

# Art-Based Inquiry as a Method in Creating Artistic Performances Based on Historical Narratives



Randi Margrethe Eidsaa



## 1 Prelude

Estrella and Forinash (2007) emphasize that narrative inquiry and art-based approaches to research offer an alternative approach to dominant discourses within theory and research (p. 376). In the projects referred to in this article, the application

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R. M. Eidsaa (✉)

Faculty of Music, University of Agder, Kristiansand, Norway

e-mail: [randi.m.eidsaa@uia.no](mailto:randi.m.eidsaa@uia.no)

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207



**Fig. 1** *The Flight from Trakehnen* presented on 15 November, 2013

of art-based research and narrative inquiry was essential to explore the themes “human courage” and “hope.” The production *The Flight from Trakehnen* was selected among five interdisciplinary creative artistic collaborations that were designed and carried out as Art in Context projects at the University of Agder in Kristiansand, Norway. The projects were created as either artistic research concepts or were included as examples in subjects, such as concert production and music didactics. Art in Context (Norwegian: Kunst i kontekst) is a network for research, project development, and artistic performances (Fig. 1).<sup>1</sup>

## 1.1 Background

My interest in working with narratives related to interdisciplinary artistic performances has been developed as a result of teaching music in both lower secondary school, and later in higher music education. Taking a great interest in history, I have found it meaningful to explore documentary events through artistic expressions, in particular through collaborative projects with either school children or with mixed ensembles including participant groups such as children, music students, amateur adults, or professional and semi-professional performers (Fig. 2).

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.uia.no/senter-og-nettverk/kunst-i-kontekst-kik>



**Fig. 2** Exploring memorable events and places through artistic performances

In her article, “Learning in and through musical performance,” O’Neill (2011) notes that teachers can create “momentary spaces for interaction” through music performance. The spaces, which she calls “contact zones” are opportunities for the learners to interact with people, objects, and events which may result in new knowledge and personal change. Through aesthetic experiences, new meanings may be constructed (O’Neill 2011, p. 183). In this article, *The Flight from Trakehnen* is explored as a result of multi-narrative approaches (Estrella & Forinash 2007) and art-based research. Narrative elements are transformed into expressions which become “contact zones” or “spaces for interaction” between all involved, but also between each participant as “subject” and the aesthetic expressions as “objects” (Nielsen 2006).

## 1.2 Educational Context

Due to limited space, the educational context and the research context will only be briefly described. *The Flight from Trakehnen* was initiated as a project connected to the theme “art and conflict.” The main intention was to investigate how music ensembles can create artistic presentations which mirror different kinds of conflicts and even point towards elements that can give psychological or emotional comfort without being naïve or sentimental. However, after having explored documentary sources, I found that a presentation of the East Prussian families’ flight from

Trakehnen demanded not only music and narration but multi-media expressions such as photos, video clips, audio, dance, and even horseback riders. For this reason, the equestrian sport establishment was an important partner in the project. The ensemble included two major participant groups, dancers and riders as well as a few additional performers. The choreographer chose pupils from one of her dance specialization classes at an upper secondary school, and she included preparatory work for the performance in the syllabus for a limited period. A group of eight riders collaborated to create horse quadrille patterns and various dressage freestyle movements in the show arena. The riders took part in the project since it was included in the venue's activity program. Also, a group of parents participated as "backstage actors" while two music students and a professional flautist performed selected pieces of music. The presentations were documented by audio, video, production notes, and photos (Fig. 3).

The main intention of creating the performance was to work didactically and aesthetically with narratives that provide historical insight and at the same time promote essential human values, in these cases courage and hope. Since I am a teacher, I continuously search for relevant and exciting methods for students to apply in their classrooms or ensembles.



**Fig. 3** *The Flight from Trakehnen* at Kilden Center of Performing Art, 21 November, 2016

### 1.3 *Art-Based Inquiry and Educational Research*

In addition to highlighting narrative accounts through the production of *The Flight from Trakehnen*, this chapter is an example of a narrative that moves beyond words through the addition of art-based media examples and artistic expressions which serve as means in the production process. Therefore, the present study is undoubtedly representative of art-based research in education as well as art-based inquiry.

In her article, “How can research with the arts as methodological practice be given frames and momentum through understanding aesthesis as its mandate,” the Norwegian professor of dance, Østern (2017), underlines that art-based research often takes its point of departure in the artist’s or art educator’s own experience and practice. There is a personal affiliation with and an insider’s perspective as “oriented towards meaning, interpretation, understanding and change” and refers to “the aspects of form, meaning, nearness, body, context, and ethics as methodological propellers” (Østern 2017, p. 7). Østern claims that art-based research challenges the verbal linguistic dominance of traditional research investigations since their methods point to alternative experiences for recognition, experience, transformation, learning, knowledge production, and understanding.

Barone and Eisner (2012) define art-based inquiry or art-based educational research as

... the exploration of the inquiry approaches that are in varying degrees and ways, artistic in character ... and engaged in for a purpose often associated with artistic activity and art-based research, which is meant to enhance perspectives pertaining to certain human activities. (p. 95)

To clarify the term, they point to the fact that art-based research is defined by “the presence of certain aesthetic qualities or design elements that infuse the inquiry process and the research ‘text’” (p. 95). The two authors agree that such elements are evident in all research activity, however; the more these elements occur, the more the research may be characterized as “art-based.” Eisner and Barone (2006) underline that art-based research is a method for exploring all kinds of research objects linguistic in character, but also take nonlinguistic art into account. In the project referred to in this article, the research objects are verbal texts such as life stories, eyewitnesses’ narratives, documentary descriptions, as well as paintings, videos, and photos. Moreover, as the creative process unfolds, new research objects emerge, such as movements, objects, music, color, and stage light.

### 1.4 *Trauma Fiction*

In her book, *Trauma Fiction*, Whitehead (2004) presents various ways of thinking through the relation between trauma and fiction. She explains that *trauma fiction* is a way of conceptualizing trauma and to move the attention away from *what* is remembered, to *why* it is remembered. It is therefore relevant to ask *why* the exodus



**Fig. 4** The entrance to the museum *historische denkmal*, *Trakehner Gate*

from the large agricultural estate Trakehnen should be remembered. When visiting the small museum in the former village of Trakehnen (today *Yasnaya Polyana* in Nesterovsky District of Kaliningrad), Whitehead's explanation echoed when the museum director emphasized that even if the stories about the East Prussian families' exodus to the West are horrifying, we should not dwell at the past but work towards future peace and international collaboration (personal communication, 2018, July 10). Since the end of the 1940s, the local Russian community has used the former main administration building as a primary school, and for more than 40 years, the area was closed for all people outside the Soviet Union. When the Soviet Union collapsed in the early 1990s, the border was opened, and in 1993 more than 60,000 visitors from Europe came to see the place that had been silenced for such a long time. The non-profit organization *Verain der Freunde und Förderer des ehemaligen Hauptgestüts Trakehnen* now collaborates closely with the Russian community to keep the cultural heritage preserved (Fig. 4).<sup>2</sup>

The theme *Listening to Voices Seldom Heard* can also be considered as a practical didactic approach. In the National Curriculum of 2006 the subject *Social Studies* in Year 10, one of the competence-aims is "to create stories about people from different societies in the past and present, and show how their living conditions and values influenced their thoughts and actions" (The Norwegian Directorate for

<sup>2</sup><https://www.trakehner-verband.de/en/verband/jubilaeumsjahr/trakehnen-heute/>

Education and Training 2019, SAF1-03). In this way, *The Flight from Trakehnen* can be interpreted as the voice of a “society in the past” in which the young participants’ investigation of narratives is developed into *trauma fiction* mirroring the complexity of war and armed conflicts through expressions of art.

## 2 The Narratives

The present chapter addresses how the historical account of a group of East-Prussian families’ flight westwards from the place called Trakehnen to former West-Germany was transformed into various narratives and developed into an artistic performance.

### 2.1 *The Historical Context*

Even though the performance of *The Flight from Trakehnen* mirrors documentary events and historical persons, only one participant out of all who were involved as performers had any knowledge about the events from which the narratives were selected. This corresponds with feedback from audiences; few had heard anything about the East Prussian families. Yet, the narratives are highly revered by the descendants of East Prussian refugees and all who are involved in the breeding of Trakehner horses. For more than 50 years the German organization Trakehner Verband has been committed to promoting not only the advancing role of Trakehners in sports but also works to shed light on the humanitarian disaster which took place in the Eastern part of Europe in 1944 and 1945 (Trakehner Verband 2019).

In the following section, I will present *the historical*, *the personal*, and *the production narratives*. The two first levels of narratives are related to historically documented events while the production narrative accounts for the transforming of narratives into artistic expressions, a process that can be described as a *creative, analytic practice* (Roulston 2017).

### 2.2 *The Historical Narrative*

*The Flight from Trakehnen* refers to the exodus of a large group of German farmers with their families, livestock and horses from East Prussia, a German enclave close to the borders of Lithuania, Poland and Russia, to former West-Germany in January 1945. They were forced to evacuate their homes at the estate Trakehnen, a rural settlement and a stud farm for the Prussian horse, the Trakehner. In October 1944, the Russian Red Army threatened to destroy the village, and in January 1945 Hitler gave the order to evacuate (Fig. 5).



**Fig. 5** Stage adaption of historical events: *The Red Army March*

The farmers left Trakehnen, determined to save their valuable horses. The following narrative is an excerpt from Trakehners UK, a British establishment who work for preserving this breed of horses (Trakehners UK, 2019, The History of the Trakehner):

What followed was a horror story that went down in history as “The Trek.” Hitching their precious breeding stock to wagons laden with personal possessions and all the feed they could carry, these proud East Prussians fled. They were mostly women, children and elderly people and they were leaving their whole lives, bringing along only what their wagons could hold. It was the dead of winter. Snow was deep on the ground, and the broodmares were heavy with foal. Many horses were left behind to be claimed by the advancing Soviets, and many were lost or let loose along the way to be eventually taken in by the conquering troops or to die.

The East Prussians headed west, literally running for their lives...For two and a half months and 600 miles, the nightmare continued, while Soviet troops constantly pursued the refugees. At one time, it looked like the East Prussians had reached the end. The Soviets had them surrounded on the shores of the frozen Baltic Sea. The only escape was across the treacherous expanse of ice, so across they went – at times knee deep in water covering the ice – galloping to stay ahead of the ice breaking behind them. If any dared to stop or attempt to dodge the fire of the Russian planes overhead, they were doomed to sink helplessly into the freezing water. Many did not make it across.

At last the survivors limped into West Germany, the once proud and beautiful 800 horses reduced to less than 100 pitiful skeletons, carrying wounds from shrapnel. Only the hardiest had survived. The next decade was spent re-establishing the breed in the West. In October 1947, the West German Association of Breeders and Friends of the Warmblood Horse of Trakehner Origin, today is known as the “Trakehner Verband” was formed.





**Fig. 6** Stage adaption of historical events: *The Evacuation*

The documentary narrative had great potential for delineating themes related to interpersonal topics, such as challenging the dichotomy “the Germans against the Allied.” The performance of *The Flight from Trakehnen* sheds light on one of the strongly documented occasions in which an enemy was brutally attacking the Germans. The East Prussian group was threatened both by the Russian Army and Hitler’s Wehrmacht. When the Russian Army marched across the area the once lively and vibrant village with extensive agriculture, craftsmen’s workshops, a hospital, and a school, was silenced (Fig. 6).

More than 1000 people worked in Trakehnen at this time, and they were forced to leave the premises. For the next two decades, the place was a wasteland (Terra Mater Factual Studios, Entertainment & Lifestyle). The cacophony of children’s voices, animal sounds, and farming activities came to a halt at the day of evacuation in January 1945. To imagine the tragic events occurring this day is impossible, however during the production of *The Flight from Trakehnen* the adult participators discussed in what ways the evacuation from the estate could be mentioned without using over-sentimental artistic expressions. We agreed on creating brief fictional mother-child dialogues, which worked out satisfyingly in the performance. For example, the dramatic events were mirrored in an anxious child’s questions, and a mother’s brief, rational answers discretely keeping back brutal facts. The mother-child dialogues became imaginative voices from Trakehnen. In this way, the audience listened to “voices seldom heard.”

Another important theme has to do with the relationship between the Prussian farmers and their animals. The farmers were professionals in the breeding and training of horses, and they risked their lives to save the Trakehner breed. After the refu-



**Fig. 7** Stage adaption of historical events: *Performers moving in silence*

gees reached former West Germany in 1945, the families and horses were scattered all over the country. What happened from that point was that German breeders became interested in the Trakehner horses that had survived the Trek. In the following years, dedicated people started to relocate, collect, and catalogue the remaining Trakehners in Germany. They had the vision that the Trakehners that had survived such a dramatic flight, once again should be the elegant and robust sport horses that made them famous (Fig. 7).<sup>3</sup>

The historical sources describing the trek are multiple. The narrative above can be supplied by narratives published in documentary novels, such as Goodall's (1973) *The Flight of The East Prussian Horses*, and Clough's (2009) *The Flight Across the Ice: The Escape of The East Prussian Horse*. There are several Youtube presentations including movie sequences, photos, and eyewitness narratives, which make it easy to understand the horror of this utterly dark event in European history.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>3</sup>The process to localize and register the horses from East-Prussia is described by Dr. Fritz Schilke (1992) in his book *Trakehner Pferde Einst und Jetzt*.

<sup>4</sup>Examples: Ostpreussische Rundfunk (2011) *The Assault on East Prussia*, germancontroversial (2010) *German 45 – The other story – Part 1 East Prussia 1* and Part 2 *East Prussia 2*.

### 2.3 *The Personal Narrative*

During a visit to a friend's home in 2012, I was placed at the dining table next to the German violinist Günter Voss, who had recently retired from his work in the local symphony orchestra. During the meal, he told a story about his father who was a soldier during the Second World War. Since he knew that my family was involved in equestrian sports, he asked if I knew anything about the German horse Trakehner, a breed that was brought into former West-Germany by East Prussian families who had fled from a place called Trakehnen. Because I did not know anything about the historical events to which he referred, even if I was familiar with the horse breed Trakehner, he told me his father's story:

This is the story of the Trakehner horse and my father Günter Eugen Voss, who died in 1987 in Lower Saxony, Germany... As you have heard, in October 1944, the Trakehnen Estate called "the historic horse paradise," ended when The Red Army advanced and forced horses and people to flee. Therefore, the story of the Trakehner horse is closely linked to the German Empire's fall at the end of World War II. We know some of the narratives of those who survived the escape. I can tell you about the journalist and writer Marion, Countess of Dönhoff who, at the age of 36 fled with her favorite stallion Alarich more than 3000 km from the family castle Friedrichstein at Königsberg and right up to Westphalia. But there are several stories, one of them is about my father.

In 1941 my father came to East Prussia as a recruiter, to the school Ordensborgen Falkenburg. The school, which trained military leaders of the German Wehrmacht, was widely known for an excellent equestrian program... My father told us about the best horse they had in the cavalry, the Trakehners. They were highly respected and considered as the best horse breed... My father Günter senior was placed in an artillery regiment with six Trakehners pulling a 12-millimetre Haubitze gun. He quickly noticed the horse Wotan... Wotan and my father became a well-known duo... Transport of goods through the marshlands in the rainy Daugavadelta, south of Riga in the autumn of 1944, had been unthinkable without Wotan's motive and leader instinct ... Horses that participated in the battle during the war often lost their hearing due to huge detonations. This was near-fatal for Wotan. He was unable to locate a coming grenade strike and was severely wounded by a Stalin grenade. Thanks to my father's patience and the well-proven weapon oil Ballistol the horse survived. That is how my dad came to save the Trakehner horse Wotan in 1945 (Fig. 8).

After I had heard his story, I searched for information about people, places, and historical events in the former East Prussia. The study also revealed a chain of historical events dating back to 1732, when the Trakehner village was established by Emperor Frederick Wilhelm 2nd. I found stories about happy children and schools, innovation in agriculture, education in veterinary medicine, and successes with the breeding of livestock and horses in the village, which provided a fascinating background to the dramatic and tragic stories about the flight. One famous documentary source is *Frühling in Trakehnen, Das Paradies des Pferdes* (Prager 1936), a thirteen-minute-long video produced in 1936 which beautifully presents daily life in the rural village. An additional source for my investigation was *Eine Reise Nach Trakehnen. Werner Menzendorf im Paradies des Pferdes* by Lars Gehrman (2009), the present chairman of Der Trakehner Verband.



**Fig. 8** The German violinist Günter Voss

## 2.4 *The Production Narrative*

The personal narrative shared by the violinist became the starting point for *The History of the Trakehners*, which was presented to an audience one year later with the violinist as a performer in the arena. The narrative is developed based on notes taken during the first stage of the production process. The documentary resources revealed great potential for delineating themes related to personal, interpersonal, and relational questions as well as containing details, which are excellent starting points for creative work. Music, movements, colors, objects, audio, photos, video clips on a widescreen, and equestrian presentations were chosen as aesthetic expressions.

I showed the riders' ensemble some of the most famous photos from "The Trek." One photo shows a row of people marching side by side in a snowy landscape, with horse-drawn carriages and their livestock included. There is another photo from the crossing of the frozen Baltic seashore, with a left carriage and a dead horse. One of the girls argued that narratives from Trakehnen could not be used as a point of departure for an artistic presentation since this was going to be a family performance and "we should not make the audiences cry all afternoon." Another rider suggested that the ensemble did not need to go into details. She suggested the use of costumes in different colors to illustrate the various conditions of war, ice, death, spring, and offered to design and make four dresses. A group of riders suggested how various movements in the arena, such as horse quadrillas, riding in pairs, long



**Fig. 9** Unpretentious use of objects: Dancers with silk scarves symbolizing war

rows, circles or diagonals could visualize the flight of the Trakehners. We also decided to add stage lights to prepare for a rapid change of atmosphere and moods. After a couple of meetings, the riders and parents were greatly motivated to present the story. Parents would join in as “extras” to create an image of multiple individuals moving.

The choreographer found the historical narrative interesting, and the dark dimensions did not worry her at all. She explained that dancers, in general, are familiar with sharing strong emotions through movements. She suggested the use of various artefacts to enhance the audience’s visualization of the performance content. We ended up using blankets around the performers’ shoulders when they marched across the arena in lines to act as refugees. Four men carried red flags to symbolise The Red Army. The dancers waved with red silk scarves when the narrator referred to war, and in the final scene, a rider on a white horse appeared in the arena. She was dressed in a white dress and carried a white flag. The use of objects was unpretentious and could even be perceived as naïve. However, the project took place in an educational, amateur setting and we had no ambitions to impress the audience with an appearance of greater importance than the ensemble possessed (Fig. 9).

Excerpts from the historical narratives were re-written into dialogues, poems, the narrator’s manuscript, and brief fictional stories. All verbal texts were pre-recorded



**Fig. 10** Music, narration, drama and dance mirrored the East Prussian exodus

and presented in parallel with the music and historical photos in a video montage shown on a widescreen. Recorded music was used to make our presentation not too technically complicated, and to keep the arena safe for the riders. In a few of the musical pieces, the violinist and a flautist played in parallel with the recorded music.

**The Music** The music was carefully chosen to correspond with the moods or atmosphere I found appropriate for each sequence of *The Flight from Trakehnen*. To avoid the performance from being too explicit or naïve, the musical expressions were intended on the one hand to connect audiences to the narrative, and on the other hand to enhance the spectators' ability to keep their involvement on a sensible and critical-distance level. The first part of the performance was primarily informative, including cheerful anecdotes about the king who had established the Trakehnen Estate in the 1730s. The dancers and a group of pony riders were in the arena in various sequences. John William's *Main Theme for E.T.* and one movement from the ballet suite *The Seasons* by the Russian composer Alexander Glazunov (1865–1936) were selected. In addition, the dancers used an excerpt from *Petrushka*, a ballet suite by Igor Stravinsky (1882–1971), and the violinist played an excerpt from Rimsky-Korsakov's suite *Scheherazade* in the arena, duplicating his own recording.

The second part of the performance portrayed the exodus. From a musicologist's point of view, the function of the music in this section was to reflect darkness, without getting too explicit. The American composer Ned Rorem's (b.1923) pieces *Vesper. Book of Hours* and *Four Prayers for Solo Flute and Piano* were excellent as aesthetic markers of the dark events, as the music is dissonant and modernistic, even

aggressive in some passages. In the finale, the atmosphere was to slightly change into a mood of optimism and hope for the future. For this part of the performance, the Rorem piece “Last Prayer” was used, since the movement includes the contrasting motifs of the lyrical and the peaceful (Fig. 10).<sup>5</sup>

### 3 Narrative Inquiry and Art-Based Research: Listening to Voices Seldom Heard

A researcher who uses narrative inquiry listens “to many voices within each narrative” by listening to or reading through the narratives several times to explore the meaning (Estrella and Forinash 2007, p. 379). This perspective corresponds with art-based research. However, when working with artistic concepts, the approach is often twofold. The “text” or narrative (songs or instrumental pieces, poems, photos, video clips, etc.) must be studied again and again, as new aesthetic expressions constantly emerge from the study. The objects or expressions will be developed through further reflections and rehearsals, and thus become “new narratives.” According to Estrella and Forinash (2007), there is a great potential in using art as a research tool, since we can “rely on the arts in every step of the research process to bring us unique and sometimes profound awareness and perspectives” (p. 380).

In the process of creating *The Flight from Trakehnen*, the use of music, colors, stage lights, movements, objects, poems, and equestrian presence added new dimensions to the ensemble’s interpretation of the historical narratives. In this way, the art-based approach did not only result in the production of new artifacts for an upcoming performance but also research outcomes in the process, as all participants improved their knowledge and understanding of the sorrowful consequences of war and political conflicts (Fig. 11).

Many questions related to the use of multi-narrative perspectives on research and artistic production could have been discussed in this article. I have chosen to focus on how we as educators can use art-based and narrative inquiry-oriented approaches when presenting documentary and even politically complicated topics to our students and audiences. How do we introduce such projects to our participants? How do we select the correct repertoires? What ethical dilemmas emerge in the process?

An essential question in the initial phase of *The Flight from Trakehnen* was related to what ways aesthetic expressions and objects could be applied to present a documentary event related to serious armed conflict without appearing naïve. Can it be recommended to approach such a complex task without claiming to have expert knowledge in politics and history? The answer must be that in general, this *is* possible if the teacher or ensemble leader is conscious of his or her limited knowledge and keeps the practical part of the process within a framework possible to organize sensibly. Also, if he or she succeeds in choosing suitable narratives as “raw material”

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<sup>5</sup><http://www.nedrorem.net/index1.html>



**Fig. 11** Horse and rider in the final part of the performance

and develop this in a proper artistic way adapted to the participant groups, then this approach is of great value. In the collection of narratives for the performance *The Flight from Trakehnen*, I searched actively for narratives with the potentiality for further aesthetic and artistic exploration.

## 4 Conclusion

*The Flight from Trakehnen* exemplifies how narratives from the silenced or forgotten voices of those persons involved in “The Great Trek” inspired the creation of aesthetic expressions organized into a new narrative account, an artistic perfor-



mance. The magic which was created in the performance by using aesthetic expressions could never have been achieved by reading documentary texts. After having created three slightly different versions of the artistic performance *The Flight of Trakehnen*, I turned to additional sources that gave me an even broader perspective on the dramatic evacuation from East Prussia by the end of World War II. In 2013, the American author Marina Gottlieb Sarles, daughter of East Prussian parents who immigrated to The Bahamas, published the novel *The Last Daughter of Prussia*. In the *Prologue* she writes:

Often called “The Great Trek”, the evacuation of East Prussia claimed the lives of nearly half a million women, children and men who were attempting to escape The Red Army as it advanced on Berlin. But underneath cold statistics, what really happened during the harsh East Prussian Winter of 1944–1945? Whose stories were silenced? For though “The Great Trek” remains one of the largest mass evacuations ever recorded, it is rarely discussed... (Sarles 2013, p. 3)

Sarles’ grandparents were survivors from Trakehnen, and her novel is based on their eyewitness descriptions. According to the author, her grandmother urged her to tell the story “so that people remember and have compassion for anyone killed in hatred, prejudice and war” (2013, p. 4). Sarles conceptualized the East Prussian trauma in a fictional text.

The documentary film, *The Assault on East Prussia* presents narratives from individuals who survived the attacks on East Prussia in 1944 and 1945. The reporter’s final remark summarizes the elderly narrators’ reflection about the past: “On the beaches of East Prussia, all traces of the war have long since been wiped away. However, the survivors’ memories have not. But the hate is gone. Hope remains” (Ostpreussischer Rundfunk 2011, 47:27). The survivor Michael Wieck who was 16 years old in 1944 and later became a violinist, concludes the film by saying: “What does music mean? If you like it, it means the source of strength to keep on living” (op.cit., 49:00).

*The Flight from Trakehnen* was my attempt to share the tragic story about the East Prussians’ journey towards former West-Germany in 1945. Music, dance, colors, equestrian sport, and multi-media presentations were used to reflect voices from the past. It would be naïve to claim that our involvement in hands-on aesthetic practices can resolve conflicts or heal wounds. However, through taking part in creative activities or being a member of an audience, we connect with our inner self. Giert Biesta, Belgian professor of Pedagogy, known for his research into art and the role of the arts in society, uses the term dialogue to describe the function of art in society: “Art, in its different manifestations, is an ongoing attempt at figuring out, quite literally, what it means to be in dialogue with the world” (Biesta 2017, p. 38). *The Flight from Trakehnen* was my attempt to be in dialogue with a traumatic chapter in history through an artistic reflection on voices seldom heard (Fig. 12).



**Fig. 12** Abandoned stable at former Main Stud Trakehnen, Yasnaya Polyana (10 July, 2018)

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