Mason's afterword to 'Double Vision', a piece she devised with the Women's Theatre Group. Mason states: 'There are virtually no stage directions in the script because the way the words were spoken and the physical pictures they created had already been invented and were familiar to all of us.'[15] A group devising and writing collectively needs to allow substantial time for this process, which I suspect is harder and longer than for the playwright employed by a company to come in and write a play from and with the group.

## Role

It is vital that a group is clear about the writer's function and the extent to which, if any, performers may be involved in the writing process. This was the case in 'Ariadne' (1989–90). Annie Griffin comments that the best writing is often done in rehearsals, 'when someone takes an hour or so with pen and paper, and puts something together.'[16] A group must identify what it wants from a freelance writer before collaboration begins, agreeing the responsibilities and crediting specialised skills as needed. The writer's relationship with the group is crucial to an understanding of what the process aims to produce.

The role of a writer-in-residence varies with every company, but often involves them working together, going away for a period of time, and constantly negotiating the work as it develops. John Wood was writer-in-residence with Greenwich Young People's Theatre from 1985 to 1990, and wrote the play that was part of the theatre-in-education participatory programme, 'The Edge of Reason'. Wood worked in close collaboration with the team leader and company members, exploring many ideas around the material. He then came up with a scenario in consultation with others, where the material dictated a need for a three-act play. The company then split up into a number of groups for act one, discussed and improvised the material until there was an agreed shared understanding of how to get to act two, whilst, Wood comments, 'knowing all the

time that we had an aiming point in act three that I had already devised anyway'. The group looked at what it thought should be the pivotal scenes of the first two acts, as well as exploring what the heart of each act should be, which then became the main part of Wood's brief, to weave the action around these scenes and to develop the main substance of act three. These scenes were directly related to the key learning areas of the programme, but as Harris observes, what was finally needed was 'one person's brain to riddle all those things through '. It was acknowledged that the play could not be written by committee, and that the writer's role was to produce a script out of the collaboration with others.

Wood needed to involve himself in the politics of the period, which inevitably threw up problems of how to resolve research with the characters that were being improvised 'on the floor'. It became a healthy clash between politics, people, the writer's personal stand, and the actor-teachers' creation of characters. This all contributed to pushing Wood to look again at whether he had characterised them correctly. It also raised the question of whether the writer was 'tightening the screw down too much, keeping them too much on my track?' The re-work and re-write process of 'The Edge of Reason' considered what needed clarification, including the participation work, and provided a clearer indication of character for both actor and audience. Changes were made in the light of discussion with the whole team on two re-work days following the first few performances of the programme. There was no substantial re-writing in terms of specifics, although there were changes in the number and nature of lines. Harris observes:

> That's an inevitable spin-off of the devising process, where you don't have the opportunity to re-draft before feedback. The first draft is your working draft until you have an opportunity to work it on the floor and usually to an audience.

## WRITING A TEXT

A re-work or re-write process is also used by Forced Entertainment, and usually lasts about ten days. This allows group members to address problems arising out of the first perform-

ances, which means that chunks are re-written, changed, thrown out, or re-ordered. For this company, the idea of devising is linked to the notion of a permanent ensemble, which means mutual support and responsible criticism. It is important to create an environment where risks can be taken. Tim Etchells describes the devising process as work that has an in-built plurality and spaciousness, a breadth of ideas and inputs. Text ideas are explored through practical work, discussion, criticism and revision. Writing is sometimes based on improvisations, but more normally on ideas and discussions with the rest of the group. Etchells comments that the text is 'torn apart, re-written in the same way that action sections or set ideas are set up and then constantly revised'. As the writer, Etchells feels that he gets more time to work alone than anyone else in the company. The company structure tries to ensure that the writer gets the vital space, support and criticism in appropriate doses, just like everyone else. It is not uncommon for Etchells to turn up at rehearsals with a text that no one was expecting, 'or equally frequent', he adds, 'are the days I turn up with bland re-workings of yesterday's ideas, or nothing at all.'

Inside the company, the role of writer is one of writer of text within the devising process, rather than writer of a show. The company talks about shows, and creates between its members ideas for places where text might go or what it might be about, and then the writer fulfils his brief. The role has only changed with the more frequent use of text, shifting from taped text to video-text to live text, which has created a parallel shift in the kinds of things that are written. The last shows have been 'very open texts', which allow the audience to find their own way through a piece. There is no authorial message, but a certain freedom for the audience. An open reading of the work is encouraged, although the writer acknowledges the tendency for others to construct narratives out of shows. '200% & Bloody Thirsty' (1988–89) was described by critics in a number of ways, from being a show about new neighbours who went to a party and were desperate for accommodation (missing the fact that they were Mary, Joseph, and the Innkeeper), to being a seething attack on inner-city deprivation. Etchells believes that this says more about what people want to see experimental performance work about. For Etchells, trying to define the show often monopolises its meanings, although he accepts

that people are entitled to do this, since it is an open piece. He is most interested in responses that talk about the ambiguity of moments, or the diversity of meanings, which are the nearest reactions to how the company sees the work.

The role of writer as contributor of text to the devising process, and as a participating member of the company making a performance,is common in experimental theatre practice. The change in status and significance of certain conventional roles linked to play production has created a new set of working relationships within many devising companies. I want to consider a particular collocation of roles and relationships in one company, which has produced a devising methodology and working practice for Lumiere & Son. I want to look at the roles of writer, technical director, and musical composer in relation to the director. Lumiere & Son's structure and methods of working are clearly identified through Hilary Westlake's role as initiator, creator, and director of the devised product. Westlake's understanding of the term 'devised theatre' applies to any show that is being prepared in ways other than the pre-written script. Westlake argues that devising implies a high degree of democracy in all areas of the work, so that all members of a group could potentially have equal input into the work. However, she no longer uses the term 'devising', which originally meant a process of working where she created a show in rehearsal with the performers, but now prefers the term 'creating' to describe her method of working with the company. Westlake suggests 'creating' implies, 'a single vision but with the creative imagination of others being given the opportunity of being involved'.[17]

## One methodology

Westlake's role of artistic director of Lumiere & Son has developed and changed over the years. Since David Gale left the company in 1983, Lumiere & Son's shows have changed considerably in their style and structure, with a greater emphasis on music and projections. Westlake conceives a complete treatment of a show, before commissioning her collaborators to create contributions of written text, photographic projections, or musical score. Specific briefs are sent to the writer, musical composer, technical director or designer, who

work independently of each other and in direct communication with the director. Westlake has a symbiotic relationship with the artists, resulting in a collaborative working process in which she is the final arbiter. Decisions are often influenced by those working closely with her, and may be based on individuals' specific areas of interest. Lumiere & Son's particular style and methodology have developed out of many years of experience, and are now distinguished by the lack of democracy in the creative process. The prospect of any company member being able to discuss every aspect of the process does not appeal to Westlake, although she acknowledges discussion as a vital ingredient in the devising process. Westlake believes that art is not necessarily best served by such democracy.

## Composition

Gale was a full-time member of Lumiere & Son from 1973 to 1983, nominating themes for shows and realising them in the form of full scripts in his role as writer with the company. His writing was based on and derived from only themes that totally absorbed him. Gale's relationship with Westlake was as a writer devising a script in collaboration with a director devising the best means of realising it, rather than, as Gale comments, 'a rehearsal process that depends largely and centrally upon the mounting of speculative exercises with fully contributing actors'. This meant that the script determined rehearsals rather than being a process of discovery by performers through group improvisation and research. However, this method of working was certainly used in the early years of the company, characterised in shows that used physical mannerism and choreographic work that Gale describes as 'often prefaced by exercises in which the performers search for gestures which Hilary will later refine and recombine'.

Since 1983, Gale has become a freelance writer and continues to be commissioned by Westlake to furnish texts for projects devised and shaped by the director. Although these shows have been well received, Gale has not found the process particularly fulfilling. Gale describes it as 'curiously frustrating when the brief comes from a source so close to my history and development as a theatre scriptwriter'. He believes it is easier to write

film or television scripts about subjects of passing interest than to write an external brief for Lumiere & Son. Gale observes that he has to be totally absorbed by research and preparation before he can write, expecting to spend 'about four times longer in preparation than in the process of actually writing what would eventually become the script'. He is aware of the contradiction of leaving Lumiere & Son in order to relinquish responsibility for the production of themes while complaining 'of the frustrations attached to supplying texts that have not been fully prepared, when I made a decision precisely to forsake the pleasures associated with devising my own texts'.

Gale's writing brief for 'Fifty Five Years of the Swallow and the Butterfly' in 1990 produced the notion of a 'commère' who introduced, counselled, and cured a variety of exotic hydrophobics. These sufferers were initiated into Penzance's Jubilee pool water gradually, climaxing in the total immersion of the last hydrophobic. Gale's dissatisfaction with this site-specific piece came from a variety of reasons. He acknowledges that site-specific work often creates difficulties of working with amateurs or local people, and believes that this particular show was severely compromised by a high drop-out rate amongst local people who had been willing to participate at the start of the project. Gale comments: 'The spectacle of amateur performers murdering my carefully crafted lines was not pleasant. I don't blame the amateurs – they are amateur.' Equally, the small budget for the show and limited resources handicapped the full expression of ideas related to the location itself.

The 1990s have seen the use of freelance directors or writers as useful to groups devising theatre in a range of chosen, clearly defined roles. However, the writer must be aware that a group devising process often involves the person functioning as someone who transcribes, interprets and assembles the ideas of a group. For writers like Gale, collective authorship, which is implicit as an objective of the devising process, means that 'the role of the writer is thereby diminished'. The writer's personal imaginative development is devalued and Gale argues that the process of devising is 'properly potentiated' without a writer, as group members may be skilled in editing and assembling material that 'will bring something of a textual aesthetic to the product'. Gale points out that the process may benefit from this

**3** Naoko Kawase, Joanna Neary, Chris Newland, Trevor Stuart, and Cindy Oswin in 'Fifty Five Years of the Swallow and the Butterfly'. Lumiere & Son, 1990. (Photo: Simon Corder.)

but the product may suffer, which he sees reflected in the disappointing quality of some devised work. He feels that the world has changed so significantly since 1983 that he must re-think and re-evaluate his work as a writer related to 'performance theatre', without losing the unique experience of Lumiere & Son's work, which is both textual and visual theatre.

## IMAGERY

Hilary Westlake's process of creating visual choreographic images for 'Fifty Five Years of the Swallow and the Butterfly' was to start with a physical warm-up incorporating exercises around bathing, diving, bird-like movements, or rippling actions that might go into the show. Some of the participants had done little movement work, so she concentrated on doing less, and polishing simple sequences of moves in conjunction with chants and musical backing. This process has been established through her wide experience of devising visual images for theatre; she often teaches a rhythm to performers so that they can move off or on the beat, which is followed by imaginative improvised movement (in the example above, swimming or bird dances), allowing ideas to be experimented with and tried out. In this way, Westlake goes into a rehearsal with ideas of movement that can be developed and shaped by the resident group or company of professionals.

The creation of technical images is a strong interest of Simon Corder, the technical director of Lumiere & Son. Corder is keen to create theatre with lighting or sound, exploring the design, shape and functions of a space or environment. His work is best illustrated by the photographic projections and lighting used in 'Panic' (1987) and 'Paradise' (1988–89). Site-specific projects appeal to him greatly, although there are real difficulties when working with low budgets and not enough technical equipment – 'we're always overstretched'. Corder enjoys the excitement of expressing and developing technical ideas, feelings or atmospheres from the site through sound and lighting. However, he argues that to be true environmental artists, time and money is needed to produce large-scale work. Previous experience of site-specific projects such as 'Deadwood' (1986) in Kew Gardens or 'Wardance' (1989) at Nottingham Castle has prepared him for the possible catastrophes of bad weather, rusting

equipment, scheduling problems, or actors not turning up on site for rehearsals. This conflict of interests is reflected in the group dynamics and inter-disciplinary relationships of Lumiere & Son, which in turn makes for interesting devised theatre.

## Vocal music

As with the relationship between technical director and director, so the role of musical composer also finds a place alongside Westlake. Jeremy Peyton-Jones has been commissioned to compose music for Lumiere & Son on numerous occasions. In the case of site-specific work or touring shows, there are practical questions to be asked, such as whether the music is for live musicians or recorded tape, the approximate structure of the show, the sort of material being used, whether a pulse is needed for choreography, or if music is to be used underneath speech. Peyton-Jones has experienced difficulties with site-specific work in terms of the reliability of local people; for instance, in 'Deadwood' he wanted a live choir, but because of changing numbers at every rehearsal he ended up taping twelve people for the choir. It is this experience that makes him want to use professional musicians or only to ask something simple of local participants.

Similiarly, with 'Fifty Five Years of the Swallow and the Butterfly', Peyton-Jones wanted a choir or brass band whose sound wavered on or off until he decided to make a tape with one singer only. His brief as composer was to provide music for choreography and songs to punctuate the show, but he would have liked more time to allow the music to have more structure. He was also concerned about the relationship of music and text, with the practical problems involved in hearing words above music. He sent Westlake tapes to work with, but missed the opportunity to work with her developing music and choreography together. In terms of site-specific work, he sees the main problems as not having enough time to work with people, to develop their ideas, and to use the location to its full potential.

Peyton-Jones favours a more collaborative process, such as previous working experiences with Impact Theatre, where there was a thrashing out of ideas within the company rather than a single idea that was pursued practically without group

discussion of composer, writer or technical contributor during the devising process. As musical composer for many of Lumiere & Son's shows, he is requested by Westlake to use his skills to write music from ideas rather than from seeing the text: 'we speak the same language, I know what she means.' This will finally be drawn together by the director and is symptomatic of Westlake's approach to the devising process. However, in 'Panic' (1987) and 'Paradise' (1988–89), Peyton-Jones had a much clearer idea of an overall musical structure that made its own sense, which he wanted to incorporate into these shows. He likes the combination of music, image and text in live performance, and enjoys composing for the voice. His preference is for a physical, visual theatre with a strong musical score throughout.

Lumiere & Son's methodology and 'creating' (devising) practice can be compared to 'directors' theatre', where the director is ultimately in charge of the overall production. In this example, the basic difference between these two forms of theatre is in the opportunity provided by the devising process for the writer, technical director, or musical composer to make important contributions from the start that move the work in new directions away from the director's original intentions.

## THE DESIGNER/DEVISER

Processes that explore visual structures, whether through building the set together or through defining and making a performance space, provide alternative approaches to writing text when devising theatre. Design and technical input are often determined by the kind of theatre being created and the extent of emphasis on the creation of visual images, constructed through the use of set, props, costumes or sculpture, as well as through choreographic movement or dance. The place of design in devised work varies enormously, from the more traditional role of designer as the visual interpreter of a director or writer's idea at the start, to the designer contributing a significant input from the beginning to a devising process that explores and develops visual ideas, used particularly by performance artists in their work.

Annie Griffin's collaboration with Laura Ford, sculptor and

painter, has been significant in using the visual arts to express and articulate her experience. Griffin comments: 'I didn't work with Laura because I was looking for a painter to make sets. I found that I could talk about work with her and was very stimulated by her ideas, by the way she saw and understood.' Their first collaboration, 'The Deadly Grove', was in 1988, which Griffin acknowledges as a very confusing work process, with little sense of what they wanted the show to be. Creating a visual, physical world from the start was important in 'Ariadne' (1989–90), allowing the performers to explore ideas of moving amongst the sculpted, geometric green wooden waves, and experiment with the possibilities of a large rock covered in seaweed. Two of the performers used their dance experience to invent choreographic images that were visually stimulating and pleasing. In Jim Hiley's article 'Nexus of Ariadne', performer Liz Ranken observes, 'I can push my talent where I like, instead of pushing my body through someone else's steps.'[18] The startling costumes – of Zerbinetta, in green sequin top with rubber ring, trumpeters in gold bolero jackets, black leggings, and gold cod-pieces, and Dog's vibrant red and green costume with long tail – all contributed towards devising a piece that evolved through the experimentation of visual ideas, images, and structures.

## Frustrations

Being a freelance set designer with an eight-week contract, employed to work as a member of Belgrade Theatre-in-Education's sub-company devising a programme for special schools ('Monkey'), raised particular difficulties for Jackie Trousedale. Time was the biggest problem in terms of finding and making costumes or props at the last moment. Trousedale recounts, 'It's very difficult when you're devising to actually say we're definitely going to use that, in order to get things prepared.' The design came out of the devising period and Trousedale's role was to assess what was necessary for the programme, providing a strong visual link of jungle environment to the centrally devised image of an ape chained to a post. From the group's point of view, they wanted to leave design decisions and options as late as possible, which was problematic for the designer, who wished to construct the set properly.

4 Franck E. Loiret and Liz Ranken in 'Ariadne'. Gloria Production Company, 1989–90. (Photo: Stephen Sweet.)

A position of compromise was reached, actor-teacher Sarah Westaway comments, 'making do and botching up because demands are on them to come up with the goods and there's no time'. Trousedale believes that the visual side often suffers when devising a theatre-in-education programme, and that there should be a deadline for devising, so that proper preparation can be given to the creation of visual structures.

The set that was finally used included a background of several flats painted brightly with a jungle scene behind a defined performance area of circular green carpet. A cream wooden triangle was positioned in the centre to which the ape, played by permanent company member Lindsay Johnson, was tethered. One of the most exciting things about the set was that small boxes in the flats could be opened by the pupils. The aim was to encourage a sensory experience for the pupils when they felt and discovered a range of jungle-related objects in the boxes. This activity was a source of fascination to the special school pupils, who needed to relate directly to visual images throughout the programme. But this idea was never fully developed, and was perhaps partly a result of not working practically with the concept in the early stages of the devising process.

The set and costume designer for Greenwich Young People's Theatre programme 'The Edge of Reason', Sarah-Jane Ash, worked alongside other team members (including actor-teachers, writer, director, educational liaison officer, and musical director) in the early stages of discussion and exploration of material. The team leader, Viv Harris, states, 'but as the process developed all team members worked more specifically according to their role.' Ash initiated visual workshops with the team, some full-day or shorter sessions, which enabled a two-way process of the designer discovering the actor-teachers' growing perceptions of their characters. Harris describes the designer's role in the process, 'which she [Ash] then took into both costume and set design, *and* enabled the actor-teachers to experiment in a visual medium with the potential of their characters and situation'. The set and ideas for costume developed out of a period of experimenting and working on different levels during the devising and rehearsal process, in consultation with individual members of the company as well as team discussions on these particular areas.

5 Stuart McCartney in 'Monkey'. Belgrade Theatre-in-Education Company, 1990. (Photo: Jackie Trousedale.)

## THE PERFORMER/DEVISER

Whatever the specialist nature of an individual's role within a devising group, there has to be an overall flexibility, versatility, and integration between the often multi-talented members and their relationships or responsibilities within a company. The role of the performer/deviser usually requires involvement in several processes, which often include improvisation, research, and discussion. I want to suggest that these processes are commonly adopted as part of a company's devising methodology. Clearly, the working structure of the company, whether hierarchical or democratic, sets boundaries for the extent to which roles or responsibilities can integrate or overlap to the degree of allowing a performer to contribute fully to the devising process as well as to the product.

This is the case for performers devising shows with Trestle Theatre, where the work is generated by everybody. As a theatre cooperative, all company members are involved in policy decisions. Having worked together for three years at Middlesex Polytechnic, Trestle Theatre set out to popularise mask, mime, and visual theatre, creating its own unique style of mask theatre, for which it is renowned. The company determines decisions about the developing shape of the product, which are further defined as the work progresses by particular members with specific responsibilities for performing, dramaturgy, visual realisation of ideas, or direction.

John Wright, artistic director, compares the devising process to a planned improvisation. Wright believes that devising is a very charged and satisfying way of working, and stresses the importance of a spontaneous, imaginative process that enables individuals to constantly suggest ideas for exploration. For Wright, devising a show is about having an idea, image, or series of questions that follows a logic through to the creation of a product. The skills of physical theatre depend on the visual, and Wright believes that the work of mime artists such as Jacques Lecoq or Philippe Gaulier has a great deal in common with devised theatre. Wright describes the company's devised productions as theatre that works physically, visually, and that uses language.

Trestle Theatre works with masks using a style that recognises personas, which gives the performers plenty of freedom.

In the early shows, three or four performers played between fifteen and twenty parts. In 'Plastered' (1985), the group decided on two locations, a pub and a hospital, devising what happened in the pub that ended in the hospital. The performers needed to devise characters, so they built a pub set and made a collection of masks. The masks were then 'liberated', and out of 'auditioning' the various bunches of characters, a cast was assembled. The group tried out various improvisations with the masks from which a thread of action was established. Then with painstaking choreography, the group attempted to clarify the story, so that the audience could seize on the action immediately.

With 'Top Storey' (1990), Trestle Theatre needed to develop the style of the work, so started thinking about this whilst touring another show. They returned from the tour with a set of rough starting points, which were to be explored through an event. They hired the Shaw Theatre in London, and twelve actors, for a month, with the intention of getting away from the idea of frivolous comedies. Wright ran workshops that resulted in four group members each devising a piece that they wanted to do. There was a 'whodunnit', a piece of social realism with detailed observations, a romp about yuppies, and a tragedy about infanticide. One member of the group, Sally Cook, wrote down everything from the workshops, taking on the role of dramaturge and writing a structured scenario from the montage scenes. The idea of an attic provided a good starting point and setting for the show. The company then devised from a linear, narrative structure through montage and imagistic work.

The devising process changes with every show to meet the mood or new personnel of the company. Wright suggests that devising depends on relationships and chemistry between people, which means that the feeling of the group must be maintained, particularly when a show's title and publicity have been decided prior to the company knowing what the piece will be about. Wright believes that the performers, with their social or domestic situations, are central to a successful, balanced creative input being given to the group. When key people or roles change, it inevitably alters everything in the group. Wright observes, 'We're like an amoeba, never really in control if devising.'[19]