

**Presentation at alys longley & pavleheidler's 'Practice Sharing'[1], hosted by
Choreographic Research Aotearoa, Waipapa Taumata Rau (University of Auckland),
17th/18th Nov 2021.**

Paul Paschal, University of Roehampton and Sadler's Wells Theatre

With thanks to alys and pavle for the invitation.

Hey alys, hey pavle,

You guys invited me to share something today about some of my current preoccupations in dancing and writing. And for some reason, the thing that came to my mind – and to be honest, the thing that I think I've been most consistently practicing over the past year – is taking notes.

By which I mean: at meetings with different collaborators, writing down what is discussed and agreed, typing that up, and then emailing it to everyone afterwards.

I've mostly been doing this as part of the various grassroots organise-y things that I've engaged with. It's a task that gets circulated, or people just volunteer to do it. I really love it. And that's partly because I appreciate having clarity around whatever it is that I or others have agreed to do. But also because whenever I do this seemingly straightforward thing, it immediately gives rise to lots of questions:

Of clarity. Of how to turn the mess of what I have scrawled during the meeting into something succinct and digestible.

And of relevance. These meetings are full of intimacy and people thinking aloud. For better or worse, we often end up bringing the mess of their lives into conversation, even if it's just at the start and end. What do I deem to be relevant or not? What gets left out of the notes as merely an 'errancy' or a 'distraction'?

And then there's subjectivity of it all: How does my bias shape what I hear or pay attention to? And my interpretation of what was agreed? How much do I include myself, or try to take myself out of the picture, as I flag – yet fail to fully account for – my blindspots?

And who do I imagine will be reading this? Each piece of writing establishes explicit or implicit boundaries not just in who can physically access the text, but the kinds of information that it chooses to explain, or presumes is already known. These notes might be for the people in the meeting, but they're also for those who couldn't make it, those who are supporting from a distance, or those who are yet to join in. I'm not just thinking about the more grassroots stuff here, but any kinds of organisation or institution. I think

taking notes is important way that we practice our collectivity; with the potential to promiscuously invite and enable; hoard and exclude; and obscure and exhaust.

But there's another way to sit with this question – of who a piece of writing might be 'for'. Not just who might have access to the text, or what kinds of information it articulates or presumes; but in the sense of motivation and desire and satisfaction. Who's really getting something out of this?

We can think about what I've written for this gathering as an example. This text is addressed to you, alys and pavle, but obviously it's also been written with everyone else here in mind. But it's also, of course, for me.

I'm here because I was touched by your invitation. But, to be honest, I probably should have said no. Things are pretty intense for me right now, both with the PhD I'm meant to be doing, and life beyond that. Part of how I convinced myself to say 'yes' to this, was by deciding that it would be a way for me to tease out some my tangled thinking around my research.

And I wonder how that feels for you guys. I think sometimes the idea of 'generosity' or 'kindness' can get tied up in a notion of 'selflessness'. That someone doing something become more significant, the less it can be seen to serve themselves. But – and if you can forgive my pop-psychology – I'm pretty unconvinced by this. So much of how we interact with one another is full of presumptions, needs, projections, desires, and ambitions. And that doesn't stop it from being meaningful or nourishing.

I'm reminded of something you said to me alys, about a postal thing^[2] you had invited me into, that I had let fall by the way-side. You described your invitation to people to contribute to that project as such being such a huge ask to be making of them. And I'm thinking as well of something you said at the Zoom thing you guys held in October. About the force of friendship. Not only how it makes certain things possible, but about the vibrancy and vitality of all this inviting and giving and demanding and sharing. The ways these things simultaneously ask something of us, and invigorate us. It's totally messy. Of course: it's worth paying attention to the particularity of these dynamics in each situation; but I think fully account for or resolve. And I'm happy with that.

So yeah. You invited me, and I said yes; and these are some of the thoughts I'm currently wrapped up with these days. And, to be honest, I also thought it would be kind of funny to speak about something tonight that in some ways is so opposite to the 'non-anticipatory aesthetics' that you guys are working with^[3]. I mean – taking notes at meetings, and editing them in readiness for others to read, as part of formal or informal organisational structures – how anticipatory can you get!? But I suspect most of us here are interested in various binaries – anticipatory and non-anticipatory, experimental or purposive, the poetic and the administrative, art and politics – and how those might be troubled or played with. So I hope that's ok.

Thanks again for the invitation, and all your work. It sustains, invigorates, provokes and demands. And for that I'm very grateful.

[1] The online event marked and celebrated the publication of alys and pavle's new e-book, *life is a sting on the bicep of the universe*, available here: <https://online.flipbuilder.com/qmiq/vfle/>. You can find more information on the event here: <https://www.facebook.com/events/412284787090638/>

[2] alys longley and Máximo Corvalán-Pincheira, ¡BEBEREMOS EL VINO NUEVO, JUNTOS! LET US DRINK THE NEW WINE, TOGETHER!. Documentation available here: <https://www.mappingporousborders.com/post-project>

[3] alys longley & pavleheidler wrote a short text that introduces 'anti-anticipatory aesthetics' here: <https://www.researchcatalogue.net/view/1295251/1295252>