

## FAST AND SLOW, THEATRE AND ARCHITECTURE

Time is one of the essential differences between theatre and architecture processes. Theatre moves very quickly, making it difficult for the architect to pin down the organisation's needs at any given moment.

Conversely, for people working in theatre it can feel like architecture is a slow-moving beast which takes months to respond to circumstances. Tompkins illustrated the difference with a reference to a Star Trek episode in which half the crew are infected with a virus that makes them move very slowly through time and the other half very quickly. To the quick half it appears that the slow half are not moving at all, whereas to the slow half those moving quickly have become a blur. Tompkins sees himself standing in the gap between theatre and architecture, using all of his strength to pull the two together.

That is quite a standard impression of the relationship between theatre and architecture, however the scratch process reverses the view. It is based on the assumption that it takes time to make good work. That does not mean the artist perfects one piece of work very slowly, it proposes that a piece of work will go through a number of live prototypes before reaching its final form. It actually means that the piece will be shared with a live audience much more quickly than in a traditional theatre process, which would see the company spending four to six weeks rehearsing before giving a public performance. In scratch the artist might do a week of research and development before testing in front of a live audience to get feedback. However as a whole arc, the piece will develop much more slowly.

Punchdrunk's development is an example of this: a ten minute piece in a festival, a second short piece followed by a youth theatre project. The key is that ideas keep resurfacing, keep circulating and coming up for discussion, working their way into scratch nights or youth theatre projects. Projects would evolve organically through this continuous loop of developing, sharing, feedback and change.

When it came to working with an architect, Battersea Arts Centre did not want Haworth Tompkins to have a few design meetings, disappear and then return with a full set of plans. They would never commission a theatre piece like that, so why change their process for architecture? They were only prepared to invest a significant amount of time and money into *The Masque of the Red Death* because Punchdrunk had already made three shows at Battersea Arts Centre. They had a relationship with the company and the company had a relationship with the building. Battersea Arts Centre were looking for an architect prepared to commit to a long-term relationship with the building to develop ideas collaboratively and slowly.