

Global Performance & Pedagogy Conference – 3rd June 2023

**From *Class* to *Team*:  
Performative Strategies to Humanise  
Our Online Teaching.**

Part 1

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1

## Part 1: THE CLASSGROUP AS A TEAM

*What?*

Creating an energy bond between teachers and students despite the lack of physical proximity.

*Why?*

Engaging students actively in the online classes.

*How?*

Vulnerability > Empathy  
> Sharing > Participation.

# BEFORE MOVING FORWARD...

## I'D NEED THREE VOLUNTEERS PLEASE:

- 1. A TIME-KEEPER** > please let me know when 30 mins have passed + keeping the time of other activities.
- 2. A ZOOM-KEEPER** > make sure that participants are online and muted; manage the chat; make sure that I am online and unmuted ☺
- 3. A PRESENTATION-KEEPER** > check the audio-video aspects of my presentation (am I sharing the screen? Can you all see the relevant slides and hear me? Etc.) **THANKS** ☺

# THE CONTEXT

## Isolation and lack of social bond in online classes

**“Although Zoom classes are still face-to-face events happening live, they are “likely to affect feelings of isolation—or the absence of social bonds— [due to] the lack of physical co-presence of participants’ interaction that reduces the possibility of individuals to become caught up in the emotions and actions of others”.**

Bellocchi, A., Mills, K.A. & Ritchie, S.M. “Emotional experiences of preservice science teachers in online learning: the formation, disruption and maintenance of social bonds”. *Cultural Studies of Science Education*, vol.11, 2016, pp. 629–652

## MY CONTEXT

Applying performative strategies (art history & body-based performance approaches and techniques) to the online teaching of *NON* creative-art units: Italian and European Culture and Language classes.

- CHALLENGES: students were not familiar with the creative arts (scholarship & works), let alone body and performance art. ~ Embedding this approach within the existing curriculum without turning the unit into an art unit ~ time-management.
- ADVANTAGES: non-familiar students = open-minded students ~ branching out to the students' interests and knowledge outside the unit ~ applicability of this method to all the aspects of the unit.

## Joseph Beuys, *I like America and America likes me* (1974)



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# Stelarc, *Suspensions*



Courtesy of the Artist

# WHAT YOU CAN DO #1

**1. Visualise / give shape to your experience of and feelings about the online teaching, positive and/or negative:**

an image, a song, a sound, a taste, a smell, a memory...

**2. Ask your students to do the same.**

**3. Share & discuss.**

- Knowing each other.
- Sharing > empathy > bond.
- Linking your course to the world.
- The Body at the centre of the educational experience.

## BACK TO THE BODY

What is more real  
than a living body in the flesh  
displaying its own needs and vulnerability?

Empathy > sharing > participation

# Before starting... PREPARE YOUR CLASS ENVIRONMENT

Both you and your students are **coming to class from somewhere else** (another class, bed, a meeting, work, family duties...).

>> **BRIDGING** the realities/environments where you come from & the class that you are about to enter.

Performance and body artists work as bridges between the audiences and the space of the performance so as to make them part of the work > *participation*.

# BODY, VULNERABILITY, SHARING: EXAMPLES #1

1. **Breakfast together** during morning classes: connecting online 10 mins before the official start of the class > *punctuality + community. (L2) – Afternoon tea/Coffee time.*
2. **Launching polls** at the beginning of the class: who's an early bird and who's a night owl? What time did you wake up this morning & what time did you go to bed last night? What are you having for breakfast this morning? > *knowing each other + community + “chilling” before focusing. (L2)*
3. **Videos on:** showing my sleepy face during the morning classes and sharing my struggle with the remote teaching while in lockdown.
  - allowing students to do the same.
  - *Shared vulnerability leads to empathy + class = safe space.*

# BODY, VULNERABILITY, SHARING: EXAMPLES #2

**4. Embodiment:** body-space awareness; mindfulness & breathing techniques; perceptual-enhancing exercises. (standing up before starting the class; walking during breaks; changing location/room during class...).

**5. Mobile phones off & away:** we do not need them 😊 > *focus + sense of "being in class"*.

**6. Putting music on** while waiting for everybody to join in. Students create a Spotify playlist related to the unit's subject & topics discussed in class (L2) > *involvement + knowing each other + community*.

# WHAT YOU CAN DO #2

**2. Identify key-topics in your units and then invite students to search for relating music, videos, films, artworks as well as newspaper and magazine articles, books, podcasts, documentaries, etc.** > Students will then create a Spotify or YouTube playlist, or a shared Folder with links that they manage and share with you.

- **It's fun!** Everybody likes music, cinema, the creative arts, and in general, sharing knowledge.
- Promoting **team-work** through the students' agency.
- Creating an **engaging and warm environment** that students feel actively part of and will be happy to join every week.
- **You will learn** a lot about the latest Art-and-culture on the scene.
- Promoting **interdisciplinarity and media-multiplicity**, acknowledging the educational value of the visual and performing arts, digital humanities, popular culture, and other non-academic resources.
- **Material** chosen by students > fruitful **discussions** & part of the **unit**.

# WHAT YOU CAN DO #3

**3. Let your students know about this approach** from the very beginning > *from passive learners to active participants.*

**4. Ask students to propose strategies**, based on their online learning experience:

- Pros & cons of online learning? (Improvements & challenges).
- What does help/impede you to stay focused during online classes?
- Work-station; work-schedule; time on & off screen; online learning & daily life... > sharing & exchanging.

□ **Through pre-class warm-up activities:** polls, breaking-out room, questionnaire, shared Google Docs for everyone to work on (including yourself).

❖ TEACHING-AND-LEARNING EXPERIENCE = IN-PROGRESS, SHARED, PARTICIPATORY EXPERIENCE.

❖ STUDENTS FEEL HEARD & PART OF “SOMETHING MEANINGFUL”. THEIR OPINIONS COUNT > “WE ARE IN THIS TOGETHER”.

❖ REWARDING: YOUR WORK AS A TEACHER KEEPS IMPROVING!

# TO SUM UP

1. **MAKING STUDENTS AWARE** OF THIS PERFORMATIVE APPROACH.
2. **CAMERAS ON.**
3. **VISUALISING/GIVING SHAPE** to experiences and feelings of remote teaching and learning > an image; a song; a sound; a taste; a smell...
4. **RELATING UNIT'S KEY-TOPICS** to music, videos, films, artworks, newspaper and magazine articles, books, podcasts, documentaries, etc. >> Spotify and YouTube playlist, shared Folders managed by students.
5. **STUDENTS PROPOSE STRATEGIES** to improve online learning and teaching.
6. **BEFORE STARTING: BRIDGING** the passage from where you come from and the upcoming class:
  - Breakfast/coffee together – polls – music on - discussions on points n.3 & n.4
  - Embodiment
  - Phones off & away

# BENEFITS / OUTCOMES

*“Nothing happens in isolation” (Dr Jill Orr)*

- Students perceive what they learn in the online classes as a reality that intersects with the “real world” and their everyday life, as part of it.
- Students perform an active role in the course.
- Fostering sociality and sense of community among students and teachers despite the physical distance.

## **Your class**

~~“The work of art~~ **does things in the world**” (Dr Barbara Bolt)

# QUESTIONS & THOUGHTS?

# YOUR TURN NOW 😊

## INDIVIDUAL ACTIVITY + COLLECTIVE DISCUSSION

### □ BRAINSTORMING – DOT POINTS:

1. What do you teach? Which are the challenges faced by yourself and your students online?
2. Are there any of these strategies/exercises that you already use in your classes? (online or in-person classes)
3. If yes, which ones, how, and why? Which are the outcomes?
4. If not, is there anything that you could potentially employ in your classes? Why and how?

### □ LET'S SHARE & DISCUSS (the Zoom-keeper manages turns together with the Time-keeper)