

The Pleasure of Not Finding Things Out: Dramaturging with Boundary Objects

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Abstract. The work of the dramaturg is usually thought of as a practice of helping a director or ensemble to reconcile, refine, and consolidate ideas into a coherent scenic whole. However, in the work of devising dance and theatre, by contrast, neither highly specified task distribution nor acute communicative coordination are necessarily required or even desired. Instead, as in the dramaturgical practice of choreographer William Forsythe and his ensemble, dramaturgy is a distributed phenomenon in which informational sharing is deprioritized in favor of an opening the work of devising to flexibility and change. In this talk, I evoke Star and Griesemer's concept of *boundary objects*—things or concepts which, although jointly deployed by members of a community, are utilized differently by different participants – to describe how The Forsythe Company's dramaturgy, rather than involving an informational "pooling" typically associated with ensemble dramaturgical practice, instead entails a radical and verbally reticent spreading of concepts that unsettles the practice of dramaturgy, while simultaneously calling the dramaturg's function into question. My analysis also reveals how Forsythe's ensemble's practice exemplifies a reversal of the trajectory towards informational coherence that typifies problem-solving, and in doing so, highlights and critiques key aspects of devising and improvisational work in theatre.