



Critical Response Process

A valuable tool for developing work-in-progress

As a recurring tool, the New:Aud network has used 'Critical Response Process' in the ensembles' workshops on audience development. Critical Response Process has been used to discuss, give feedback on and develop the concert projects of the network's ensembles, and it has proved to be a very valuable tool for facilitating a qualified discussion on artistic work and project development.

Critical Response Process was brought to the New:Aud project by one of the ensembles in the network, the London Sinfonietta, who has worked closely together with the American choreographer Liz Lerman, who developed the method. London Sinfonietta has adapted Critical Response Process to both the organisational and the artistic development and practise of the ensemble.

ABOUT CRITICAL RESPONSE PROCESS

Liz Lerman developed the Process through her work as a choreographer in dance, wanting to find a way of discussing her artistic work in the making and getting useful feedback from audiences and artists involved, in order to increase her work and develop it even further. She describes Critical Response Process like this:

'Critical Response Process is a widely recognized method that nurtures the development of artistic works-in-progress through a four-step, facilitated dialogue between artists, peers, and audiences. In use for over 20 years, art makers, educators, and administrators at theatre companies, dance departments, orchestras, museums and more have embraced the Process. The Process has deepened dialogue between artists and audiences; it has enhanced learning between teachers and students. By extension it has proven valuable for all kinds of creative endeavours, work situations, and collaborative relationships within and beyond the arts, from kindergartens to corporations.'

www.danceexchange.org

THE ROLES

When taking part in a Critical Response Process you can take one of the three following roles;

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- **Being an artist or organizer** who offers a work-in-progress for review and feels prepared to question that work in a dialogue with other people.
- **Being part of a group of responders** — committed to the artist's or organizer's intent to make an excellent work / project — who engage in the dialogue with the artist / organizer.
- **Being the facilitator** who initiates each step, keeps the process on track, and works to help the artist / organizer and responders use the process to frame useful questions and responses.

THE PROCESS

The Critical Response Process takes place after a presentation of an artistic work or project. The work or project presented can be short or long, large or small, and at any stage in its development. Everyone involved in the conversation should sit in a circle, since it's a useful and democratizing way of starting the conversation.

THE CORE STEPS

- 1. Statements of Meaning:** Responders state what was meaningful, evocative, interesting, exciting, striking in the work they have just witnessed.
- 2. Artist as Questioner:** The artist asks questions about the work. After each question, the responders answer. Responders may express opinions if they are in direct response to the question asked and do not contain suggestions for changes.
- 3. Neutral Questions:** Responders ask neutral questions about the work. The artist responds. Questions are neutral when they do not have an opinion couched in them. For example, if you are discussing the lighting of a scene, "Why was it so dark?" is not a neutral question. "What ideas guided your choices about lighting?" is. A good way to ask neutral questions is to start your question with 'How' or 'What'.
- 4. Opinion Time:** Responders state opinions, subject to permission from the artist. The usual form is "I have an opinion about _____, would you like to hear it?" The artist has the option to say no.