

size of the animal became increasingly evident, serving to strengthen everyone performing within it.

In the final weeks of the strike, the complexity of the creature began to emerge. Differences in priorities and desired outcomes hampered the collective performance, eventually leading to unsatisfactory binding arbitration. It's not easy to unite thousands of people in opposition to a few in power. Division is the animal's greatest weakness, but it must be overcome as the shared objectives far outweigh the relatively minor differences.

The animal lies dormant now, but very much alive. In two years' time, it may wake up again. This time I'll be a part of it, contributing another body to the collective performance. The animal will continue to evolve, but not from infancy. The animal has grown, it has strength, and it has learned.



“How’s Work?” Tackling the Issues of Academic Labour One Scholar at a Time

SUSANNE SHAWYER

“How’s work?” I ask the theatre scholar who hesitates in front of my table. She surveys the cue cards arranged before me, each one filled with question prompts created by the American Society for Theatre Research’s Working Conditions Task Force with the goal of gathering information on the current reality of academic labour. We’ve set up a booth in a hotel hallway in Dallas at the annual ASTR conference, hoping to encourage organization members to address questions of working conditions, graduate training, and the academic marketplace. I’ve volunteered over six hours of my conference time to engage in dialogue about these issues with theatre artists, graduate students, and performance scholars from across North America and around the globe.

“You probably don’t want to hear from me,” the scholar hedges, “I’m not tenured.” I hear a similar response all weekend—“You probably don’t want to hear from me, I’m a graduate student . . . a full professor . . . I work in Canada . . . I like my job . . . My job isn’t typical.” Many conference attendees assume that, despite growing concerns among faculty and their professional organizations about an increasingly competitive job market, stagnant academic salaries, rising numbers of contingent faculty, and escalating service demands on fulltime faculty, their opinions on these issues are not valued. And despite the Task Force’s efforts to create a welcoming environment, most people who approach the table hesitate. The institutional feel of the academic conference—the chilly and soulless hotel rooms, the gendered and class-based tensions of professional dress codes, the occasional scholarly posturing—makes it initially difficult to engage in personal and open discussion.

Once assured that their opinions are needed and valued, however, the floodgates open. Participants speak passionately and forcefully. Some cry. Times are tough. Research funding is decreasing or non-existent. Graduate students are not getting jobs in the academy, and their scholarly faculty are not trained to help them prepare for non-academic employment.

With fewer fulltime faculty, service obligations mount and overwhelm. Focused on shrinking budgets, administration does not listen to faculty concerns. Those with fulltime jobs, all too aware of colleagues straining to make ends meet as contingent faculty, feel guilty for acknowledging their own struggles with academic labour. We are frustrated and want to take action. But there is uncertainty as to how to best approach such a complex problem, one that has structural roots in neoliberal governance policies but that feels all too personal to artists and scholars whose self-identity is entwined with their creative and scholarly work.

Thus the following year in Baltimore we change the prompt from “how’s work?” to “what’s working?” Our booth becomes a space to share strategies of success, brainstorm solutions, and offer suggestions for action. Some strategies seem small, but can have far-reaching effects: a standing desk and good sleep practices make big differences in energy levels. Co-teaching and syllabus sharing ease pedagogical burdens. Supporting contingent faculty and forming writing groups creates a sense of shared purpose and camaraderie. Other suggestions have broader reach. Take advantage of current scholarly trends to find interdisciplinary research support. Personally invite administrators to performance workshops and theatrical events to help them understand our field. Expand the professional development offerings of professional organizations to train faculty faced with increasing administrative tasks. The process reminds us how institutional structures discipline our bodies and expectations of behaviour, and prevent faculty mobilization. But how might casual coffees, walks around campus, town-hall forums or forum theatre, meetings in the gym or in the park, and open discussion of academic labour allow for creative thinking and problem solving?

From my two years volunteering with the Working Conditions Task Force, it is evident that theatre and performance scholars want to talk about working conditions and academic labour. But it is also clear that faculty and graduate students aren’t at all confident that their opinion matters or that their voices will be heard. Professional organizations like ASTR are listening to their members’ creative suggestions, and devising strategies for response. But these ideas go nowhere without support from institutions. Administration needs to ask faculty and graduate students “how’s work?” and learn from their answers. Faculty need to know that their administration is not only listening to them, but also learning from them.



Thinking a Public University

JENNY SALISBURY

[T]he discrepancy between thinking a public space and actually achieving it—or how to achieve it, with powerlessness in the presence of the sources of power, somehow able to change it—**that** remains the biggest question of any century.

—Herbert Blau

On Friday, March 27, 2015, a headline for *The Globe and Mail* announced, “[b]inding arbitration means U of T strike is over, but issues are not resolved” (Chiose). By the time the article