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Composing the moment.

Play and improvisation in childrens theatre.

This work is about improvisation in childrens play and in childrens theatre. "Childrens theatre" is here to be read as theatre made mainly by adults directed towards children.

To create and perform something in the same moment, is what we call improvisation. I believe that the art of improvisation is the art that comes closest to, and is most familiar with childrens playing, if we regard playing as an aesthetic activity.¹

When children are playing, they are making instant worlds, together, with their bodies, with objects and with words and stories. But even though they create and perform their expressions in the same moment, and in this way improvises, we do not call it an art. We can therefor ask whether improvising really is an art at all, because even if we can find improvisation in different arts, as music and theatre, we all improvise a lot more in daily life than in art. And moreover, inside art, we tend to regard improvisation less as art, and more as a way of training, a working method, or even more as an art of life. As an art in itself it ought to be considered.

A concept of art which contains the art of improvisation, can be given ground from two totally different and opposite traditions. One is from the classic art concept *techné*, which means technique, and assumes that art is a question of technical skills. The other is a modernistic attac on the bourgeoisie concept of art as a trading product, that provoke a new understanding of art where it is not the product but the acting process, the art concept or the relations that makes the art.

Not to argue that childrens playing *are* art, the focus is upon the resemblance between their playing processes and the way improvising artists work. This processes are co-operating, creative and have a purpose to "compose the moment".

To give this work an dramaturgical analysis I have questioned: How do children and artists improvise? In what ways are the processes different and related?

To bring the questions back to an aesthetic practice, I question: Is new forms of interactive childrens theatre a way of bringing playing and childrens theatre into a meeting point?

And for discussion: Is this to be the aim, in a new understanding of the dramaturgy of childrens theatre, that the aesthetics of playing is a model for the art of childrens theatre?

With some examples i focus the aesthetic dimentiones of both artists and childrens improvisation in dramaturgical terms:

- The use of body
- The use of time and space
- Fictionality
- Rules and frames
- Playstyle
- Surprises
- Risk and tention

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¹ The work is based on and work further on perspectives in chapter 16 *Lek som dramaturgisk veiviser* (Play as dramaturgical directory) in the book *Dramaturgi-forestillinger om teater* (Dramaturgy-concepts about theatre) written by Svein Gladsø, Ellen Gjervan, Lise Hovik and Anna Bella Skagen (2005) and earlier articles on childrens theatre (Hovik 2002 og 2004).