

You are listening to The Red Line Sessions - a new series of podcasts from South East Dance as part of their Dramaturg in Residence programme.

Over the next weeks you can join dramaturgs Lou Cope and Luke Pell for a number of reflections, discussions and exclusive interviews with artists shed light on how the work we see on and off stage gets made.

The podcasts will be uploaded every week to uploaded to The Red Line website. or, you can sign up to the South East Dance mailing list and we'll deliver them to your inbox

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## **The Redline Sessions - Podcast 2 - Luke Pell with guest Janice Parker –**

### **Where dance meets with other worlds**

Hello, I'm Luke Pell and welcome back to 'The Redline Sessions'  
This week I'm going to be reflecting with – guest artist: choreographer Janice Parker on what happens when different disciplines come together, where dance meets with other worlds and the dramaturgs contribution to a collaborative process

Last week Lou talked with Gary Clarke about the personal and the political in Coal, I was struck by their discussion about how to shift the boundaries between audience and performer in order to be able to relate to someone on stage and Gary talking about how he goes about “embedding a physicality in an environment about what the works about” with his dancers.

Something that's become increasingly important in my work as a dramaturg – which will probably sound incredibly obvious - is: when working collaboratively we acknowledge where and how dance and choreography meet with other worlds.

That we take the time to acknowledge boundaries, the similarities and differences between disciplines, attend to how we relate to other artists and their practices in a collaborative process, in order to explore ideas from different forms and embed that in our working environment

I'll consider what's distinct about the nature of particular disciplines coming together for research or to make work.

- >What is it to share collaborative process
- >To notice the difference in the artistic origins of a creative team
- >The ways in which they might approach or look at a project, process or problem
- >The layering of fields, forms and disciplines
- >Laying on top
- > Or, alongside

These meetings... great Collisions or quiet encounters, interweaving and their emergings

What comes - from flattening, pressing, packing things down, from wrapping something in another or, from giving space for both to breathe - some room to move. What is it not to try to make one thing like another but recognize their similarities and their differences and to work with those.

What new possibilities might come from protecting, defending, fighting for a form and, from being compassionate, generous, towards different processes and points of departure. Questioning, critiquing, turning around about, opening out  
What does this offer to the audience, to artists - their fields and forms.

My guest this week Janice Parker is an artist who has worked for many years, in many different contexts as a choreographer of her own work, a performer, a mentor to other dance artists and regularly as a movement director in theatre.

### Interview with Janice Parker

*LP: So this week I' at Cove Park in the west of Scotland where artists from many different art forms come to work on projects and processes... Cove Park is a place known for inspired thinking and one of things that always strikes me when I'm here is there are lots of artists from different worlds working alongside each other ... and I'm here Janice Parker - with choreographer and maker - who's here thinking having some time to think about her own work and we'd good time to catch up on collaborative processes*

*So Janice the first thing I wanted to ask you is... what happens or has happened for you when dance meets with other worlds or disciplines in your work?*

*JP: Nice question Luke, it's so second nature to me that I actually struggle to answer that question sometimes. But I think this is one of the ideal places to consider that, Cove Park is one of the idea places to answer that because you automatically encounter other artists from other places but, also from other forms of working. It's making me think you encounter nature, you never encounter a studio, never encounter that normal, usual, expected way of working in dance, yet I'm here at Cove making in my way, I'm still in my body, I'm still engaged in somatic practice and just being - just being - in that different environment and being exposed to these different meeting places and touching places, for me really, really opens up new possibilities of vocabularies in movements and thoughts and concepts that I wouldn't get in what I want to call a more sterile environment.*

*LP: Great, and so that's really useful for me to think about what stimulates you as an artist...*

*In your work when you are working in studio or in theatre, you work in lots of different contexts, your work happen in public spaces, it happens in intimate spaces, it happens on stage, you're often working with other artists from other art forms and your often working with people from very different worlds or lived experiences, what happens in that meeting, in those meetings?*

*JP: Yeah... I'm thinking of it as an exploration, that that meeting point is a point of exploration and being open and porous to what's different and what's the same and where the overlaps are and different ways of engaging with the same things possible. So it's a definite meeting point, noticing point, being open to the unexpected*

*Erm, I can think of working with Claire Barclay - who's a visual artist – and I mean, interestingly someone else suggested we worked together and because we are both people who were exploring our own worlds but from different perspectives... and when we got together, the first thing we started to do was we talked about our practice to each other, what it was, how we worked and we found that we each used similar words but they meant completely different things.*

*So Claire would work with material and materiality and for her that was totally the substance that some thing is made from and of and going into the essence of that. Where as for me material and materiality is the body, and how it moves and why it moves and erm going into the processes of that and we got really excited about considering ... we were both looking for essence, so the journey was the same, we were both looking for essence within that, but the substance was different.*

*I often think of collaborating, collaborative practice as creating a third thing, which for me means that when two worlds meet or diverse body types and diverse vocabularies meet, that a third thing is created, that neither person could create otherwise.*

*I think of that in terms of buildings and spaces, there's a third thing created in terms of how the body is within a particular space and what that invitation offers. It might feel like a limitation but that limitation is an invitation...but there's something about that, the meeting and the coming together that creates something that otherwise wouldn't be created.*

*So if there are...errmm... two people meeting, we are coming from very different places, from a diversity in our physical languages, if you take one of us away and re-place with a different person, a different third thing would be created. So everything is always a result of whoever and whatever is in the environment and in the making process at that time.*

*LP: Great, thank you... whilst we're talking about making processes, why do you work with dramaturgs?*

*JP: Yeah, working with a dramaturg for me is, I think of that as an integral part – I of of dramaturg and the art of dramaturgy, as an integral part of the collaboration, it's another voice, it's another part of erm, it's another element, it's another element in creating whatever this third thing is going to be...and it's that sense of, I'm seeing my mind's eye at the moment of somebody circling, something circular, circulating on the outside because the role for me is that of noticing, of observing, of looking, listening, noticing, reflecting back, making conscious things that, maybe I wouldn't be conscious of myself but they are actually there, letting me know that they are there.*

*Making sure that I and who ever else is in the room in the making process are working on the path that we set out to work on and maybe that path changes, but pointing that out as well and I think of the golden thread as well, which is that way of, I think there is a golden thread in all work, it's not necessarily a linear golden thread, or a literal golden thread but there's something that connects all the parts together to make the whole and sometimes when I'm immersed in work I lose that sense, of what it is and I'm sort of lost in my own process and I find a dramaturg and dramaturgy is constantly making these links and helping me to find that again and helping everyone else that's in the work to know that and to find that and to speak to that.*

So Luke you've asked me this question about what working with a dramaturg means to me but I'm really interested in what it means to you, I'm thinking that as part of our collaboration right now, of reflecting back to you, what does it mean to you to be working as a dramaturg and bringing that skill into a process of collaboration?

**LP:** mmm, I mean I think you've described beautifully already some of things that I do in a process and I think particularly in a collaborative process, one of the things I'm doing is this moving from the outside – of this circle you described – to the centre, to anywhere within that field of a piece of work emerging and looking at the macro and the micro from the perspective – or perspectives - of the different artists. Acknowledging sometimes where things – as you said – touch or collide or meet and, yeah acknowledging and naming those things or at least being conscious of them, so that we can understand that they are happening in a work, rather than trying to plough ahead with perhaps the rules or the logics of one particular form.

So if we are talking about us being dance artists or working in dance, that maybe when we invite different artists into a dance world to collaborate, that it's assumed that dance is in charge or is leading and we should follow the traditions or the training or the rules that are established from a particular way of working in a field.

So yeah, as a dramaturg I think I'm often trying to be sympathetic or at least informed of what different artists are bringing to a collaborative process, their backgrounds, the way they might be looking at something or approaching something

And then also noticing how that might be really useful with regards to problem solving or speaking to other pieces of material, so maybe the lighting designer - their expertise in the room might offer a solution to a choreographic problem

And again this thing you talk about with the third thing, that there is a bunch of expertise in the room and things encountering that provide opportunities and possibilities that we might not have thought of

So I often think I'm the person in the room who's noticing and charting these possibilities, the other thing I think I'm doing is as you said – when an artist is deeply immersed in a work being somebody who is following the thread, or the many threads that are running through a work, and I think when we bring together different artists from very different disciplines then we often have many different kinds of golden threads.

Yeah, and noticing those things might get tangled, and we might want them to get tangled or we might want them to run beautifully separately from each other.

Yeah again it's about noticing these things and noticing how they relate and interrelate with each other

Thank you Janice that's been really great to reflect a little bit on how collaboration plays out in your work.

**JP:** For me too Luke it's... I think this conversation is part of a collaboration, I really appreciate it, it thoughts come to mind and ways of understanding that wouldn't otherwise, so thank you for that.

## End of interview

When working with Janice as a dramaturg I'm mindful of honoring her intentions her core values as an artist as a choreographer and the principles that have worked for her historically when making work...

She often talks about co-authorship between everyone in the room:

- >This third thing
- >The language of the artists, the dancers, the audience and of the work
- >The golden threads
- >Opening
- >Interweaving
- >Becoming

In any collaborative process I will be mindful of practicalities, particularly, the importance of communications between roles within a creative team, the value of each artist or professional's contribution to the dramaturgy of a work and how, all of those things can really be in once space together, be honored and not compromised, and work as a whole experience...

I'll work with the creative team on language across their lenses, on what we are being led by, ordering, privileging or excluding. And how do we adjust accordingly to the life of a work, to follow the laws of its own.

Of what's becoming because of these people and their practices sharing time and space

I'll be:

- >An intermediary
- >An interface
- >In between collaborators
- >with an ear to
- >the integrities of a discipline or approach
- >the distribution of detail
- >Intention
- >Interrogating how these elements
- >Interact
- >Inter-relate

And then it's my role to keep noticing and help to nurture the emergent dramaturgies that arise from these collaborative practices

Things like:

- >Dramaturgies of dark and light
- >Of altitude
- >Of object and material
- > Human and non-human
- > Of scale and sound
- > Of skin, of breath
- > Of text, visually, aurally, on page, in sign

- > The ins and outs – the changing of space, then opening and closing of space
- >The movement of performer and of audience and their full experience with each element

The kinds of questions I might ask along the way are:

- >Why that? How can this do something different?
- >What work does this do that it couldn't or doesn't do alone?
- >What else does this open up or underpin?
- >What is one offering to the other?
- > What ways of doing?
- >What movement – does this allow or invite within a moment?
- >What invitation or urge or nod to shift in space or perspective, what new breadth or depth
- > What's been assumed to be shared
- >Do we need 'it'
- >Does it need 'this'
- > Is this a bridge between worlds... a pouring into another?
- >Is it saying the same things differently?
- > Or different things, newly?
- >Is that third thing occurring? - One plus one makes three
- >Are they in competition, cancelling one another out or calling to each other?
- > Perhaps that's what we want or not?
- > What will they bring?
- > What stays, what falls way, what do we let go?
- > Where does this dance meet with that person's world?

We've been really enjoying receiving your thoughts and comments on facebook and twitter, please do keep them coming on The Red Line Facebook page tweet us @southeastdance @lukepellmakes @loucopeSED #DiR

After the first four podcasts we'll be hosting a live Q&A session on facebook on Wednesday 28 March to hear more of your thoughts and comments so far

Next week Lou Cope talks to artists presenting work at South East Dance's Undisciplined, a multi-genre art form festival.