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Post-anthropocentric Rehearsal Studies. A conceptual framework to account for the social and material mediations in performance-making

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ABSTRACT
This article uses the concept of 'mediation' to account for the sociomateriality involved in the rehearsal of a new play. Drawing on ideas from the 'New Sociology of Art' that has its origins in Science and Technology Studies, we show how the sociomateriality of the rehearsal is an essential part of the process of theatre-making. It means giving to materials, bodies and matters in the rehearsal room a crucial role in the process of developing and refining a scene. Using ethnographic research methods, with particular emphasis on excerpts from video recordings, we analyse specific activities that take place in the rehearsal room to give a less anthropocentric and a more nuanced reading of the processes that contribute to the creation of a scene. Analysing the dynamics of entanglements in work practices of performance-making, we reveal the material base of the easily overlooked professional processes that constitute the craft of theatre.

KEYWORDS
Rehearsal studies; new sociology of art; sociomateriality; mediation; performance-making practices; theatre-making practices; 'performance yet to arrive'; ethnography

Introduction

In recent years we have witnessed a growing attention to the theatre as situated processes (Harvie and Lavender 2010). On one hand, the growing influence of post-dramatic theatre has seen attention turn toward situated practices of performance (Lehmann 2006), whilst on the other, there is increasing consideration of the practical and material elements behind productions and the production line of performance-making. For example, Ric Knowles (2004) provides an interesting critical analysis of the material elements in the backstage of theatre production and reception. In particular, he focuses on the training of professionals, the funding of productions, the way labour unions shape work practices, the features of the architecture, and the geography of the areas that significantly impact the production and reception of the performances. Furthermore, several scholars of the production side, have recently focused their attention on the work practices and craftsmanship of post-dramatic theatre-making (Allain 2016; Harvie 2010; Harvie and Lavender 2010; McAuley 2012; Galea and Musca 2020). John Matthews (2012), for instance, requested a thoughtful consideration of the role of training practices

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in theatre studies. He claimed that a more nuanced consideration of training and training practices is needed as they are not only central to the 'mainstream' theatre, and the role of the big drama schools, but also to independent and non-commercial performance practices (Matthews 2012).

Within this renewed interest in theatre-making, several scholars have raised questions about artisanal processes in performance-making practices. In dance studies, for instance, Susan Melrose (2007, 2009) focuses on what constitutes performance-making expertise. Identifying performance-making practices as distinct from the practice of expert spectating, she raises questions about the performance practitioners' 'signature', highlighting how performance-making expertise is generated within situated practices of informal apprenticeship.

A deep interest in situated practices of performance-making also distinguishes what is nowadays known as Rehearsal Studies. In 2012 Gay McAuley, noting how relatively little has been written about rehearsal, advocated for ethnographical accounts of production making practices. McAuley proposed to explore the situated nature of creative agency (in theatre-making) in the rehearsal room, highlighting the collaborative dimension of work. Observing and analysing professional actors in the rehearsal, each working to create a performance, the author stressed the situated nature of theatrical meaning-making, revealing how meaning in theatre is constructed by actors together with other artists and craftspeople (McAuley 2008).

To explore deeply this situated and distributed nature of the theatrical performance-making practices, we suggest Rehearsal Studies requires, not only the inclusion of human participants in the rehearsal room, but also the agency of non-humans such as bodies, artefacts, and spaces. According to Tim Ingold (2013), the generation of things in craftsmanship and artworks should be understood as a process of morphogenesis in which a form is ever emergent rather than given in advance. In other words, artists and artisanal practitioners do not work imposing a form onto matters based on a mental idea of the finished object. They instead think with materials, as the dancer thinks through the body (Ingold 2013). According to Ingold:

> . . . the role of the artist is not to give effect to a preconceived idea but to follow the forces and flows of material that bring the work into being. To view the work is to join the artist as a fellow traveller, to look with it as it unfolds in the world, rather than behind it to an originating intention of which it is the final product (Ingold 2013, 96).

Thus, the common idea behind the agency in artwork focuses on 'an arbitrary starting point (the image in the artist's mind) and an equally arbitrary end point (the allegedly finished work), while missing out all that goes on in between' (Ingold 2013, 96).

To shed light on 'all that goes on in between' the two arbitrary end points in performance-making practices, we suggest looking at a strand of literature within the sociology of art that is analytically able to consider material agency (Latour 2005). By drawing on the concept of 'mediation' (Hennion 1997, 2015), derived from the 'New Sociology of Art', we empirically illustrate the material and social network of relations that gives rise to performance-making.

Tracing the network of interactions that constitute the rehearsal of a theatrical play, we reveal the distributed nature of the creative processes to account for the emergence of a specific scene. As we have argued elsewhere (Parolin and Pellegrinelli 2020a, 2020b), this

also demonstrates that creativity is not the gift of an individual, commonly regarded as the playwright, the director, or a singularly significant professional actor, but rather emerges from situated interactions (between humans, non-humans and things) in the rehearsal room. Drawing on theoretical perspectives from the 'New Sociology of Art', we show how a play emerges in a situated and distributed way through the contributions of human and non-human actors. In so doing, we propose an analytical framework to Rehearsal Studies, that can account for the role of material mediations in performance-making.

The article consists of five sections. The first contemplates the extant research that has emerged from Rehearsal Studies. In particular, we draw on the work of Gay McAuley, who shows the relevance of this scholarship for theatre-making studies. Secondly, we explore the connections with the 'New Sociology of Art', a recent literature in Social Science, concerned to frame questions about the aesthetic properties of art in ways compatible with social constructivism. Here, we pay particular attention to the way this strand of research differs from the classical sociological approaches to art practices of Pierre Bourdieu and Howard Becker. The third section draws together these strands of research and explores how the concept of mediation proposed by Antoine Hennion, provides a useful analytical tool to study performance-making. This is followed by the outlining the contours and explication of our empirical case, the research methods we employed and explores the ethnographic material we gathered from the rehearsal. The case focuses on the emergence of a particular scene during the rehearsal of a theatrical play for children. As we further explain, the importance of our work is not related to the choice of the play itself, but the contributing to a finer grained understanding of the craftmanship of theatre. The fifth section critically analyses the work that lies behind the development of a scene; illustrating the process of emergence in the rehearsal, and accounting for the role of human and non-human bodies, spaces, and interactions implied in the craft of theatre-making. We conclude by suggesting distinctive ways that theatre studies can benefit, by drawing on innovative approaches from social science, as well as new theoretical concepts from recent literature within Rehearsal Studies.

1. Rehearsal studies

The recent scholarship on rehearsal practices regards the performance-making process as dynamic in both its production and reception (Cole 2001; Conkie 2012; McAuley 1998, 2006). As McAuley argues, at its core are ethnographic approaches to rehearsal analysis where observation ' ... provides vivid insights into the dynamically shifting and contingent nature of theatrical meaning-making' (McAuley 2008). Such studies have tracked the collective process of constructing a performance from the inside, that is to say they have focused on the micro-creation of each segment of the performance. As McAuley further points out, only an accurate description of the minutiae of particular group work can provide analytical material robust enough for ethnographic analysis (McAuley 2008). Focusing in particular on what human actors bring to the collective process of creation, is for her a critical step in better understanding the nature of creative agency in the rehearsal process.

McAuley's work preceded the analysis of performance as a social practice through the use of ethnographic methodologies already tested by anthropology, ethnomethodology, and sociology. Indeed, in thinking about the right methods to account for what happens in

the rehearsal room McAuley argued that ' . . . any editing or re-working of the recorded material, has, however, always seemed to me to be extremely problematical for both ethical and other reasons' (McAuley 1998). Thus, she adopted methodological inclinations common to anthropological and sociological ethnographic approaches (Bruni 2003; Atkinson, Coffey, and Delamont 1999), but ones relatively recent to theatre studies suggesting,

> . . . the very notion of phases, the valorisation of the analysis that follows immersion in the field experience, is one of the first lessons that the theatre specialist can learn from ethnography (McAuley 1998, 77).

In observing the rehearsal room as a site where collective creation emerges, McAuley considered the actors pivotal to the process. At the centre of the theatre rehearsal's practice, are the actors:

> . . . their questions, their perceptions, their technical skills, their bodies, and the deepest levels of their own emotional lives are what transform and sublimate the written words, creating unique and unrepeatable performance events (McAuley 2015, 38).

According to McAuley, other elements contribute to creating the performance; neither the text, nor an abstract image in the mind of the director. In this sense, Rehearsal Studies adhere to the post-dramatic theatre tradition (Lehmann 2006), of considering the performance as the real object of the creation process and disengaging from the idea of the text as central to theatre production. As McAuley suggests,

> Brecht used a compelling image to describe the function of the play text in relation to the ephemeral occasion of performance. He understood, he said, that 'the text would be expended in the production, would go off like gunpowder in a firework' (McAuley 2015, 38).

The Rehearsal Studies scholarship takes account of the collective dimension of the creative work in its consideration of the rehearsal room as the site, and the activity of staging a new play, as a specific work practice collectively accomplished by a group of theatre professionals. With a similar interest in situated practices in the rehearsal room, we claim that accounts of creation need to pay more attention to bodies, matters, and non-human entities that participate in the creative acts in it.[1] Indeed, the rehearsal literature is framed strongly towards the consideration of human action and human intentionality, with less emphasis on the role of materiality, bodies and spaces in the process of performance-making. Whilst we share some of that epistemological landscape, we part company over the range and scope of materiality and spaces as crucial elements of how the rehearsal room contributes to performance-making. As Ingold (2013) suggests, we have to be able to trace the emergence of the artwork, instead of considering it as the imposition of an idea onto materials and bodies. Concomitantly, we suggest that Rehearsal Studies can benefit from a more materially nuanced rehearsal ethnography and greater emphasis on the theoretical categories able to reveal the sociomaterial entanglements involved in the process of creation. To do this we draw on the theoretical vocabulary of the 'New Sociology of Art' to enrich the distinctive Rehearsal Studies ethnographic contributions, by accounting for its sociomaterial aspects.

2. The new sociology of art

Although sharing an interest in the creative process, and employing similar methodological tools, the 'New Sociology of Art' stresses a considerably stronger focus on non-human (or better defined as: more than human) entities contribute to the artwork than Rehearsal Studies (De La Fuente 2007; DeNora 2000, 2003; Hennion 1997, 2015; Eyerman and Lisa 2006; Eyerman and Ring 1998; Fox 2015; Strandvad 2009). This stream of literature emerged from the critique of mainstream sociology of art that perceived the artistic object as contingent upon social relations (Bourdieu 1984), and have been explicit about their intent to re-position art, and its processes, at the centre of sociological research (De La Fuente 2007).

Traditional sociology of art is commonly reflected through the work of Howard Becker and Pierre Bourdieu (De La Fuente 2007; Strandvad 2009). Coming from symbolic interactionism, Becker (1982) focused on networks of human interactions to consider art as something that emerges from work conventions and common resources mobilised to achieve a collective goal. For him, artworks are the outcomes of collective action. He is dismissive of the dominant tradition that regards art as some special activity and instead considers it as based on professional work practices. His work demystified the ideology of the creative genius and grounded the artistic phenomenon as a fundamentally social and dependent on 'social organisations, interests, conventions and capacities available within their realms of production' (DeNora 2000, 4).

By maintaining that social and economic power relations are determinant of the artistic object, Bourdieu (1984) broadens the interactional context of analysis. Bourdieu went further than Becker in unmasking the mystification of art, not only disputing the 'ideology of charisma' related to artistic production, but also the notion of a 'pure' gaze with regard to the consumption of art (De La Fuente 2007). Asserting the artistic field as both shaped by, and rooted in, social power relations, Bourdieu saw the task of sociology in art as the exploration of the social causes and forces that shaped the production, reception and consumption of art and culture (Fox 2015). In seeing the social as primary, Bourdieu extrudes the artistic object from sociological research, describing its aesthetic properties as unnecessary for the sociological inquiry. As pointed out by Hennion, sociologies of art:

> . . . have come out against the primacy of the work of art, either by attempting to denounce it as an illusion in equating it with mechanisms of belief (Latour and Woolgar 1979) or, more simply, by ignoring the question of its value (Hennion 1997, 415).

Indeed, *contra* Bourdieu, the New Sociology of Art aims to overcome 'the tendency to limit sociological investigations of the arts to contextual or external factors' (De La Fuente 2007, 409).

According to De La Fuente (2007), the New Sociology of Art grapples with the aesthetic properties of art. This does not mean a return to un-sociological statements, on the contrary it refutes 'essentialist' perspectives which revere artwork as magic kinds of object, or artists as 'gifted' individuals with unique visions. However, rejecting essentialism does not preclude the use of analytical frames that say something meaningful about art, without succumbing to the tendency to inflate its status and importance. Eyerman and Ring (1998) for example, see the meaning of artwork as something

constructed during the phase of production and unpacked during consumption, the content of which needs to be investigated with proper sociological tools. This, however, still sees artwork as a passive receptor of meaning rather than an active participant in its making-practices and beyond. In her study on music, DeNora (2003) draws on Latour's framework to show how music is co-produced with the social, and further that music has the potential to act in the world. For De Nora, it is necessary to study cultural products by looking into their active engagement with social contexts (DeNora 2000), and by mapping the network of relationships in which the artwork participates so as to avoid the deception of essentialism.

The New Sociology of Art then, not only investigates the social relations in which the artwork is embedded, but also the actual practices by which it emerges, and its agency in transmitting meaning and arousing social change. For these reasons, and much like Rehearsal Studies, the new sociological approach to art seeks to '[m]ake it necessary to turn our gaze to the actual sites in which practitioners engage in conceiving, modelling, testing and finishing cultural artefacts' (Farías and Wilkie 2016, 7).[2]

3. The role of mediations

To avoid reductionist social accounts, Hennion (Hennion 1997, 2015; Hennion and Grenier 2000) suggests working with the particularity of concrete objects in their empirical field, taking account of the events where artistic products are made and how they become active participants. Inspired by Latour's work on Science Technology Studies (STS), he identifies the concept of 'mediation' as central to investigating the networks within which cultural products emerge and confronts the issue of the artistic/cultural object, in the same way that STS perceived the scientific object.

For Latour, the scientific object is not a given, it is constructed through a process that implies materiality (Latour and Woolgar 1979). The emergence of science, he argues, is supported by the mediation of heterogeneous elements like cells, plants, samples, pipes, tubes, shelves, classifiers, diagrams, sheets of figures, papers (Latour 1999). These non-human elements possess agency and participate in the process of construction of science. Thus, material objects like cells, plants, samples, pipes, tubes, shelves, classifiers, diagrams, sheets of figures, papers actively participate in the chain of translations that give rise to scientific facts. Through the mediation of these elements, experiments are translated into inscriptions, which constitute the scientific text components, and this stream of research aims to account for these sociomaterial entanglements.[3] Hennion is similarly attentive to the non-human elements when exploring cultural and artistic fields, in order to account for how a cultural/artistic object emerges from the active contributions of human and non-human elements that mediate the process.

The attention to the agency of the objects, space and matters implicated in cultural production, allows the avoidance of purging the artwork from sociological studies of culture, and follows Ingold's request of a focus on the situated emergence of the artworks. As other concepts introduced by STS, the concept of mediation helps to qualify and describe the agency of non-humans. It provides an answer to one of the central questions about the potentiality of the object, namely, where do objects get their power from? (Hennion, 1989). The answer for Hennion lies in the artistic object itself, which is an active entity, made so by the chain of mediations of which it is part. For example, in

considering the reception of baroque music, Hennion identifies multiple mediators: 'scores and texts, sound, instruments, repertoires, staging, concert venues, and media' (Hennion 1997, 432). In this case, the role of mediations as elements that constitute the cultural/artistic object is particularly visible as the artistic object in music is elusive and difficult, even impossible to translate in words. It is possible to argue that music cannot even exist without mediators such as instruments, musicians, scores, stages, records.[4] Mediations in music are not mere carriers of the work, but they are the art itself (Hennion 2012). According to Hennion:

> When the performer places a score on his music stand, he plays that music, to be sure, but music is just as much the very fact of playing; mediations in music have a pragmatic status—they are the art that they reveal, and cannot be distinguished from the appreciation they generate (Hennion 2012, 253).

Accordingly, these mediators are not just passive intermediaries,[5] but active producers of the cultural object (Hennion 1997). Within production or reception, the network of mediators is a formative factor of the aesthetic and meaning of the cultural object itself (baroque music). Such examples provide analytical ballast to the notion of imagining a positive conception of mediation defined as intermediaries that participate in the emergence of the arts and contribute to its meaning. As the author suggests, mediations like instruments, musicians, scores, and stages are the art of baroque music itself (Hennion 2012). Similarly, mediations like theatre venues and stages, actors' bodies, sets, lights, scripts and other sociomaterial components are theatre itself.

However, precisely what does it mean to understand and study artwork as mediation? For Hennion, it means the study of the work in all its details; the gestures, bodies, habits, materials, spaces, languages, and the institutions in which it dwells to reconstruct the network of mediations that it consists of. It means to focus on developing the artwork and to follow the chain of mediation it is made from. If the chain of mediation is accounted for, not only are the contributions of human and non-human actors, but also the alterations (i.e. in the meaning) produced by mediators, specifically identified.[6] Hennion's suggestion avoids the dualism between aestheticism and sociology implied in the sociology of art, and offers a model based on the sociomateriality of becoming (Deleuze and Guattari 1980),[7] where artwork is continuously transformed and re-created through each passage and transformation of the chain of mediations.

Following Hennion's suggestion, we studied ethnographically the work practices that took place in the rehearsal room, to trace the chain of mediations in the process of performance-making. Here we noticed the relevance of the stage in classical theatrical architecture, the significance of mundane practices like reading in circle, the role of the script, the levels of improvisation in the rehearsals and many other sociomaterial elements that participate in performance-making processes. Turning our gaze to the contribution of non-humans in the chain of mediations that gave rise to a piece of theatre, means paying attention to a considerable number of things usually taken for granted. Indeed, as pointed out by Hennion, we cannot have music without mediators (Hennion 2015), and we cannot have theatre without stages, actors' bodies, sets, lights, scripts and other things that make theatre, like makeup, costumes, videos, music, improvisation, etc. For our purposes, the explanation of the potential of a post-anthropocentric rehearsal study, will only be concerned with a sociomaterial analysis

of the emergence of a particular scene in the play. Using video recordings, ethnographic diaries, provisional scripts, interviews and photos from the rehearsals, we will account for some of the most common mediations in the craftsmanship of theatre, shedding light on their contributions to the process of performance-making.

We use the concept of mediation to *describe-analyse*[8] some excerpts of the rehearsal that, taken together, realise the composition of a specific scene in the process of performance-making. Mediation provides a powerful analytical tool to unpick the heterogeneity of the relationship between human and non-human actors, by providing important ways to understand their relationship with the theatrical script, other human and non-human bodies, and spaces. Just as Latour provides insights into 'science in the making', we use similar tools to better explain the concept of 'theatre in the making'.

4. The empirical research and methods

As noted above, this article is based on the analysis of the rehearsal of play written for children. One of the authors, 'Carmen', was the playwright, director and a contributor to the data collection through an auto-ethnographic diary (Alvesson 2003; Atkinson, Coffey, and Delamont 1999).[9] In addition, the other author of this article was also present in the rehearsal room with her ethnographic notebook and a video recorder. Besides the use of autoethnography research methods (Valtonen et al. 2017), the research team developed additional means to create a fuller picture of the unfolding phenomenon (Denzin and Lincoln 1994). In this regard, a range of qualitative data were gathered, including *inter alia*: a self-ethnographic diary; some ethnographical interviews; ethnographic observations; photos; videos and audio recordings. This facilitated the careful interrogation of several rich descriptions of the mediations which occurred during the process.

The theatrical production was developed by a small professional theatre company in northern Italy that featured three actors: two who compose the company (Federica and Michele), and one hired for the occasion (Laura). The performance was based on the history of Alfonsina Morini Strada, the first female athlete in the 20th century to participate in the national cycling race, the '*Giro d'Italia*'. The rehearsal took place over the period from early January 2017 until the 25th of May 2017, when the performance premiered at *Teatro Verdi* in Milan.

Through a close analysis of fragments of video recorded on the very first day of rehearsal, we followed the emergence of the first scene of the play, which enabled us to account for the emergence of a scene as an 'object yet to arrive'.[10] To clarify our position, we focused on the emergence of a particular scene, however, we strongly underline that the choice of the scene, as the choice of the performance itself, it is not the relevant factor here. In other words, we did not follow the development of this specific scene because of its particular status or relevance within Theatre Studies.[11] The microanalysis of the emergent scene is here purely as an illustration of the significance and the analytical potential of focusing on mediations to understand the craftsmanship of theatre. An exhaustive account of every mediation detectable in the rehearsal room is not possible. Instead, we chose to focus on those mediations which are commonly involved in the development of the play. More precisely, we focus only on the ones that seemed crucial to

how a specific scene emerged from the rehearsals room. Indeed, our analysis accounts for the relevance of bodies and matters in the process of performance-making (of a specific scene), intending to contribute to Rehearsal Studies with a post-human sensitivity.[12]

Before analysing a fragment from the first day of the rehearsal, there are two aspects we need to clarify about this play and these rehearsals. First, when the rehearsal began, the playwright/director had only produced a provisional draft of the script instead of a complete text that one might have assumed. The draft was very schematic and provisional; it did not specify any movements and only presented dialogues and monologues. The text was never conceived as a fixed thing, it was a temporary, provisional entity that was designed to be unfolded, tested and redefined as the new performance came into being. In our conceptualisation, the outline of the story, multiple drafts of the script, images, actors' bodies and artefacts are all mediations that contributed to the emergence of a new piece of theatre. Thus, while considering the script, our intention is not to revisit an old debate on the textualization of the performance, rather, it is to consider how the script is used in the rehearsal room, its relationships and its role in the chain of mediations in performance-making.

Secondly, it was originally envisaged that the company would use an overhead projector (OHP) and a projection screen synchronous with the acting onstage for this theatrical play. This is a theatrical technique that allows for multiple presentations of situations and characters onstage – not only ones that embody the actors, but also the rich addition of images in the form of extemporaneous drawings, illustrations, photographs, or shadows. The use of such a technique, therefore, allows for the staging of scenes that can inspire representations beyond the means of a classical theatrical setting primarily characterised by the actors onstage.

5. The analysis

To provide an analysis of the contribution of non-humans to creative processes, we begin with an illustration of the scene as it played during the premiere taking place at Verdi Theatre in Milan. As mentioned above, we do not claim to be exhaustive of the role of non-human mediations in theatre-making, we do however, deem that Rehearsals Studies can be enriched by a post-human sensitivity, as indeed, 'New Sociology of Art' has already demonstrated in other arts. Our focus is to illustrate the relevance of matters that lie within the chain of mediations from which the artwork emerges. It means to focus on the contribution of bodies, objects, texts, and spaces to develop a particular scene. We follow the request also highlighted by Ingold (2013) to include materials and matters in art formation processes.[13] Focusing on the rehearsal, with particular emphasis on the first day, we describe/analyses the elements we observed that contributed to the emergence of a scene.[14]

The focus here is on one of the initial scenes of the performance, where the protagonist Alfonsina, played by Laura, is chatting with her mother, played by Michele, about her future. The scene depicts the featured characters and shows the nature of their relationship. The mother's desire for her daughter are characterised by gendered expectations for women typical of the time (early years of the twentieth century), which in this case was

embodied in the hope that Alfonsina will become a good embroiderer and marry soon. Alfonsina however, wants something quite different for her life and is very bored by her mother's requests.

This scene is a dialogue between the two characters, and it is formed from two different perspectives: one played behind the screen, showing the actors in shadows (*see* Figure 1), while the other is acted in front of the screen with the two actors embroidering together while chatting (*see* Figure 2). Indeed, in the first part of the scene, Alfonsina and her mother's relationship is translated into a shadow play behind a large screen that occupies the whole scenic space. Through this play of shadows, the mother is made to appear very big compared to the much smaller and younger Alfonsina (Figure 1).

In the second part of the scene, the two actors stand next to the big screen where the mother asks Alfonsina to embroider with her, and Alfonsina meekly agrees. The mother praises Alfonsina's ability to embroider. She looks at the image of the embroidery shown through a projection on the screen (Figure 2) and declares her displeasure at being unable to read what Alfonsina has written in her needlework. Images of Alfonsina's embroidered writing of 'I cannot take it anymore', 'help' and 'save me' are key participants in the scene where the contrast between the dialogue and the projected images (with its text) adds irony to the scene.

The following analysis shows how the scene was composed in the rehearsals through the mediation of the human and non-human participants (amongst other things, the draft of the text, the contribution of the overhead projector technique, the actors' bodies, the images, the actions and improvisation),[15] starting from the draft of an initial script

Figure 1. Photo of the scene played by shadows. On the left a big mother on the right a small alfonsina. Photo courtesy by Enzo Mologni.

Figure 2. Photo of the scene played by presence on stage of the actors next to the white projection screen showing an embroidery with the text "Save me" (on the left Michele-the mother, on the right Laura-alfonsina). Photo courtesy by Enzo Mologni.

where the scene essentially consisted of a short monologue by Alfonsina's mother (see excerpt 1). As we noted above, the scene did not yet exist as such when the rehearsal began, but we can certainly call it, mocking Beaubois (2015) a 'scene yet to arrive'.

Excerpt 1

MOTHER: Alfonsa, Alfonsa! Come back here: you don't want the village to gossip about you? You are rowdy! Look at your shabby dress. [. . .] Come on! Sit here close to me. Look how fine you can embroider; nobody can do it like you! Look at how precisely you do it, look at its perfection. (Excerpt form the first draft of the script).

After Carmen had introduced the first draft of the script, the team began to work on the first part of the play. The group focused on the scene (above) based on the relationship between Alfonsina and her mother, and the contrast between the two characters and their worlds. In a way Alfonsina represents the tensions of the future, embodying the concepts of freedom and women's emancipation, while her mother personifies the past: traditional practices; old values; and the subordinate role of women. The excerpt 1 illustrates some lines of the mother's monologue from the first draft of the script.

5.1 The mediation of bodies

As noted above, the team worked on specific features of the characters by reading the lines out loud. First, roles were cast by gender, with Federica playing the role of the mother. However, Carmen, thinking about trying to transgress gender stereotypes, suggested that Michele (the sole male actor) could try to interpret the part of the mother. Michele, reading his lines, added features to his character using the tone of his voice, accents, and speaking rhythm. This phase reflected a primary mediation of extra-textual elements and seemed to convince the group about the choice.[16]

This first physical embodiment, or mediation, that entered into a relationship with the lines of the draft text, evoked conspicuously new meanings. Indeed, as Performance Studies tell us, the choice of Michele playing the role of the mother entailed a renegotiation between a normative binary vision of gender attribution compared with a more fluid one.[17] A similar renegotiation of the meanings provided by the mediation of the bodies can occur even when there is compliance between a character's gender (semiotic body) and the gender attribution of the actor that interprets it (phenomenal body). The decision of hiring Laura – a non-binary performer – to play the role of young Alfonsina was rooted in the intention to create a female-identifying character that was not stereotypically feminine. Indeed, by displaying Laura's non-binary body on stage, Alfonsina's daily struggle against gender stereotypes was not only a topic mobilised by the texts, but also carried out by her phenomenal body. Through the mediation of Michele and Laura's bodies, a connection is also established between the 'performance yet to arrive', that is striving to represent Alfonsina's challenge to male hegemony in professional cycling, and her daily fight against gender stereotypes as cultural basis of gendered oppression.

5.2 The mediation of bodies in space

The production rehearsal we focused on included several identifiable working practices. The first readings of the script took place in a circle, while the next explored bodily orientation and movements by having the actors stand and occupy the space onstage and orate their lines. Standing while reading the lines opened up other considerations that were triggered by how bodies are used both in theatre and human interactions. The following excerpt shows how Michele struggles with uncertainty when dealing with a monologue text that sounded inappropriate to be addressed to the audience (as a monologue would have required).

Excerpt 2

MICHELE: [Acting as the mother, reading the script] Alfonsa, Alfonsa! Come back here: you don't want the village to gossip about you. You are rowdy!

[Interrupting the acting] And then she arrives . . . because I am telling her . . . [He turns from the front orientation facing the public to his left, indicating a fictional engagement with another character].

CARMEN: [Interrupting the acting] She could also be a drawing . . .

MICHELE: [Acting as the mother, reading the script] Look at your shabby dress! [. . .]

CARMEN: [Interrupting the acting] I need to understand if Laura [Alfonsina's interpreter] is onstage with you . . .

MICHELE: [Reflecting aloud] Maybe, she could be drawing beforehand, and then it could be her [in person] . . .

CARMEN: Yes . . .

Video, min. 7.50

The excerpt gives an interesting insight into the issue of the actor's presence onstage during the first part of the scene that was initially written as a monologue. While acting out the text of the mother's monologue onstage, Michele finds himself unable to continue without knowing if Alfonsina is onstage, and if so, where. Michele turns to an imaginary Alfonsina, and he says: 'And then she arrives … because I am telling her … '. His out of the character comment highlighted his need to define Alfonsina's status and consequently her orientation and position on the stage. Indeed, when an actor is on stage, even if just reading the lines of text, it involves the whole body and begins to be an action. Through these micro-actions (turning towards Alfonsina), Michele allows the relationship between the mother's character and Alfonsina to unfold, giving the scene the form of a dialogue. 'Being' and acting onstage elicits the definition of micro-actions and actions that have the potential to transform the 'scene yet to arrive'. These micro-actions are inscribed in the text-scene only as potentialities (Deleuze and Guattari 1980) because they cannot be expressed nor unfolded until the bodies take their space on the stage.[18] The encounter between the line of the text on the one hand, and the bodies in space on the other, allowes for the testing and trialing of further elements in the composition of the scene. Indeed, some elements of the composition emerges from the interactions during the rehearsal in the process of producing, stabilising, and defining the scene.

Although we do not take all the aspects of bodies and spaces into consideration, it is worth noting how acting implies occupying the space onstage, and involves choices related to the interactions (with the audience, with other actors on stage, with objects and figures participating in the scene). Considering these choices, we can interpret the contribution of the space (and the stage) - and their allowances and prescriptions (Akrich and Latour 1992) - in the scene's development. Indeed, in our case, whilst reading the lines of the script in a circle, the monologue was not perceived to be at all problematic. However, when Michele moved to the stage, he was unable to continue reading without knowing the position of Alfonsina, to whom the mother's discourse is addressed. Triggered by these considerations, the scene soon became enriched by Alfonsina's presence on the stage: the text that was initially intended as a monologue thus becomes a dialogue. As the excerpt shows, when stimulated by Michele's consideration about Alfonsina's presence, Carmen speculated on the kind of presence the character should have on stage.

This consideration compels us to notice that the physical space of the theatre allowed for different forms of a character's presence in the performance. These forms depend on and are deeply rooted in the use of specific artifacts.

5.3 The mediation of artifacts

Once the presence of Alfonsina is requested through Michele's indirect actions, the need to display Alfonsina's character onstage is mobilised. However, several methods can stand in for the presence of Alfonsina in the scene, *inter alia*: images; drawings; or shadows appearing on the white projection screen on stage.[19]

The idea of introducing the character of Alfonsina as a drawing (*see* excerpt 2) drove the possibility of depicting Alfonsina as a shadow, as she will appear in the first part of the scene we are investigating (see Figure 1, Figure 3and Figure 4).

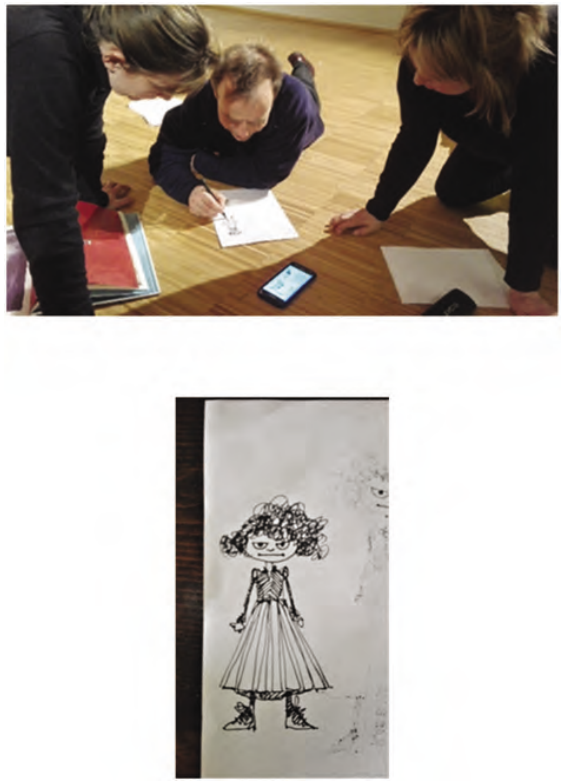

Figure 3. (a) Michele is working on the drawing of Alfonsina during the rehearsal surrounded by the group. (b) One of the several drawings of Alfonsina used in the rehearsal. Photos courtesy by Laura Lucia Parolin.

Once the idea of projecting an image on a big screen was evoked, imagining the use of the same artifacts to develop another type of presence on stage (shadow), was not such a conceptual leap. As the rehearsal of the scene developed, the idea of using one character as a shadow evolved (see Figure 4 a and b) into the decision to make the entire first part of the scene with shadows. As the photos of different days of rehearsals show, (see Figure 4), the drawings were meant to represent Alfonsina only during the mother's monologue, while the mother was played by a shadow (Figure 4 a). However, it soon becomes more interesting to consider reconfiguring the entire scene as a dialogue played by shadows (Figure 4 b).

It is worth noting that the drawings of Alfonsina contributed to the transformation of the scene into shadows, but they do not appear in the performance. Indeed, if they participated in the rehearsal, driving the process of transformation of the scene, they did not last in the performance; it was only composed by shadows (the first part), images and actors (the second part), (*see* Figure 1 and Figure 2). Tracing the chain of mediations that gave rise to the scene, demanded accounting for the drawings of Alfonsina and their use

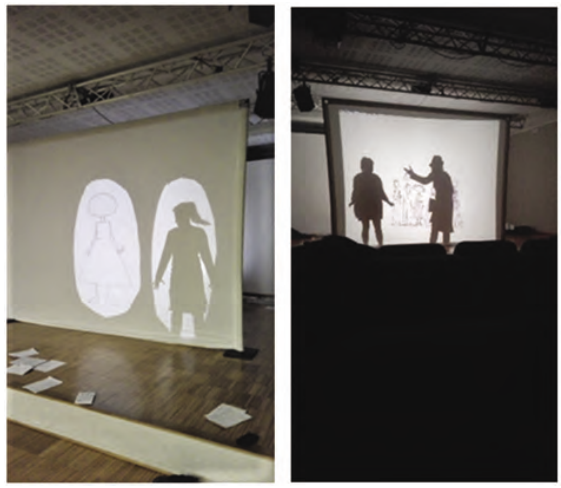

Figure 4. (a) An example of the scene under investigation that uses both the drawing of Alfonsina, and shadow, during the rehearsal. (b) The scene made by two shadows and drawings during the rehearsal. Photos courtesy by Laura Lucia Parolin.

with the screen and the overhead projector which created the character onstage. It also requires us to account for the role of these material artifacts and spaces in creating the characters and scenes made by drawings and shadows.

The shadows are obtained by the specific relationships between actors' bodies, a beam of light (in our case produced by an overhead projector), a projection surface, stage's specific space and phisical theatre. All these elements are non-human mediators that make possible or rather actualise (Deleuze 1994) the character as a shadow. Indeed, the overhead projector (OHP), the white projection screen, the stage space, the actors' bodies contribute to performance-making transforming and modify the scene and the meanings they are supposed to carry (Latour 2005). Following the chain of mediations means accounting for how bodies, artifacts, and spaces are entangled, and how this entanglement evolves, in particular when it changes the scene's meaning in the process of performance-making.

Once the scene became composed by the shadows, not only was the first stabilised form of the scene found, but other possibilities also became accessible. Indeed, the shadows are an interesting mediation that carries meanings that also have the potential for further elaboration. For instance, unlike actors' bodies, a character as shadows can easily increase, decrease, or even mutate their size. The more distant the actors' bodies are from the light source, the smaller the shadow on the screen appears and vice versa. These potentialities grants for creative exploration of the relationship(s) between characters by using different on-screen sizes of shadows (the small Alfonsina juxtaposed with the huge mother), allowed for the expression of the unbalanced power relationship between Alfonsina and his mother. The characters' relationship is given form in disparity of the shadows' size (see Figure 1), obtained by positioning the bodies at different distances

from the light source . In contradistinction to the embodied version, when the two characters were depicted as shadows, the nature of their relationship was more starkly conveyed, and humorous intent of the text given greater effect (*see* Figure 1).

The second part of the mother's scene (*see* Figure 2) was also influenced by material matters, not least the projection screen that was introduced onstage during rehearsal (see Figure 4 a., b.). This part of the scene introduced a different action between the mother and Alfonsina by engaging the daughter in sewing. This part of the scene drew upon the main character's background, who worked as a dressmaker before becoming a cyclist. To better appreciate the role of material mediations in developing the scene, we refer to the episode we recorded on the same day of rehearsal, where Michele (as the mother) is reading the text from the first draft of the script.

Excerpt 3

MICHELE: Came on! Sit here, close to me (mimicking an invitation to approach an imaginary Alfonsina on stage).

MICHELE: How skilled she is! [. . .]

CARMEN: [Interrupting the acting] Ah! Here . . . [mimicking a square]

FEDERICA: [overlapping Carmen] The embroidery . . .

CARMEN: The embroidered fabrics need to be shown (referring to something previously discussed by the team)

Video 9.14

In the above excerpt, Carmen interruptes Michele's performance to add an element not specified in the text's first draft. She wanted to display the images embroidered by Alfonsina to reflect her cry for help. This idea was inspired by a comic book by Jackie Fleming (2016) in which embroidered phrases like 'Save me', 'Help', and 'I cannot do it anymore' expressed women's frustration with being forced to stay at home. The idea to use similar images in the play was previously introduced to the team by Carmen even though it was not written in the script at the time.

During the rehearsal, Carmen recalled the idea of highlighting the contrast between the text lines and the images projected on the screen. Indeed, at first glance the mother succeeds in making Alfonsina adhere to a traditionally feminine role while,[20] the association with embroidered images suggests an alternative meaning – that she only appears to be doing so. The juxtaposition of the mother's monologue – the invitation to Alfonsina to join her needlework activity – with the embroidered images that so richly demonstrated Alfonsina's profound unease at the thought of engaging in such activity, created a more nuanced connotation for the scene. Whilst the text presented the mother's attempt to relegate Alfonsina to a traditional feminine in-house role, Fleming's style of images reflected Alfonsina's longing for a different role.

The presence of images that display Alfonsina's inner thoughts (Figure 2)[21] constitutes an element that alters the meaning of the scene. Like in the previous part of the scene, Fleming's drawings, the OHP, the white screen, space and bodies of actors are mediators that make possible more nuanced and rich meaning of the scene. While both the mother's monologue, and the way Alfonsina's body behaved on the stage, expressed Alfonsina's compliance, the images of the embroideries are displayed instead of a more

direct representation of her rebellion (*see*Figure 2). The contrast of the mother's request with the compliance of a disciplined Alfonsina body (who needles diligently with her mother) and the images of the embroideries, trigger a new, and more ironic, meaning to the scene.

5.4 The mediation of improvisation

Having discussed the relationships between the text, bodies, space, and artifacts, we turn to another kind of mediation that was able to change the original lines of the scene. It goes without saying an important practice in the rehearsal room is improvisation. This technique, in its various forms, is used to explore a scene further, allowing new meanings, texts, movements or actions to emerge from the interactions between actors, space and artifacts onstage. To illustrate why improvisation constitutes another interesting form of mediation, we present the following of the previous excerpt.

Excerpt 4

MICHELE: [Improvising] Look how fine you can embroider; nobody else can do it like you!

FEDERICA: [Interrupting the acting and performing as the mother improvising] It is a pity that I am not able to read it!

CARMEN: [Clapping] Exactly, nice, nice! [Collective laughter]

MICHELE: [Overlapping Chiara's exclamation] Look at how precisely you can do it; look at its perfection. Look at it. This is when I regret that I cannot read. I do not understand what you write. What did you write, my dear? [Collective laughter] Cheers to Holy Mary! [Collective laughter]

FEDERICA: [Acting again as the mother] It's a pity I cannot understand.

MICHELE: [Improvising as the mother] It's a pity I cannot understand. However, I'm a woman from the 19th century. What can you expect from me? [Collective laughter].

Video Min 9:24

This excerpt shows how the director's prior reference to her intention to use Fleming's images (see excerpt 3), activated the participation of the group and inspired new improvisations. Michele in particular, promptly improvised a phrase to include the referenced embroideries. In doing so, Jackie Fleming's embroideries, even though they were physically absent from the rehearsal room, became part of a situated collective construction of the meaning of the scene (Parolin and Pellegrinelli 2020a). It was the idea of using Fleming's images, that enabled the group to work collectively in the exploration of new meanings in the scene, bringing about creative interventions, from which wholly unpredictable results transformed the scene.

As the fragment shows, although she is not cast in this role, Federica temporarily assumes the mother character's identity to improvise new text. Federica introduces new improvised lines, emphasising the contrast between the mother's speech and the images of embroidery, affirming the illiteracy of the mother, who is unable to read what Alfonsina has written in her embroideries. This small improvisation created an unexpected creative emergence (Parolin and Pellegrinelli 2020b) that was recognised

as comical by the collective who expressed their appreciation. Carmen's clapping, collective laughter, and Michele's replication of the same phrase proposed by Federica, all contributed to the inclusion of Federica's addition to the scene.

Federica's improvisation made an contribution to the scene by highlighting, and making explicit, the mother's misconception of Alfonsina's work, while at the same time exploring the distance between the mothers' and the audience's perception. Michele's improvisation acting as the mother draws the audience toward the quality of the embroidering performed by the daughter ('Look how fine you can embroider; nobody else can do it like you!'), while the audience also sees the images on the screen that display Alfonsina's request for help. It means that the mother and the audience read what is written on the embroidery differently. Federica's improvisation explores deeply this difference. By reinforcing the differing interpretations of the same embroidery, Alfonsina's ability to maintain self-discipline while being highly subversive is emphasised.

For Hennion (1997), mediators are not passive, they are an active and essential part of the production process. In this sense, improvisation is clearly a mediation; precisely because it contributed to the definition of the scene. Federica's improvisation was constitutive of the forming scene, that thanks to her improvisation, also became different in the text. Moreover, it reflects that:

> Artworks do not derive from a vision, which is materialised with the help of various human and non-human assistants, but are created in the process of making these components work (Strandvad 2009, 32).

Through the work during rehearsal, the group reached a stable articulation of the scene, which also included new lines of text that emerged from improvisation. This meant that the new configuration of the scene with its ironic import, does not come out of the ether, but is a result of the evolution of sociomaterial entanglements made by lines of text, bodies, actions, artefacts and improvisations within the rehearsal room, that taken together contributed to the development of the scene and its meaning.

Conclusion

Drawing on theoretical perspectives from the New Sociology of Art, this article contributes to Rehearsal Studies in four ways:

(1) The provision of empirical evidence that shows the situated, and distributed, nature of rehearsal practices.
(2) It gives evidence to strongly contradict the notion that the creative impetus for scene development resides in the mind of one individual; rather, it is distributed in the sociomateriality of situated work practices within the rehearsal room.
(3) An account of a performance-making process that shows mediation by several matters (drafts of the script, sketches, images, bodies, artifacts, spaces and work practices) and which have to be taken into account for any meaningful analysis of the rehearsal to be realised.
(4) The assertion that these mediations are not isolated, but operate as part of a network made by encounters between bodies, spaces, texts and artifacts, with their potentialities able to provide and modify meanings of the scene.

By offering a deeper understanding of the role of matters and sociomaterial mediations in the process of performance-making, a more sophisticated conceptualisation of materiality's role in the process of artwork making is realised. Indeed, as several authors have highlighted, such an analysis is long overdue (De La Fuente 2007; DeNora 2003; Hennion 1997, 2015; Ingold 2011, 2013). As we have argued, a traditional understanding of artwork is based on two false premises (Ingold 2013): first, the arbitrary starting point of the 'image' of the artwork in the artist's mind, and second, the equally arbitrary endpoint, namely the allegedly finished work.

The post-dramatic turn in Theatre Studies has already contributed to the critique of the arbitrary endpoint (the notion of theatrical plays as finished work), by focusing on spectatorship as a co-producer of meanings. We suggest that Rehearsal Studies has the similar potential in challenging the first false premise (the artwork's image in the artist's mind), by taking account of everything that happens 'in-between'. However, to understand the contribution to meaning in the process of performance-making, including the role of materiality and matters, Rehearsal Studies must embrace post-human ethnographic research seriously, considering both the social and material interactions that occurr in the rehearsal room.

One way to take account of material interactions involved in performance making can be found by drawing on the insights offered by the concept of mediation used by the New Sociology of Art. Mediations are active entities that participate and constitute the piece of art, but not just as simple carriers (like the intermediaries), but as translators of meanings (Hennion 2012). Put in a Latourian lexicon, the overhead projector (OHP), the white projection screen, the drawings, the shadows, the stage space, the actors' bodies, the practices of reading in circle, reading onstage, and improvvisation, are all mediators that 'transform, translate, distort, and modify the meaning or the elements they are supposed to carry' (Latour 2005, 39). We propose that Rehearsal Studies needs to pay more attention to mediations in performance-making processes. In particular, as indicated by our findings, we strongly suggest attention be given to:

1. The mediation of actors' bodies and their capacity to add meanings;
2. The mediation of bodies in the space (i.e. micro-actions and movements on the stage), and their capacity to add meanings and modify scenes;
3. The mediation of artifacts in the rehearsal room (i.e. the drawings, the overhead projector, the white screen, etc.) and their role in contributing to the scene and its further development;
4. The mediation of improvisations and their role in the development of the scene (adding text or movements that change the meaning).

All these mediations – and a lot more, we did not have space to consider – participated in the rehearsal as the actual site in which practitioners engage in conceiving, modelling, and testing the scene as performance in the making. It is clear, that tracing networks of mediations (human and non-human) involved in performance-making offers much to Rehearsal Studies in taking account of the matters that participate in creative development. Moreover, the network of mediations ought to be a critical factor for Rehearsal Studies in helping to understand the agency of non-human elements in the process of performance-making. Indeed, material elements contribute to situated activities in the rehearsal room, allowing and preventing (Akrich and Latour 1992) specific actions and movements to the actors (human and non-human) interacting with it. For example, the

overhead projector (OHP), coupled with the projection screen, allowed multiple ways to present characters and situations, but it prescribes a particular use of the stage space. The A white screen paired with overhead projectors cannot lie in the background, and so consequently, the actors can only use a portion of the stage, risking what we could call a 'bidimensional effect'.

In sum, we claim that tracing the chain of mediations, and their transformations, allows Rehearsal Studies to unfold its potential to take into account 'all that goes in-between' in performance making. We underline the importance of this framework for analysing rehearsal as the site of performance-making. Our analysis of elements that influenced the development of one scene only, indicates that a lot more must be done to fully grasp the potential of this framework for theatre studies. Nonetheless, we have shown how some mediations in the rehearsal (like Michele's invitation of Alfonsina character onstage or the use of her character as a drawing) that were essential in developing the scene, later disappeared in the performance act. Thus, their contribution to the development of the scene, as matters that matter, can only be grasped with a post-human analysis of the rehearsal. Without this sensitivity, understanding how artists follow the forces and flows of material that bring the artwork into being is likely to be misunderstood, and the role of matters in the emergent process of morphogenesis of artwork will be missed (Ingold 2013).

Notes

1. This resonates with our background and the purpose of giving account to social and material work practices in creative processes and arts, in particular, in design (Mattozzi and Parolin 2020; Parolin 2010a, 2010b; Parolin and Mattozzi 2014, 56, 2013, 56) and theatre (Parolin and Pellegrinelli 2020a, 2020b). Indeed, we share a similar research interest in the rehearsal as particular work practices that occur in a specific place and time to stage a new play.
2. A recent stream of literature called 'studio studies' works within the tradition of STS and looks at the places where the cultural products are manufactured (Farías and Wilkie 2016). Indeed, as Bruno Latour points out, in architectural studios – or an engineer's design departments – the object's controversial nature is made visible (Latour 2005, 80). Farias and Wilkie similarly maintain that '[s]uch perspectives make it necessary to turn our gaze to the actual sites in which practitioners engage in conceiving, modelling, testing and finishing cultural artefacts (Dubuisson and Hennion 1995, Hennion 1997), the studio, although a preoccupation in the visual arts (e.g. Jacob and Grabner 2010), has not been an object of systematic and intensive analysis for the social sciences (e.g. Zembylas 2014).' (Farías and Wilkie 2016, 7). Inspired by 'studio studies' in a previous work (Parolin and Pellegrinelli 2020a) we suggested the interpretation of the rehearsal room as 'creative laboratory' of performance-making.
3. For a deeper explanation of these processes see the chapter 'The "Topofil" of Boa Vista-A Photo-Philosophical Montage' in (Latour 1999).
4. Exactly in the same way science cannot exist without material objects like cells, plants, samples, pipes, tubes, shelves, classifiers, diagrams, sheets of figures, and papers. Hennion (2015) underlines how science and technology studies and sociology of culture may mutually benefit each other. Like the production of cultural products, scientific knowledge is a construction process. The work of Latour and colleagues has demonstrated how material objects are part of the process of building facts showing how trails and experiments are

translated into inscriptions which makes up the components of the scientific text. A similar approach in sociology of culture gives attention to the sociomaterial entanglement that allows cultural object to emerge (Hennion 2015).

5. As Latour (1999) points out not all the intermediaries are mediators that change the meaning that they carry.
6. It should be noted that this method can be used to trace the components and explain the transformations of the meaning of both in the artwork's creation process as well as its consumption.
7. It is worth noting that Tim Ingold (2013) also grounds his proposal on Deleuze and Guattarian philosophy of becoming.
8. This use of descriptions which carry analytical potential derives from Actor-Network Theory. Indeed, according to Latour there is no difference between description and analysis (Lise 2020). The analysis can be considered a description of relations (Mattozzi 2019).
9. As argued by Paul Allain (2016) the lack of thick descriptions in theatre-making is connected with the difficulties of negotiating (and maintaining) an access to the field (see also Harvie 2010; McAuley 2012).
10. The term 'object yet to arrive' is used by Beaubois (2015) to focus on the tension toward a future object, a thing, while avoiding considering it an image in the mind of the designer.
11. We come from an interest in understanding collective knowledge and learning within work and organizational practices. Our interest here is related to the understanding of elements of professional practices of theatre. Even our choice of a play addressed to children, was made to avoid any possible misunderstanding regarding our focus on the craftsmanship of theatre. We have not written about this specific theatre play because of its importance or to talk about the 'signature' (Melrose 2007) of the playwriter/director, indeed, the practices we describe can be observed in many theatre productions.
12. However, we understand more investigation is needed to fully grasp the relevance of a post-anthropocentric gaze to rehearsal and theatre studies. Nevertheless, we hope our article could offer inspiration to ethnographers working in the field of theatre.
13. It is without saying that not all the matters that are relevant for performance-making will be visible as such in the scene of the performance. We will see examples of mediations that, despite contributing to the development of the scene, they are no longer present in the performance.
14. Other elements we did not take into consideration in this article would be relevant for the Rehearsal Studies. However, we limited our analysis to the ones related to the development of such a scene to account for the role of material and matters in the emergent process of morphogenesis of artwork (Ingold 2013).
15. We made specific choices to exemplify the potential of the non-anthropocentric ethnography approach in contributing to explain the craftsmanship of theatre. Only a small part of the elements we observed were relevant to the development of the scene. As noted by a reviewer, we could have been focused on the characteristics of the space or the layout of the rehearsal room as those elements affect and constrain the activities in the rehearsals. However, in our case the group had the opportunity to use a theatre for the rehearsals, thus, those reflections seem not particularly relevant for the development of such mentioned scene.
16. We agree with one of the reviewers – whom we warmly thank – who suggested that this approach could offer relevant insights on 'how the performers or other creatives make material use of their bodies – or indeed how their bodies are deployed as material per se – in giving expression to identities'. However, we chose to limit our analysis to the elements that clearly contributed to the development of the specific scene (and the development of its meanings). Nevertheless, we deem the potential in explaining how bodies are used to express identities during the rehearsals is huge and it surely deserves further investigations.

17. The choice of Michele exemplifies what has been defined as cross-gender casting – the casting of female actors in male roles or vice versa – that adds new and unexpected meanings to the scene. As Fischer-Lichte (2014) suggested, cross-gender casting is a practice in which the choice of casting unconventional bodies in certain theatrical roles contributes to renegotiate a series of meanings regarding 'masculinity' and 'femininity'.
18. Our analysis resonates with several conceptualizations produced by postdramatic literature. For example, Conkie (2012) notices how 'producing a play the creative practitioners have fixed, by a series of performance choices, the "myriad possibilities" (Hartley 2005: 41) of the text' (Conkie 2012, 413).
19. As the actor Michele is also a skilled cartoonist the group is used to work with drawings and the overhead projector in their plays for children.
20. The lines of the mother and the diligent silence of Alfonsina gives the idea she is complaining with her mother's request.
21. It should be noted that interpreting the images of the embroideries projected onstage as the result of Alfonsina actions (her embroidering onstage) is not a natural process or prescription, rather, it is based on specific conventions (another kind of mediation) developed within the fictional world of theatre.

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