

# Introduction

**Scaffolding** was born out of a keen interest in how language works – how both the form and content of the text work together and in opposition to create meaning. And while already-created scripts are most commonly the texts-of-choice for actors and directors, there's a vast body of words, words, words out there just begging to be made into performances, events, happenings, pop-ups, readings, whatever. When theatre people ask, "where are all the new plays?" – well, look around. On the shelves, yes, but also everywhere else.

**Scaffolding** is a way of working with unconventional texts -- primary and secondary source documents of all kinds -- that draws on techniques, skills, and perspectives from not only what would be considered traditional theatre practices but also from the visual arts (collage and assemblage) and qualitative research methods (phenomenology, heuristics, and cast study).

At times, **Scaffolding** looks like adaptation; at others, a method of devising. It's really just one approach, one *way in* to discovering (through iterative questioning), constructing (through the creative process), and embodying (through performance) themes and meanings in textual data. Poems, narratives, histories, interviews, diaries, blogs, public records, newspapers, surveys -- whatever has been written and said about **what it's like to be human. The essential nature of the "lived experience" of being human.**

This **Casebook** is an evolving document in the same way that **Scaffolding** is an evolving practice. What is it, what's its "provenance" and influences, how did it come about, what's it good for, who might use it, and of course – *how* to use it? How to borrow bits and pieces from the **Scaffolding** tool bag to solve knotty playmaking problems?

## **Scaffolding**

blends the aesthetic **muscularity** and technical **discipline** of classical theatre with the **intellectual** and **imaginative freedom** of an emerging art form.

# An Inquiry Process

## The qualitative lens

As a counterweight to the cause-and-effect thinking of quantitative methods, seeking understanding of the multiple meanings of a phenomenon through experiential accounts is the foundation of qualitative processes.

**Qualitative research investigates the "qualities" – the "what kinds" – of human experiences as expressed by and described in languaged and non-languaged texts.**

Rather than counting the number of people having certain experiences – although that's not off-limits in **Scaffolding!** – or comparing and relating features of those experiences to discover *why* something came about, qualitative methods and procedures "**provide evidence for the experience**" (emphasis added, Polkinghorne, 2005, p. 138).

More specifically, qualitative research notices the particulars of an experience, makes them visible, makes them **conspicuous**.

When you make a discovery, when you get to where things are popping together with the text, with the script itself, you have to go back to the words. It's not, "I'm feeling this so I'm going to add a howl or a line or whatever," but it's what can be found in the text. You have to have a key that guides your choices. Some evidence. **Some authentic evidence.** – Actor

Although **Scaffolding** strategies and activities can be used as learning experiences in a classroom or rehearsal hall, they are first and foremost tasks and tools that **lead to** a performative event. They can inform the processing of texts or artifacts and settings that are "read" as texts, but will remain merely interesting demonstrations of technique unless linked with **making a play**.

## An Inquiry Process

# Other ways of knowing

**Scaffolding** strategies are borrowed from two qualitative traditions, **phenomenology** and **heuristics**, with structural components drawn from **case study** methodologies. Although single-perspective proponents might object to my selective use of closely held and valued assumptions, each approach opens a unique window on an experience not otherwise available. This work is:

- **Phenomenological**, in that it focuses on distilling lived experiences, revealing and describing underlying themes, structures, and meanings.
- **Heuristic**, in that it integrates the accounts and reflections of the people having the most concentrated and intense forms of an experience, along with those of the artist-scholar. The task of the artist is to "widely and deeply explore the phenomenon . . . [through] . . . self-dialogues, stories, poems, artwork, journals and diaries, and other personal documents that *depict* the experience" (Moustakas, 1990, p. 18).
- **A case study**, in that it is situated within a "bounded system" (Creswell, 1998, p. 63), explicated using nested cases in which the experience has been manifested.