



CONFLUENCES 6
PHYSICALITY AND PERFORMANCE

Hosted by the UCT School of Dance
Director – Gerard Samuel

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Confluences 6

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Dear Delegates

Welcome to *Confluences 6*!

When I first began preparations in 2010 for this celebrated UCT conference dedicated to Dance, South Africa was in the feverish grip of the thrilling FIFA Soccer World Cup. There was much talk about peak performances, cutting edge training methods and professional athletic bodies.

Confluences 6 provides an ideal platform for a wealth of dance-related conversations and in 2011 one can examine care, absence and desire as related sub-themes of *Physicality and Performance*. I trust that over the next three days you will find a diverse array of academic papers, workshops and performances to support and provoke further debate. As practitioners, theorists and even bystanders of Dance we have, in this opportune moment, a chance to re-question tried and tested techniques in order to nourish not only ourselves, but the many countries from which we stem.

I extend a warm welcome to all delegates (especially those that have traversed the *kala pani* (dark waters), students, the media and the dance interested public at large. I urge you to engage with much abandon with one another and with the staff at the UCT School of Dance as we cultivate visionary dance.

My sincere thanks goes to the University of Cape Town and to Distell who continue to support the School of Dance in this important endeavour.

Our launch of the *South African Dance Journal* at this time is no coincidence: it is a natural development from our proud record of six international dance conferences hosted by the UCT School of Dance. Its purpose is to serve especially the needs of African dance practitioners and to share expertise with the international dance community. My heartiest congratulations to the contributing authors and the entire team who have made this dream come true. I am confident that the historic first edition will become a treasured resource and collector's item.

Yours sincerely

Gerard M Samuel
Director : School of Dance



Part I – Keynote Speakers

Professor Julia Buckroyd

Psychological Aspect of Dance Training

The vast majority of those who undertake formal dance training will never earn their living through dancing. For most of them the principal experience of dance will be the dance class. For that reason dance training can and should never be merely a means to an end. This paper addresses three elements in the meta-purpose of dance training.

- *Training as the facilitation of identity development and self-esteem*
- *Training as the means to good body esteem*
- *Training in the use of dance as a powerful communicative art*

The paper will discuss the need for these themes to be incorporated in training and will illustrate the problems created when they are absent and the advantages to the person and the dancer when they are present.

Psychological Aspects of Dance Training

Professor Julia Buckroyd,

University of Hertfordshire

Introduction

What are we trying to do when we begin the process of dance training? In this paper I want to suggest that the conventional account of dance training as the means by which the traditions and conventions of dance, as it has developed over maybe the past hundred years, are transmitted to the next generation, is no longer adequate. I want to propose that we need to articulate a more ambitious set of values and purposes for dance training, and that a failure or reluctance to do so is damaging, not only to trainee dancers, but to dance.

I want to address three areas:

- Dance training as the agent of the development of the dancer's identity and self-esteem
- Dance training as the agent of the development of the dancer's body esteem
- Dance as a communicative art and dance training as the development of an empowered body-voice

But let me begin by sketching out a little of my concern about the current state of affairs for professional dancers. It is interesting how often those who are at the sharp end of any activity, the ones without whom it simply could not take place, are the ones whose status and conditions of work have often been the worst. This seems to be true from coalminers to ballet dancers. Those who organize, manage, direct and administer them are often treated much better. This is generally the case in the dance world. Conditions of work, terms of employment and rates of pay for professional dancers are generally poor or even exploitive.

My examples come mostly from the UK, but as I understand it, conditions for dancers are similar or worse nearly everywhere.

- I am a trustee of the Royal Ballet Benevolent Fund, a charity which, despite its name, exists to support professional dancers of all kinds who have fallen on hard times. We have a steady flow of dancers in their prime who have been injured during the run of a production. The companies have hired them on a project basis; there is usually no provision for injury, often not even for physiotherapy and so when a dancer is injured, she loses her job. In what other trade or profession would industrial injury result in immediate job loss? The dancer then has no income and no means of making one. These dancers come to us destitute. The terms of their employment often disqualify them from all but emergency state support.
- Dance UK, an activist organization, campaigns for better conditions for dancers. One of its campaigns has been to try and ensure that dance venues provide suitable floors for dance (<http://www.danceuk.org/healthier-dancer-programme/healthier-dancer-programme-campaigns>) Although I am happy that there is a pressure group attempting to achieve this end, I am also astounded that in the 21st century it is still necessary to campaign for dance floors that will not hurt dancers.

How is it that dancers, in the 21st century, in developed economies, are still putting up with conditions like these? Part of the answer is the way dance is funded. With some commercial exceptions, it is mostly funded by government and charitable grants. In the UK government money is shared out by the Arts Council and the Arts Council won't fund the proper care of dancers while project funding also ensures ongoing insecurity of employment.

It doesn't have to be like this. Some countries do better. The Nordic countries do it differently and so, at least until recently did the countries of former Yugoslavia and the former Soviet bloc countries. I remember speaking to some Hungarian dancers who told me that in their country professional dancers were honoured and respected. In Slovenia in the former Yugoslavia, dancers were given subsidized housing as an indication of the state's respect for artists. Capitalism has put paid to that. Professional dance, with rare exceptions, is a minority taste. It doesn't televise particularly well and does not make large amounts of money for anyone. People who

disagree with me point to shows like 'Strictly Come Dancing'. Look, they say, dance is flourishing and has a huge audience. Call me old-fashioned, but I don't enjoy the prospect of dance being used as a kind of spectacle where the humiliation of the losers is the attraction. Dance in my view is a communicative art; watching celebrities go through an intensive training to learn to rhumba, doesn't give me a lot.

But I think there is more to the poor conditions under which many dancers operate than the brutal simplicities of capitalism. How is it, for example, that Equity, the Union for dancers in the UK, has failed to secure good conditions for them when they have been able to do much better for musicians? Perhaps it is significant that the Wikipedia entry on Equity ([http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Equity_\(trade_union\)](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Equity_(trade_union))) does not even mention dancers.

Dancers are treated badly because they have been taught to ignore and neglect pain (Aalten, 2007); to eat badly in pursuit of thinness; to believe that it is a privilege to dance for a living for which they should be grateful, whatever the conditions. Dancers in the developed world know that far from being a valuable elite, they are an underclass, readily replaceable and without a voice. So it's not surprising that these elite athletes and artists have eating disorders (Hoek, 2001) and self harm and that they smoke in greater numbers than the general population. In the Healthier Dancer survey carried out for Dance UK, 36% of dancers admitted to smoking (Brinson and Dick 1996, Munasinghe and Sichertman 2005); the current rate in the general population is 20%. They have very high rates of injury; Brinson and Dick (1996) reported 83% over a period of 12 months; Thomas and Tarr (2009) reported a 90% prevalence of injury at some time and that injury rates do not seem to be declining. Their professional lives are very short – a shorter time than they have usually spent training.

And what is the common denominator for dancers? Their dance training. These are the years when they can learn to neglect and ignore their own welfare and best interests; or it can be the time when they learn to acknowledge and respect their own physical, emotional and practical needs and figure out how to protect those needs as a professional. In what follows I want to explore 3 areas in which I believe change needs to take place and to reflect on what attitudes and values within dance training

establishments might enable those changes. The result I would expect would be dancers who are collectively unwilling to be exploited, who expect and demand good conditions of work and who take responsibility for their own health and well-being.

Part 1

Dance training as the agent of the development of the dancer's identity and self-esteem

It's very widely recognized in the psychological literature about human well-being that good self esteem and a strong sense of self are highly protective in many areas of life. Good self esteem is protective against illness, against accidents, against exploitation at work, against relationship breakdown, against eating disorders, against depression, against addictions of all kinds (Carlock 1999). Too bad we can't bottle it! How can we develop it and more particularly, how can we develop it in dance trainees?

Narrative competence

This is of course a huge subject and I can only begin to outline some suggestions, but let me begin with the idea of narrative competence. The degree to which I can tell a coherent story of my life is not only an indication of my emotional well-being, but is an agent of the development of that well-being. Dance students need to have a story about where they came from, how they got to where they are now, and where they are going. That process enhances our identity, consolidates our sense of self and confirms purpose and direction. One of the reasons why *Billy Elliot* is such an inspiring film, is that it does exactly that. We see how Billy comes from nowhere and nothing, struggles against all sorts of obstacles and difficulties and gradually triumphs.

How can that process be incorporated into dance training? Well, for example it could be part of a review system. Most dance schools have systems for the regular review of students' progress. Asking students to incorporate the term or year's work into their longer view of their journey might work. So might asking students at the beginning of their training to create an account of how they got to the school – what has been their journey so far – what difficulties and obstacles have they had to deal with – when did they know that they wanted to train – how did other people respond to that desire.

Then that account can be revisited and extended as the student progresses through the school.

This strategy would also be of tremendous value if a student for any reason has to leave the school. Let's say the school has come to the conclusion that the student does not have the necessary talent or qualities to make good use of the training. That kind of judgment can frequently be devastating to a young person. If the on-going narrative has incorporated anxieties, hesitations, difficulties and discouragements, it can also be used to chart a new direction. The apparent failure at the dance school can be seen not only as a disappointment, but part of a new alignment, instead of a crushing rejection. In this way my continuing story incorporates how I dealt with difficulties and overcame them to find a new direction.

This process of continuing updating and revision of the narrative continually builds the sense of self and self-esteem. Instead of feeling that I am at the mercy of what life throws at me, vulnerable and without power, my narrative of my journey enables me to see adversity as part of the journey, informing me of how I have adapted and managed what comes my way. Without doubt, this perspective is strengthening to the person and builds resilience for the future (Payne 2006).

Goal-setting and achievement

The highly didactic style of much dance training is often solely directed to pointing out what has not been mastered or learned. As I have said elsewhere, I was shocked to discover that a teacher-student communication in the dance world is called a correction. In such an environment it is difficult to maintain self-esteem and a sense of purpose. How can the trackless waste of what is to be learned be made more manageable and less likely to overwhelm the student?

One strategy is the creation of small achievable goals. This is a style that is much used in business and often incorporates a system called SMART (www.topachievement.com/smart.html). Goals are set according to the following criteria:

- Specific

- **Measurable**
- **Achievable**
- **Realistic**
- **Time limited**

The advantage of goal-setting according to this strategy is that it systematizes the learning so that I know what I have to achieve, I have figured out the steps to achieving it and I know when I have achieved it. I can, so to speak, give myself a gold star. What we know about measured achievement is that it vastly improves self-esteem. Explicit noticing of achievement consolidates empowerment and of course makes the next goal and the next task seem much more possible. (Bandura 1997)

Goal setting has another advantage, which is that it supports and develops planning. Young people are often poorly organized and have limited organizational skills. Goal setting is a way of addressing a specific element in a student's life and focusing on it. Knowing that we can plan and organize our lives is empowering and increases self-esteem.

Ownership of the training

I have written at length about this subject elsewhere (Buckroyd 2001). Here what I would like to emphasise is that young people live in a world where autonomy is extremely highly prized and where traditional respect for authority has been dramatically eroded. 'I will do what I like' and 'You can't make me' are common attitudes among young people. This will inevitably affect those corners of the world that remain authoritarian and expect young people to do what they are told. I read that the British Army rejects 80% of applicants precisely because they will not do what they are told. They have never done so and they are not starting now. Sometimes these old authoritarian attitudes can be maintained by segregating people in isolated communities where they are, so to speak, isolated from the polluting environment and other values can be maintained. Christian schools are sometimes such an environment. Foucault has explored this whole issue in relation to prisons and psychiatric hospitals (Foucault 1977) and it has also been applied to dance training organizations (Smith, 1998)

My sense is that dance schools are rarely effective in creating these islands (although I know some that are) especially when the dance styles they teach (for instance contemporary, jazz, hip hop etc) bring with them a value system that is about individual exploration and expression. However, they often try. The style of such a school is top down and authoritarian. Some students, who are already used to conforming, will adapt to this environment. The rest, as far as I can see, manage the situation for themselves by becoming disengaged and apathetic. Their resistance takes the form of passive refusal to invest their energies. That leaves the dance teacher with the huge task of coaxing the student to learn. There is something wrong when it's the teacher's job to make the student want to learn.

How can we enable students to take ownership of the training and responsibility for the way they use it? Well, I would start by saying that the training is theirs, as often as possible and before students even come to the school. It should be in the promotional literature, spoken of at interview and explored at each opportunity for review of progress. Students won't necessarily enjoy it – taking responsibility for ourselves involves growing up; sometimes we prefer to remain adolescent and irresponsible. It might sound something like this:

- I'm sorry you are late for class, but no, you can't join in now
- You didn't come to rehearsal so your role has been given to someone else
- Do you agree that your lack of fitness is limiting your training
- How do you think you can improve your fitness within the next six weeks?
- How are you going to lose/gain 1 kilo in the next two weeks?
- Which of these courses do you think would be best for your development as a dancer?
- How would you evaluate your progress over the past six weeks?
- What is it that you need from me in order to progress?
- How do you need to develop as a dancer in order to have a good chance of getting a job?
- What do you think are your strengths and weaknesses in this technique
- How could you improve your day-to-day nutrition?
- How will you maintain your fitness and flexibility during the summer break?
- What preparation are you making for finding work when you leave the school?

The other half of this process of enabling students to become more autonomous is that we, the adults, the teachers and facilitators, must stop interfering, rescuing and micro-managing. I learned my lesson about this the hard way, many years since. We admitted to the school a young woman who had the perfect body and who had already completed one training. I opposed accepting her because in her interview with me I could see no sign of passion, no indication that she wanted to use the training, but rather that she was seeking a hiding place from the world. She was admitted nevertheless on the basis of her perfect body, but it soon became evident that she couldn't really learn. She wanted to do more of what she already knew and resisted new experience at every turn; so, for example, she put up a strong passive resistance to her choreography class because it was clear to her that student choreography could never match up to the great dances that had already been made. She did not endear herself to anyone by her contempt for the work of her fellow students. In retrospect this young woman was never going to be able to use the training and should have been moved on after the first year. She couldn't take responsibility for herself or ownership of the training. What did I do? Instead of acting on these perceptions I decided to rescue her, so I worked with her for the rest of the time she was in the school. Did anything change? No. In fact I think I colluded with her fear of the world. In the real world, actions have consequences. As part of the process of learning to take responsibility for ourselves, we discover that. We who have the care of young dancers must not treat them as children, but as the young adults they are. The person who takes charge of herself; who calculates the results of her actions, who takes responsibility for looking after herself, will be strong and not so vulnerable to those who would misuse her.

Dance training as the agent of the development of the dancer's body esteem

We live in a lookist world where judgments are made of us on the basis of appearance. There are whole industries dedicated to the production and display of the human, and especially female, body, according to norms, often invented by those same industries. As someone once said, 'First they tell you what's wrong with the way you look and then they sell you something to put it right'. I'm thinking of dieting, cosmetics, cosmetic surgery, fashion, fitness, as only the most obvious examples. We are presented daily in a thousand images on billboards, in magazines, on television, in

films, with pictures of how we should be. Additionally we are also presented with images, especially on television of how we should not be, in slimming, fitness and fashion programmes. There is nothing so tempting as the opportunity to take a fat, badly dressed, baggy eyed, middle aged woman and with a dozen experts turn her by means of cosmetic surgery, haircuts and clothes and makeup and diets into something at least approximating to the desired norms.

By all those products and interventions we are sold hope that we can match up to those idealized, airbrushed images. But strangely enough we never will. First of all because those images never existed; they are airbrushed into a fantasy; and secondly because our confidence in our own bodies and own appearance has been so undermined by the body industries that we never can feel quite right. There is always a further horizon. One current further horizon is the requirement to remove body hair, not only from the more obvious places, but increasingly from the face and even the arms. We should be smooth as eggs and since body hair has an inconvenient habit of re-growing, the hair removal industry has found a way of parting us from our money on a frequent basis.

So it is that a group of people who are often desirably slender, beautifully toned, elegant movers, dressed imaginatively – you understand I am speaking of dancers – are often filled with distaste for their bodies, even loathing. How can this be? And more important, how can we change it? What can dance training do to fill young people with confidence and pleasure in their own physical being?

Fat talk

Some years ago the Canadian National Ballet School had among its support services, the input of a psychiatrist called Niva Piran who specialized in working with eating disorders. She published a book on the prevention of eating disorders (Piran 1999) in which there was a chapter on the prevention of eating disorders in dancers. One of her observations was that among students there was a culture of what she called ‘fat talk’. You know the sort of thing: ‘Oh my bum is just huge’ – accompanied by inspection of the said part of the anatomy in the mirror with accompanying twisting turning and pinching. This talk went on in groups with competition to express dissatisfaction with their bodies: Well, look at my gut; it’s so flabby’ – again accompanied by pinching. Piran felt that this fat talk created a culture of body dissatisfaction, which undermined

body esteem and self-esteem. After all if you are a dancer and your body is so unsatisfactory, then you won't feel good about yourself. She discussed all this with classes of students and got them to agree to abolish fat talk – which included talk about weight loss and diets. You can sense how radical a change this would be if you imagine dancers enjoying and taking pleasure in the way they look. I was talking to someone from a ballet school not long ago who said that the students 'looked like racehorses'. Perhaps it's not the image I would have chosen, but it suggests bodies in the peak of condition. I wonder if those same 'racehorses' felt the same way about their bodies. I doubt it.

For these reasons it is obviously unacceptable for teachers to make offensive comments about the bodies of the students. I thought that such behaviour had more or less disappeared, but it's not that long since I heard a dance teacher giving a demonstration class at a conference (so on a very public occasion) tell a student her legs were like bananas. Yes, the teacher has the power to say whatever she likes and the student rarely has the right of reply, but respectful ways of talking are the very least that should be expected of those of us who have the charge of young dancers.

Mirrors

Some years ago, concerned about what I heard from individual students about the effects of the mirror on their body esteem, I conducted a pilot study designed to investigate the perceptions of students and teachers of the mirror and its value (Buckroyd 2001). There was very general agreement that the mirror was useful for technical training. A large majority of the participants and all the teachers agreed that the mirrors were useful for placement and alignment, with more divided opinion on its use for balance and kinaesthetic memory.

When it came to the psychological experience of the mirror, however, a majority of students felt that the mirror made them too self critical and undermined their confidence in their bodies. A majority of students avoided the mirror and also particular mirrors. A large majority of the girls in the survey thought that the mirror did not improve self-esteem or body esteem, but the boys felt the opposite. However more than half the girls and almost half the boys felt that the mirror actively damaged their self-esteem. Interestingly the teachers in the study were relatively unaware of the psychological effects of the mirror on students.

The study concluded that teachers need to be more aware of the emotional reactions of students, especially girls, to the mirror and perhaps to limit the use of the mirror as a result. It showed clearly that girls are at greater risk than boys in relation to the mirror, which makes sense of the well-known cultural pressures on girls and their resultant normative body dissatisfaction. The study also reinforces what we already know about the vulnerable self-esteem and body esteem of adolescent female dancers. Work by Radell et al (2004) on the use of the mirror in a college dance department setting concludes ‘the use of the mirror in a beginning ballet classroom may negatively affect the skill acquisition of the dancer and may contribute to the low body image scores of higher performing dancers’. It is more than a little ironic that a practice which is designed to improve skill and capacity has such negative psychological effects.

Weight management

Having said all that, there can be a practical issue about weight control that may need to be addressed. How can it be done without becoming a huge source of shame and distress? My preference would be to see the issue of maintaining a specific weight as part of the responsibility to oneself of being a dance trainee. This needs to be expressed as early as possible – in the promotional literature, at interview, in the induction into the first year, at review sessions. And to make sense it needs to be connected to the trainee’s obligation to feed herself appropriately, to get enough sleep, to maintain cardio-vascular fitness and generally to present herself for training in a state to maximize the benefit of what she is taught.

However, the dance school ultimately has a duty of care; when a dancer is very thin, or less likely, very overweight, then it is our responsibility to ensure that she is not at risk by continuing to dance. My sense is that dance schools are reluctant to withdraw underweight youngsters from class; they keep hoping that somehow, miraculously, the problem will solve itself. My experience is that the sooner appropriate psychological support can be found, the quicker the problem can resolve. While that is happening, the student may need to withdraw from the school. Having skeletal students in the class is not good for other students trying to maintain their body esteem at a more normal weight and our duty is always first to the group.

Eating disorders

That brings us to eating disorders and disordered eating. All the literature suggests that dancers, as one of the 'thin professions' are at much greater risk of eating disorders than the general population (eg Hoek 2001). There is not space here to do more than outline how I understand eating disorders. Those of you who are interested to know more, can look at other publications (listed on my website, JuliaBuckroyd.co.uk) My basic conviction is that disordered eating is a means of coping with feelings. Most of us, dancers or not, can acknowledge that our eating behaviour is sometimes a search for comfort, rather than entirely a response to hunger. The eating disordered person uses food, thoughts of food, resolutions not to eat or not to eat, planning food, calculating calories etc as ways of managing/distracting from experience or thoughts that are too difficult. She is not different from those who are less troubled by food, except in so far as she uses the food solution more often. And the person who undereats or resolves to restrict her eating is conceptually no different from the person who binges and vomits or the person who overeats. All of them are using a pre-occupation with food as a way of managing. What goes with disordered eating is low self-esteem and low body esteem, so the more we educators can instill a sense of confidence and self-esteem, the less at risk of disordered eating will be our students.

In particular, we need to enable students to express what is going on with them. Dance training is very taxing as an emotional journey. Learning French or maths does not require the vulnerability and exposure that a body subject demands. Young people especially, are strongly identified with their bodies and the difficulties of mastering dance can feel not just like a temporary blip in a learning curve, but a total failure as a person. Yet the typical dance school wants its students to 'leave their troubles at the studio door', 'not think about it, just do it'. That leaves them searching for a way to express what is going on with them, especially since in some schools, communication with teachers cannot include any dissatisfaction or difficulty. Ideally of course we would hope that students would use the support group of their fellow-students, but in my experience, relations between students can be competitive and mistrustful, so that real difficulties or upsets remain unspoken. In these circumstances using food and eating behaviour as an outlet for unexpressed feelings is a common solution.

The dance school can go some way to managing the inevitable upsets in the lives of students. It can provide appropriate pastoral care; it can acknowledge explicitly the difficulty of managing the frustrations and difficulties of the training; it can create a peer led support system; it can foster and encourage a spirit of mutual support within year groups. But above all we can encourage students to use their classes to embody and express feeling. Plies or technique of whatever kind can be danced with disappointment or frustration or rage or exhilaration. Isn't that what we think dance is – a communicative art?

Dance as a communicative art and dance training as the development of an empowered body-voice

The purpose of dance training

Let's go back to the beginning. Why are we training dancers? What is dance for anyway? There are many answers to that question, but mine is that dance is a communicative art. It tells us about ourselves; it engages us at a level beyond the cerebral; it uses the body to explore the human condition. It draws its strength from the fundamental truth that we are all bodies – we have no disembodied existence and body language is our fundamental, basic, earliest, inescapable means of communication.

And what is it not? It is not a display of gymnastics investigating the outer limits of contortion; it is not a competition in technique, those 32 fouettes en tournant in *Cinderella* give me nothing; nor is it an opportunity for indulgence in the choreographers private fantasies.

So then, in my view, dance training is the process whereby the ordinary expressive body language of the ordinary person is captured and honed and developed into an empowered body-voice, capable of enacting some aspect of our human story. That is a project that I can believe in and think is worthwhile.

A training for life

But is this definition of training all about the means to the end. Is the only justification for dance training the employment of our students as dancers or dance teachers? We must face the reality that for most dance students their experience of the dance class

will be their primary experience of dance. In the UK one thousand students graduate every single year from dance schools (<http://www.danceuk.org>) . There are approximately 200 dance companies, some very small and many financially insecure. The arithmetic is not difficult. Most of those students will not become professional dancers; some, perhaps many, will teach dance, but most will never perform again once they have put on the final show at their dance school.

So is the time spent at the dance school wasted? Should we follow the example of some dance schools and weed out those who are less likely to be employable so that we arrive at the end of the final year with just a handful of students? Or should we reckon that if a student has the desire and ability to benefit from the training we should encourage her to develop the capacity to become a conscious being, aware of what she feels and knows and able to translate herself and her experience into the language of movement, believing that even if she never dances again, she will have been developed and enlarged as a human being by the process of dance training and consequently educated and enriched to take her place in the world. Dance in my view is not just a vocational training; it may be that, but the evidence suggests that for many the vocation will never be fulfilled. It is also a liberal art that has the potential to develop and inform its students, whether or not they make it their life time profession. I would say the same of the study of history, or literature or languages. These subjects enrich the person and civilise and refine the citizen\

.Dancing our lives

But how is this high ambition to be translated into the daily routine of technique classes, repertoire and choreography? I remember once hearing a ballet master at a famous company explaining that the dancers would learn the piece and then at the very end they would ‘add the feelings’. I find this an extraordinarily limited view of what dance is and can be. Technique classes need the passion that first impels youngsters into dance training to be endlessly recaptured. The way to do that, in my view, is to invite students to bring their messy, difficult, ambivalent selves into the studio and to dance their lives every day of their training. It is to ask them to identify their qualities as a person and as a dancer and to expect that the individuality of that body and that person are expressed day by day. I remember how when Nuryev defected and joined the Royal Ballet there was all sorts of tutting about his technical

abilities – that was until he took every eye in the theatre with the magic of his presence and his personality.

I have often enjoyed student performance and choreography more than the more polished performances of professional companies. I think that is because students often display a passion, a vulnerability, a force of feeling that is so often absent from the sanitized and over-rehearsed performances of large companies. I want to be moved, gripped, amused, engaged by dance. I want to be able to lose myself in the performance and respond not from my overdeveloped cerebral self, but from a deeper body self. Film audiences don't go to films to criticize the camera angles, they go to be moved, to have an emotional experience. The same must be true for dance audiences and when something really powerful comes along – say for instance the work of Matthew Bourne – then the audiences are queueing round the block.

This is the kind of identification of the self and the dancer via training that will enable our students to grow into self-aware and expressive adults, ready to take their place in society, even if they never dance another step

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Juanita Finestone-Praeg

Difference is revolting.

Julia Kristeva claims to be ‘increasingly sceptical about the capacity of political movements to remain places of freedom’ (2002: 107). She has argued fervently for the capacity of art to perform an ‘intimate revolt’ which embodies the original impulse of revolt as that which continually questions, unveils and discovers (Kristeva cited in Lotringer, 2002: 120). In 2009, the Minister of Arts and Culture, Lulu Xingwana, left an exhibition because she was allegedly ‘offended by images of black women in erotic embraces’ and argued for ‘nation-building’ art. The Mail and Guardian Editorial reacted against this ‘banality of official art’ arguing that ‘Nations, her view seems to be, are built on bland and heroic affirmation, not complex questioning or representations of difference’ (Mail And Guardian Editorial, March 5 – 11: 2009: 24). What might be the limits or potential of choreographic revolt for perceiving and expressing diversity and difference in South Africa? Importantly, performance theorist and practitioner, Baz Kershaw asks: ‘how might we judge one aesthetic approach to be more politically promising than another?’ (1999: 17). In response, this address will speak to examples and provocations offered by my own teaching and artistic practice within a Physical Theatre over the past 21 years in South Africa. I propose that Physical Theatre champions a certain freedom for the performer through its devised processes and its insistence on an embodied, ‘physically intelligent’ presence which has upended notions of the performer as a passive, ‘docile’ (Foucault) body awaiting the imperatives of the teacher-choreographer-god. I also consider the ways in which the ethical and perceptual training for a Physical Theatre continually rehearses its freedom from the perceptual politics of traditional dance representations. In this way, it continually performs difference; liberating difference and opening up a space for difference to revolt; to perpetually be revolting.

Difference is revolting.

Ms Juanita Finestone-Praeg

Rhodes University

Difference is revolting.

body of questions ... or towards a democratized performance ...

„experience is what happens when our ways of knowing break down“ (C.S.Pierce)

(hypnotic Philip Glass score ... the audience view images from a work entitled *Shattered Windows* ...)

This raw, ecstatic dance choreographed by Gary Gordon was the first work to place the First Physical Theatre Company on the national dance map. It shook the South African dance world with its uncompromising savagery and startling images of an unyielding body in and of revolt. A corrosive, disintegrating landscape is ruptured by the anarchic mumblings and shrieks of the performers as they fling their bodies with violent abandon through barbed wire doorways. Bodies pound, shake, collapse, lie inert and uncomprehending, while others fall into paroxysms of wild, dark trembling. These nihilistic physical impulses embody an insurrection against the mannered dramatic traditions and codified languages of mainstream Western theatre and the classical spirit of grace and clarity embedded in many dance forms. Gordon deconstructs this image of the ideal dancing body and the gendered social body through a performative body that is unstable and fragmented – but one very much alive with possibility and reaction. In short, it offered the audience an experience of the body exactly because it ruptured the modes of knowledge through which we have come to encode and decode the dancing body.

This work was my first encounter with the creative processes and particular immediacy of presence activated in performing a Physical Theatre. I was to perform this work at three different cycles in my life. First created by Gordon in my Honours year of study in 1989, my 25 year old body marveled at the (literally) breathless exhilaration of such physical and emotional abandon. I had come to university to escape the violence of my nice, white middle

class life and had a dream of becoming a trade unionist who would contribute to the struggle for socio-political freedom and human rights in Apartheid South Africa. My political experiences between the years 1982 – 1991 force me to acknowledge that I did not have the sensibility to be an activist in the world of big politics. I would need to look elsewhere to manifest responses to my existential questionings and to find my political usefulness in the world. And so with a deep suspicion at what I then perceived to be the political ignorance and frivolity of the dance and theatre world, I was nonetheless seduced by the „intimate revolt“ I was invited to consider by *Shattered Windows*.

The second performances of *Shattered Windows* took place at the 1983 Dance Umbrella in Johannesburg. My now 29 year old body was again trying to write itself in uncertainty and to perform a series of questions interrogating the ability of the body in a Physical Theatre to express difference. This unformulaic collision of drama and dance in the creative matrix of a Physical Theatre continued to challenge understandings of the accepted role of movement and voice in Physical Theatre. As Ana Sanchez-Colberg (2006) suggests, the hybrid nature of Physical Theatre is testimony to its „double legacy“ in the avant garde theatre of practitioners like Ionesco, Artaud and Beckett as well as the provocations of modern dance and postmodern dance practitioners that rejected the codified languages of mainstream dance – practitioners like Laban and Wigman in Germany in 1910's and later, the ilk of Pina Bausch and Merce Cunningham. Both streams of influence were birthed in the failure of codified languages to express experiences of the horror and absurdity of the world wars as well as the inability of language to speak to the human condition in a suitably contemporary idiom. Physical Theatre, following the provocations of Ausdrückstans and Tanztheater in Germany and the Judson experimentations in America questioned the place of movement within dance. As Sanchez-Colberg (2006: 45) notes, these artists proposed a devaluation of the language of technical virtuosity in which the body is bound to ideal forms which exist outside it and which objectify it. This rejection of a reified body, she argues, opens the boundaries of what can constitute dance movement and the dance medium:

Given that the focus is on the nexus of the body and space, movement becomes subordinate, and intrinsically linked to the environment that contextualises it ... movement is relevant in as much as it may express aspects of the body/space nexus.

In 2003, for the third time, my now 39 year old body again revisited this site of questioning – although this time I knew that if I did one of those Gordon polar bear dives through one of the empty doorways, I would be permanently shattered – and yet ... I was desperate to do exactly that because even then, by the third time I was involved in staging this revolt, I was also still in revolt against the question that haunted this piece from its inception, the banal question that responded to the gender confusion of dancers in decomposing dresses worn by both male and female performers ... long hair, bald heads and exposed body parts smeared with wet clay which gradually flaked off leaving in its wake an ashen trail of dust on the nice clean floors of the theatres we performed in, the question that has and continues to haunt the world of creative performance, the question: is this dancing?

Spanning its performance over two decades, this work has continued to provoke reaction. Does it conjure a post-apocalyptic landscape reminiscent of Cormac McCarthy's *The Road* ... or an ongoing reflection of social and political fracture in a post-Apartheid South Africa? Does it perhaps embody a physis splintering, the „shattered windows“ of a fragile and broken mind? Yes, to all of the above. But it also produced and continues to produce an avant garde revolt against the denial of the body in mainstream dance representations. The primitive expressionism of this work makes it one of Gordon's most shadowy, violent statements about and against the cruel, overpowering forces that govern our lives fostering, in all of us, obedience and passivity; passivity, that is, as the complete antithesis of the moving body. In an interview with me in 1999, Gary commented:

It is not possible to use traditional criteria when approaching physical theatre as this theatre experience moves away from a tendency toward the familiar. Attempting to articulate the void cannot provide ordered and comfortable articulations.

This work has remained close to me because it seems to embody the poetics of revolt in its purest form. For me it captures the radical potential of art and particularly of a Physical Theatre, to question and resist the way power is both wielded on and, if we are to take Foucault seriously, inflicted by the self onto the self through micro-technologies of self-discipline. To watch a performance like means opening oneself up to the experience that becomes possible only when modes of knowledge break down; it shatters ideas about mastery over the body through artistic representation and expresses a body that refuses to be domesticated, pinned down, or contained: a body of questions, permanently in revolt. A body that is revolting.

Richard Stamelman (1991: xviii) in the preface to a book of poetry by Edmond Jabes says that his book „activates not a story but the movement of writing“. Similarly, the choreography in a work like *Shattered Windows* does not activate a dramatic tradition of narrative or story telling but using its own internal aesthetic logic establishes physical performance as „a way of knowing“. I am often confronted by people who find Physical Theatre obscure and want to know, no, not But is it dance? (although I often get that) but the perhaps more trite: What does it mean? To people who respond to a work like *Shattered Windows* with this question, I have after many years of anguish formulated a simple response and it is this: when you listen to a Beethoven string quartet, do you ask yourself: But what does it mean? Of course not. That would be inappropriate; a fundamental confusion of sorts. A confusion that assumes that all art should respond to the criteria of logical, rational and even narrative structure of meaning.

In light of my obnoxious but entirely justified response, it makes complete sense that since the early 1990's, performing arts discourse and theatrical scholarship have re-invented drama and dance studies by shifting the paradigm that is presupposed by questions like „What does it mean“? That question is a function of a *theatrical* paradigm – where, mostly, things have a linear beginning, middle and end which, once understood would reveal the meaning of that theatrical event. Instead of this theatrical paradigm we have moved towards a *performance* paradigm. This shift has transformed how performance studies both informs and performs its teaching pedagogies. What do we mean by a „performance paradigm“?

Performance studies can perhaps be characterised as a broad-based, multi-disciplinary field „with a continually moving center of gravity“ (Stucky and Wimmer, 2002: 10) – it is difficult to define it more precisely because it has many interdisciplinary origins and roots. Though it concerns itself broadly with aesthetics, culture and identity, it „involves the study of the human as a performing being“ (Stucky and Wimmer, 2002: 11). It is not possible here to contextualise the complex histories of the emergence of performance studies as a distinct discipline, but perhaps it is useful to cite Stucky and Wimmer's point that performance studies provokes a negotiating of borders – cultural, disciplinary, theoretical, personal and political. Within this matrix, Practice-as-Research has become a key methodology for re-thinking pedagogies via a teaching praxis which locates performance itself as a *site* and a *method* of study: performance as epistemology, by which we understand performance as both a *source* of knowledge and a *way* of knowing

A seminal text to have emerged from this re-thinking and reconceptualising of contemporary performance practice is Hans-Thies Lehman's text, Postdramatic Theatre (2006). He argues that contemporary performance practice has often met with little understanding and that those who are convinced of its integrity often lack the conceptual tools to articulate their perception (19). His point is that work is often defined through a „lack or negative description of what a work is not“ rather than a „positive articulation of what it is“ (19). Part of this historical context is the tension between what he refers to as the *dramatic* versus the *postdramatic* tradition within dance and theatre performance. William Worthen (cited in Stucky and Wimmer, 2002: 15) succinctly captures this tension:

Literary engagements with performativity tend to focus on the performative function of language as represented in literary texts, and much performance-orientated criticism of drama, for all its invocation of the theatre, similarly betrays a desire to locate the meanings of the stage in the contours of the dramatic text.

Lehmann's term „postdramatic“ critiques this tradition of equating the dramatic with the performative. As Lehmann posits in his prologue to Postdramatic Theatre,

I want to read the realised artistic constructions and forms of practice as answers to artistic questions, as manifest reactions to the representational problems faced by theatre. (Lehman, 2002: 20: my emphasis)

What is invigorating about Lehman's proposals is that they allow us to question the veracity and value of performance on its own terms. This has implications for re-thinking the relationship between politics and performance - the relationship between the political (conventionally understood) and the performative as a space where identities are forged, interpreted and founded. This also raises a related, comparative question, a question about whether we can or even should use politics as a criteria to measure the relative worth of artistic expressions. As performance theorist and practitioner, Baz Kershaw (1999: 17) asks:

So how might we judge one aesthetic approach to be more politically promising than another? Is live art's deconstruction of the politics of representation, say, anymore or less potent than community celebration's political reinforcement of collective identity.

I remain haunted by this relationship between politics and performance and perhaps these responses can be distilled into two simple questions related to what I have said so far: is the appropriate response to a work such as *Shattered Windows* the question „What does it mean“? And secondly, should the supposed meaning of such a work *translate* into the political or should it *undermine* the very notion of the political by staging a revolt against its hegemonic understandings of both meaning and the political? In short, is an understanding of performance possible that not only refuses to play politics but that actively undermines the categories of meaning upon which the political is premised?

Let's approach this question by returning to the scene of the crime – 2009, when the Minister of Arts and Culture, Lulu Xingwana, left an exhibition because she was allegedly „offended by images of black women in erotic embraces“ and argued for „nation-building“ art. The Mail and Guardian Editorial reacted against this „banality of official art“ arguing that „Nations, her view seems to be, are built on bland and heroic affirmation, not complex questioning or representations of difference“ (Mail And Guardian Editorial, March 5 – 11, 2009: 24). This incident made me reflect on my own belief in the ability of art and in this instance, dance/physical theatre, to perform such complex questionings in the hope of maintaining vital spaces of agency and freedom in society. In a compelling critique entitled the „ideological paralysis of the left“, Walther Davis (2007: 57 – 58) questions the political correctness that uncritically affirms artistic mediocrity in much political theatre: if a work serves politics, he asks, is its artistic integrity irrelevant? He laments that often „mediocre works are the most serviceable because they don't cloud the political function of art with the kind of aesthetic complications that characterise “high” or “elitist” art“. Davis' argument surfaces that such narrow viewings of art deprive it of any agency to change our political perceptions: „a fundamental ideological necessity has been asserted in a way that deprives drama of any independence or significance“. He suggests that art viewed in this way does not seem to possess the „power to challenge or transform our political agendas“. Quite a reversal on thinking possibilities for any potential agency of art to transform and question, to revolt against conventional and comfortable definitions of what „political“ means. It is to this transgressive impulse in understandings of what constitutes a vital impulse of revolt that Kristeva's notion of „intimate revolt“ speaks.

The Power of the Small: Kristeva's 'Intimate Revolt'

In Revolt, She Said (Lotringer, 2002: 107), Julia Kristeva claims to be „increasingly sceptical about the capacity of political movements to remain places of freedom“. She speaks to a betrayal of revolt by political revolutions, where a history of political revolts show that once power is attained, the revolution ceases to question its own values, thus losing its impulse for revolt (119). Kristeva argues that art has the capacity to perform an „*intimate revolt*“ which embodies the original spirit of revolt - to „rehabilitate the microscopic sense of the word, its etymological and literary sense in which the root “vel” means unveiling, re-turning, discovering, starting over, this is the permanent questioning that characterises psychic life and, at least in the best cases, art“ (120).

It is to researching this transgressive performative identity that my own body of choreography, performance and teaching has over the years directed its own questionings, provocations , reflections and embodiments. Let me cite an example. In 2009 I made my most politically provocative work to date – a site-specific work called *Inner Piece* which meditated on relationships between theatre, war, peace, torture and the body. I like to think that it was a complex work that attempted to re-stage the continual and endless possibility of revolt. In its provocation, the work took risks, both aesthetically and ethically, and in this process, I possibly understood for myself what Artaud meant in his call for a „Theatre of Cruelty“– that a cruel theatre is not necessarily defined by the use of excessive violence, blood or the limits of pain – but one that becomes that which is cruel in the sense of being difficult - difficult to create, to perform, and also difficult to witness/watch. Difficult, that is, because it ruptures mode of knowledge to return us to an experience of the revolting being.

My choreographer's note articulated some of this difficulty. A play that engaged notions of „spectacle“ was a vital impulse within the work. Not „spectacle“ in the sense of a deconstruction of the „spectacular“ – although there was that too (especially in my choice to try to subvert the framing of virtuosity in trapeze performance) - as much as engaging the spectacle that has come to define much of the domain of the contemporary political, most incongruously in the form of ethical and complicated questions generated by the visceral images of spectacle torture that came out of Abu Ghraib. Numerous critics and artists have responded to the absurdly theatrical dimension of these images. Zizek, for example, describes first viewings of the Abu Ghraib photographs in the following way:

Spectacle Torture. "When I first saw the notorious photograph of a prisoner wearing a black hood, electric wires attached to his limbs as he stood on a box in a ridiculous theatrical pose, my reaction was that this must be a piece of performance art. The positions and costumes of the prisoners, suggest a theatrical staging, a tableau vivant, which cannot but call to mind the „theatre of cruelty,“ Robert Mapplethorpe’s photographs, scenes from David Lynch movies.” (Žižek cited Perucci in Anderson and Menon: Violence Performed: Local Roots and Global Routes of Conflict: 2009)

In trying to cite these images and respond with my own reflections on their meaning in a technologically matrixed global context, I found myself trapped in a curious logic that bespoke the contradictions of representation: in representing or performing to images of violence, one can so easily re-insert them into the logic of „spectacle“ resulting in what McKenzie (2009) calls a „counter-performativity“ that contributes to the violence it seeks to critique. In many performances of *Inner Piece* this is exactly what happened. Using layerings of image and text and combining these with the irreverent use of humour beside images that evoked the Abu Ghraib image spectacles often made audiences laugh. This created extreme discomfort and rupture. At the same time these reactions signalled the failure and inability of such representations to effectively critique or reflect on such degradation, or to disarm the audience. As an artistic provocation or experiment, the work in its revolt, became in moments quite revolting. (view DVD clip from *Inner Piece*).

I struggled tremendously with this at a personal level given my own political stance against the American articulation of the „war on terror“, but the work aimed from the start to set up a choreographic encounter with difficult questions with many resultant failures and ambiguities. What the work did not do was to produce a comfortable experience or a superficial politically correct commentary on a difficult political topic. McKenzie suggests that the risks of such „counter-performativity“ are often unavoidable when citing violent images or events but that while „the risks of producing them are great, ... the risks of not doing so are greater still“. In the quiet and sometimes not so quiet censure I received from many colleagues and friends about my use of humour but also in the many healthy discussions that followed, I was reminded that it is worth taking these risks if theatre is to remain a place of constant questioning – of agitation and provocation, a place to search for reaction, reflection and revolt. As Davis (2007: 20) suggests, audiences are generally trained

to expect meanings that easily translate into the familiarity of „bathos, pathos, sentimentality, and nostalgia“ which

usually bathe us in the waters of an essentialistic ahistorical humanism, which once again provides the comfort and the guarantees that cleanse us of politics and history.

We go home unmoved and comforted; unchanged because unperplexed – maintaining intact the modes of knowledge we construct often in order not to experience discomfort or any continuation of revolt. Davies (2007: 35) makes this point when he argues that the purpose of theatre is to move audiences from „the comfort of secondary emotions“ like pity, fear, and contentment to the „agon of primary emotions“ like anxiety, humiliation, envy, cruelty and melancholia. His reasoning is that these primary emotions shatter the ego (a system of defenses) and „awaken the psyche“. He cites Pierce who argues that „experience is what happens when our ways of knowing break down“ (2007: 43). It is surely this unpredictability that compels the live in performance which in turn activates a possibility for reaction or transformation. As Peggy Phelan suggests – and I quote her at length -

For me, live performance remains an interesting art form because it contains the possibility of both the actor and the spectator becoming transformed during the event’s unfolding. Of course, people can have significant and meaningful experiences of spectatorship watching film or streaming video and so on. But these experiences are less interesting to me because the spectator’s response cannot alter the pre-recorded or remotely transmitted performance, and in this fundamental sense, these representations are indifferent to the response of the other. In live performance, the potential for the event to be transformed by those participating in it makes it more exciting to me – this is precisely where the “liveness” of live performance matters. Of course, a lot of live performance does not approach this potential at all, and of course many spectators and many actors are incapable of being open to it anyway. But this potential, this seductive promise of possibility of mutual transformation is extraordinarily important because this is the point where the aesthetic joins the ethical.

Baz Kershaw (1999) provides a vital shift in reviewing the idea of the political in performance. He discusses contemporary performance as a form of „democratised performance“. Kershaw proposes that we think this „ethical“ by replacing our common and uncritical use of the word „political with that of the radical because, as he puts it, radical performance invokes:

not just freedom from oppression, repression, exploitation – the resistant sense of the radical – but also freedom to reach beyond existing forms of formalised power, freedoms to create currently unimaginable forms of association and action – the transgressive or transcendent sense of the radical. (1999: 19)

Kristeva similarly suggests that revolt is not only *against* but also and more importantly *for* something – that revolt foregrounds „starting over ... an element of renewal and regeneration“ (2002: 123). What then might be the potential and limits of choreographic revolt for perceiving and expressing diversity and difference in South Africa ? And what does this mean for articulating identities in, through and for our choreographic expressions? In discussion with Praeg (2011), he has suggested the need to critically engage three related issues: 1) the need for authentic African expression of identity and communality; 2) that this cannot happen within but only *against* a nationalist discourse that will constantly threaten to return us to the original scene of the crime where, for instance, same-sex intimacy is judged either as un-African or „against nation-building“; 3) that against this threat of hegemonic nationalism we must stage and restage the perpetual revolt of difference and diversity.

As for the first, namely the desire for authenticity, Jay Pather (2006: 9) has argued that before we pursue „ultimate definitions“ of a contemporary African dance, we need to acknowledge and „own the reflex aesthetic,“ that is, the inescapable indebtedness of that quest to Western dance discourse and its influence. Pather (2006: 10 – 12) says he is

uncomfortable with the implication that there is something particularly, fundamentally African about our contemporary culture and that identifying what this is, in contemporary African dance, would inspire a body of independent and free aesthetics ... our contemporary dance then, whether they are postmodern, reconstructed, deconstructed, Afro-fused or Marxist feminist, will be responses to,

rather than anything fundamentally of themselves ... I do not think any colonized nation has ever been afforded the chance to be contemporary on its own terms – the idea is preposterous.

Pather (2006: 14) interrogates many of the assumptions we have about how to meet expectations of authenticity in a choreographic signature or identity. He proposes that the dance community rather develop the self-consciousness that may allow us to „unpack received notions“ and that we rather work towards a contemporary aesthetics „informed by a life lived within and of our communities at this time and in this place“.

This realism regarding a naïve quest for authenticity and his insistence that whatever authenticity is possible will only emerge through and as a result of our articulation of lived communality brings us to the question of difference and diversity. In fact, I would argue that it is the very reality of difference and diversity that holds the potential for reviewing fixed definitions of choreographic identity within a postcolonial South Africa. Kristeva’s notion of continuous questioning as revolutionary is most prominent in my mind. Atu Sekyi-Out (2003: 10 - 12) in a paper entitled *Fanon and the possibility of postcolonial critical imagination* provides a rich counterpoint to Xingwana’s nationalist discourse in his reading of the Algerian revolutionary Frantz Fanon’s understandings of decolonization. He writes that

According to Fanon, then, the ultimate virtue of the revolution, the goal of historical action, is not the conquest of power but the resurrection of repressed questions and the disclosure of “unexpressed values”. In his approving depiction of such transformations, such a renewal of openness to untried possibilities, may be discerned what he meant by “true decolonization”...

He goes on to frame this „true decolonization“ in terms very reminiscent of what I am here referring to as the staging and restaging of the intimate revolt. He proposes the following:

Supposing decolonization, the postapartheid, is first and foremost, a resumption of interrupted history. A resumption not indeed of some original purities and essences before the Fall, but of interrupted dramas, indigenous and universal dramas; above all a resumption of our dialogue with one another, with ourselves.

I would like to think that this „resumption of our dialogue with one another“ is not limited to the right and imperative of making and staging revolts but also to the space in which we teach, that is, the learning encounter as the kind of space where we lay the foundations - artistically, ethically and politically – for the resumption and continual renewal of a dialogue that always gets interrupted by the „end of revolutions“ and the „resumption of power“.

Towards a liberatory teaching: research as teaching

an Ethical Approach ... a Perceptual Training ... a Physical Intelligence ...

The idea that teaching and learning might be a rehearsal for such dialogue has always been a part of the ethics and ethos that informs my interest in teaching choreography and Physical Theatre. Baz Kershaw identifies 4 main characteristics of the radical in „performance beyond theatre“ which he argues leads to „democratised performance“: dialogic exchange; participatory engagement; performative absence and aesthetic reflexivity (1999: 20). It is interesting for me to note that that his inventory parallels many of the educational philosophies that speak to a liberatory educational experience. *Dialogic exchange*, *participatory engagement* and *aesthetic reflexivity* are all critical to teaching pedagogies that value empowering the learner as an active participant in the educational process and context. Progressive educational philosophers like Freire and hooks have long maintained that students should be involved in the constructions of their own learning – many of these educational approaches advocate a *holistic approach* to teaching which takes into account the interconnectedness of all the context pertaining to the educational experience: the personal, social, economic, cultural and political. In this, teaching strategies that enact a praxis, or that value embodied pedagogy, body-centered research, experiential learning, perhaps have in common an insistence on „*conscious teaching*“ – teaching with „self reflexivity and a heightened awareness of methods, attitudes, hidden curricula, postures and inflections“ (Stucky and Wimmer, 2002: 3). Paulo Freire argues that the trajectory through which we make ourselves conscious as human beings is marked by „inclusion“ and that this „characterises us as historical beings ... consciousness of one’s inconclusiveness makes that being educable“ (1997: 93). Freire (1997: 94) notes that this „unfinishedness“ is also part of

the way that learning is always an ongoing, permanent search through an embodied consciousness:

Consciousness of, an intentionality of consciousness does not end with rationality ...This consciousness is a totality – reason, feelings, emotions, desires, my body, conscious of the world and myself seizes the world toward which it has an intention.

I believe that one does not and should not only learn through rational, cognitive ways. It is my conviction that the entire being of the learner needs to be engaged and stimulated in the learning experience if it is to resume and participate in the dialogue of revolt. The act of learning is exactly that - an *act* or *performance* which requires the active presence of the learner who becomes participant in the process and experience of acquiring knowledges. My teaching methodology is based on the attempts to engage both teacher and learner in such an *embodied, experiential* process whereby learning becomes an interaction between learner and teacher and between the subject, the self and the learning context.

Freire argues that *dialogism* or a dialogic relationship is essential for communication and is a fundamental practice to human nature and to democracy (1998: 92). He notes that dialogue must not be regarded as merely a strategy or „tool“ by the educator, in keeping with their political choices and in order to reach results. He argues for the deeper ethical significance in making dialogical relationships possible. The idea of dialogue, of interaction, takes on greater complexity, he argues, in relationship and suggests that curiosity is key to this encounter :

without the curiosity that makes us beings in permanent availability for questioning ... there would be no gnoseologic activity, a concrete expression of our possibility of knowing ... dialogic experience is fundamental to building epistemological curiosity. (Freire,1998: 94)

As a distinct focus and articulated approach in my work, I have thus tried to nurture these notions of dialogue and curiosity. The focus on stimulating a researched response to ideas and actions is envisaged through teaching a Physical theatre and choreography as practice-as-research: the ideal of a *laboratory mode of process* is encouraged. This praxis brings theoretical enquiries (research,

writing, scholarship) into an interactive, dynamic relationship with practical explorations (improvisation, experimentation and creative play in the teaching, making and performing of work) - bringing conceptual or critical thinking and creative practice together in a synergistic and holistic relation. Valuing experiential knowledge allows the learner to subjectively experience learning as a process that demands their active participation and critical reflection. Through experiential knowledge, the learner, now active and embodied in the learning process, can reclaim the different intelligences of the mind-body.

Avant garde choreographer, Merce Cunningham once choreographed the logic of the I Ching. He often selected to use chance and indeterminacy as a methodology for his choreographic process and product. He comments:

... the feeling I have when I compose in this way is that I am in touch with a natural resource far greater than my own inventiveness could ever be, much more universally human than the particular habits of my own practice, and organically rising out of common pools of motor impulses. (Rockwell in conversation with Cunningham)

Cunningham entirely altered the way dances could be made and perceived – he decentered the stage, doing away with soloists. He used a range of unexpected choreographic devices like chance to structure works, he brought theatricalities and scores (often by John Cage) together in unexpected, unusual ways (the movement and music often met for the first time in performance) and he also innovated when he used his Life Forms computer software to choreograph works. In an article entitled, *Merce Cunningham and the Politics of Perception* (Copeland, 1979), Roger Copeland suggests that we are so eager to credit Cunningham with having liberated dance from the burden of having to project various sorts of meaning (narrative, symbolism, personal expression, etc), „that we fail to properly consider the meaning of this liberation (Copeland, 1983: 314). Copeland argues that what Cunningham achieves in his work is a „perceptual training“ - that the importance of his work is not only in what we are „given to see and hear; but in the *way* we see and hear what we are given“ (1983: 322), and he cites Peter Brook who proposes Cunningham’s aesthetic as a „continual preparation for the shock of freedom“ (Brook cited in Copeland, 1983: 322).

I would like to propose that the potential provocation of a Physical Theatre to mainstream theatre and dance forms and also to methodologies of teaching, resides precisely in the way its processes and products activate such a *perceptual politics*. Physical theatre's insistence on experimenting with traditional narrative structures and deconstructing known dance and theatrical codes and languages continues to question conventional perceptions of what dance or theatre might be. In this sense, Physical theatre is continually rehearsing its freedom from the perceptual politics of traditional theatrical representations.

I would like to propose that Physical theatre champions a certain freedom conceived as *perceptual* but also *perpetual* politics for the performer through its devised processes. Its insistence on an embodied presence, or what First Physical Theatre Company has coined as „physical intelligence“, has upended notions of the performer as a passive, „docile“ body awaiting the instructions of the teacher-choreographer- god. I have long been intrigued by the way that Physical theatre allows for an idiosyncratic and individual response to satellite around its construction.

In devising Physical theatre works, one of the central concerns has been working closely with the performers' autobiographical histories, intimate idiosyncracies and bodily gestures. This has often meant a shift away from the virtuosity of representation towards what might be called „performer presence“. Training this self-awareness requires the activation of imagination and stimulating a curiosity (bodily curiosity). This fascination with personal bodily memory and instinct has insisted on creative processes that require the immediate, personal responses of performers to task-based explorations. These explorations extend to a play with aesthetic boundaries – collaborations, gesture, dance, movement, text, design, image. In rehearsal, classes include a range of experiences that might involve research and improvisation around devising the ideas, images and movement pertinent to the source of the work which would then be structured and refined through crafting and rhythmic interpretation. In an interview with Gary Gordon last year (Finestone-Praeg 2010: 33), he calls this pedagogical approach, „movement research“.

One of the skills that needs to be taught in bodily-based performance work is a deep knowledge of the body. One of the ways to educate the performer's body is through an embodied, experiential teaching of techniques and experiences that will nurture and invest the student with the ability and confidence to make movement, to dance, to perform the

choreographed body. This is a contested terrain within the performing arts with many views on how to teach technique.

For me, teaching technique with performers is not necessarily or only about developing skills that will allow them to mark themselves in particular ways or reproduce a particular movement style, but rather, that the technique explored or generated becomes re-search towards finding a suitable form for expression/choreography. As performance practitioners and teachers, we understand that technique can easily lock performers into habitual repetitions producing a bodily memory that prevents the spontaneity and openness that new searches for form and creativity require. Technique can indeed become complicit in producing an overly designed body, one that replicates power relations instead of fostering a revolt against them, capable of replicating skill and reproduction, but not invention. The strategies for teaching technique that I select to work with attempt not to reproduce a mechanical effect of habit, imitation and repetition.

In an article by Frank Camilleri (2009), he notes that performance training has become increasingly commodified over the past two decades. He proposes evidence of a paradigm shift currently underway between what he terms an „*ethical*“ versus „*ideological*“ or „*institutional*“ approach to training – he actually proposes that training has become more institutional and that choosing how to train has become like shopping in a mall. His distinction locates the ethical approach as a context where training is not approached an end in itself (the shopping mall option), but becomes part of a larger „utopian project“ conceived as process, not product (Camilleri, 2009: 27). As he suggests, an ethical approach is not determined, but is „alive and adaptable according to the development of the performer“ (Camilleri, 2009: 28).

In other words, training is not for skills development only, but part of a larger artistic orientation and possibly even, a way of life. I think here also of Butoh training (which only allows for improvised movement from the performers“ own bodies- nothing learned from the guru-master or teacher) and even the choreographer, Anna Teresa deKeersmaeker whose school insists that students required to grow their own organic food. Raising awareness of these concerns with performers or students becomes a vital part of their own contextual questioning of what and how they are learning.

Closure

My recent experience with Butoh (Finestone-Praeg, 2010: pp 279-297) brought all of what I've said here home to me. Japanese movement – un-western – deconstructed my way of being and moving; disrupted my forms of knowing and made possible an experience of being as revolt. It reminded me that a liberatory education or democratized performance can enact or perform „intimate revolts“, forms of resistance that may, as Baz Kershaw suggests, produce a radical freedom that is

not just negatively against a regime but positively for some value or ideal that lies well beyond its ideological territory . Even in the most unlikely corners of the culture of a paradigm shift, say, in the most abstruse interstices of modernity and post-modernity, radical performance can institute pathologies of hope. (Kershaw, 1999: 26)

It is my belief and manifesto that a reflexive, participatory and embodied choreographic and teaching praxis can and ought to engender and instill such intimate moments of possibility for freedom.

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Part II – Scholarly Papers

Carol Abizaid

***Enacting and Repeating Enactments
In a Pathological Spinning
Toward an Inevitable (non)Fiction and Historiographic
Choreographed Novel***

Narrativisation of traumatizations concerning civilians in war zones happen in embodiments of articulation(s) where captured events become embedded and produce repeated revolutions in-of words, movement, stillness, silence, psychic and embodied madnnesses, and dissociation/forgetting/ burying, for the purpose of re-telling, reconstructing, forgetting, remembering, how and what happened as a matter of reconciling guilt of survival, responsibility to count the dead/their lives, mattering, identity, and Truth. In performing re-violences on the stage, both literal and virtual, what is being re-performed and what is being witnessed, or not, is often different-shifting-blurring into another performance which communicates, or doesn't, a moment of time, memory, fiction, often contained in movement as metaphor to itself, and also to its witnesses. What does the impact of sexual and physical violence have on identity, memory, and sexual practices?

Within hierarchies, women and children who are subjected to traumatic events, whether one time or over long periods of time, adjust to abusive environments physically, chemically, and emotionally. Their impacts re-shape victim's being-ness and self-hood, resulting in an alteration despite treatment often shifting toward survival methodologies in an attempt to stay, leave, repeat, control, undo, or re-move. Their sense of caught-ness becomes a self-inflicted violence, and a choreography of re-identifying, misidentifying, and un/de-identifying. Violence in war zones happening in the private and public space, is archived/stored in the body-individual-social, twists and churns in the moment and in the rumbling future, becomes embodied repertoire, and is re-performed and re-enacted through time and space by bodies written. In a physical articulation, the performed violences represent autoethnographic possibilities of remembered happenings, and asks for a (new) witnessing, and a re-witnessing by spectator, author, and performer, that conjures and provokes a discourse relevant to uncovering and recovering, telling and re-telling, surviving, and seeing violences and their (its) global and transgenerational impact-affect.

In this paper, buttressed by performance, I am suggesting that what is missed in the pen and paper written iteration of experience, dialogue, violences or events, can be revealed, re-enacted by the writing body, as agent and referent, representing its trauma, and/or affects of it. By using the body as the method of transport of what the body has archived, experienced, and witnessed a more cyclical/spinning articulation can be achieved. I suggest that for this purpose a document performed in pen and on paper is only a partial re-enactment of happening(s), and might mute the embodied representation, limiting meaning making; it invisibilizes the object of trauma and violences done to the body as there is too wide a gap, swollen with excess/nothingnesses, and distance between what is on paper and what is on (the) body. However many times memory is scored, re-done, re-told/ refictioned, do we ever get closer to 'what actually happened'? Is there a catharsis if there is nothing new known in the re-performance of re-remembering? Perhaps the reliance/addiction on/to pathologies which shape the human sense of the real and the truth is enough to stabilize what is unstable, or not, because everything or nothing always is and it is in de(il)lusion where humans find a space for Tru(e)th, which it's not.

Enacting and Repeating Enactments
In a Pathological Spinning
Toward an Inevitable (non)Fiction and Historiographic
Choreographed Novel

Carol L. Abizaid, MFA

It is likely that their autobiographical memory gaps and their continued reliance on dissociation make it very hard for these patients to reconstruct a precise account of both their past and their current reality (Van der Kolk, 1996:283).

Narrativisation of traumatizations concerning civilians in war zones happen in embodiments of articulation(s) where captured events become embedded and produce repeated revolutions in-of words, movement, stillness, silence, psychic and embodied madnnesses, and dissociation/forgetting/burying, for the purpose of re-telling, reconstructing, forgetting, remembering, how and what happened as a matter of reconciling guilt of survival, responsibility to count the dead/their lives, mattering, identity, and Truth. Plato says

True, he now. And suppose once more, that he is reluctantly dragged up a steep and rugged ascent, and held fast until he's forced into the presence of the sun himself, is he not likely to be pinned and irritated? When he approaches the light his eyes will be dazzled, and he will not be able to see anything at all of what are now called realities (360 BCE; translated by Benjamin Jowett).

In the search for clarity and unraveling twists in a fractured mental schemata, in an attempt to move closer to light as a metaphoricity of truth, in a pathological rumbling, possibly within healthy parameters distinguished by different hegemony on whose unstable parameters social political bodies rely, survivors of traumatizations don't find peace of mind in articulations or hiddennesses of dissociation, but perhaps find peace within the bowels of the mind, by relying on the mental memories encapsulated in their bodies, and (re)producing enactments or repeats in representations to distill, or de-still events of the past in acts for themselves in a score of itself, revolving and revolutioning-(mal)forming in the *eternal return*. "The negative, the similar and the analogous are

repetitions, but they do not return, forever driven away by the wheel of the eternal return" (Deleuze, 1994:297). In this paper I will move through the question of, is the 'real' or 'Truth' too dazzling/ bright to be re-witnessed/remembered seen, again, for the first time? "The double-triggered mechanism of metaphor is the very mechanism by which the symptom, in the analytic sense, is determined" (Lacan, 2006:166). Would this determination/seeing be metaphorificized to accommodate a signifier of/for the symptom to make meaning, or not, of a traumatization of the past creating affect in the present as art as language/speaking/telling?

In art forms as a matter of narrating a moment, or many, of thought or event(s) through movement as writing/speaking, it is in this metaphoric form that a re-iteration is pushed to the edge in a forcing, or forceful, intentioned re-enactment as a force or form of discovery for the art-maker, doer, and spectator. Is it the function of the art that takes a (the) moment to not think, but to do, and re-do a reflection or remembrance in a pathological repetition for a higher understandability or in a sad attempt for desiring difference, since in each repetition there are temporal shifts which insist on differentiations?

Or is the chronic repetition a vehicle to discover so much difference that it creates a new possible non-happening/ invisibility/(ex)tinguishing? Gilles Deleuze says,

Repetition is pathos and the philosophy of repetition is pathology. However, there are so many pathologies, so many repetitions entwined in one another. When an obsessive repeats a ceremony once, twice; or when he repeats an enumeration, 1,2,3,...he carries out a repetition of elements in extension which both translate and displace each time or with each number, and is disguised in the overall set of numbers and times (1994:290).

In the reflective representation of artwork, "dance", a repetition in rehearsal to get the "thing" to do another "thing" and to produce an embodiment of a truth extends the force of what memory's instability creates in its affective form. In gesture, repeated or enacted more than one time, or two times, 'dance' articulates/exaggerates/fictions discovered traumatization, remembered imperatives as a displaced remembering repeating to the point of a disguised or undistinguishable truth, of an event. Deleuze says, "In a certain sense, the ultimate repetition, the ultimate theatre, therefore encompasses everything; while in another sense it destroys everything; and in yet another sense selects among everything" (ibid:293). Is this the problem of the body remembering, something rather

than the impossibility of/or remembering nothing but an over constructed story in a pale attempt to move toward the light/Truth/sun? Or is it the problem of art as an apparatus which is mutable in its repeatability and repeatedness releasing an emergence of a new somatic affect on which is relied upon by humans and their social structurings as a real re-construction of the event despite art's unreliability, instability, and multi-interpretivity it acts or re-acts as, or to, the gap between life and phantasmaties or the virtual? Deleuze says,

Perhaps the highest object of art is to bring into play simultaneously all these repetitions, with their differences in kind and rhythm, their respective displacements and disguises, their divergences and decenterings; to embed them in one another and to envelop one or the other in illusions the 'effect' of which varies in each case (ibid).

The pathology of impulses conjured by amnesias or dissociative voids, which are not empty at all but filled with unspeakable unconsciousness affecting movement or psychic stillness, are the mechanics of an impaired memory struggling to retrieve/revive traumatizations in a sad attempt for humans to remember events of the past as if there were an imperative reason to re-create the past without a referent or inventing it. It is through the method of the arts as a distancing mechanism for witnessing by others or the art-maker-doer them self, to reveal and (re)produce a discovered or disputed re-creation as a matter of constructing personal or social identity/purpose it is the survivors' intrusive snips which disrupt cognition bringing rise to lost memory and mal-formed affect bringing rise to re- performances in the everyday or on the stage. "This means that the emotions attached to any particular experience play a major role in determining what cognitive schemes will be activated" (Van de Kolk, 1996:284). It is in the present context that the enactment of trauma triggered by environment is re- enacted in a fictive form, yet is felt or witnessed as a representation of what was/happened. It is in re-action, reaction, that the body moves into a shifted space, as a non- cognitive apparatus of transfer that continuously acquires shifting repertoire. Diana Taylor says,

Performances also replicate themselves through their own structures and codes. This means that the repertoire, like the archive, is mediated. The process of selection, memorization or internalization, and transmission takes places within (and in turn helps constitute) specific systems of re-presentation. Multiple forms of embodied acts are always present, though in a constant state of againness. They reconstitute themselves, transmitting communal memories, histories, and values from one group/generation to the

next (2007:20-21).

Transgenerational transmission of fictionalized memories re-performed in the context of a new time with and on new bodies (mal,mis-in)form social and political structures as a matter of narrativizing the past regardless of its real-ness, the transmission of knowledge happens (somatically) affectively, and cognitively.

Are the animalities of humanity so evident as embedded in the body that as much as we try to distinguish ourselves as human, rather than animal, in our expressions of traumatization in art forms we still rely on affective, somatic-reactive embodiments of memory, or forgotten unconsciousnesses, as the Truth of experience effecting the present by interjecting the new knowledge of the past through art-making as a bridge to knowledge despite its instability? Richard Shiff posits in his paper, *Art and Life-A Metaphoric Relationship*,

In addition to locating artistic activity on a metaphoric bridge between a perfected art and an evolving life, I wish to demonstrate that the work of art itself has been considered by modern critics and scholars both to embody the new truth of immediate experience, altering and extending the known world of the past, and, alternatively, to exhibit the established truth, the ideal or external; standard to which ongoing life experience must be related (1978:109).

In the embodied life experience that is 'ongoing' carrying the past, altered present as a remembered past, producing ongoing life, the body as the container, produces the narrative that makes the 'thing' count. Counting, as identification, identity, delineation, and possible distribution of changes and malformation, that shifts into a forever renewing(able) and synthesizing body that transfers one thing into the next time- thing, repeating until it is just right (f)or representing the metaphoricity endlessly not getting it right. Does it count anyway? Or does it remain as an un-counted(able) thing/person/human/event? In the aftermath/wake/trace of trauma a dizzying body remembers obsessively, trying to forget, or perhaps trying to remember so that it can be forgotten? Giovanni Lotti, MD states, "(According to Janet,) the working of human memory and consciousness is, basically, a creative act of meaning-making (the "personal synthesis"). By this work of personal synthesis, new meaningful experiences are continually integrated into the already existing cognitive-affective schemata of self knowledge" (1999:757). In the 'creative act of meaning-making' through art, and doing instead of thinking to remember, are we discovering a new way of thinking and speaking about a

forgotten past, as a result of our re-doing a representation of them in art forms as physical articulations of language being narrativized-produced by the body?

When the body re-enters philosophy as a figure for its own knowledge, it is not only a moving body but a moving organic body, and ultimately a moving human body: a body that is a series of articulated parts. The human body, as a figure for a self-knowing philosophy, is also the figure for the knowledge of a difference: the difference between pure philosophy and empirical discourse. The possibility of a self-knowing, self-referential system of discourse-the paradigm of theory as the knowledge of its independence from empirical referents-is contained in its self representation as a human body (Caruth, 1996:79).

Speaking of the body, or the body of speaking, again, as a container of pastnesses which are present, re-enacting, re-producing, fictioned imaginings of the past, from fractured and fragmented memory snips, stills, and running repetitions, as a re-creation or recreation, as a matter of repossessing non-fictional events, dismembered by psychic dissociations or pathological psychoses, in a performance of survivorships, un-tellings, or part tellings, enactments, and repetitions, again. "On the contrary, only if language is not always already communication, only if language bears witness to something to which it is impossible to bear witness, can a speaking being experience something like a necessity to speak" (Agamben, 2002:65).

In this case language is embodied and articulated affectively, biologically, bearing witness and telling in an incomprehensible linguistic expression. Yet, when each word (re)counts because each movement does, the body as (an) author of knowings brought back, and re-enacted, as metaphoricities to hide/protect the subject from its objectification as an inevitable act of transfer of something from something to something, change, imitation, re-covered, or uncovered; the container is sorrowfully not (in)disposable. Is it the pathological impulse of memory to revive itself through repetition as a means or method to move the body through an act of re-membering traumatization of the past in an act of contrived urgency to (de)stabilize identity, reliability of priority, or an obsession of authenticity in fear of the fraudulent tendency of memory as an unstable/unreliable source of "real" information, informing historicities and making the subject and the body a material lie-witness, which transfers across borders and time and becomes embedded, to secure a reliable history on which humanities and its social structures rely as true? Is the body, as a container of archived materialities a site or object of knowings and over-mis-enacted empty signifiers in search of difference as it re-

attaches in re-enactments, but also the container of intentional and unintentional fictions, as it becomes biologically impacted/ converted/diverted by environments and social political manipulations of images, rants, and political positionalities drenched in agendas which stray from happenings as a matter of supporting hegemony or surviving as a normalized subject, despite the continuous state? Ernest LaClau says, "(But) if what we are trying to signify is not a difference but, on the contrary, a radical exclusion which is the ground and condition of all differences, in that case, no production of one more difference can do the trick" (39).

In a performance of unscramblings that materialize in a whole system of signifiers and metaphor as a matter of embodied existence, in reaction to twenty years of forgettings or dissociative lies of untold events that are hidden in the body as fissured scars on the fibers of soft tissue affectively landing in the stilled, and silenced pregnant void of the abyssal unconscious, the body in its container(ed) action and non-action, and (re-un)production, is, was, does, passes, or doesn't, as human bodied actings in the first place, past, and re-enactings in the second (another past). Does it make re-enactments or repetitions in search of differentialities, narratives, or believabilities come closer to a believable truth or identity in the third? Does it create a space for witnessing embodied uncoverings which in the pasts' present blur into a rolling space of post-traumatic stress disorder, a named, albeit unreliably named yet relied upon, conditionality of psychic distress and/or trauma which is hidden or voided by witnesses- survivors who refuse to tell, because the dead can't, and bury the dead in concrete pavements covered by new masses of roadway, but really are a cemetery of uncounted/un-named bodies of humans who existed, but never did, because no-one ever re-enacted one thing about them, but enacted the happening in Shantilla?

KARANTINA

Karantina-a place, but now named a Palestinian massacre I witnessed-I was ten.....by my people-"Christians" who I thought were supposed to be godly; a child's memory, an adult memory that has over remembered the event and doesn't remember it being godly anymore.....Shantilla was more remembered, but never re-membered. I re-membered Karantina, so that it would have a chance of survival even though it didn't. I'm just wondering, because when I made *Landing On My Feet In Bits, In Pieces: Memories of*

War Zones, I was in search of my (a, any) memoir of possible happenings; to choreograph a (my) memory of what witnesses said never happened, and that my truth was a lie, that it (I) didn't matter- the past, which recurs in the present all the time, continuously evaporating into an erasure of two decades of things that did happen. I developed a score, little bits at a time, checking new resources, and relying on ephemerality and traces of disorganized, and muted(able) visceral somatics conjured from purged sources of my articulating, of the past in the (my) present, body, a re-enactment of it, from what is remembered, or imagined, which I apologized for to a friend from Palestine, who never knew her people, massacred, now in cement covered over by African immigrants who never told; Karantina, (n)ever existed-they're buried under the highway....we walked, still...walk on their bones... now dust; re-walking on the invisible which is (re) bringing to the present, to an obsession which holds guilt, shame, pathological obsession of knowing, still spinning....finding stability in the container- body-referent- memory of the past rumbling as present.

Even Stella, who can remember, refuses. She calls me a parable-maker. She was always jealous of you. She has a strain of dementia, and resists you and all other reality. Every vestige of former existence is an insult to her. Because she fears the past. As a result she has nothing. She sits and watches the present roll itself up into the past pre-quickly than she can bear (Ozick, 1980:41).

Enactments of tangled knowings between people and events, in the everyday, as we author a new present, enacting the same of the past, re-enacting in metaphoricities and representations, over enacting and voiding metaphor, as a matter of making it different.

Or, is it in re-enacting re-presentations in art, including writing-choreographed in letters or the body, of the referent that the disappearing in Lacan's *plus de metaphor* adding one more time, creating a blur, or evaporation, and a compossible pirating of the event in the first place? By closing night it was a different work (metaphor), either closer or further, or evaporated from my intention, yet still conjuring living experientialities, possible truths, and possible (de)uncarings from performers and spectators, in the last. Schechner says, "The field is the embodiment of potential, of the virtual, the imaginative, the fictive, the negative, the not not. The larger it gets, the more it thrills, but the more doubt and anxiety it evokes, too" (1985:113). What did I steal, anyway, from the archive to re-enact in performance that I can't remember, but that I re-membered so that I could tell?...Because I am still re-spinning possible in(ter)ventions-metaphoricities, so that they resemble truth, even though they are not, or not not.

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Rob Baum

How the body remembers and longs to forget: memory and trauma

What does it mean to remember, and why (or how) do we forget? Why are some memories traumatic, and why do they have so dire an effect on the body?

Memory is understood to be brain-based; yet the body (which incorporates the mind) is also a catchment for memory. Thus it is not that easy to forget. Some of our memories are shared, while factors such as disability, age and trauma are said to be 'hard-wired' into our 'systems.' Such a mechanistic view of the body can be useful, if it reminds us that the body is the key to any issue.

This is a discussion of how we make memory, its embodiment and neuro-science, and the effects of trauma, somatic and psychological, on memory and its embodiment.

How the body remembers and longs to forget: memory and trauma

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In the deep dark of remembering

Memory is a curious thing. We speak of memory as if it is something outside ourselves, something faceted and tangible. In objectifying it, we lose sight of the essence of memory, which lies in its mysteriousness. Memory is an abstraction for something unknown and unsighted, like sirens of the deep: we have a sense of something lurking beneath the surface of our lives and thoughts, something with substance and form, but this is completely conjecture, based on what we have been told of mythical creatures. Memory, like the mermaid, is a useful idea, a kind of container for the notion of remembrance. This notion gives shape and colour to the past. Without memory, there is no past.

Memory interests us because it is unknowable: we do not know what memories we possess until they ‘come to mind.’ And we cannot rely upon our memories precisely because they do not *always* spring into consciousness; there are gaps, sudden absences in memory, like black holes in space, and like those vacuums we do not understand where the material which may have once populated them has taken itself. There are also instances of absence, when a memory on which we have counted (as when we have brought concentration to bear, in memorizing for a test or a meeting) does not appear. In English we talk of ‘drawing a blank,’ which might be mistaken for an evocation of creative failure, such as ‘writer’s block.’ But I think this phrase has issued from the world of artillery, where to draw a blank is to find oneself unequipped, undefended, raw and vulnerable in the face of an army. In this regard, the enemy is oneself, the soldier unable to soldier. What a peculiar way to articulate the failure of memory: an empty weapon. Yet our memories are what keep us whole.

I have a memory of what it is to be burned on the skin of the body. I am no more than five years old, because we are living in the ‘old house,’ from which we moved during my fifth year. It is a Sunday, and we have returned from *shul*. I know this because our lunch is especially diverse: the table is crowded with food of all kinds, the *smorgasbord* my mother prefers to any other kind of meal—dark and light bread, hunks of cheese, tins of sardines. This is evidence, usually kept out of sight, of a European palate. And this may be why we always eat this way after returning from Sunday School, but at no other time. There is even a white candle on the table, or the stub of one, my mother’s indication of the festive quality of the meal. At this point my eldest sister reaches across the table for the cottage cheese, and burns her wrist on the candle’s flame.

Strangely, my mother has no memory of this. Odder still, my sister has no memory of the moment, although it is *her* arm that is injured. In fact no one remembers the incident apart from me. But I have never doubted the veracity of the memory, because of its vividness. I see the carton of cottage cheese, with its black markings, which I now realise must have spelled out the product’s name. I see the speed with which she snatches back her arm, and the red mark at the wrist. Above all, I *smell her skin*: I can never mistake the smell of burning flesh. This constitutes a foundational memory—the elemental understanding of temperature and its consequences to the body; this provides a ‘sense memory,’ making me informed and fearful of fire. There is also, presumably, a ‘muscle memory’ (Friedman 2005), not mine but my sister’s: the embedded knowledge that one must move quickly when one is burning.¹

My mother has a different memory, of the time the baby was burned during a ride on the back of Dad’s motorcycle. ‘You came back,’ she says, ‘with your little foot burned from the gas tank.’ She is speaking of me. Yet despite the fact that this happened to *me*, I have no memory of such an event. That my father gave up his Harley Davidson was the

¹ Yet there is also an embodied lesson for the direct witness: mirror neurons would help to embed such knowledge in the vicarious body (Bavelas *et al.* 1986, Gump, *et al.* 1997).

tragedy of my childhood. To this day the sound of one revving up gives me shivers of adoration.

Each of these memories is ‘real,’ in that someone remembers it as a reflection of an event that could have happened, and likely did happen. Each of the memories functions as an educative or even moral tool, explaining how bodily injury occurs in the most casual of domestic settings, even in the company of adults who seek to protect children from harm. Each memory reports on an experience of minor bodily insult.

And in pairing these memories, I can elicit something more: a paradigm of how trauma works. Trauma has physical, mental and emotional components, and they are inseparable from each other. I point this out because there is a tendency to speak of psychological trauma as if it can exist without a body to house it. Although traumatic memory is said to be stored in the amygdala, a part of the limbic system or reptilian brain, it is by dint of its cranial location stored in the body. But there is an additional—primary, not secondary—embodiment of traumatic memory, and this is in the greater portion of the body commonly referred to as such—by which I mean the body apart from the head. Of course I know such divisions are entirely arbitrary, historically driven by earlier philosophers such as Descartes, whose theorem ‘I think: therefore I am’ has given us untold trouble, as well as delight. After all, to bring such a concept to the study of existence—in his time ruled over by theologians—is nothing short of inspired. Yet this same concept has been translated as dividing the thinking spot from the doing or being spot, that is, it has produced the ‘Cartesian duality’ known as ‘mind’ and body,’ as if they were discrete entities. Yet they cannot be extricated from each other, and trauma demonstrates this unity.

In the memories recited, there is a physical phenomenon, the memory of pain and anguish. Yet in neither case is the bodily pain remembered by its recipient: rather, a witness or, in the case of the motorbike, a third-party not present at the original trauma event, relates the tale, complete with feeling. This is called Vicarious Trauma, Secondary Trauma or, in its advanced condition, Compassion Fatigue. In both cases, the original

recipient of the pain has apparently *repressed* it. This is a common feature of trauma, believed to be a deliberate and necessary strategy (on the part of the ego) to maintain itself in an intact state. Typically, occurrences immediately surrounding the traumatic event, and almost invariably those occurring subsequent to the injury, are seemingly erased. The memory is simply unavailable to the subject; even if there are witnesses to describe what happened from their points of view, the subject of the trauma has virtually no recollection.

When the traumatic event does threaten to de-stabilise the ego, the ego may create an intervention in the guise of an additional personality (Farbairn 1950, Grostein 1981); this serves to keep the consciousness in an apparent state of order and mundane function. But (thankfully) splitting of the consciousness is only one avenue to repression, and not taken by everyone (Hagendoorn 2005); another means of repression is a ‘simpler’ blocking out of the memory, or a part of it, that black hole of the psyche. Thus I recall—vividly—the food, the flame, my sister’s arm, while she has no recollection of any part of the event (perhaps even such meals seem a fiction to her) and declares this as another indication of my over-active imagination. My mother recalls—with great sympathy—her daughter’s burning flesh, while I (who must have been there) have managed to make any negative association with motorcycles disappear. My mother, who also loved motorcycles, remembers the injury; as a result when I turn up in her kitchen with crutches, my mother blames a motorbike.

In this way, memory becomes constructed: I take on and even seem to accept, a memory of having been burned (although it is not mine); similarly, I wholly accept and incorporate, the memory of what it is to have been burned (a memory which belongs to me alone, but is not ‘mine’). Cixous (1997) makes such a distinction in regards to family memory, the memory of others which becomes one’s own. And memory is shown to be ‘real,’ whether it is recounted by the subject or by a witness.

But there is another, extremely common, feature of trauma that pertains to its re-telling. Apart from the question of whether the subject *remembers* the trauma (first-hand), there

is the difficulty of being able to express it. When it *is* remembered, gross trauma confers a lack of articulation. Thus Adorno (1949) suggests that there can be no more writing of poetry after Auschwitz, and Steiner (1967) submits that silence is the only conceivable response to such horror. Trauma is not only incapacitating, it is ineffable, literally inhibiting the body's ability to speak of what has occurred. While this may appear to be a form of repression, it is more consistent with the effects of actual injury to the brain, in which the speech centre is knocked out of operation. In such a damaged state, the brain literally cannot produce language to describe the events.

Of course, not every survivor wants to communicate about the event. Social conditioning has produced a 'nature' (which is not entirely 'natural') to maintain a silence; this has traditionally been the manner expected of males. But even when one desires to share, through recitation, horrors one has personally endured, the capacity for language seems to be impeded. The language disappears. Dori Laub explains:

On the one hand, the survivors felt the need to bear witness, to be heard by empathetic listeners and thus to rejoin the human community. But there was at the same time, an even stronger feeling that the past could not be mended and that one's experiences were too terrible to reveal even to willing listeners. This past was for many a present reality; their fear that fate would strike again was central to their memories of trauma and their inability to narrate it. The trauma of the Holocaust was an event outside normal reality with no beginning and no end; ever present and unmasterable. As a result, the imperative to tell was hindered by the impossibility of telling (Laub 2022, p.78).

In order to protect the psyche, the narrative must be restricted, kept from coming to surface.

One might think of it as the brain competing with itself, for a prize it is assured of simultaneously winning and losing: the success of the narrative would be the value of social interaction, and the sense of sharing a heavy burden. But the loss—far greater,

though still unconscious—is that the psyche would deteriorate still further, that it could not tolerate such an admission. This is because

(t)rauma not only taxes human cognitive capacities to their limits but also reinforces the natural human tendency to avert one's eyes from the center of the traumatic experience, to overlook details, to misperceive, and most of all, to fail to comprehend. These failures of perception and comprehension are often necessary defenses related to self-preservation. Consequently, however, the record of traumatic events is often fragmentary and those events, which are transmitted, completely lose their essence because the core is missing (Laub 2002, p.65).

The theft of expression, the silencing of an individual's ability to articulate experience, is only one way trauma marks the body.² This feature is particularly pernicious as the failure to speak separates the individual from others, inhibiting the benefits of social interaction to 'bring a person back' from an event that otherwise continues to play out as if recurring. Society therefore becomes increasingly alien and frightening. And the inability to speak is an ability to *know*, to give language to thought: thus the individual's experience of trauma is compounded by its mysterious strength, the trick of re-appearing unbidden at any moment. This kind of recurrence, which we call Post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), exerts a de-humanizing force upon the body and society.

Other hallmarks of trauma and PTSD are invisible, at least initially: these manifest at the cellular level. The body's chemistry alters (Rothschild 2000). Hormones, those regulators of sleep, mood and sustenance, begin to dysfunction. The body experiences an increasing desire to anaesthetize, insulate and isolate. Pain is intensified. Depression may set in, which further lowers the body's thresholds of pain. Mental processes slow down. It would seem that the body's felt need to maintain vigilance and defend itself from attack diverts energy from other processes and functions. Thus it may become more difficult to make decisions, especially ones involving complex cognitive reasoning. And this grossly, dramatically, affects the organization of the body.

² I have taken up this issue elsewhere; see for instance Baum 2010.

Although the changes I've described happen at the microscopic level, they have catastrophic effects upon the individual, the family, and the community. Trauma spreads like a virus across generations. Although the concept of inter-generational trauma transmission is now accepted, Jung is one of the first to have suggested the phenomenon of a 'collective unconscious,' and the way it might control the psyche of the future.³

Stress speeds the ageing process so that, as the body's physiological functions are inhibited or arrested, the body prematurely ages. Trauma wears down defences, debilitates the system, like water inexorably rushing over stone.

The task of forgetting

How do we forget, why must we forget, and why do we long to forget? Experimentation suggests that trauma, in its temporal (capacity to return the victim to the time of the original trauma event, is a right-brain activity. This is interesting, given that the right brain is conventionally associated with creativity—the production of art, the generation of something new. Memory is thus seen to be artful, a re-creation of an event.

The right brain is associated with the visual and spatial information and analysis, the left with language processing (the Broca and Wernicke areas). The frontal lobe, as Lucian found, activates 'forecasting': the ability to solve new problems, essentially what is considered 'intellectual activity' as compared with stored knowledge.

Bremner (1974) uses a concept of time to differentiate two feelings, anxiety and depression. He observes that just as the feeling of anxiety is associated with the idea that something bad is going to happen, so the feeling of depression is associated with the idea that something bad has already happened. Implicit here is the concept that time differentiates feelings, as contrasted with the view that that feelings give character to time (Schiffer 8).

³ See Jung 1959.

Memory is glued to time. So many elements interfere in the making of memory that it is a wonder we have memories at all. Little is known about how and why memories are made, although conjecture associates the making of memory with evolutionary forces, which is to say, features of biological survival. Bert States (1997) has asked similar questions about the purpose of dreams. Therefore a memory of the consequences of walking into a dark alley, where one was once beset by violent men, pre-disposes the individual to avoid that alley, or even *such* alleys, although the leap from that alley to all dark alleys occurs through cognitive reasoning, not from memory itself. Thus it can be seen that even memory-making, and memory-keeping, is inflected by memory-usage, the ability to turn that memory to useful properties, rather than simply have it take up storage, somewhere.

Where does memory reside? While distinct portions of the brain seem to be reserved for various functions, the absence of or injury to those areas does not always eradicate the ability to perform tasks associated with those areas. Therefore a brain area such as Wernicke's area for speech/vocalisation, or Broca's for complex speech mnemonic functions is understood to facilitate speech and the 'memory' (if we can call it that) of *how* to produce speech. Yet in some cases individuals with injuries to those areas have been known to be capable, or become capable, of speech, notwithstanding the injury to that part.

The hippocampus has been affiliated with memory laid down under 'normal' circumstances; the amygdala is associated with traumatic memories, those generated during stressful events. Laboratory experiments run by Alexander Luria, Karl Lashley, and Wilder Penfield, to name only a few, have pin-pointed these areas. Symptoms of trauma exhibited as the syndrome of PTSD are right brain situated, mediated by limbic and paralimbic systems, and occur within the amygdala (Rauch and Shin 1997, p.89)—accompanied by a concomitant decrease in size of the hippocampal area (van der Kolk *et al.* 1997, p.107). These psychopathic 'hotspots' are visible with neuro-imaging. Yet Karl Pribram's work (following Lashley's) indicates that damage to most areas of the

brain does not, as formerly maintained, destroy most memory; instead, memory appears to be distributed throughout the brain. That this is the case has been accepted: memory is 'holographic.' *Why* this should be so is not yet known. Is this the brain's insurance of ultimate survival? Or is it due to the complex organization of the rest of the body, whose operating functions are dispersed across the brain?

Because of this holographic structure, however, it should be clear that forgetting is not as easy as we think. Sure, it seems so when I cannot find the key to the front door, the toothbrush I used last night, or the cup of tea I was just drinking. But if storage is generalised rather than localised, as Pribham demonstrates, then does it not follow that mnemonic associations also occur throughout the brain—granting each memory a longer life, by virtue of its relationships. The activity of attempting to forget is passive yet active, and affected by a fairly vast array of neuro-chemicals. These chemicals occur 'naturally' (from the brain's own functions) and from chemicals introduced into the system—substances largely intended to interfere with the act of remembering. Used often enough, even in clinical proportions, these substances may lead to addictions, further hampering cognitive function as well as the capacity for emotional relating. Traumatic memory, however it may be dampened, manages to re-surface.

Thus it would seem that the capacity to actually forget may be accidental, a matter of locational mishap in the brain rather than intent. As Freud noted,

Wishful impulses which have never passed beyond the Id, but impressions too, which have been sunk into the Id by repression, are virtually immortal: after the passage of decades they behave as if they had just occurred (1966, pg 74).

Perhaps memory is something to escape, reflecting the past, and holding us down in it.

So I remember now the moment at which my sister's arm races back. I see the cheese container, plastic and white, and remember that in my childhood we ate Knudsen's cottage cheese, which was then packaged in a bright pink waxy cardboard. So I have changed that shape. I see the candlestick holder, with its brightly painted ceramic

pansies, and realise that Oma may have presented this to my mother years later. I see my sister, the red raw skin, which could not have blistered so quickly, and I feel the calmness of a meal, continuing after this moment as if nothing had happened. There is no sound, which cannot be 'real.' In the absence of a moment to follow the burning, I have substituted the memory of other Sundays, when pain did not grace the table. Thus even this foundational memory, the embedded and embodied understanding of the power of fire, is suspect, a matter of co-creation and construction. I know it is a memory, *my* memory, but I don't know what that means.

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Flow, disappearance and grace: the “labour and pain of endless and liminal passing” in performance

Richard Schechner’s (2006: 97) idea of “flow” (the feeling of losing oneself in an action so that all awareness of anything other than performing the action disappears) is explored in this paper by means of questioning and deconstructing the authenticity of theatrical presence of a labouring body/artwork: a body that deliberately performs presence and absence, visibility and invisibility, appearance and disappearance, acting and not acting. By deconstructing “the performing body’s presence” one becomes aware of the intricate dialectics of appearance and disappearance which ironically makes the performing body self-reflexive and self-aware. As performance theorist Peggy Phellan (1996:150) writes: In performance, the body is metonymic of self, of character, of voice, of “presence”. But in the plenitude of its apparent visibility and availability, the performer actually disappears and represents something else – dance, movement, sound, character, “art”. This paper reconsiders the performance, representation and reproduction of the “something else” (rather than the theatrical self) by comparing Marina Abramovic’s performance piece of 8 hours, Freeing the body (1975) and Jean-Baptiste-Simon Chardin’s painting Soap bubble (1735-40). The theatrical self disappears and an antitheatrical self-awareness, or self-forgetting, appears through the “labour and pain of endless and liminal passing” (to quote Phellan from another context). The deconstruction of authentic presence of the performing body involves the body’s performance of time, labour, mindedness and “flow” that is required for the antitheatrical act which art historian Michael Fried calls grace.

Flow, disappearance and grace: the “labour and pain of endless and liminal passing” in performance.

Magriet Botha

The performing body is simultaneously an entity and nonentity that is visible and invisible, present and absent, that appears and disappears; it flows from the dialectics of theatricality and anti-theatricality, self-awareness and unawareness, acting and not acting. This paper reconsiders the performance, representation and reproduction of “something else” (Phelan 1996:150), rather than the theatrical self, by comparing Marina Abramovic’s performance piece of 8 hours, *Freeing the body* (1975) and Jean-Baptiste-Simon Chardin’s painting, *Soap bubble* (1735-40). The theatrical self disappears and an anti-theatrical self-awareness, or self-forgetting, appears through the “labour and pain of endless and liminal passing” (Phelan 1996:153). The deconstruction of authentic presence of the performing body involves the body’s performance of taking time, labour, mindedness and “flow” that is required for the anti-theatrical act which art historian Michael Fried calls grace. But what does it take for the presence of the performing body to reach the state of anti-theatricality, presentness and grace?

One can say that all artworks are theatrical: they are objects made to be seen, to be exhibited and to be engaged with interactively by viewers from different social, political and cultural backgrounds. This is also true for performance art, which involves theatrical acts done in front of an audience or in spaces that demands the attention of onlookers (which can be read on a similar level to Michael Fried’s critique of what he calls “literalist art” (Fried 1960: 214-240) whose nature is essentially theatrical). Even if the performance is done in a secluded space where the only audience might be the private eye of a video-recorder; the performative documentation becomes part of the public sphere, but Fried already pointed out in several of his texts¹ that artworks (in spite of their inherent theatricality) can be anti-theatrical.

¹ *Absorption and theatricality: painting and beholder in the age of Diderot* (1980) and his article “Art and objecthood” (1967).

Anti-theatrical performativity entails self-awareness and self-referentiality of the artwork or performance piece, which is achieved through the apparent cancelling of spectatorship. According to Fried's theory an artwork is anti-theatrical when it appears as if the figures represented are unaware, or independent from, the spectator: the artwork does not act for an audience. On the other hand, the denial of spectatorship through a representation's metaphorical turning of its back on the spectator is a conscious, even theatrical action; the subject acts unaware. For example, Cornelius Gijsbrechts's *Back of a painting* (1670 – 75) (Figure 1), shows the back of a painting, painted in *trompe l'oeil* style. It is self-conscious, because the painting is *performing painting*: the painting is performatively showing and



Fig. 1 Cornelius Nobertus Gijsbrechts (1610-1675). *Back of a painting* (ca.1670-5). Oil on canvas, 66 x 86.5 cm. Kobenvahn: Statens Museum vir Kunst. <www.ivarhagendoorm.com>

hiding its own being and coming to be in the world. And the viewer of this painting is willingly participating in the self-conscious game of showing and hiding, seeing and not seeing, acting and not acting. The relationship between theatricality and anti-theatricality, or self-awareness and unawareness is therefore essentially dialectical: it

is conflicting negation (Buck-Morris, 1977:185) and affirmation, which lends a dynamic structure to the complex relation and role of the artwork and the viewer in the process of becoming and disappearance in/of an artwork.

Richard Schechner refers to Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi, who used the term “flow” to describe the feeling of “losing oneself in an action so that all awareness of anything other than performing the action disappears” (2006: 97). Schechner’s idea of “flow” is explored in this paper in terms of appearance and disappearance as a dialectical phenomenon of the anti-theatrical performing artwork: a meta-representative, performative construction and deconstruction; a body that deliberately performs presence and absence, visibility and invisibility.

By deconstructing “the performing body’s presence” — the materiality of the painting or the labour of the moving body — one becomes aware of the intricate dialectics of appearance and disappearance which ironically makes the performing body self-reflexive and self-aware. As performance theorist Peggy Phelan writes:

In performance, the body is metonymic of self, of character, of voice, of “presence”. But in the plenitude of its apparent visibility and availability, the performer actually disappears and represents something else – dance, movement, sound, character, “art”. (1996:150)

To “represent something else” other than the “presence” or theatrical self, dialectical speaking demands a self-reflexivity or self-awareness from the artwork, dance or text [This self-reflexivity might also be read in the words of Mieke Bal in terms of performativity: “Art performs; so does writing; so does the looking we write about and with.” (1999: 120)]. The performer appears and disappears and becomes art; the writer appears and disappears and becomes text: the labouring, self-aware artwork appears in its disappearance.



Fig. 2 Jean-Baptiste-Simon Chardin (1699-1779). *Soap Bubble* (1735-40). Oil on canvas, 61 x 63 cm. Washington, D.C: National Gallery of Art. www.sandstead.com

Jean-Baptiste-Simeon Chardin's painting, *Soap bubble* (1735-40) (Figure 2), is the embodiment not of "time wasted but of time *filled*" (Fried, 1980:51) through graceful anti-theatrical labour. Performativity in this artwork might be read as the artwork's apparent self-awareness of its own coming to be while performing or representing something else; exactly at the point when we expect the bubble that the boy concentrating on blowing to burst into nothingness. It is a picture of concentrated tightrope walking between becoming and nothingness, appearing and disappearing, of the flow of time and its mesmerising stoppage. The artwork balances at the edge of the abyss.

A young man is playfully engaging in the trivial amusing act of blowing bubbles from a blowpipe, while his small friend is curiously watching from behind the windowsill. In the attempt to create the perfect bubble, the young man is absorbed in his act, self-forgetful and lost in reverie (Pippin, 2005:578). Though, it seems as if it is the soap

bubble itself (Figure 3) (and not so much the physical presence and activity of the boy) through which we can read the contained concentration of the boy and by extension, we can read the artwork as a self-reflexive representation of a fleeting world that appears and disappears, in and like a wet soap bubble. Thus the boy's concentrated blowing produces a reflexive and self-reflexive world, while we empathetically see our own concentration proleptically mirrored in him and our world in the bubble.



Fig. 3 Jean-Baptiste-Simon Chardin (1699-1779). Detail of *Soap Bubble* (1735-40).
Oil on canvas, 61 x 63 cm. Washington, D.C: National Gallery of Art.

Typically 17th century, as in Hendrick Andriessen's still life painting, *Vanitas* (ca 1650) (Figure 4), the soap bells (together with a skull, jewels, flowers, candleholder and other objects) as a *Vanitas* emblem signifies transience, nothingness and ultimately disappearance. According to Fried, it seems as if the "transparent, slightly distended globe at the tip of the young man's blowpipe seems almost to swell and tremble before our eyes" (1980:50) in Chardin's painting. Thus, the soap bell suggests time: as in flow, concentration, extension and protraction, projection and absorption. It is in the suspended flow of the soap bell that the boy's



Fig. 4 Hendrick Andriesson (1607-1655). *Vanitas* (ca 1650). Oil on canvas.

anti-theatrical (because he seems oblivious of being or seeing) attention is being focused. As Fried suggests, Chardin's paintings depict the "actual duration of the absorptive states and activities represent[ed]" (1980:49), or in other words, there seems to be a "natural pause in die action which, we feel, will recommence a moment later" (Fried, 1980:50). In the suspended moment of the flow of the soap bell, the viewer's absorption or attentiveness is encapsulated through the heightened input that is being demanded from the viewer's imagination: the focus is on the swelling soap bell and the viewer holds his/her breath for the moment in which it will burst.

The soap bell not only reflects a vague representation of worldly materiality, but it lends important performative content towards the transience of the material world, and possibilities of "short-lived" (Fried, 1980: 43) consciousness. The soap bell becomes an allegory of the artwork as being a reflection and representation of the world, which gives the artwork a self-aware, meta-representational quality. This self-reflexivity becomes performative when the representation of absorption is read as labour: the boy blowing bubbles is a self-reflexive performance of the labour of painting. As Fried says: "[...] Chardin found in the absorption of his figures both a natural correlative for his own engrossment in the act of painting and a proleptic

mirroring of what he trusted would be the absorption of the beholder before the finished work.” (1980: 51)

In this self-aware painting, performing its own dialectical being in the world, being always teetering at the edge of nothingness, there is a –salient detail that functions as a sign of the figure’s obliviousness to everything but the operation he [...] is intent upon performing” (Fried, 1980:47). This sign is the tear in the young man’s jacket, used by Chardin to manifest the depth of absorption to the beholder. This sign is dialectical, as it figures that what was inside (mindful absorption, self-forgetting) is now outside (a performative play with the absorptive possibilities of the beholder): the theatrical appearance, or acted out presence disappears and it becomes anti-theatrical presentness (as opposed to the acting out of presence) – a graceful performance of a state of being.

Marina Abramovic’s head covered in a black scarf in her performance *Freeing the body* (1975) (Figure 5) might be read on a similar level as Chardin’s tear in the jacket – a visual attempt to show disinterestedness, being lost in reverie, or the absorptive anti-theatrical act that evokes timeless, weightless grace. But there is something distinctly theatrical in this veiling of the performing subject.

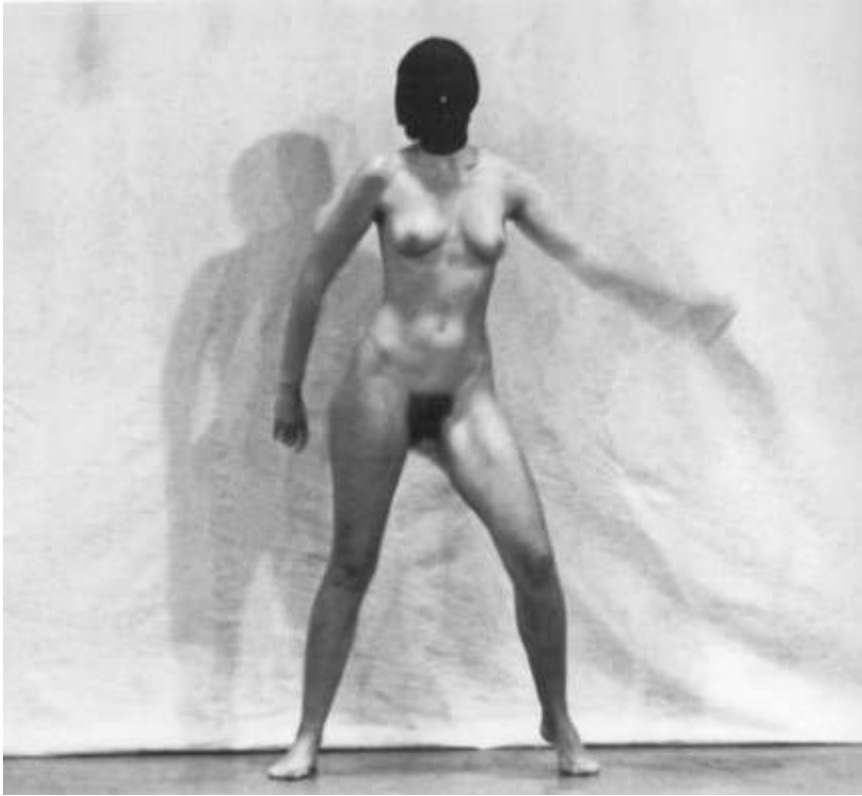


Fig. 5 Marina Abramovic. (1946-) *Freeing the body* (1975). Performance, 8 Hours.
Kunstlerhaus Bethanien, Berlin. (Biesenbach 2010: 88-89)

The duration of this performance is a “marathon effort” (Spector, 2010: 39) of eight hours, in which, similar to the viewer holding his/her breath for the moment the bubble will burst in Chardin’s *Soap bubble*, the viewer holds his/her breath for the moment in which she will collapse. A naked Abramovic moves to the rhythm of an African drummer. She moves until she is completely exhausted, “imposing her signature commitment to endurance-in-the-extreme” (Spector, 2010: 37) and then, unlike Chardin’s bubble that we never see bursting, she falls (Figure 6).



Fig. 6 Marina Abramovic. (1946-) *Freeing the body* (1975). Performance, 8 Hours.
Kunstlerhaus Bethanien, Berlin. (Biesenbach 2010: 88-89)

At first one is impressed by Abramovic's ritualistic endurance and Schechner's idea of "flow", or "the feeling of losing oneself in the action so that all awareness of anything other than performing the action disappears" (Schechner, 2006: 97), and hence Fried's idea of anti-theatricality immediately comes to mind. If one rethinks the performing body's presence (the acted out presence), bearing in mind the intricate dialectics of appearance and disappearance which ironically makes the performing body self-reflexive and self-aware — in order to unravel the question of what it takes for the presence of the performing body to reach the state of anti-theatricality, presentness and grace — one has to confront the problematic issue of the theatricality of Abramovic's performing body.

The replacement of the canvas by performance-art in the 1960's and 1970's as arena for artistic action, is in itself theatrical, for example: Jackson Pollock's (Figure 7) "heroic" (Warr, 2000: 50) artistic activity in the 1950's, in which the painting became the material embodiment of an event, as opposed to Carolee Schneemann's performance *Meat joy* (Figure 8) in 1964 that is an excessive, indulgent celebration of

flesh as material. The grotesque display of Abramovic's naked post-modernistic body (that might be a key point of Fried's critique of essentially theatrical literalism) as an "object to explore her physical and mental limitations" that gains "edge and power when presented through the medium of the naked female body of the artist" (Danto, 2010: 29) is theatrical. Though, in Abramovic's performance, the black scarf apparently cancels spectatorship. At first, the extended time of the performance might be seen as another theatrical aspect: repetitiveness and typical endless hours of demonstrating the seriousness of artistic intentions was quite common among early performance art. (For example, Gilbert and George's performance, *The singing sculpture* (1970) (Figure 9), which they performed continually for seven hours a day for five consecutive days.)

On the other hand, Abramovic's performance becomes deliberately anti-theatrical by means of repetitive, laborious and time consuming acts, as Abramovic herself stated in an interview for ARTnews (Yablonsky, 2009) that "[...]time is so necessary: the public needs time to get the point". Gerhard Schoeman² writes in another context about the fragile time it takes to be mindful of the shared experience of time:

One is never wholly witness to it; neither is one wholly lost to it. Time draws the observer and observed in; at the same time as observer and observed lose track of the detail in the whole, and vice versa. Time runs out, in the exact moment of re-cognition.

Abramovic's extended time also visualises Peggy Phelan's statement: "What becomes apparent in performance is the labour and pain of this endless and liminal passing" (1996: 153). This liminal passing, which we also experience in Chardin's *Soap*

² Personal email correspondence with Gerhard Schoeman, 19 November 2007.



Fig. 7 Jackson Pollock (1912-1956). *Painting in his studio* (ca.1951). East Hampton. (Warr 2000: 50)



Fig. 8 Carolee Schneeman (1939-). *Meat joy* (1964). Performance, Paris. (Warr 2000: 60)



Fig. 9 Gilbert and George (1943 & 1942-). *The singing sculpture* (1970). Performance, Nigel Greenwood Gallery, London. (Warr 2000: 82)

bubble, has the possibility of producing firstly self-reflexivity, and secondly the dialectical coming into being of appearance and disappearance; being as that which emerges or flows from the process of appearing and disappearing. The self-absorption of the performing, labouring body — the body working hard to forget itself — might become self-reflexive when the endless liminal passing or flow is pointing towards something else. For instance, in Pipilotti Rist's dancing body in, *I'm not the girl who misses much* (1985) (Figure 10) (that seems to be a direct reference to Abramovic's performance) is shivering on the liminal edge between distortion, veiling and flow of digital material, and on the other hand the manipulation of time being slowed down and accelerated to the point of alienation — the artwork is pointing towards its own origin as process of appearing and disappearing.



Fig. 10. Pipilotti Rist (1962 -). *I'm not the girl who misses much* (1986). Single channel video, 4 min. Zürich: Galerie Hauser&Wirth.

www.qag.qld.gov.au/cinematheque/cinema_resources

In any case, the depiction of absorption would not be persuasive —if it did not at least convey the idea that the state or activity in question was sustained for a certain length of time” (Fried, 1980:49). Within this idea of extended time lies the self-reflexivity of the performance: *the performance's absorption in itself*, so to speak. In this self-reflexivity of the performance itself, the act of disappearance of the performing body sets in through the labour and pain of endless and liminal passing. Then, as Phelan

writes the ~~performance~~'s being...becomes itself through disappearance" (1996: 146). Through this process of performing under erasure (as in Rist's digital disappearance and Abramovic's unconscious body), the body becomes an instrument or medium: an alienation of the artist's subjectivity (that disappears momentarily) takes place and through that it represents something else. This something else, might be the artwork or performance pointing inwards towards itself: not a present/presented image, but a self-image.

The video or photographic recording of performance art, or the representation of representation — ~~given~~ that its status as moving reflection of the world is ultra-thin and precarious at best" (Schoeman, 2009:1) — is a further process of becoming something else. Similar to the soap bubble in Chardin's painting, that is an ultra-thin reflection of the world as well as the artwork's being, the ~~video~~ work too swells and shivers on the edge of disappearance" (Schoeman, 2009:1). Because ~~performance~~'s only life is in the present" (Phelan, 1996: 146), and, the reciprocal appearance and disappearance in performance art might be found in the temporality thereof, the performance's reproducibility entails a dialectical nature of self-affirmation and self-cancellation. Documentation, photos, video-recordings, still-images, written text and the memory of the beholder, are the only traces that exist as proof of the happenings. But, as performance art ~~becomes~~ itself through disappearance" (Phelan, 1996: 146), we are reminded of Walter Benjamin's statement that the origin is ~~that~~ which emerges from the process of becoming and disappearance" (Didi-Huberman, 2005: 4). One might then say that the recording or reproduction of performance's ontology — as process based art that happens once only — involves a repetition that both cancels and affirms the fleeting moment in which acting is replaced by grace.

What is this grace? Does it depend on the beholder? During the laborious and painful eight hours of Abramovic's performance, as well as in the suspended moment of flow of Chardin's soap bubble, both performer and viewer experience *Jetztzeit*-moments of Walter Benjamin's now-time of readings and viewings in which time comes to a stand-still, every time anew. Mieke Bal (2007)³ writes:

³ Paper presented at the conference EncuentroII Migratory politics of the Migratory, Amsterdam, Holland, September 19-21, 2007.

It is the “now-time”, of the viewer, the existence and significance of which the latter is hardly aware. Each moment of viewing takes one such instant – between the ticks of the watch, a dark [*Vanitas*] moment between the flashes or ordinary life – and captures it, in an image, a frame, a slowed-down or sped-up sequence, where it then lingers. (Bal, 2007)

Images or performances of “time not wasted but of time filled” (Fried, 1980: 51) becomes a performative play with the absorptive possibilities of the viewer, given that the process of acting and not acting points towards something else: the dialectical movement between self-awareness and unawareness. In now-time flow and anti-theatricality becomes *obli de soi*, presentness and grace, because for that moment we are suspended between being and disappearance and nothingness, like the bubble in Chardin’s self-aware painting or the endless and liminal passing in Abramovic’s performance.

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Illustrations

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Catherine Cole

One: A Meditation on Disability, Dance, and Loss

This presentation is a spoken word poem that is a meditation on duplicity, loss, and discovery — discovery that one has a body just as it begins to disappear, discovery that one yearns to dance but learns this only when locomotion becomes seemingly impossible. The author is an amputee who lost her entire left leg to cancer as an adult. Cole turned to poetry to render in highly compressed form a big story: a tale about a cancer diagnosis, dissociation, trauma, memories of ballet and dancing with her father, and the embodied experience of being a monopod in a bipedal world. It is a story about suddenly, unexpectedly, late in life learning to cultivate qualities of a dancer—balance, flexibility, stamina, and coordination—just to fold the laundry. This poem is a creative answer to the well-worn question, "What happened to you?" It is a poem about a dance on one leg.

Two

Catherine M. Cole

Once there were two
always together
Where one went the
other followed Like
twins
so alike
one could hardly tell them apart
They usually dressed in the same clothes

Once there were two
lock step — day in, day out
When flirting they might cross
one poised on top
the other squashed below
feet tangled — no longer clear
who was who
A toe of one probed flesh of the other
one pointed starboard the
other curled behind
Pause, wiggle,
pins and needles,
unfurl,
repeat

They would climb mountains sometimes
Here's how:
one knee would bend
pull forward
a foot thud barely heard
on dry powder
dust billows up
sending a signal
calling her sister Dirt
clinging to skin
dappled with freckles
blushing in the sun
with a pink
not unlike the pink
on a little girl's tutu
One thigh leads, beckons, and holds
enduring the weight of herself
and her sister

and everything above
everything that held them together the
one who controlled what they did and
yet seemed so unaware
of what made it all possible.

("All" being to move
ambulate
loco mote.

"Loco" being not "crazy"
but motion from a place
from here to there
from A to B.)

So confident were the sisters in each other
they rarely paused
First one, then the other
Right-left-right-left-right:
striding in rhythm
and every once in a while
just for fun
a hop.

This is a story about legs.

As one leads, the other follows
Foot arching, weight shifting:
forward to toe
briefly suspended
Glutes —
long strands of fiber —
stretch and contract.
The one lands, as did her sister
Then the thigh
like a soloist rising
isolated from a sea of sound
contracts, lifts, beckons,
assumes the weight
of everything

In the thigh are quads. Quads come in fours: rectus femoris, vastus lateralis, vastus medialis, vastus intermedius. The vastuses are "vast", you see. But they are also delicate, nestled on top of each other as pedals on an unfurled bud. In the center, hidden below like a stamen is the femur. (Fer: to carry, bear, bring. Faci: a sheet of fibrous tissue.) Slip and slide. Slip and slide. Bone and muscle, flesh and blood: viscous.

Sisters
Twins
Two
always together
yet apart from the rest
Who controlled them?
The one who hardly ever gave them a thought
So separate, remote, were they from she
who had become lately more and more absorbed in
crossing and unfurling ideas and words
long words like
 "hegemony,"
 "transculturation,"
 "instantiation,"
 "sublimation,"
 "dissociation."
Her tongue slinging "tions" and "isms" and "ists"
twirling them like revolvers in a duel
she of the cerebral cortex
who had forgotten she had a body nestled
below the folds of her thoughts like a
stamen

This is a story about the first person, the divided self, pronouns separated from antecedents

Hardly slept did she
ignored her bladder
ate erratically
drank too much.
She recognized below the neck momentarily in
sex
but daily it was mostly through her fingers
that rattled across a keyboard
her body's expressiveness circumscribed by a plastic box
She was given to a tactile pecking
that transformed her ideas into matter
in a robotic process a
repetitive motion that
hours on end
produced pain
and a posture of defeat

One day — a day when nobody was looking, and for reasons even less understood — one so small it could only be seen through a microscope divided, and became two, and two became four, and four became eight, and eight became sixteen, and sixteen became thirty-two, and on and on and on it went like that, reproducing, replicating, dividing, colonizing as living things are want to do. It's done, you know, all the time in life, and it's not necessarily bad — replicating, making new life.

But this one forgot to stop.
And that was the beginning of the end.
Such a force gestating in a body means death.

(Pleomorphic: "many formed" and "protean," from the Greek god Proteus, prophetic old man of the sea, son of Poseidon.) A pleomorphic mass was hidden in the delicate bundle of vasts — the quadriceps, who in their vastness (*vastus lateralis*, *vastus medialis*, *vastus intermedius*) harbored the insidious protean form that reproduced endlessly. Type A cells that never observed a weekend, or a holiday, so incessant were they in their productivity. They do email 24/7.

A neoplasm, a new growth

Time became mass
and mass became massive
and things got very, very crowded
hypertrophied, in fact
A swelling capable of assuming different forms
sent tentacles out
 invading,
 investigating,
 claiming
 consuming
 colonizing.

Who knew Proteus was so malignant?

How did she find out, you might ask
the one on high who had forgotten she had a body?
One day she was asked to get in a tube
and it was that day she remembered she had a body
She remembered she was alive
and that this thing we do called life
like cloud of dust
can suddenly dissipate leaving
one entirely exposed as she
was at that time

exposed

in a tube
of magnetic resonance

She found out by looking backwards through glasses — not rose colored glasses, but glasses with mirrors that allowed her to look behind while looking forward. She was in a tube, you see, like a tomb, a cocoon. But ever since she left her mother's womb she did not like small spaces. She was asked to climb into a magnetic womb so powerful that anything metallic would fly through the room to cling to it. But she was not metal; she did not cling to it.

They slid her inside
 like a drawer in a cabinet a
 knife in a sheath
 a pea in a pod
 hand in glove
 cadaver in crypt

She convulsed with a need to flee
fingers white on plastic
As she pulled and clawed and clenched
the tube consumed her
dividing head from body
at the mason dixon line of her neck
But all she could see
was a blank whiteness
and a tiny speaker
a circle of dots
no bigger than the mouth of a choir boy
singing "o"

It was cold like a morgue
It smelled of nothing
It reeked of death
She was not OK with this.
What she knew in her throat in
her heart heaving
was that this tube was eating her alive

"I need to come out," she said. That's when they gave her glasses and a pill — a pill to slow her heart, glasses to extend her vision, to give her perspective, to help her think outside the box, outside the tube, as it were, even while inside the tube (where they sent her once again, like a roast in an oven, she who's heart now slowed, she who looked behind through reflective lenses from inside to outside, from the horizontal to vertical, from patient to doctor, from sick to well) she heard the words: "Everything will be OK. Be calm. Just relax!"

But what they didn't know was that through the smoke and mirrors she
could see them
in their glass booth
glowing screens
faces blue

And they were not calm:

They pointed and talked
They looked at each other
They looked back at the screen
They looked at her: head, glasses, mirrors, the one with no body
They picked up the phone
They looked at the screen
They pointed
They bowed their heads
Lips moved, no sound, as she lay nestled, stamen-like, inside
Their mouths opened and closed in silence, like guppies

It was then that she knew she had a body, and it had mysteries, and betrayals — it of her
and she of it. This is a story of betrayal.

She had stopped having a body gradually over time. When she was five, for instance, the
two who were always together, the twins who loved to hike also loved to dance. They
bent, they leapt, they swayed, they trailed and pulsed to the sounds of the Tijuana brass in
the basement of her house, where the family gathered in the evening, sound and coolness
blasting against the wet July heat. Father and daughter, moving together as rhythms swept
them away, the twins and the one above who at that time were all one in the arms of her
father. He was warm, head back, eyes wide, face taut with joy, bending, leaping, swaying,
trailing, their cheeks red, necks moist as lungs heaved a pulse of love and delight like the
Christmas trip to the Nutcracker
after which she and her sibling would jump off the couch in pink leotards, the plastic
record player spinning a 45 of Tchaikovsky's greatest skipping as they landed on the floor,
the two always together — left-right-left-right, inseparable together with the one above...
(At that time they all shared one pronoun.)

She — head, throat, elbows, spine, thigh, ankle, and toe — loved to dance, and so she took
a class: a room full of mirrors, and a gaggle of girls five years old who had studied ballet
for six. In those mirrors, she saw herself from all sides for the first time. Copper hair
clashed with pink tights; hips wide, stomach protruding, freckles punctuating a face
stricken with panic. First position, *À la seconde*, *plié*, *rond de jambe*, *relevé* — steps
recited at an impossible rate, traversing the room desperately leaping, a pathetic grand
jeté, tripping, belly jiggling as perfect little girls giggled and jeered. That was the
beginning of the end of her dancing.

The divorce of head from toe was gradual, with little cleavages and infidelities along the
way so that it is hard to know now precisely when the separation was finalized. But surely
bathing suits were part of it. The heat of fashion offering microscopic bits

of fabric stretching to contain abundance and flesh that crisped in the sun despite all attempts to keep up with the other girls who sprayed on baby oil and water as they baked on Midwestern lawns heavily fertilized. The air still, a wall of heat, serenaded by the insistent trill of cicadas, sun penetrating so deep through skin without melanin that layers peeled off like tissue paper, aching at first, itching later, each movement noticed by nerves the sun's rays had abused — all in a desperate attempt to keep up with the brown Debbie's and Amy's who in their mellowing tans claimed a future of uncertain wonders that one needed a particular body to possess.

Over time, she of the books stayed in worlds that opened to her readily, leaving behind pubescent breasts, child-bearing thighs, buttocks worthy of an African woman, belly pressing at a button down waistline, levitating above bell bottoms that were all the rage on others but to her were a misfortune. The body became a vehicle for locomotion, nourishment, repose. It was not, hardly ever a place of expression, exploration, or joy, as was her mind.

But then came the tube, where everything changed.

After that, head looked at toes
all ten of them
peeking out of white folds of a sheet
white curtains surrounding the table white-
coated people swirling in and out poking,
measuring, noting, writing, walking white toes
poking up
nails painted red in a last flourish of indulgence.
She sat on the table
no food or water since midnight.
Ten toes wiggled, flinched, and fluttered
with memories of
dust, and heat, and lifting, spinning, twirling, curling, sweating, digging into thighs,
recoiling from a tickle, heel to toe, heel to toe, relevé, grande jeté, baby oil
Her husband bent over the table and kissed her foot goodbye.

And that was a terminal separation. A
disarticulation.

What happened next was a new world
dots on white panels overhead a
rectangle of fluorescence eyes
closed
searching north to south and south to north
scanning for signals, information,
records, messages a second birth
a new body now profoundly asymmetrical
born skewered with tubes and lights
bells and whistles
pain blanketed in morphine
telling the whole body,
"Shhhhhhhhhh"

The first time she sat up the world turned so
light was she that head and torso
floated like a helium balloon
She tipped over
Blackness crept into her vision
the room telescoped
to a distant spot
in her field of vision.
A woman sitting in front of her gently coached,
holding, steadying a trickle of water
down her cheek
that opened her vision once more.
The room widened
and everything came nearer as
the woman lifted her torso again upright She
moved from horizontal to vertical
from sick to well
She sat on the edge of the bed
and took an inventory
Looking down at a lap no longer there or
no longer what it had been one
foot alone in the world missing
her sister
her constant companion
came down to the floor
linoleum shockingly raw and cold
She sat
connecting mind to foot
foot to mind
looking down

looking ahead at her guide
What a strange job this woman has to
help grown persons sit up
to witness the newly maimed to
celebrate as the day's accomplishment
simply resting on the edge of the bed

The woman, a therapist, returned an hour later, and we repeated our duet, from horizontal to vertical. My torso now anchored by muscles insisting on gravity, eyesight not eclipsed but focused ahead on my companion, my assistant, and then down on my one leg, now orphaned, mourning her sister yet eager to test her autonomy. The woman gripped the white belt around my waist, and beckoned, her arms reaching around me in an embrace as I leaned forward on the bed — foot pushing into linoleum, toes grasping outwards to command as much space as they could. I leaned into her as thigh engaged, pulled forward, then pushed up, extending, lifting all that was above — abdomen, sacrum, vertebrae stacking one on top of the other until the head arrived. But the body did not stop. Left ribs now unmoored continued upwards and a lightness refused gravity. Perhaps all rules were now changed.

I remember sobbing in the arms of a stranger whose job it was to witness and assist in this, the most private moment of my life, as mind and body became reconciled in grief.

Once two; now one.
Once ten; now five.
Constant companions before
now one stands alone
she stands
lies
and bends
and sits
but doesn't locomote alone
She waits rather on the edge of the dance floor her card
awaiting signatures from new companions who are
many:
two sticks, for instance form with her a tripod
Together they poll vault There is also
a robotic companion who looks very
much like her sister
When they go out together in the world
they can pass
as a woman with a limp or a bad hip

Once there were two
always together
Where one went
the other followed
like twins
so alike one could hardly tell them apart
They usually dressed in the same clothes
Pause, wiggle, pins and needles
unfurl, repeat

Now one (no one) standing alone
toes wiggling
center of gravity listing to the right
the weight of everything above unrelenting
most of the time
as she waits
and waits
and waits for her dance partners
who are, alternately, metal, wood, cyborg, human, the feet of others
sometimes two, sometimes four, sometimes six together forming a
many-footed organism
a centipede,
lifting
trailing
landing
springing
swirling
in this post-biped world
dancing once more
in my mid life crises
of ambulation-post-amputation
articulation about my disarticulation
remembering my dismemberment when
I discovered that I had a body just when
some of it
disappeared
I danced again
one foot in the grave,
one foot in life
One.

Kathrina Farrugia –

Crossing boundaries, negotiating physicalities: Tracing transnational and transcultural performance heritage in Haka (Preljocaj, 2007)

This paper journeys through the fields of aesthetics, cultures and performance traditions to negotiate readings of choreographic physicalities surrounding recent performance practices. Through reading Angelin Preljocaj's Haka (2007), the key arguments in this proposed paper outline the transitory relationships between Preljocaj's choreographic practices, transnational and transcultural heritage, and the emergent discourse from this 2007 Ballet Preljocaj commission, celebrating the All Blacks' residency in Aix-en-Provence (Rugby World Cup, 2007).

Through the process of decoding/encoding the emergent performance, (dis)placement as a theory of vectorisation (Farrugia 2011 after Pavis 2003) suggests a shift across identities, dance cultures and corporeal physicalities of gender. Insights into performance histories suggest the liminality of boundaries and the negotiation of physicalities between cultures, gender and identities, allowing for Preljocaj's Haka to contribute towards constructs of transnational (Higson in Ezra, 2005) and transcultural (Epstein in Vladiv-Glover, 2003; Taylor 2003) discourses paralleled in twentieth-century European dance practices (Farrugia 2011). These methodologies discern the complex legacies that reside in recent performance practices indicative of some of the concerns in performance; a "continual flux of bodies mutually readjusting and reassessing their relationships to one another based on each other's recent movements" (Foster in Bleeker 2008, p.174). In conclusion, this paper addresses key themes associated with conference's topic. The paper bridges selected issues surrounding physicality as a corporeal/choreographic concern and challenges intersections of cultural and gendered concerns in performance-making.

**Crossing boundaries, negotiating physicalities:
Tracing transnational and transcultural performance heritage in
Haka (Preljocaj, 2007)**

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Physicality: a source of performance histories? Border-crossing: a negotiation of physicality in performance? On watching Angelin Preljocaj's *Haka* (2007), a series of descriptions come to mind: Maori heritage, historic, ritual, contemporary, gendered...French? Moreover, a collision of questions emerges through analysing Preljocaj's commission: How does this performance explore the complexity in traditions, cultures and rituals? How are these apparently embodied in physicality of the performers and in the performance? What do they tell us about this dancer maker's heritage and willingness to negotiate across boundaries?

Performance theorist and scholar Andre Lepecki (2004) argues that the process of retracing performance legacies "becomes a matter of delicate excavation" (2004: 4). In this paper, I address key themes associated with the conference's topic bridging select issues surrounding physicality as a corporeal performative/theatrical/narrative concern and the challenging intersections of cultural and gendered concerns in performance-making, largely through discussing the work of French choreographer Angelin Preljocaj (b.1957). Here, brief insights into his performative histories comment on the selected avenues and approaches within his recent choreographic practices. Through using a YouTube posting of a recording of Preljocaj's *Haka* (2007), invisibilised digital performances provide tensions and insights into the negotiations across physicalities. As the Latin(o) American scholar Diana Taylor (2003) suggests:

...through the lens of the performed, embodied behaviours, what would we know that we do not know now? Whose stories, memories, and struggles might become visible? (Taylor, 2003: Xviii)

Border-crossing, vectorisation and (dis)placement: a tool for reading physicality in performance

„Border-crossing“ and „negotiation“ become central to my approach of analysing and reading physicality, performance histories and performance-making traditions. This is readily apparent in the title of this presentation. The theoretical framework that facilitates the arguments in this paper draws on the performative, theatrical and narrative dimensions of a choreographic work (after Schechner, 2003); these are pivotal to the disciplinary concerns that shape my interests as an educator and researcher. Subsequently, the enquiry in this paper explores the concept of „physicality“ through the model of (dis)placement¹, largely derivative of two epistemological standpoints. In her contribution to Susan Leigh Foster’s *Corporealities* (1996), Heidi Gilpin explores the term „displacement“ as “the act of perceiving movement enacts its own displacement. In the act of movement, of „putting something in another place“, there is the displacement of a body” (Gilpin in Foster, 1986:109). In another vein, French theatre semiotician Patrice Pavis (2004) applies the mathematical construct of displacement in vectors. This infers the change in position of a point or a particle in reference to a previous position; moving from A to B, moving along a trajectory. In the methodological concern of my research, this process of vectorisation outlines effort, shape and direction; it is DISruption and PLACEment as a relocation of the smallest unit to larger more complex histories. Both Gilpin’s and Pavis’ applications suggest identities of connection and spatiotemporal pathways; these pathways affect how we can connect performance histories and practices as well as the interconnecting characteristics of physicality in selected performance makers’ trends and consolidated traditions. Within parameters of my doctoral research, I propose the identity of (dis)placement as a mechanism to survey, map and organise the histories, legacies and practices that cross boundaries and negotiate the embodiment of physicality and performing histories in the work of particular dance makers. Choreo-historiographic (dis)placement, or simply (dis)placement, is the term I propose to outline the act of vectorising physicality in

¹ The term was first presented at the Society for Dance History Scholars conference (2009) to outline the practices of Mauro Bigonzetti, a second area of concern within the author’s doctoral thesis.

language and syntax within recorded performances. Considering its role as an effective tool, (dis)placement heightens perceptions; as Taylor suggests:

we need to shift our methodologies. ... This shift necessarily alters what academic disciplines regard as appropriate canons, and might extend the traditional disciplinary boundaries to include practices previously outside their purview. (Taylor 2003: 17)

Alongside this shift in methodology lies the reliance on the resourcing of performance histories. A preliminary first boundary-crossing has already taken place; one from performance analysis to historiography; recordings of performances provide insights into performative qualities that might be extrapolated and constructed into histories of physicality. Moreover, the digitalisation of dance archives established in traditional research libraries and company archives together with the recent expansion of online archives facilitates access to the repertoire as a tool for historiography of performance.

2

As performance theorist Richard Schechner outlines, “performativity – or commonly, “performance” is *everywhere* in life, from ordinary gestures to macrodramas. ...theatricality and narrativity are more limited, if only slightly so” (Schechner 2003: 326). The process of (dis)placement is enhanced through the microcosm of these layers; they provide sources of histories at the hands of the spectator, viewer or analyst. The narrativity of a history of (dis)placed physicality presents a more complex and multiplex system of signs and scenes developing as far as a large-scale macro drama in performance. Performative influences surrounding a dance maker’s heritage offers an opportunity to survey the (dis)placed histories that inhabit the processes. A closer look at the effects of border crossing and constructing negotiations of (dis)placement of performative identities will support this transdisciplinary approach³ as I journey through the enquiry (Farrugia, 2009; 2011).

² Here, reference is made to the development of Web 2.0 technologies allowing dance companies to share extracts of their works on their websites, the phenomenon of YouTube and the recent activities in online sharing of databases (Digital Dance Archives, Siobhan Davies RePlay, etc).

³ The term “transdisciplinary” infers the transference of epistemology and disciplines across traditional borders. The origins of the epistemology reside within the Melbourne Model (Davies and Devlin, 2007). Farrugia presented a model of transdisciplinary practices in dance histories at the

Angelin Preljocaj: an embodiment of (dis)placed performance histories and heritage

Born in 1957, Preljocaj hails from Montenegro and was raised in the South-Eastern suburbs of Paris. With a French-Albanian upbringing, Preljocaj studied with Karin Waehner (1926 – 1999), a German dancer associated with American dancer/choreographer Alwin Nikolais (1910 - 1993), and Viola Farber. Waehner's *Scuola Cantorum* was the platform through which Preljocaj encountered principles of German expressionist modern dance associated with the performative legacies of Mary Wigman (1886 - 1973). He outlines Waehner's creative, improvisatory contribution to his understanding of what he describes of his early works as "creating emotive objects with bodies" (Preljocaj, 1987, online posting).

In a 2009 documentary on the heritage of Merce Cunningham's influence in French contemporary dance (Plouchard, 2009, television broadcast), Preljocaj describes the cultural and artistic impact of the 1979 performances of Cunningham's company at the Pompidou Centre in Paris, describing Cunningham's work such as *Channels/Inserts* (1981) as "a semantic approach to choreography...something completely new" (Preljocaj in Plouchard, 2009, TV broadcast). Thus, the year spent in New York at the Cunningham studio in the 1980s and further study with Viola Farber in France presented a period of consolidation of vocabularies in Preljocaj's work, notably the interplay of linear and angular shapes crafted within a clear use of planar treatment.

Preljocaj's choreographic career launched in 1984, creating *Marché Noire (Black market)* for the Montpellier Dance Festival as well as establishing his company, Compagnie Preljocaj, in December 1984. Early works for the company include *Larmes Blanches (White Tears)* (1985), *À nos Heros (For our Heros)* (1986) and *Noces (The Wedding)* (1989). Preljocaj's interest in dramatic and compositional traits of Japanese Noh theatre is exemplified in some of the works created in the 1990s for commissioning companies including London Contemporary Dance Theatre, New

York City Ballet and Lyon Opéra Ballet. Paris Opéra Ballet commissioned seven works between 1993 and 2010; commencing with the double commission of Ballets Russes (1909-1929) revisions including *Parade* (1993) and *Le Spectre de la Rose* (1993), and the subsequent commissions including *MC14/22 (Ceci est mon corps)* (*This is my body*) (2001), *Le Songe de Médée (Medea's Dream)* (2004) and the more recent *Siddharta* (2010).

(dis)placement, migration and collision: *Haka* (2007) as physicality of migrating practices

Presented at Pavillion Noire (Aix-en-Provence) on 26th and 27th September 2007 by Ballet Preljocaj⁴, *Haka* celebrated the residency of the New Zealand (All Blacks) rugby team in the southern region of Provence during the 2007 Rugby World Cup in France⁵. Most readily recognisable, the title of the performance denotes the (dis)placement of the Maori warrior dance, which the All Blacks perform prior to any international match. Preljocaj's *Haka* was performed in a black box theatrical space, lasting for the duration of six minutes.

The dance commences: a gradual fade-in of a row of lights outlines a single line of women; all fifteen dancers are dressed in the All Blacks rugby shirt and black stiletto shoes. Chanting the *haka*, five dancers walk forward, place their right leg out to form a second position and raise their arms forward in the sagittal plane. Raising their right forearm, the dancers slap and punch the air, metonymic quotation from the two national/cultural documents: the indigenous Haka and that performed prior to the start of a rugby international match. A second line of five dancers joins in, repeating this first phrase. The dancers in the first group *developpé* their right leg, placing emphasis on the downward action as the foot punches the floor. The first line of five dancers walks forward, executes forward shunts with two syncopated jumps, and in unison

⁴ Originally named as Compagnie Preljocaj (1985 – 1996), the company performance the majority of Preljocaj's work. It is located in the city of Aix-en-Provence, South of France and acts as a National Choreographic Centre (CCN) providing outreach programmes, regular performances as well as one of the central spaces for D.A.N.C.E. Project .

⁵ This choreographic work was only performed on these two days and has not featured in any of the subsequent seasons of Ballet Preljocaj.

slaps their right, then left shoulder, hips and thighs. A third line of five dancers joins in, presenting the same order of steps and organization of phrases as the first two lines. All three lines perform the three phrases in succession and the three groups repeat the entire phrase together in unison.

[Observation of Preljocaj's *Haka*]

Haka's contribution within the transnational and transcultural discourse: "mutually readjusting and reassessing their relationships" (Foster in Bleeker 2008)

With those images in mind, *Haka* presents a (dis)placement of physicality in performance that can be read through the transitory relationships between concepts of national and cultural. Such shifts suggest the malleability within negotiation and border-crossing, "mutually readjusting and reassessing their relationships" (Foster in Bleeker 2008: 174). The transition from social/ritual to theatricalised presence denotes a (dis)placement and transference of performative and theatrical spaces. The interplay of transcultural connections include a (re)organization of efforts, shapes and directions of language which replicate the traditional haka, the juxtaposition of metaphoric male warrior dance on female contemporary dancers as well as the use of the theatrical space as an alternative performative space of the *Haka*. Using theories on transnational (Higson in Ezra) and transcultural (Epstein), I argue that Preljocaj's *Haka* can be viewed as a tapestry of border-crossing and quotations as well as a prime example of (dis)placement.

The chanting of the haka, the interplay with formations on the three lines, and the alteration of the dancers' gaze toward and away from the audience present a theatricality and narrativity that underpins the physicality in performance. Preljocaj's transcultural use of unison denotes hybrid references to the associated legacies of the warrior dance and western theatre dance classicism. The (dis)placement of the vibratory hand gestures as metonymic quotations from performance of the indigenous Maori haka in more traditional contexts. Nonetheless, the theatricalisation of opening and closing lighting states outline the fifteen dancers' role within the theatricality of performance, reminding us of the theatrical connections, accumulations and shifts that have taken place. The liminality crossing Preljocaj's creative engagement with a traditionally social ritual typifies connections, accumulations and shifts of transcultural and transcultural performance (dis)placement within the theatricalised staging or *mise-en-scène*.

Preljocaj's heritage and transnational/cultural physicalities in performance

From his early training and across his twenty-five year choreographic career, negotiation across physicalities in performance histories has shaped the epistemological and corporeal concerns in performance-making. From Waehner's German expressionist roots and the Cunningham heritage progressing to French avant-garde practices in the early 1980s, there is a clear pattern that marks Preljocaj's influences across transnational/cultural discourses. The negotiation across the physicalities present in his body of work can be described as overlaps, intimacies and proximities in an ever-complex network of physicalities. It is that same kind of negotiation that inhabits the border-crossing in *Haka* and his own practices. Whilst Preljocaj temporarily abandons his performance heritage in *Haka*, there is a distinct epistemological standpoint that shifts across into this six-minute performance. It is Preljocaj's openness to work across boundaries, that reflects his personal and professional transnational/transcultural border-crossing, one which may be paralleled to what Susan Leigh Foster describes as a "continual flux of bodies" (Foster in Bleeker 2008: 174). As the enquirer, I cannot ignore the intra-connections of physicality as performance imbued with historic, contemporary, gendered, national and cultured references. What I argue here is that Preljocaj's „body of knowledge" (Claid, 2006) provides a metaphoric and metonymic complexity of border-crossing; one that pushes *Haka* beyond a ritualised performance, rethinking its gendered identity as well as a homage to the Maori/New Zealand cultures. A complex network of physicality in performance, theatricality and narrativity embodied through a segment of French contemporary dance culture.

Conclusion: Analysing physicality in performance: (dis)placement as a tool for transnational/transcultural discourse

The metaphors imparted by Lepecki's "excavation process" alongside the stories, memories and struggles, suggested by Taylor, provide new avenues for reviewing recent performance histories. This paper shapes a model of enquiry that promotes border-crossing and negotiation. Through adopting (dis)placement as an analytical tool, the process of vectorising language and syntax sheds light on the liminality across boundaries and facilitates the negotiation of physicalities between national identities, cultures, gender and theatrical identities. The additional layer of transnational/transcultural discourses presents a second dimension to the framework.

It is hoped that the examples presented in this paper – notably the border-crossing physicalities that shape Preljocaj’s performance histories and body of work together with insights into the negotiation of identities in *Haka* – provide a framework and application that positively enhances methods for analysing physicality in performance histories. Through exploring physicality as a historiographic tool, the concerns in performance-making resolve into the (dis)placement of performance histories, cultures and rituals. The complexity in recent performance discourses reminds us that performance making implies a creative “readjusting and reassessing” (Foster in Bleeker, 2008: 174) of physicality in performance.

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Ida Mara Freire

The Body as House of Memory and an Experience with Blindness

The Journeys began with questions about being in the world. The Journeys sought to access and awaken our corporal memories. My own corporal experience led me to question how a person with blindness could appreciate dance. What interests us in this process upon creating the dance is the perceptive experience of that which can be appreciated in the making of the dance - by the dancer and by the audience.

The Body as House of Memory and an Experience with Blindness

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The experience with blindness

My experience with people with blindness has taught me a number of things. Firstly, that blindness appears to be a problem more for those who see than for those who do not. Secondly, that blindness is not a disability but a perceptive experience. Finally, understanding blindness as an experience does not involve investing in the need for compensation, but striving for a new way of being human. The first issue that motivated my studies with blindness is related to the body. To examine how a child of two with congenital blindness adapted to her experiences helped me realize the mutual implications between the body and language. My own corporal experience led me to question how a person with blindness could appreciate dance. This is how a university extension project began in 1998 at the Santa Catarina Association for Integration of the Blind, (ACIC), in which together with students from the school of education I began to teach dance to children and adults with blindness. Guided by questions such as, “what body constitutes the dancer?” and “what movement constitutes dance?” I began my search for methodologies that allowed the appreciation of dance by *all* those who desired to do so. This led to an integrated series of Journeys as a creative process of teaching dance, and which have been applied particularly to teacher education.

Journeys

The Journeys began with questions about being in the world. All of us have questions that are profound, if not explicit, yet latent within us. They are based on intuitive and aesthetic experience. Each one of the ten Journeys sought to access and awaken our corporal memories. Each Journey contains the whole of the process. However, in this case, the whole is much more than the sum of the parts. Given the question: does the body forget? An answer guides the Journeys – the body does not forget that which it loves. Moreover, while our memories include painful memories, the experience of the Journeys encourages

us to go beyond them. The purpose is to transform our pain into beauty; like an oyster that transforms an irritating grain of sand into pearls. During the interval between the workshops a set of creative activities is proposed – for example, writing a diary, cutting and gluing, drawing, and others – in order to elaborate the corporal work and prepare for the next step. This is a lucid experience, which is pleasurable and profound, focused on the well-being that comes from self-knowledge.

This process can be summarized as follows. The first five Journeys involve a moment of entering a cocoon, a weaving of what is around us and getting to know the vital space. It is a return to the beginning, an awakening of the senses, a discovery of the movements and other sensations, to perceive the body as a gift and dance as the courage of being. In the sixth and seventh Journeys we seek to rediscover the sense of living, to recreate existence itself; to do so it is necessary to have the courage to create. In the final three Journeys the feminine and the sacred are intertwined. Like a butterfly, we celebrate existence in its plentitude and beauty; the liberty of flight demands the courage to love.

The body as house of memory: Alma's Journeys

“What do I know?” is a question asked by Maurice Merleau-Ponty in *The Visible and the Invisible* (2000), and which inspired us to create a questioning choreography. This is his alternative to the affirmation, “I know that I know nothing” – which comes from a skeptical perspective that provokes a doubt that destroys certainties. But commonplace questions are there, for example, I want to know: where am I? What time is it? These are questions that evoke a context and a person who asks, questions that come from our experiences as a “being in the world.” “What do I know?” ask Merleau-Ponty (2000), without wanting to explain what is knowing? Or who am I? But, what exists? And even, what is existence? These questions question our own existence. It was by reflecting on Alma's very existence, a dancer with congenital blindness, that we created her choreography questioning herself and the world around her.

What interests us in this process upon creating the dance is the perceptive experience of that which can be appreciated in the making of the dance - by the dancer and by the

audience. To exercise the sensibility forged in the space-time experience in dance which, for example, is different from that of photography, operates at a synthesis that unifies different temporal moments into a single time.

In phenomenology, temporality is a flow towards opening in search of a future that is promised, but still not given. The search for temporality of being is anchored in the questioning and gives priority to the description of perceptive experience. For Maurice Merleau-Ponty, time is not material - that is conserved within things - it is present as horizon, a dual horizon: past and future. At the moment that there is a relationship between them, the phenomenon rises from the foundation, where we find the expression of something as a totality, although we still cannot determine what it is (Araujo, 2010). We see how this temporal synthesis can be found in the choreographic composition.

When we returned to our activities with the Potlatch Dance Group in 2006 we spoke with members of the group about their vacation. Alma, a 17-year-old non-sighted dancer, commented that she had participated more than once on pilgrimages to the shrine of Saint Madre Paulina, and I asked her about this experience. What did she do there? What was her request from the saint? She commented that she accompanied her grandmother, and that she asked the saint: “To be able to see the obstacles.” Her request caught my attention because I identified an interrogation of the being. This is how we began her series of Journeys to create her choreography. I explained that the application of the Journeys does not occur linearly. Since we were in a process of choreographic composition, the content of the Journeys favored the exploration and experimentation of new movement and gestures considering Alma’s request.

To illustrate: from the first Journey we worked with the concept of *kinesphere*. We sought to establish the relationship of the center of the body - with Alma prostrate, or sitting with her chest on her legs and her head against the floor - to reduce her *kinesphere* as much as possible. Upon kneeling, the relation of the center of the body to space changes, passing to an average *kinesphere*. By getting up and raising her arms, opening her hands, her corporal expansion is recognized and her *kinesphere* expanded. In this

spatial transition, elements of a second Journey are added, by including the shifting of space, there is a quality, an intention in this path, a search, and desire should be revealed.

In the third Journey the senses help us to qualify the touch of the dancer – the search for the obstacle that is present before her and impedes her from seeing. In the fourth Journey that we call Authentic Movement, we explore the mutuality between the body and language. This particularity was interesting to Alma, many times during our conversations she would pay attention to what others said and repeated what her colleagues said. When I encouraged her to describe her own movements, we could perceive the alteration in her discourse. For example, when describing her trips with her grandmother to the sanctuary of Madre Paulina she refers to her own experience, not that of her colleagues. Her friends do not make the pilgrimage year after year. This marks her existence and creates a singular corporal memory. To present this experience in the group mobilizes her entire body to say something unique: “That I can see the obstacles,” thus establishing a fruitful relationship between body and language.

The fifth and the sixth Journeys concern the diagonal of life. Upon dancing her existence, the gestures and movements of the phases of life (birth, infancy, youth, adulthood, maturity and death), the young Alma confronts perceptive experiences that relate to the pre-objective world, which is not guided by an intentional conscience. Spontaneous, like movement and temporality, the body is presented as the first instance of significations. In this way, the perceptive body is presented as the future; the current body as the present; and the habitual body as the past. Similarly, the conversation with the non-sighted dancer reveals that in her

“desire” the body shelters a future gesture. “In the desire to see the obstacles”: a spontaneous experience is anticipated. It is similar to an involuntary memory, to want to see something, as if one day she had already seen, but in her case she has never seen. This perception comes to a complete fruition as synthesis: For the dance it does not only involve wanting to see. She wants to see something specific: obstacles. This experience is not in her present body, for this involves something that is not current, not something

common (past), for this reason it is unprecedented. In this way, the body presents itself as temporal flow.

In the seventh Journey, the contact with the emotion contributes to awakening the dramaturgy in Alma's body. Seeking inter-corporality, her movements become mirrored gestures that the audience looks at, sees and recognizes. The palms of her hands, held together facing each other, may reveal that her prayer could be the prayer of many of the people who are there to see her dance. It is a preparation for the three final Journeys that are based on the search for gestures that evoke sacred space and celebrate life. The words of the dancer become dance. Her movements, her postures of prostration or of elevation become gestures orchestrated to the sound of *Ave Maria* by Gounod and Bach, her hands in prayer open to touch the light and transparent fabric that covers her body.

Alma's dance reveals a peculiarity, which properly distinguishes the dance that originated from the Journeys from a spontaneous dance. In the Journeys, everything takes place as if these new creations had come ready made, they are there as questions that had been formulated beyond oneself, a bit before the gestures of searching. As aesthetic and intuitive experience, the Journeys lead us to admit the presence of our body, a type of future that comes from the past. As exemplified by Alma's prayer, which expresses a complete lack of presence: I want to see obstacles, but inseparable from the other that is empty: her gestures of searching. The signification is born from her supplication, this signification after being understood, or that is, danced. The words by which she expressed herself are no longer seen. Upon dancing the workshops the body is no longer the home of memory and comes to be the temple of temporal flow.

To conclude, it is worth highlighting that this text began presenting blindness as a perceptive experience. Contact with people with blindness and my personal experience with dance led me to seek methodologies that present the teaching of dance as an aesthetic experience. This search resulted from the creation of the Journeys, a creative process of appreciation of dance. The experience of this process by people with or without blindness has provided them a greater understanding of their way of being in the world. Through it, the body that dances confronts its existential questions and is invited

to visit its memories. The Journeys lead us to inhabit our perceptive experiences, we go beyond the painful memories and responsibly occupy the sacred place – we are singular in the human plurality.

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Ribbons, Bindings and Aesthetics of the Arch

The standard female ballet aesthetic, in particular the prominence of a dainty, high tarsal arch represents the pinnacle of feminine sophistication and desirability. Of particular prominence is the stylisation of the foot relating to pointe technique. Another, more extreme practice relating to the presentation of the female foot, occurs within the Chinese practice of foot binding. Both may be viewed as culturally-defined embodied practices and both occur within highly regulated parameters of socio-cultural acquiescence. The origins of ballet and foot binding, although geographically disparate, are not dissimilar. Both originated in dance culture at court and became widespread through male desire and female compliance. The practice of foot binding demonstrates the female incentive to comply with an external projection of idealised femininity, despite incurring extreme disability and loss of function. Similarly the rigours of pointe technique perpetuate the female myth, often at the cost of the dancer's unique potential. Parallels between the two practices are explored within historic, anthropological and phenomenological boundaries. The effects of ritualised practice are discussed in relation to the dancing body, and point to a rethinking of ritualised practice with a more inclusive somatic approach.

Ribbons, Bindings and Aesthetics of the Arch

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The human foot is a remarkable construction of 26 bones, 33 joints and more than 100 ligamentous structures that allow a remarkable range of action both in support and propulsion. It is through the foot that we ground ourselves and move into the world, yet the foot is often seen as a malleable, external object, subject to external value scales and standards rather than an essential part of our beings. Of all female body parts, the foot is particularly prone to stylisation, and appears to carry significance as the locus for visual allure. The female foot often represents the visuality of the entire female form and the way women present their feet, overlaps with popular notions of sex appeal and culturally defined femininity. Images of the idealised body have traditionally impacted women more than men (Berger, 1972; Mulvey, 1989), and are evidenced in everyday life (Bordo, 1993). We notice women's subscription to illusory projections of idealised femininity in the way shoes are chosen to project an impression of longer legs, or a leaner stature, often despite the inconvenience of compromised stability or discomfort. Similar stylisation of the female foot occurs in ballet training and of particular prominence is the aesthetic relating to pointe technique. Another, more extreme practice relating to the presentation of the female foot, occurs within the Chinese practice of foot binding. Despite disparate classifications in application, ballet could be identified as a currently practised, extra-daily activity and the practice of foot binding as an antiquated, everyday practice; both may be viewed as inherently culturally defined embodied practices that occur within parameters of socio-cultural acquiescence. In exploring parallels between these two seemingly disparate practices, similarities are identified, in concurrence with Lambeck's argument that:

...in making cross cultural comparisons we ought not to be comparing embodied practice in one society with concepts or theories in another, but practice with practice and thought with thought, or moving up a level of abstraction, their suitably historicised mutual constitution and interrelationships in the societies in question. (1998: 105).

In finding parallels, I wish to analyse the manner in which the female body embodies, reflects and performs cultural convention. Throughout, close attention will be paid to the underlying qualities that construct and inform the emergence and development of

the aesthetic set. In tracing the practices from a socio-cultural aspect, analysis will be applied with a bipedal focus relating to the mediation of aesthetics interior and exterior to the dancer's body, in congruence with Schilder's definitions *Lieb* and *Körper* (1950). The former focus bears upon the experiential body, and relates to intrinsic physiological and psychological aspects. The latter relates to the representational body: how the stylised body situates itself in the cultural confines that frame it, and overlap with Butler's thoughts on performativity (1993).

The nature of enquiry therefore pertains to the female body as a social construct, and is couched in discourse that includes anthropological, phenomenological, feminist and physiological viewpoints. Despite the obvious ignominy that is imbued in the Chinese form and possible contention of contextual disparities, this paper does not set out to issue a bill of indictment on either practice, aiming rather to provoke thought in the surrounds of stylisation of the body within the remit of dance training and performance.

It is unsurprising that most scholarly accounts on the history and process of foot binding have been derisive, based on the *anti*-foot binding legacy in recent Chinese history. The process is associated with pain and suffering and relates to needless subjugation of women. The anti-foot binding movement began towards the end of the 1880's as imperial China struggled to find its place in a technologically advancing world. Calls to prohibition were driven internally by male scholars who were embarrassed by the practice; externally by a flood of missionaries entering the country on the back of treaty pacts following the opium wars. Both characterised the practice as shameful and immoral and the movement was driven by men who promoted unbinding the feet (or *fangzu* ,letting the feet out') of all Chinese women (Ko, 2005).

Seen as a national embarrassment, the Chinese legislators and moralists wished to do away with the practice as speedily as possible. The women's resistance to the reformation was surprising and flew in the face of liberation. Many would unbind their feet for inspection purposes and simply replace the bindings once the officials had seen satisfactory evidence that the practice was diminishing. This explains how in 2005, National Geographic photographer Michael Yamashita came across some aged, foot bound women in a rural village in Yunnan province (2005). The attitude of these

feisty old women points to a mind-set that locates itself in national pride, and is resistant to change. The same can be said of women's widespread resistance to change during the *fangzu* period.

During the late imperial era in China, the bound foot had transformed into the "natural and immutable proof of true femininity" (Zeitlin, 1993: 125), and binding the foot appeared an essential part of a well-groomed woman's toilette. In addition, it had acquired significance as a "social skin", an ornamentation that heightened social status and signified not only social difference but constituted social value (Ko, 2005: 182). The Chinese women were indignant and humiliated to be told that their way of presenting themselves in the world, after more than 1000 years, had become obsolete and shameful. No wonder the moral appeals for „natural feet“ fell on deaf ears, and the liberation process had to be spearheaded by county officials imposing hefty fines: the fundamental identity of women was at stake.

The women's resistance indicates the difficulty in attempting to challenge an embodied cultural practice where acquired physiological modifications have become proven markers of accrued identity and status. Helen Thomas states that when the body takes on the status of a commodity, it becomes an object of exchange; the consequence is a phenomenological split that "stresses representation over embodiment...or *Körper* over *Lieb*" (2003: 55). The implicit separation of the two aspects of the self and the privileging of the former occurs in any practice that involves reshaping the body. Conceptually, bodily malleability requires an outlook that assumes the individual as being an unfinished entity (Foucault, 1980; Bourdieu, 1993 in Thomas, 2003) and from the outset presumes the body to be a plastic instrument, which can be coerced to conform to externally expressed ideals. Ritualised acts are then performed, conditioning the body to the required criterion.

According to Grau ballet dancers have come to look upon their bodies

...as tools that can be stretched, bent, starved or whatever to push the boundaries of technique... and think of what they can do to their bodies as though they were objects. Dance studios are generally lined with mirrors, and looking at themselves in the mirrors, dancers often only see a visual image, a „thing“ that never conforms to the ideal, no matter how wonderful and famous the dancer is, because the ideal is unattainable (2005: 192)

The process is aptly addressed by Doris Humphrey who noted that:

We are told that the body is a wonderful machine, and so it is in part. This leads to absorption with body mechanics and finally to an obsession with technique which loses sight of the objective: the communication of the human spirit. A virtuoso technique is very exciting, but also very rare- most mechanical dancers are just mechanical. (1959: 37)

I will elaborate on three points arising from this quote: the objectification of the body implied the view of the body as a machine; the typical dehumanising effect of excessive emphasis on technique; and the implicit call for a rarefied type of dancer that possesses a sense of interiority- a feeling and sensuous body.

In mastering the visual requirements of the art-form, the dancer mimics a type of self-perpetuating orthodoxy. She forfeits an internalised, experiential approach to artistry, building her identity instead on what she can do. She measures her success proportionately by degrees, by conforming to external expectations. Relating to the ballet class, Kirstein states “at no stage in the instruction is there room for improvisation, experiment or doubt”, the first aim being “correctness” (1983, in Thomas, 2003: 97). In treating her body as an object to be bullied into line, the mind is positioned as the ruler over the baser impulsive and corporeal aspects of life. The dancer perpetuates an embodied form of Cartesian dualism, positioning the identity *with* the mind *over* the body rather than *within* the body. The legacy of dichotomised ideology seeks to subjugate all traces of unquantifiable irrationality, rendering all corporeal faculties such as sensation, memory and imagination incidental. The result is a loss of intrinsically sensuous intelligence within the body and a denuding of essential creative impulse. Humphrey’s caveat and the implications of Kirstein’s statement describe how invocation of a stylised body can undermine instinctive corporeal knowledge, ushering a kind of tunnel vision.

Anthropologist Ted Polhemus aptly identifies the blinkering affect of the surrounding socio-cultural setting in which practice becomes „normalised“ in our bodies:

... „the body“ is inevitably caught up in a symbolic congruence with the „social body“ of one’s society; a congruence so complete that it has the effect of blinkering us to the cross-cultural relativity of corporeal experience. (1998, in Carter, 1998: 172)

In effect, the practice of foot binding produced a similar blinkering effect. The similarities coincide in ritualised activities that begin by shaping the foot sometime between the age of two and five years of age when the bones are pliable. Daily care of the foot was ritualised to include wrapping techniques to shape the foot, minimise infection and promote graceful movement. The blinkering becomes starkly obvious in the way the painful process was perpetuated from mother to daughter, from murky origins in the 10th century. The practice began as an aesthetic ideal among court dancers intent on displaying a kind of ephemeral sensuality and eroticism that pandered to male power. After being used as a regulatory tool, the practice became widespread and fashionable in the 12th century (Ko, 2001).

Although binding techniques differed, the three inch „golden lotus“ evolved extreme miniaturization in the 17th century. The older practise of bending the four toes under the sole was retained, but novel binding techniques pressed the base of the metatarsals and adjoining cuneiforms backwards toward the calcaneus. The arch on the dorsal surface of the foot was emphasised, forming a deep cleavage under the instep, which over the centuries became the locus of both good taste and erotic pleasure (Ko, 2005). Ko explains:

...to put it bluntly: were it not for male emotions and desires, there would have been no bound feet... male and female desires are intertwined, to understand the latter, we have to go through the former.. (2005: 188).

History had been underwritten by dubious jottings made by male historians and scholars attempting to explain its prevalence (Ko, 2005). Myth flourished, preserving the textual indirectness of early erotic poetry and imaginings. Common themes in the origin discourse include ephemeral sensuality of harem dancers, shape-shifting femme fatales, sylphs and ninja-like warriors all lending credible flesh to the practice. One precondition in all jottings was the apparent patriarchal hegemony and male excess which accompanied the process (Ko, 2005).

Bourdieu relates how the individual's body becomes inscribed by three determinants: social location, *habitus*, and taste (1993, in Thomas, 2003). *Habitus* describes how the body becomes socialised through acts which have a bearing on how individuals develop and maintain their physical being. These acts often have a historicity and

refer to permanent, acquired dispositions, that are passed down through the generations appear to be innate and contribute to social competence (Bourdieu, 1993 in Thomas, 2003). Ritualised practice and tasteful display are situated within a historicity that extends beyond the individual and suggest a pre-established identity. Butler states that acts of performativity consist of a “reiteration of norms which precede, constrain and exceed the performer” (1993: 234). Parallels can be drawn in that both practices are prone to a type of historic tyranny of visual scrutiny, accompanied by a dynamic inter-generational initiation which defines the boundaries of orthodox practice.

In ballet the requirements extend over a period of 4 centuries, initiating the dancer into an aesthetic set based on a school which has its own defining characteristics. Training locates the dancer in a line of succession that can be traced back through the Romantic age of the sylph, to the patriarchal opulence and spectacle of the French Renaissance (Warren, 1996). Lavish court ballets displayed Louis XIV’s pre-eminence, performing the embodied Sun King. When the king finally stopped performing in 1670, theatrical professionalism commenced. Females took to the stage eleven years later (Thomas, 2003). The route of the aesthetic developed then diversified after 1731, all the while following male patronage, depending on location and availability of resources (Banes, 1998). Perceptions of female dancers ranged from frivolous prostitutes associated with the Paris Opera, to aristocratic mistresses in Russia. Female dancers rode the waves of repression and reform, but enjoyed an ethereal status, able to simultaneously display and disembody their sexuality with outrageous modesty (Chazin-Bannahum, 2005).

Sex appeal was never far from the development of the ballet shoe: historians Ivor Guest (1996) and Marian Hannah Winter (1974) note how tightly fitting shoes were preferred as the standard presentation of the female foot in Western culture in late 18th century. Dancers emulated the styles that predominated street fashion. Each change in form permitted further innovation in technique and in due course culminated in the advent of pointe shoes. Accustomed to the discomfort of dancing in shoes too tight, the dancer excelled in innovating the „ideal look“: by quilting the edge of toe cap with stitching and relying on pure muscle strength to raise bodyweight, she achieved the desired illusion of weightlessness. As the shoe had neither shank nor block, dancers

endured severe pain in an effort to present themselves appropriately on stage (Chazin-Bannahum, 2005). French painter, Roqueplan noted in 1855 how dancers suffer “for a little bit of applause”:

The public thinks that the dancer’s foot is so beautifully arched, so supple, so graceful when it is encased in a silk stocking and a piqué shoe. However when examining the nude foot of a dancer, one discovers a monstrous appendage with a fat lot of red and tumified skin as a result of the violent and continuous exercises of ossified articulation, which caused twisted toes, ingrown toenails, corns, irritated skin and protrusions...caused by practising entrechats, pirouettes and pointe work... (Roqueplan, 1855, in Chazin-Bannahum, 2005: 255)

Initially, in an effort to raise bodyweight successfully, arm placement was impaired. Marie Taglioni reflects on this phenomenon in her journal in 1823: “Mlle Brugnoli was a dancer who brought to light a new genre; she did extraordinary things on the tips of her toes... in order to raise herself up she was obliged to use great effort in her arms” (in Chazin-Bannahum, 2005: 190). Théleur, the first dance theorist to include illustrations of women on pointe, advised dancers to strengthen the toes and use ankle strength to lift the heels from the floor and called for proper placement of the arms (1831, in Chazin-Bannahum, 2005).

Sayers notes how concealing effort is deemed appropriate for the ballerina, in acquiescence to the ideology that informs the technique (1993, in Thomas, 1993). Technique is highly gendered: although men may be allowed to use their arms to add extra force in large leaps and turns, effort is to be utterly minimised in the female dancer. Indeed, the degree of perceived ease in motion en pointe sets the soloist apart from the corps de ballet, and is a chief designator of female status in ballet (Foster, 1996).

A similar parallel can be traced regarding concealment, ease of motion and status for the Chinese female. Bound feet displaced the fall of gravity through the posture, which made walking difficult. Concealment of effort ensured an upwardly mobile marriage if combined with a „natural gait“. Graceful movement set apart those elite from the lesser fortunate, and even if the foot could be described as „slender, curved, arched or small“ the ultimate test of status was the quality of movement. Well bound feet were prized in that they enhanced the gait, producing swaying mincing steps that

exhibited „natural“ motion. The aesthetics governing social hierarchy ensured that women with grace married upwards and were assured a secure future (Ko, 2005).

Ideas of status and hierarchy are inextricably linked to the perpetuation of embodied gendered practice. Polhemus's „blinkering“ occurs where the presentation of the foot is symbolically etched as the carrier of value and habitualised in the woman's body despite the associated detriment. Since the 1980's, and the resurgent academic interest in the body, dance scholars have questioned the representations of the ballet aesthetic from a theoretical feminist position. Langer's initial philosophical inquiries (1953) were followed by those of Sheets-Johnstone (1966) and (1984), Fraleigh (1987), and Foster (1996), and discourse on the victimisation of female dancers has been explored in the writings of Daly (1987), (1992) and Hanna (1988). Adair (1992) addressed the subordination of women from a patriarchal perspective, contributing insight regarding power relations and theatrical dance. Young (1998) considers the tendency for women to objectify themselves under the male gaze (Mulvey, 1989) due to notions of their own „immanence“ (1998: 269). Thomas, in identifying the problem of representing the ballet dancer as victim, suggests that positioning women this way disables women and perpetuates the western male/female dichotomies. She notes how “the idealised natural body ...finds its expression through the outer appearing body, which is maintained by false (or fake) means” (Thomas, 2003: 55).

According to Freud, fetishism occurs as the male projects his weakness or castration anxieties onto the body of the woman, investing erotic meaning onto substitute body parts (1927, in Ko, 2005). As the Chinese custom was associated by texts loaded with ambiguity and innuendo, many historians suggest that male fetishism perpetuated the practice. Through the 19th century and towards the end of foot binding history, male connoisseurship flourished. Male fantasy was realised in obsessive “literati- culture” (Ko, 2005: 94) and the collection of erotically charged objects: female shoes and socks, porcelain shoe-shaped wine glasses and other representative paraphernalia. Iconic examples of erotic display are the regional foot-contests that are purported to have occurred from the 17th century in Northern China: the itinerant male traveller could satisfy his fantasies by frequenting towns participating in small feet competitions, essentially, a peep-show for connoisseurs (Ko, 2005). The same fascination was displayed by male connoisseurs of ballet from the Romantic

era. Judith Chazin-Bannahum describes how images of the Romantic ballerina featured on five of the first thirty issues of a London pornographic weekly (Chazin-Bannahum, 2005), and relates analogous incidence of fetishism among French and American Dandies. Today, a brief internet search will reveal remarkable similarities and include ankle and arch stretching devices that can be purchased online, implicating persistent feminine compliance to the male preference. The agency of the female is to be questioned when she is seen as a passive subject under the imposition of a patriarchal frame. Agency she has, however complex it may be.

In her writings, the Chinese historian Dorothy Ko relates how, in most scholarly thought, two important oversights are made regarding the documentation of foot binding. Accounts have dislocated the practice from the foot bound woman's embodied experience, and have failed to locate the agency of the estimated 4.5 billion affected females, presenting an image of mass victimisation. Misrepresentation is made in situating the women as victims *subject to* the pain of practice, rather than one of agency *over their bodies* in order to re-shape them to conform to the standard aesthetic, in spite of the pain. Ko's sentiment could be expressed as easily in Jacques Lecan's statement, "woman is a symptom of man" (1975, in Salih, 2002). It becomes evident that mystique and agency is perpetuated in both practices by a dynamic transaction of the objectified female body, in exchange for gratified self-display (Ko, 2005). The transaction holds only as long as the dictates of taste and ideology remain convergent.

Chinese women's fortunes made a speedy about-turn when denigrating texts and pamphlets began to circulate, highlighting women as the cause of China's technological and economic weakness: "all two hundred million women are consumers; not one single one has produced anything of profit ...no wonder men keep them as dogs, horses and slaves..." (Ko, 2005: 21). The period was also marked by a widespread visual exposé disclosing the bound foot and its peculiar, naked deformities. Once a symbol of national prestige, the practice was at once dissected, de-mystified and rejected, challenging conceptions of the idealised Chinese woman (Ko, 2005).

Perhaps the legislators failed to notice human physiology when they conceived a simple reversal of the practice which was supposed to liberate the women “overnight” (Ko, 2005: 11). Reversal assumes a pliable body. Effectively, the very opposite was experienced by the women, after years of tight binding, they encountered the familiar stubbornness in their own flesh that disallowed any semblance of „natural“ feet. Ritualised reshaping of the body has moulded a physical set that affected the whole body, not just the feet. Perhaps physiological fixedness explains women’s stubborn resistance to change, issues of identity and agency aside.

Simone de Beauvoir’s recognition of the body as a „situation“ introduces an alternative to the Cartesian view of the body, and relates to existentialist notions of developing consciousness toward female agency (1949). It could be argued that in any socially gendered practice, recognition of the „blinkers“ is the first step in conscientising the individual. Viewed from the perspective of feminist theory, women become reactive as they acknowledge the nature and directives of imposed limitations and produce counter positions, often with a type of knee jerk reactivity. Thomas points to how „over-socialisation“ theories hinder corrective action in problems concerning human embodiment, and leave no room for individual negotiation and agency (2003).

In negotiating their way around calls for more versatility, ballet dancers behave more aware of the bifurcations generated between traditional performance on one hand, and an integrated approach based on somatic awareness developed within modern and post-modern dance (Fraleigh, 1987). It could be argued that ballet technique training promotes a type of blinkering: locating the dancer in the familiarity of a social system where the complex transactions between male desire and female compliance are embedded tacitly. Disentangling unhelpful practice may include an inclusive strategy that recombines the fractured conceptions of the body and the senses (Fraleigh, 1987) and will involve a serious reconsideration of the way normalised practice is transmitted between society and the body. Goffman describes ritualised behaviour as being mutable. He proposes an inclusive approach to transformation, where familiar body techniques may be consciously modified, re-oriented and re-negotiated within the existing context (1972, in Thomas, 2002). Once technique-related implications have been identified, a change in normative behaviour can be appropriated. As

Humphrey suggested, performance requires an intrinsically human approach that integrates both *Körper* and *Lieb*. Merleau-Ponty's ideas of intercorporeality entreat the dancer towards a relational way of being, primarily for her body, then through her body into her world (1965).

In counteracting the over-stylisation effect of technique training, incorporative body-mind practice should be included. This ought to take cognisance of the body as a whole, and not just focus on a quick-fix area of localised imbalance (Myers, 2009). Sensory group work could be added to counteract normative individual competitiveness and establish a kind of intersubjectivity (Thomas, 2003). In rectifying the visual preference in ballet training, regular, ritualised tactile massage and sensual bodywork could be incorporated along with facial release techniques in undoing bodily tension. Traditional methods could include Feldenkrais, Alexander technique and more especially, Rolfing or Structural Integration. Bond (1996) describes how through focus on externals, a dancer's body awareness becomes externalized, resulting in "blocked" cognisance of deep imbalance, and notes how re-training can be met with resistance:

...release of that core level of tension might interrupt familiar ways of mastering movement sequences, some dancers may be resistant to the core level changes that must occur for the body- the whole person- to find the ease and freedom of motion that can only occur when the core is released and responsive (in Fitt, 1996: 323)

Incorporating body-mind retraining for the dancer involves de-constructing the external image; therefore, covering mirrors should be regular practice. Training should include techniques that internalise stimuli, such as those devised in contact improvisation, butoh, mask work and physical theatre practice. Fitt identifies how conscious integration of somatic techniques frees the physical set and produces a healthier, more efficient and neutral body. The dancer is able to overcome inherent stylistic blocks, exercise choice, and achieve her full potential (Fitt, 1996).

Developing within discrete social structures, and sharing a similar historicity, ballet and foot binding position the female body within an ideological framework which reiterates itself with painstaking regularity. Both cultural forms are accompanied by an aesthetic ideal that both designates status and displays desire by habituated

extension, through the female body. Appearing to satisfy the mutual need for a type of “conspicuous consumption” (Veblen, 1994) both cases relate to the women’s predicament that can be understood *through* that of the man’s. Fraleigh recognises the dynamic interchange associated with the human need to be seen, and that in a positive way, and calls for developmental strategies that bring a “reciprocal way to refer us to ourselves, as also toward the natural and social environment in which we play a part” (in Cheesman, 2009). Prioritising an internal reciprocity for the ballet dancer will require a re-thinking of practice, which is likely to come with resistant attitudes, much like that experienced by the Chinese women a hundred years ago. As boundaries between disciplines cause the inevitable „crises of representation“, Baudrillard (1977) cautions us to question the way we designate meaning via the object rather than by the medium, and urges us towards regaining congruity from within the sensuous dancing body.

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the _____ that isn't {?}: an investigation into absence as a contributing factor, to the presentation and/or (re) presentation of the real, in performing bodies

Performance is transient, it is momentary, it happens now. What one remembers is not the performance; but fragments of that which was. To be, to live, to exist, to be aware of what is happening right now, presupposes being present within this moment. However, in order to harness the act of being present, one still needs to acknowledge that which is not there, an investigation into this notion of presence is important as it is this, 'not being' which constitutes the performance of presence; it is the presence of the performing body as well as the absence of the performer, that makes the performance of absence possible. Essentially one needs to look at how one manages to perform what fails to allow representation, through the inundation of signifiers that make it virtually impossible to just be, without (re) presenting something on stage.

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Performance is transient, it is momentary, it happens now. What one remembers is not the performance; but fragments of that which was. To be, to live, to exist, to be aware of what is happening right now, presupposes being present within this moment. However, in order to harness the act of being present, one still needs to acknowledge that which is not there, an investigation into this notion of presence is important as I wish to successfully articulate what constitutes as performing with presence; is it the presence of the performing body, or is it the absence of the performer; is the performance of absence even possible? More specifically, how does one manage to perform what fails to allow representation? Or is it that one is so inundated with signifiers that it is virtually impossible to just be, without (re) presenting something on stage?

In this essay I will attempt to look at engaging notions of the real as presented by Andrew Quick, in relation to key theorists, such as Emilyn Claid, André Lepecki and specifically Peggy Phelan. According to Phelan, the only life of performance is in the present (Phelan, 1993: 146). So it is through encouraging the revelation of a memory that one evokes performance: through the living bodies that have experienced and breathed; through bodies that have long forgotten their multitude of past performances. By evoking these bodies of memory it is suggested that one re-awakens the documentation of that which the body once performed. Phelan suggests that, “The document of a performance then is only a spur to memory, an encouragement of memory to become present” (Phelan, 1993: 147). By eliciting what refuses representation, within performance, I will suggest that this becomes an outlet for generating new material, in both the choreographic and performance processes. The revelations of disappearances, as mentioned above, allow for performance to take shape. According to Phelan, “Performance’s being... becomes itself through

disappearance... it rehearses and repeats the disappearance of the subject who longs always to be remembered” (Phelan, 1993: 147). Using this idea of disappearance, I would like to look at ideas concerning bodies in performance and the subsequent presence of a performer within a space. This will be done in order to articulate the notion that it is only through the acknowledgement of what is not performed, not seen, not spoken, not danced, that one can begin to understand performance that encompasses the present as real, and not as artifice of a subjugated multitude of signifiers; in other words not as a mere add on to the spectacle of the performance that already exists, relying on one’s connotative abilities as an audience member to decipher what is being „presented“. This will culminate in a critical analysis of two works, which deal specifically with the use of presence, although in very different ways: Jérôme Bel’s, *The Last Performance* (1998), and Juanita Finestone-Praeg’s, *16 kinds of emptiness* (2006)¹.

Phelan, on discussing the disjuncture between the acts of performance versus the act of writing about the performance, suggests that this disjuncture requires disappearance. This disappearance is brought into play if one’s subjectivity is to be retained; she believes that this act of disappearance is both a site of simultaneous objectification and an assertion of one’s dominance as a subject. She suggests that, “To live for a love whose goal is to share the Impossible is both a humbling project and an exceedingly ambitious one, for it seeks to find connection only in that which is no longer there” (Phelan, 1993: 148-9). Performance then, according to Phelan, can only be constituted as such when it shows the potential for disappearance: for loss acquires meaning and generates recovery, of both object (in this case, a memory), and by proxy, the person who is remembering. The act of remembering or bringing certain memories to the fore generates certain connotations and associations. This implies that although the performance is non-reproducible² – in its here and now-ness – it is

¹ Jérôme Bel is a French experimental choreographer with a reputation for being controversial. The Paris-based artist provokes his audiences with witty, cerebral presentations that often break down the traditional barrier between performer and audience, posing questions about virtuosity and the nature of dance. Juanita Finestone-Praeg, is a South African choreographer and academic, who is one of the longest standing members of the First Physical Theatre Company. Her work often looks to undermine the virtuous, and question notions of (re)presentation.

² For the duration of this paper, understand this term to mean that, performance is not a tangible product which can be packaged and reproduced. Once reproduced the product will not be what it was

real. This is because of the presence of the living body. So although the memory is in a sense made empty, or valueless by the presence of the living body, the emptiness of what was, is re-valued. It is present, it is here and now and because of that, one can find value in it.

The inability for performing bodies to exist without any immediate direct points of reference, or associations being attached, is in large part structured around the vertical hierarchy of metaphor. This vertical hierarchy is often associated with a multitude of connotative signifiers, embedded in performance. One is always in relation to another. One is always subjecting or being subjected to, becoming or being involved in the process of being othered. Phelan's notion of the metonymy³, attempts to debunk and unsettle the vertical hierarchy and create as Phelan suggests, "a horizontal axis of contiguity and displacement"⁴ (Phelan, 1993: 150). This is important because performance frames one trying to be or do something, which is in essence foreign, it catches one trying to engage with an entity that is not us. According to Phelan, "... performance uses the body to frame the lack of Being promised by and through the body- that which cannot appear without a supplement" (1993: 151). Performance, as stated previously, is non-reproducible. Therefore, with the use of metonymy, one avoids the direct metaphorical connotations associated with issues concerning gender and race, and deals more directly with displacing notions concerning identity, resisting the subsequent ideologies associated with the multitude of signs and signifiers attached to one's external locus of identity. It is not about making an audience engage on some deeper level to understand a meaning or higher truth, but rather to engage with and understand the loss of self and the emptiness of the

previously, it will have shifted. Although generally the same, in its essence certain variables will have altered.

³ According to Phelan we must encourage the use of metonymy as opposed to metaphor. Metaphor by its nature presupposes a reductive state whereby two conjointly different notions, somehow merge into one. With the metonymy, the very act of performance itself always has a direct „referent“; in the body of the performer. Therefore the performance always begins with an acknowledgement that that which is about to be set forth and engaged with, cannot be achieved, and will ultimately result in a loss, of either self, Othered self or performed self: to quote Phelan, "in moving from the aims of metaphor, reproduction, and pleasure to those of metonymy, displacement, and pain, performance marks the body itself as loss... The promise evoked by this performance then is to learn to value what is lost" (1993: 152).

⁴ What is being presented is sharing a common border, as opposed to being juxtaposed and delineated into degrees of superiority. Herein each signifier feeds into the next, without any specific one taking preference.

audiences desires⁵ that they, as voyeuristic participants, are eagerly trying to satisfy. What is happening in this type of performance is that, as the performer/choreographer, one is asking the audience to make a distinction between presence and representation, trying to make the audience understand that what is being attempted cannot in actuality be achieved. The presence of the present is impossible, according to Derrida as quoted in Lepecki:

the end of representation remains both a project and an impossibility... „presence, in order to be presence and self-presence, has always already begun to represent itself, has always already been penetrated [by representation]“ (2006: 49).

What does it mean to have presence and to be present? In her seminal work, *Trio A*, Yvonne Rainer questioned performer presence, articulating key concepts in her famous manifesto known as the „strategy for denial“⁶. This period marked an awareness of the exclusion, or removal of the expected from the performance paradigm. Accordingly, if one is to resist the spectacle, one must shift the audience’s attention away from what Deleuze and Guattari⁷ postulate as the “three great strata concerning us” (Claid, 2006: 93), namely: the organism, the significance and subjectification. It is imperative that one denounces these as they are the very ideologies which are restricting one’s body, as I suggested earlier, within the vertical hierarchy of metaphor. The performing body, as seen in these terms, is a body that in a sense is unattainable. So, as suggested earlier, their loss is always imminent because

⁵ Jacques Lacan suggests that because performance is non-reproducible, the desire to try and retain a salience of the performance through language is a desire which is unattainable, for it stops being the performance the moment it is contextualised in language. An altogether alternate framework to the performance, Phelan continues, “... the inauguration of language is simultaneous with the inauguration of desire, a desire which is always painful because it cannot be satisfied” (1993: 164).

⁶ Rainer, initiated work that revealed the illusion, and removed illusion; to showcase the performer as performing subject and not object, to be viewed and scrutinized and decoded by the audience. Her strategy for denial, resisted illusion, and spectacle, and revealed absence to be at the fore of what performers often associate their performance presence with, according to Claid, “New dance switches seductive relations between performer and spectator into reverse mode... The work initiates an era in dance when knowledge of convention informs the absence of convention in the work” (Claid, 2006: 91).

⁷ Having formulated an idea, originally introduced by Antonin Artaud, known as „Body without Organs“ (from hereon this will be referred to as „BwO“), the idea is, articulated quite eloquently as the post-modern dance aesthetic. This body is in constant flux, it has no set point, no final destination, but it is always moving towards something, away from something and being influenced by a multitude of entities around it at any given point, and most importantly it is something which is unattainable. According to Claid, “BwO is described as a set of practices, not a concept; a body in a state of change; an experiment that is unfixated, unrooted, always moving, always on the way somewhere; a body in the practice of desiring” (2006: 93).

one's desire to try and attain it overrides any logical inference that it cannot actually be attained, so one feeds into the desire, fuelled - I believe - by a hope for an adequate consummation of one's desire, but it is ultimately a pointless act. The moment one engages with performance one needs to understand that the representation can never be fully realised in a tangible product that can be taken home. Claid makes reference to this when she says, "Becoming evokes movements of bodies as a process of transmuting, making, doing, trans-crossing, never-being, always on a journey with no final destination, junctions of creative change" (Claid, 2006: 93). Performances of this nature seduce one then not by showcasing the virtuosity⁸ of the performer, but rather by making one see what is not there, showing the absence of the performer trying to gain the audience's attention by trying to be present.

Absence as presence is an important idea, discussed quite extensively by Jacques Derrida; his main idea is that of „*Différance*“, similar to that of the „BwO“ this idea in essence, is a state which is unattainable. The basic premise suggests that to speak is the acknowledgement of presence, but to write is to document and preserve it. The presence of a person is always negotiated through the medium of language; it is always in a represented state, so presence by that reasoning is always absent. Because what one first engages with will always be the signifiers that are written or subjugated onto bodies; Claid, referencing Derrida suggests, "presence becomes a goal rather than an origin and is a presence that can only define itself by its absence, its representation in language" (Claid, 2006: 97). This presupposes then, when a thing is absent or removed from the context from which one expects it to be, one's attention is immediately drawn toward that area because one understands that certain signifiers perpetuate the notion that something should be there. And when this is disrupted our immediate point of reference and one's ability to decipher what is happening is removed, and the presence of the lack of object becomes blindingly obvious. It is this absence which now becomes the new seductress of dance⁹. I believe then, that interplay between the post-modern detached „cool“ and the heart-wrenching emotional

⁸ By virtuosity in this context, I deem it to mean, an extremely skilled and accomplished dancer and/or performer, who because of their training and technical skill (or virtuosity), are deemed superior than those who are less developed.

⁹ Opposed to the idea of spectacle, which previously drew audiences in, I would like to suggest that it is now a lack of spectacle, a lack of virtuosity, and a lack of pretence and illusion of (re) presentation, which gets the audience's attention and draws them in.

narrative of the modernist era, needs to meet in order to create a new era of dance. This era of dance, I suggest, removes the world of make believe and transports one to a world that is absent from our conscious minds because its presence is of such a magnitude, that to engage with it on a constant basis would be to step on the brink of insanity; a world where the presence of the real, is the driving force behind the seduction.

Quick, suggests that one is embedded in a state of the „lack of lack“; one’s reality and what is real, cannot then be perceived according to Quick, “the real is founded on the absence of absence or as Lacan states the „lack of lack”” (1996: 15). And it is this lack of awareness or understanding of the absence, which embeds one within this language structure. So using these ideas derived from Lacan, Quick is saying that one’s reality or what one understands to be their reality, is nothing more than as Derrida was suggesting: a series of signifiers that are regulated and controlled by one’s language structure. The real resists these structures completely. It is something that as a subject within the system one knows, it is in a sense an innate intuitive awareness, but because of our assimilation into the system, an understanding that has been lost. One being a subject happens in spite of the system, but is so closely linked to the system that one cannot run away from one being made a subject. Re-iterating strongly ideas that were mentioned previously by Phelan, in that as a subject one is in constant state of torment and suffering because one is constantly being made aware of one’s irrelevance or lack, articulated more eloquently herein by Phelan as a lack of subjectivity that consists strongly of three ideas concerning this state of subjecthood¹⁰:

a full seeing of the Other’s absence (the ambitious part), a seeing which also entails the acknowledgement of the Other’s presence (the humbling part). For to acknowledge the Other’s (always partial) presence is to acknowledge one’s one (always partial) absence (Phelan, 1993: 149).

So in essence what Lacan has postulated via Quick, is the suggestion that the real can never be reached, similarly to the „BwO“, because by its very nature the real avoids and debunks any notion of symbolisation or reference. So as one - who is in a system

¹⁰ To simplify these three states which are articulated more eloquently in the quotation provided above, are as she refers to them, “Memory. Sight. Love” (Phelan, 1993: 149).

which is by its very nature codified and arranged by signifiers - cannot engage with something nor have an understanding of it in a tangible sense, without attaching certain ideologies to it, it stops being the real. Quick states, "Lacan indicates that the real cannot be reached since it always escapes symbolization. The real is the point of origin that is for ever lost and trauma marks this loss" (1996: 16). Therefore, any art form which tends towards a denial of language, or showcases the failure to represent, and rather presents the failure of this system or structure, can be considered as moving toward a state of the real. Work that moves between, as Quick suggests, the „symbolic“ and „real“, is work that tends towards a new paradigm; one that is attempting to engage the „lack of lack“, by exposing the real. So as Phelan suggests, one should make a move away from the metaphoric and move rather toward the metonymic.

To return to the idea of presence, Lepecki purports by means of Derrida similar ideas that I began articulating earlier, that one cannot get away from the deference of signifying elements within texts. This inscription of the body is what needs to be revealed, for these writings on the body essentially erase the body; the body becomes then a sign post of signs and signifiers and does not, or rather cannot, just function as a body but it functions as a body plus a conglomeration of other things; as Phelan would suggest as the site for, „Memory. Sight. Love“, as was articulated above. The tension herein lies between presence and repetition. Michael Foucault restates Roland Barthes' idea that there must be death of the author. Bodies have become sites of beings removed from their true selves, disassociated bodies, who are inscribed by a multitude of narratives purported by a multitude of authors¹¹. Both Derrida and Foucault are then suggesting, due to these multitudes of signifiers, a dismissal of the body. However, in order to truly harness and appreciate live performance, we need to abort these notions of inscription and repetition if we are to capture the real, according to Lepecki:

¹¹ Foucault opposed the idea that there is a signifying rational center to a subject. Rather, we are subjects that assimilate a multitude of references, and are basically deluded into thinking that there is a rational solitary unity from which we operate. Lepecki suggests, "When Foucault stated that the body is the site of a disassociated self that adopts the illusion of constituting a rational unitary subject, he was articulating a set of anti-humanistic ideas that have become associated with the notion of the death of the subject" (Lepecki, 2004: 31).

To appreciate and fully experience the unique moment of live performance, theatre must break its ties with the repetition and representation of the author's presence in the theatrical text, and with the presence within this of timeless truths. It is only when theatre makes this break that it will create a „present whose plenitude would be older than it, absent from it, and rightfully capable of doing without it: the being-present-to-itself of the absolute Logos, the living present of God“ (2004: 32).

Repetition however creates a disturbance in the mind of an audience, for at the basis of the repetition there is a difference and each time a motif is repeated the signifiers shift¹². This then shifts the perception of what is being presented. It is here we introduce Lepecki's idea of Paronomasia¹³. As Lepecki suggested in *Of the presence of the body*; the body and presence are no longer entities which are synonymous with each other, “Presence and body are no longer necessarily isomorphic; one does not necessarily imply the other” (2004: 3). Similarly Paronomasia suggests that dance is not something that necessarily implies or has anything to do with the dancer. This means that the manner in which we are engaging with time shifts. By simply using repetition, we act as if we are remaining still and consequently disrupt the signifiers. Choreography then is a machine which acts as an entity which subsumes the bodies of performers, and has the ability to morph them into whatever entity the choreographer requires; choreography becomes the net which carries the traumas of the bodies, as Lepecki states:

Under the paronomastic display of choreography, dance emerges as a disembodied power ready to be occupied by any body. By peeling off dance from the dancer, the dancer can be inhabited by other non-performed steps; and choreography reveals itself as always diluted by each body's tremors, involuntary acts, morphology, imbalances, and techniques (2006: 63).

This stillness is important, for it is within the immobility of the body to be able to move beyond or out of the repetition that the disruption occurs. This happens because

¹² That which is repeated is not in essence the same thing, and by virtue of its nature highlights a difference, subsequently calling into question the power of the author and minimizing the objectification of the subject. According to Lepecki, “each reiteration of steps, music, dress, and utterance of the name of the author inevitably discloses difference at the core of repetition” (2006: 62).

¹³ Essentially it is a play on words, a kind of pun, “paronomasia, a composite word for the Greek *para*, both „alongside“ and „beyond“ and *onomos*, „name“, that indicates slight variations on meaning proper to the pun” (Lepecki, 2006: 62).

one is going beyond the constraints of a linear reference and engaging the metonymic as suggested by Phelan. Specifically, in relation to Lepecki, this notion of stillness is a move toward an ontology of dance that deals specifically with an investigation into representation through the use of stillness, and particularly in relation to Paronomasia (Lepecki, 2006: 45).

Jérôme Bel's piece entitled, *The Last Performance* (1998), is a prime example of a work that deals directly with questioning notions of representation through the use of Paronomasia. Lepecki suggests in *Skin, Body, and Presence in Contemporary European Choreography*, that within Bel's works, he tends to engage with two critical elements, namely, 'studium' and 'punctum'. The former, deals directly with what is staged, what is being represented; the latter deals with something which disrupts the viewers gaze (Lepecki, 1999: 133). *The Last Performance* (1998), consists of four dancers who constantly subvert the expected stage conventions; all dancers purport to names that are not their own and ultimately bring into question ideas surrounding presence and absence, by virtue of the fact that they are presenting this in a framed theatrical space. One of the key moments in this piece is when performer Antonio Carallo, walks onto stage and claims, „I am Hamlet“, after a few moments, he says „to be“, walks off the stage and exclaims, „or not to be“, walks back onto stage and quietly finishes, „that is the question“ (Lepecki, 2006: 60). When the „Hamlet“ character exists, dancer Claire Haenni walks onto stage and states, „I am Suzanne Linke¹⁴“, then proceeds to go upstage and perform an extract from Linke's *Wandlung*, (1978). This keeps happening; all four dancers proceed to walk on stage, stake this claim and perform this extract. Their actions suggest that by premising this piece by quoting Shakespeare, Bel is highlighting the very system of presence, which as subjects, one is subjugated to and ultimately becomes representations of: according to Lepecki, “Hamlet's conflicts are those informing the emergence of modern subjectivity as a system of presence... this system of presence, because it entangles the spectacle of visibility... is also a system of representation” (2006: 60). This, in conjunction with the repetition of the dance, reveals the failure of representation to be all

¹⁴ A German choreographer, who worked with Mary Wigman who was important with regards to the development of *Tanztheater*. *Tanztheater*, means „dance theatre“, it grew out of expressionist dance and fed off of, and in large part due to, a post war Germany.

encompassing, for as each dancer dances the steps, they start to move less and less like each other and the underscore of the repetition is repeated to reveal the hidden trauma's and idiosyncrasies of each dancer's body. This repetition,

reveals how dancing alongside and beyond a name is also to stay with it, to reveal its undersides, to unfold it, to unleash its lines of force, to break open the illusion of fixity a name is supposed to bring to its referent (Lepecki, 2006: 60).

Finestone-Praeg's work, *16 kinds of emptiness* (2006), attempted specifically to engage with what exactly it means to speak of a performer's presence. It sought to discern how the ideas of presence or absence are able to be captured. Finestone-Praeg suggests that embedded in the search for this absence and presence, is an immediate distrust of virtuous performance, rather an embrace of intimacy and immediacy. The site for the piece was the Old Nun's Chapel. This venue was chosen as it disrupted the gaze of the audience¹⁵ and provided a multitude of possible perspectives from which the piece could be viewed. As opposed to a shared witnessing of the piece by the audience, this disruption is important as it showcases the piece as it is; the work is not in and of itself trying to hide any tricks in order to mask a spectacle. Simultaneously, this means that the performers have no room to prepare and become a character; they simply are who they are. Finestone-Praeg suggests by referencing Ana Sanchez-Colberg, "There is no hidden code to be deciphered, the experience of the piece is the thing itself" (Sanchez-Colberg in Finestone- Praeg, 2007). When choreographing, one needs to transgress the proscenium, the framed lineage of the fourth wall, in order to create a live experience. The real as previously suggested is beyond the realm of representation. Working specifically with images: experiences of emptiness; she tried to resist representation. Finestone-Praeg suggests that "the 16 different vignettes were an invitation to experience, not the unity/coherence of narrative, but the elusiveness of emptiness in its various forms" (2007). A prime example of the elicitation of this „elusiveness of emptiness“ is in vignette VI, *The Soul*; the audience is plunged into darkness and after a few moments all that is seen is a blue light bulb slowly being lowered. The choreographer's note to the designer was simply a Tom Waits song and the idea of an audience being left in an empty space for an indefinite period of time.

¹⁵ Audience members were placed on either side of the performance space seated as one would be if watching a Wimbledon tennis match.

What this vignette elicits is not only the notion of emptiness and a strong sense of play within this kind of work, but it brings into question the act of documentation. This instance on film merely reads as the audience being bathed in darkness, however in the space, in the immediacy of this action, the tangibility and breath of the moment is extremely present, but unable to be captured accurately on paper: Finestone-Praeg states, “The tangible and immediate experience of the stillness and energy generated in this performed moment could not be captured for research or documentation purposes as the outcome was the experience, the *thing* itself” (2007). The real, the live, the present, requires a sense of abandonment of the rationale, the logical, and the coded in order to harness and extrapolate the potential of all the possibilities of what could be or has been in the performance paradigm.

Derrida claims:

Play is always a play of absence and presence, but if it is to be thought radically, play must be conceived of before the alternative of presence and absence. Being must be conceived as presence or absence on the basis of the possibility of play, not the other way around (Derrida in Claid, 2006: 182).

Hopefully I have articulated that the presence of the body is not and cannot be removed necessarily from the signifiers that are embedded in our understanding of who we are. However, if we embrace the trauma of what the body has lost and are unafraid to play in the realms of the unknown, that which is absent may come to the fore and generate work that is of great worth. That is to say this is work that elicits presence, and a commanding energy that is unafraid to play, that is unafraid to speak and most importantly, that is unafraid of judgement.

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Gavin Krastin

Ruptures, Remediations, Reconfigurations – ‘Dancing’ towards the Post-Choreographic

*In the context of contemporary twenty-first century digital performance and virtual art, choreography has undergone a radical re-evaluation in terms of how bodily movement produces data (information and meaning) or how a performer engages with an interfaced environment that is programmable and networked and therefore susceptible to emergent and unpredictable states. When we perform on virtual stages or in simulated interactive environments we are propelled through the various dividing membranes of theatre as we have known them, cracking open alternate experiences of time, space and present corporeality – resulting in an unstable moving body that hovers above new and uncharted formations of choreography and physicality. This paradoxically unmapped landscape has come to be known as the postdramatic and the post-choreographic. The paper will investigate Lehmann’s idea of postdramatic theatre, and in conjunction with Birringer’s early explorations into the post-choreographic, apply these concepts to contemporary interactive ‘choreography’. This paper will unravel the ambiguities and complexities of these concepts’ ‘definitions’ and articulations. Furthermore, these theories of alternative physicalities are then applied to Nathaniel Stern’s *Stuttering* (2003), unearthing the post-choreographic strategies embedded in the work. The paper concludes that digitally realised interactive environments allow for a rhizoidal transformation of the body, where it may entertain conventional notions of time and space while it simultaneously inhabits the potential to permeate alternative, irrational and paradoxical nodes of time and space, consequently resulting in other forms of physicality. A relatively new topic and debate, the paper shall serve to add to the discourse surrounding the post-choreographic and digitalised embodiment.*

Keywords: *post-choreographic* *postdramatic theatre* *enfleshed-machine*
Nathaniel Stern *haecceity* *interactive-environments*
performing data *alternative physicality*

Ruptures, Remediations, Reconfigurations – 'Dancing' towards the Post-Choreographic

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Arrival/Departure

It's a very provocative issue, because I was thinking I would agree with the people who say that it's not dance, but we have to be careful that we don't get left behind, or that we don't miss an opportunity to share what we know about the human body and what we love about live performance, share it with the future; and that we don't become so protective of this little domain that we have which, as we know, is undervalued and underfunded, that we don't have the courage to step out [Bill T. Jones on virtual and digital dance; (Jones in de Spain, 2000:5)].

A provocative question – is digital dance actually dance? When the sweating, breathing and fleshy body leaves the concrete confines of the proscenium arch and is rendered as a digital entity of numerical codes within alternate experiences of time and space one certainly finds oneself in a maze of arguments, loopholes and paradoxes in trying to answer that question. Trying to answer that question remains futile, as it can be argued either way, with each argument equally valuable and justified. Furthermore, answering that question may imply a hierarchy of dance and choreographic experiences – something that post-modern performance discourse refutes. Instead, what may prove to be productive is examining how the addition of advanced digital systems have exposed unconventional performances of body, time and space, resulting in further, and diverse, dance and choreography discourse and practice.

As we dance on the edges of machines – in virtual theatres and through digital-actuated events – we are projected towards the post-choreographic, where notions of the body-in-time-and-space¹ have been re-evaluated, ruptured, remediated and reconfigured. When we perform on virtual stages or in simulated interactive environments we are propelled through the various dividing membranes of theatre as

¹ See glossary of terms.

we have known them, cracking open alternate experiences of time, space and present corporeality – resulting in an unstable *moving* body that hovers above new and uncharted formations of drama and choreography. This paradoxically unmapped landscape has come to be known as the postdramatic and the post-choreographic.

This research paper will investigate Lehmann's idea of postdramatic theatre², and in conjunction with Birringer's early explorations into the post-choreographic³, apply these concepts to contemporary interactive *'choreography'*. This paper⁴ will unravel the ambiguities and complexities of these concepts *'definitions'* and articulations. Furthermore, my intention is to then apply these theories to Nathaniel Stern's *Stuttering* (2003), unearthing the post-choreographic strategies embedded in the work.

Due to the nature of this art and the discourse that it is submerged in, new terms and connotations have had to emerge. As the technology within the art evolves, so does the ability of the art and discourse morph, often resulting in new directions of discourse, and thus new words are constantly added to the lexicon of jargon within interactive and digital art and academia. A glossary of terms can be found at the end of this paper where relevant *new* terminology is explained and examined.

Ruptures

² –Lehmann's theory of postdramatic theatre is testament to a new emphasis on performance in European and North American theatre and art from the 1960s onwards, which consequently led to a paradigm shift in the study of theatre and to the emergence of Performance Studies as a discipline ... The theatre that Lehmann identifies as postdramatic often focuses on exploring the usually unacknowledged anxieties, pressures, pleasures, paradoxes and perversities that surround the performance situation as such ... Together with the turn to performance in practice and theory, the development of postdramatic theatre" (Jurs-Munby in Lehmann, 2006:4-7).

³ Johannes Birringer coined this term in 2006 when he first articulated his thoughts surrounding the use of digital actuated interactive environments and digital choreography that resulted in alternative concepts of (dis)embodiment and a shift in the understanding of body-in-time-and-space towards the notion of real-time and cyber/virtual and interactive space. He released more reflections on this concept in 2008 when his earlier thoughts became subjected to vigorous criticism by some dance practitioners/theorists, yet also spurned support and further elaborations on the theory. The post-choreographic remains to be a highly debated and contested concept amongst the international dance, choreography and art community – this paper serves as my addition to the continuous challenges of unearthing the theory of the post-choreographic.

⁴It is important to note that this paper acts as a sibling to my earlier paper, *Infiltrated Bodies: The Corporeal Politics surrounding Stelarc's Theoretical and Artistic Practice, using his Ping Body (1996) as a case study* (2010). The notions of computer-human symbiosis, the obsolete and non-obsolete body and the rhizome, which are discussed in that paper, are centrally embedded in this investigation but not repeated. I am not assuming readership of the prior paper, however engaging with the previous paper will provide a more rigorous understanding of this argument.

Due to the delayed translation of Lehman's *Postdramatic Theatre* (2006), which was originally published in German and several other languages in 1999 but only in English in 2006⁵, one must take note of the curious situation this text finds itself in: ahead of its English publication, *Postdramatic Theatre* had already become a seminal reference point in international discussions and research on contemporary theatre/performance. In *Postdramatic Theatre*, Lehman articulates and theorises new and emergent theatre forms while also pragmatically considering their relation to dramatic theory and theatre history, including their resonances with (and divergences from) the experimental theatre of the 1960s onwards. Lehman pragmatically considers the new aesthetics in terms of an aesthetics of space, time, the body and text, taking into account the historical shift out of a textual culture and into a mediatised culture of image and sound.

The word post seems to be the trendy word of twentieth and twenty-first century academic, artist and philosopher⁶. In understanding notions of postdramatic theatre, or more specifically, the post-choreographic, it is important to interrogate the weary word post:

Post here is to be understood neither as an epochal category, nor simply as a chronological after drama, a forgetting of the dramatic past, but rather as a rupture and a beyond that continue to entertain relationships with drama and are in many ways an analysis and anamnesis of drama. To call theatre postdramatic involves subjecting the traditional relationships of theatre to drama to deconstruction and takes account of the numerous ways in which this relationship has been refigured in contemporary practice since the 1970's (Jurs-Munby in Lehmann, 2006:2).

The same thought can be applied to the notion of the post-choreographic. The post in post-choreography does not refer to chronology or linear progression, but rather it evokes the rupturing, re-evaluation and reconfiguration of conventional modes of choreography. However, Birringer does render my preceding statement as paradoxical, as he titles his first (and so far seminal) paper on the post-choreographic as *After Choreography* (2008), which does connote a sequential progression of time. Nevertheless, after processing Birringer's research, I feel that the after in the title, as

⁵ A concern expressed by Jurs-Munby in Lehmann, 2006:1.

⁶ I am reminded of Heiner Müller's corny joke that he only knew of one postmodern author – a poet who worked at a post office.

well as its connotations, only remain in the title as residue and not in the discourse, as the discourse is indeterminate and rhizomatic in nature and does not lend itself to linear or purely vertical progressive movement in understanding the history of choreography. Perhaps the title is self-referential and that Birringer deliberately points to the game, or pun, in the word after within post-modern discourse, specifically the post-choreographic, to make one aware of the implications of post in the post-choreographic.

In examining postdramatic theatre and the post-choreographic, one will notice that theatre and drama have drifted apart in the second half of the twentieth century – the momentum of decades of experimental art and boundary-breaking performances have shifted, or morphed, drama into the performative. We, the contemporary artists and art theorists, have reclaimed theatre as a performative process not a literary conclusion. No longer is theatre, or the *mise-en-scene*, inscribed with ink between the dusty covers of books and records, but rather, it is inscribed in our bodies, breaths, gestures, fleeting moments and the network of sounds and images that create our environment – constantly unfurling and uncurling, immune to stagnation. Furthermore, our current environment is submerged in, and created from, the digital and virtual; more specifically our environment is mediated by media, that is to say time, space and the body are mediatised. Jurs-Munby concurs that, “Lehmann’s study identifies the caesura of the media society as one of the most crucial contexts for postdramatic theatre” (Jurs-Munby in Lehmann, 2006:9).

Remediation and the Mediatised

Given that contemporary performance is more immediately informed by current (digitalised) cultural practices other than traditional drama, it is aporetic as to why it is even necessary or appropriate to relate this type of new performance work to drama at all. Perhaps a *truth* lies in that “we are dealing with deep structures that still inform the expectations of the majority of the audience when they come to the theatre or talk about it in everyday language” (ibid:10). Lehmann’s postdramatic theatre is not a rejection of dramatic discourse, but a deconstruction or rupture of it – postdramatic theatre still contains the dramatic within its deconstruction. As Lehman argues, drama and theatre are treated as inseparable, if not synonymous, in the popular imagination and come with expectations of excitement and suspense. Furthermore, when film and

television first emerged they remediated theatre, modelling themselves on theatre and dramatic structures. Early film,

Remediated theatre by adopting the narrative structures and visual strategies of nineteenth-century melodrama, [television in addition] could remediate theatre at the ontological level through its claim to immediacy (Auslander in Lehmann, 2006:13).

Therefore, important dramatic structures and expectations are still sediment in film and television. However, in a postdramatic theatre where contemporary performance uses or references media (or any form of digital/virtual representation) it is,

Partially remediating film and television but not in order insidiously to replicate them to maintain its legitimacy but in order to probe their status and impact on us in a self-conscious manner – including their history of remediating theatre (Jurs-Munby in Lehmann, 2006:13).

Once an artist acknowledges and understands these ruptures, remediations and reconfigurations then one can fully probe the implication of technology on the body – rigorously extending and questioning the body's relationship with the digital and virtual. Running simultaneously and parallel to Lehman's notion of the postdramatic and media mediated bodies are Birringer's critiques of media and performance⁷ and *his* theory of the post-choreographic⁸ – a theory, or understanding, that is constantly being developed and added to, constantly being agreed and disagreed with, a theory open to multiple input. This paper serves to act as my addition to this theoretical and practical amoebic machine.

Experienced digital and virtual artist, choreographer, academic and theorist Johannes Birringer argues that:

The new conditions of re/production in the digital age are pervasive and invasive in ways that profoundly affect – as all technologies must – our minds and bodies, our concepts of space, place, time and movement, and thus our imaginaries and our projections of materiality (in both a corporeal and discursive sense but also in terms of visual design and spatial architecture) (Biringner, 1998:28).

⁷ See Birringer, 1998.

⁸ See an on-line forum entitled *Post Choreographic* (2008) (<http://dancetech.ning.com/forum/topic/show?id=1462368%3ATopic%3A15914&page=1>), which Birringer facilitated, where the notion of the post-choreographic is dissected. The text remains archived in this cyberspace where anybody can add to the on-line discussion. This forum resulted in his paper: Birringer, J. "After Choreography". *Performance Research*, 13: 1 (2008), pp. 118-122.

Dancing, or simply moving, magnifies a central aspect of the body-in-time-and-space, its innate provocation to determine, claim and maintain its existence, or as Birringer argues, “its being in the world, by projecting itself and moving into space, by taking up space, by shaping space and touching the environment, mediating or minding the self in relation to others” (ibid:29).

Reconfigurations⁹

The notion of choreography, or dance, has not disappeared in the context of twenty-first century digital performance and visual art, but rather it has undergone a re-evaluation, resulting in the reconfiguration of the body-in-time-and-space. Choreography is currently, in the context of the digital, in a state of reconfiguration “in terms of how bodily movement produces data or how a performer or ‘immersed’ engages with an interactive environment that is programmable and networked, and thus open to unpredictable and emergent states” (ibid:118). Dance, according to Birringer (ibid:29), “moves through media and moves media of representation.” The glass lenses and screens housed within the machinic architecture of our televisions, cameras and cell phones re-display and re-space¹⁰ the moving body, robbing it of its actual flesh and affecting motion. Since movement cannot ever be fixed, saved or recovered exactly, it creates a paradoxical challenge for critics, historians and theorists who seek to map it onto language and into texts. The proposition of the post-choreographic, in the context of digital interactive environments, serves to emphasise evolving system behaviours, including physical performer articulations in constant exchange with responsive or (semi) autonomous intelligent audio-visual environments, sensorial flows and hyper-sensory spaces. The particular challenges in composing ‘choreography’ arise from the real-time synthesis of image and motion, not based on traditional modes of choreographic usages of ‘steps’ in space, but on programming and physical adaptation, which create virtual movement through the body’s interaction, now rendered ordinal, in a digitalised interactive environment.

⁹ See glossary of terms.

¹⁰ Re-spaced in that the body image is now within the box-shape structural space of a cell phone or television, not in the original/actual environment of the body in motion.

For many digital and virtual artists and choreographers who work with interactive or computational systems, the model of real-time¹¹ sequencing in image and sound has become vital. This notion of real-time is realised from:

Mathematics, cybernetics, biology, neuroscience and AI rather than from a primarily notational understanding of ‘choreography’ (the writing of dance) based on the principles of organising movement in space and time. The category of real-time is introduced through computational and algorithmic processes that allow performer-initiation of a broad range of live sampling and direct accessing of sound and image synthesis parameters, moving between programmed patches and changing the qualities of digital manifestations from moment to moment (Birringer, 2008:118).

In the preceding quotation, Birringer (2008) explains that in ‘dance’ considered post-choreographic the introduction of real-time to performance allows for a responsive space and immediate feed-back action between participant and the space – resulting in a body that cannot succumb to settling and stabilisation. A body immersed in an environment, where the space, due to real-time software implementation, constantly and immediately responds and reacts to that body in space – creating a loop of unpredictable play between body and space, within a real-time system. Nevertheless, it is important to note that the complexity of real-time that Birringer articulates in the digitalised notion of the post-choreographic differs to that of ‘real time’ in terms of Lehman’s postdramatic theatre – yet both are inherently present and poignant in the post-choreographic. Lehman (2006) believes it is important to acknowledge and analyse the ‘real time’ of a performance process in its entirety: “Its [the performance] fore and after play and its accompanying circumstances: the circumstance that its reception in a very practical sense ‘takes up’ time, ‘theatre time’ that is life time and does not coincide with the time of the staging” (Lehman, 2006:154).

Real-time, as expressed by Birringer (2008:118), can be understood as a new medium of artistic expression – performers and machines interact in a continuous unfolding process which is a part of a much larger space of networked media transmissions (rhizoidal knowledge) if the interactive apparatus is linked to cyberspace or other systems. Perhaps it is the inclusion of this new notion of time into choreographic praxis, deviating from conventional choreography, that aids in the underpinning of

¹¹ See glossary of terms.

the post-choreographic. For Lehman (2006:156), only an experience of, or simply being in, time that deviates from habit, the ordinary and the expected can provoke an explicit perception of the body occupying space in time, which permits time to:

Move from something taken for granted as a mere accompaniment to the rank of a theme. Thus, a new phenomena in the aesthetics of theatre is established: the intention of utilising the specificity of theatre as a mode of presentation to turn *time as such* into an object of the aesthetic experience (Lehman, 2006:156).

The digital has certainly aided in facilitating post-choreography, in terms of the potential of the body in a new time and space – real-time and virtual interactive space, where the triad of body, space and time is constantly negotiated and re-negotiated. The conventional organisation of dance as a choreographic process relied on a coding, bound within a fixed lexicon, that fixes (or concludes) steps and movement phrases in a physical space, and normally within patterns of music. However, the machinic architecture implied in interactive environments and continuous computer processing guarantees that fixity, conclusion and stagnation is unsupported. Stasis is unwarranted on the level of machinic emergence, namely the potential of the system to evolve dynamically in ways that are not pre-programmed” (Birringer, 2008:118). Furthermore, such technology and digitally-interactive spaces (physical as well as virtual) have rendered some traditional kinds of musicianship¹² obsolete and have led to the formation of new aesthetics and judgements of value” (Thornton in Birringer, 1998:31). What would otherwise remain trivial as a mere demonstration of media communication (as in journalism and broadcasting), in the context of performance manifests the latent conflict between the moment of life and the surface of virtual electronic time” (Lehman, 2006:158).

The Machine: Facilitating the ‘Post-Choreographic’

I am not arguing that the incorporation of advanced technology in performance or a digitalised interactive space is the only trajectory towards the post-choreographic, but only that it certainly does facilitate it. As technology evolves, so does the potential of the human body, the body-in-time-and-space, as it is through the use of (and symbiosis with) advanced technology that the ‘restrictions’ and/or potential of the

¹² In the original context of this quote, ‘musicianship’ can also be read, or interpreted, as ‘artistic practice’, i.e. the term refers to various types of art, not just music.

body-in-time-and-space can be explored. The machine, sometimes unheralded, ceaselessly probes, penetrates, postpones, props-up, permeates and performs the body, time and space (as can be seen in Stelarc's repertoire¹³) – with every plateau or limit as an agent of not only arrival, but simultaneously a point of departure. Time and space which constantly unfolds and expands, like a mass of sourcelessness and uncontained water, results in the body-in-time-and-space in process, a body leaping towards indeterminate modification.

Birringer argues that technology comfortably facilitates the post-choreographic as the technological system is now entwined with the organism¹⁴. More poignantly, an answer lies in the use of real-time:

The real-time performance (if there are human organisms coupled with hardware [sensors, wearables, camera tracking systems, etc.]) and software (patches running on computers analysing incoming data and controlling feedbacks and continuous modulations of output materials such a video, digital animation, light, sound etc) thus happens within a data flow environment. This is the first important issue, I think: the post choreographic emerges in data flow environments (and these are facilitated by technologies and transductions) (Birringer, 2008:26).

Birringer, with reference to his practical and theoretical practice, later explains:

The proposition was to no longer conceptually treat the real time environment as an equivalent structure for choreographic ecriture or capture... but to imagine real time adoptional performance – improvisation along a scenic structure for interaction – as, primarily a synaesthetic event, a generative happening and a formation where the performer may not be in control and yet explores an intersubjective or multisubjective experience, playing with the cybernetic machine as the machine plays with them, within the digital environment, within the fantasised environment, with others there (performers, audience), with the sensorial and tactile instruments, both visible and invisible, the linings between body and technologies (ibid).

It is these linings that Birringer mentions that are of interest, as it is in that liminal space where the new might emerge, where the familiar may look unfamiliar, as this interfacial process is not necessarily spectacular or familiar and nor is it even interesting at times. For in interactive and immersive environments the choreography, or movement language of the dance, is the ~~un~~structured happening within the performance space, the stumbling, the malfunctioning partnering, the exuberant contingent, the unsuspected breathlessness or discordination when your organs or

¹³ See Krastin, 2010, where the penetration of the (Stelarc's) body, due to technology, is explored.

¹⁴ See Krastin, 2010, where the entwinement and symbiosis of technological systems and the human body are explored.

limbs seem not there or digitally dilated” (ibid:27). Perhaps these processes unearth a different type of dance technique, in this case a techno-ique – where ‘dancers’ learn how to utilise and program real-time and sound software, as well as conventional dance technique.

Stern/*Stuttering* (2003)

At the beginning of this year I encountered my digital twin in a new light for the first time. Of course anybody who engages with the internet has an electronic twin, an avatar, and the acknowledgment of my digital twin body was nothing new, but this encounter was different – both of my bodies simultaneously coexisted in the same space. Furthermore, I did not experience disembodiment as I usually do when I sit at a computer and enter cyberspace, where my avatar may move freely with my body confined to a chair-prison, instead my body and breath (and the time and space they inhabit), my very existence, was amplified to such an extent that it became a sensory overload. This confrontation between bodies happened at the Cape Town National Gallery’s “DadaSouth” exhibition, where in one of the gallery rooms Nathaniel Stern’s *Stuttering* (2003)¹⁵ was situated.

Nathaniel Stern is a writer, teacher and interdisciplinary artist who continues to research, write and publish on digital art, continuity and embodiment. His artistic practice lies in experimental and interactive installations, video, net.art and printmaking. He is not a choreographer, hence why I feel his work to be a poignant example of post-choreography, as the expansion of dance out of the realm of choreography is a pivotal force contributing to the momentum of debates surrounding the post-choreographic.

The complex notions of the ruptures, remediations and reconfigurations of the body-in-time-and-space are all evident in *Stuttering* (2003). The work is a real-time system¹⁶ actuated interactive environment where participants cross a threshold into the space saturated with printed transparencies on the floor that contain quotes and

¹⁵ The work premiered in 2003 at a one-day test at the Johannesburg Art Gallery as part of the 24.7 artist residence, and then the work was formally exhibited at The Brett Kebble Art Awards in Cape Town. Furthermore, the work has toured to Dublin, Milwaukee and Minnesota. The work was exhibited again in 2010 at the DadaSouth exhibition as a work made by a (diasporic) South African that inhabits a sense of the Dadaist spirit.

¹⁶ See glossary of terms.

passages about stutters, –situations in which stuttering, in its broadest sense, is common, and suggestions of when and where we should make stutters,‘ in order to break seamless‘ communication” (Stern, 2009:153). Participants are then confronted with a projection (containing thirty-four trigger points) that is broken into a Mondrian-like mirror¹⁷, –where each sub-section, initialised by body-tracking software, animates one of the floor-found quotes¹⁸; every animation is accompanied by an audio recitation of its text” (ibid). In addition, the movement of the projected image and sound heard appear to share the same rhythm at first, however this is not necessarily the case, as the faster one moves the more images and sounds are triggered, resulting in over-lapping audible (although unclear) text and a sporadic collage of image, constantly gaining momentum (in sound and image) until the body stops and only then do particles begin to settle.

When I found this space in the exhibition it was vacant, silent. After admiring Steven Cohen’s dildos (and the resilience of his anus), I briskly walked into the adjoining room and, unknowingly, into the art work, where my quiet and passive body was suddenly hit with a barrage of text, vocals, line, light and contour – such an onslaught that I felt as though I was trapped within a bright white cube of static electricity. The more my body responded in fright, the more the space responded and grew in intensity – with the space responding to every gesture and breath, while simultaneously my digital twin towered over me, copying and reproducing every action of my fleshy body. It was only when I was still did I realise what was actually happening and at play, and the performer and choreographer in me could no longer be contained and took to the opportunity to play in such an amplified environment.

Stuttering thus created a tense environment through its inescapable barrage of stuttering sound and visual stuttering: noise. Only by lessening their participation will the information explosion slow into an understandable text for the viewer.... Their minimal movements, and the phrases they trigger, literally create new meaning. The spaces [linings] between speaking and listening, between language and the body, add to the complex experience of communication.... And to do so in, and as, and with, our bodies *Stuttering* suggests that communication comes to and from us, in ways that even we do not fully comprehend (ibid:136).

¹⁷ See Appendix A.

¹⁸ See Appendix B.

The intertwining of sense perceptions in such a projective environment is intense, furthermore the haptic visuality marks the enactment of movement that has less to do with steps, phrases or placements of the limbs, but rather with –gestural or postural articulations of motion _mapped‘ onto image, sound and light movement” (Birringer, 2008:119). The articulation of sound and light/image creates tactile feedback in the interactive, or projected, environment outside of the performer’s body. –There is a disjuncture insofar as the data acquired from the body drive other temporal objects in the environment” (ibid). *Stuttering* (2003) strongly charts towards the post-choreographic, as in such an environment there can be no set choreographic structure, nor can one speak of improvisation, as improvisation surrounds goal orientated outcomes, while in a post-choreographic context it shifts towards a process orientated transformation. Birringer (2008) notes how, in the post-choreographic, the –interactive potentials are shaped by particular aesthetic and mathematical principles requiring that performers adopt specific physical techniques to play the instruments of the medium and learn new proprioceptive and sensory process” (Birringer, 2008:119).

The experience of *Stuttering* (2003) encourages one to re-address our perceptions of the relationship between human body and advanced machine – that mankind’s relationship with the digital should rather be seen as a multidirectional process of potential, as opposed to a unidirectional process in stasis. Stern (2009) implores one to –rethink the extant relationship *in* the in- between of body and technology, and invites us to experiment with the *of* of the relation of body and technology” (Stern, 2009:117). Stern’s work points to the symbiosis of human body and machine, emphasising the persistent existence (or being) of the body, not the obsolescence of the body, as –forgetting about the body is an old Cartesian trick” (Stone in Stern, 2009:118)¹⁹. The human body is perhaps the paramount form of technology, and likewise when thinking of the body as a machine, technology too can be considered a body. Stern expresses this techno-human symbiosis in a constant state of negotiation, which is imbedded in his digitalised interactive environments as an _enfleshed machine‘ (Stern in Birringer, 2008:6).

¹⁹ See Krastin, 2010, where this _Cartesian trick‘ forms the central debate in relation to Stelarc’s _split body‘.

The term enfleshed machine²⁰ was first used in 2001 by Stern for several reasons. Firstly he wanted digital-enabled interactive art to be thought of as more than just simple reactive software. Stern (2008), in reference to an interactive system that he created for another collaborative dance performance (yet applicable to *Stuttering*), states that his real-time operating system “drove Jeanette’s performance just as much as she drove the projection... a soccer ball moves the players even more so than the players kick the ball”²⁰ (Stern in Birringer, 2008:6). Secondly, Stern believes that the machine did represent a (human, fleshy) body:

[It] had a skin (the screen), a moving body-image (animated signs and projected shadows), a body-schema (in the shared space of inter-action), a flux of significations (the text), etc... Even though it did not have a body on its own, it had flesh that might be part of an embodying process (ibid).

Stern (Birringer, 2008:6) suggests, lastly, that he did not want the technology that actuated the space for interactive potential to be thought of as a prosthetic. As, unlike Stelarc, that assumes a dominance that, while relevant, is much more dynamic in the moment of interaction and unpredictability. The result of utilising a real-time operating system, or an enfleshed machine, according to Birringer (2008:120), is that such proximity to recognition-systems that analyse enactive embodiment can potentially shift the subjective of choreography towards an operational category of collaborative design (software algorithms, live processing) which belongs – in a broad sense – to the discourse of artificial life and autonomous systems. Hence one notes the expansion of choreography out of the realm of only dance and into a more collaborative mode of being – cross pollinating various practices of art and performance.

What results from *Stuttering* (2003), is what Stern calls the implicit body. This body is one that has shifted away from the presentational and codified body – the implicit body provokes the post-choreographic as it has less engagement with pre-determined and patterned steps. Stern (2009:121) expresses that under the digital conditions of

²⁰ Jeannette Ginslov, a digital artist, performer, and choreographer, has collaborated with Nathaniel Stern numerous times. In this quote Stern references the performance *En/traced*, that he and Ginslov collaborated on in 2001. *En/traced* (2001), also a digitally actuated interactive environment, utilised similar real-time system operations within a similar architecture as *Stuttering* (2003) and thus I feel that this quote can apply to *Stuttering* (2003).

the work there is potential for a shift in subject/object and performer/audience hierarchies, and how one comes to perceive embodiment within a digitalised framework. As the name suggests, the implicit body‘ is a body that is implied or embedded in the work itself – Stern’s art is centred upon the interaction between body and machine, and without the body (and the body’s interactions) there would be no art work. Together, the body and machine (that gives way to the realisation of a digitalised interactive environment) make the art work. Stern proposes that the *flesh* of the implicit body‘ can perhaps be thought of as a palimpsest, where:

We inscribe and scratch away, and enfold, alongside our continuous unfolding, in order to not uncover or discover our bodies, but to emerge as bodies (both legible and illegible), as not-yet-bodies, as bodies in process – implied bodies, in relation and drawn out. Like a moebius strip²¹, where the root of explicit is *to unfold*, to imply *to enfold*. And, like a moebius strip again, the relationship between them is neither dichotomous nor dialectical. We ponder this continuum not as a binary between emergence and positioning, between regulatory operations and becoming, or between implicit. It is rather a both/and, a co-telling – in, of and by the flesh (Stern, 2009:121).

This implicit body‘ is activated by the role of advanced technology. Hence, the use of the digital in the post-choreographic concept facilitates new forms of interactivity and intersubjectivity in a shared space. Where, as expressed by Olu (2008), ~~the~~ audience and performer have an active role as real-time reflective participants, they become users‘ and player‘” (Olu in Birringer, 2008:15). Furthermore, in context of the audience-experience, Birringer argues that:

Every user of such virtual, generative spaces participates in and creates their own dynamic environment‘ and its expressive qualities. The levels of control are variable; if the architecture involves intelligent agents or streaming media (transmitted from partner sites), the layering of indirect and remote manipulation of the kinaesthetic and the kinaesonic can be highly complex, especially if the kinaesthetic qualities of projected images contradict the human body motion observable in the phenomenal body. The articulation of digital objects by the body, yet at a distance from the body, induces new associations between sensations and sense perception (Birringer, 2008:119).

Interactive art, for Stern (2009:121), allows one to live through that out of which the experience of embodiment emerges. In allowing one to touch and to be touched by the continuum of digitality, the implicit body precedes construction, as the body and digital are co-creators in/of the process. ~~Process~~ always has ontological priority” in

²¹ See glossary of terms and Appendix C.

that ~~it~~ constitutes the field of emergence” (Massumi, 2002:8). Interactive art, as a process not product, allowed me, the visitor, to perform the piece: I *am* ~~the~~ piece as its experiential subject, not by identification, but in body” (Morse, 1991:155).

The notion of lessening participation and the slowness‘ needed to access *Stuttering* (2003) that Stern (2009:136) speaks of points towards a slower ontology of dance‘²². While the implicit body‘, or a body always becoming, and dance‘ within a digitalised interactive environment expresses process, continuity and a sense of becoming – these concepts relate to the theory of haecceity²³. The concepts of a slower ontology‘ and haecceity will be discussed with reference to *Stuttering* (2003), as both concepts are embedded in the work, as the work asks participants not to interact, but just to be, in order to understand/experience the barrage of sound and images. These thoughts manifest themselves concurrently, as both ideas emerged in parallel as I experienced *Stuttering* (2003).

Slow. Silent. Stop.

Lepecki (2006) expresses choreography’s slower ontology in that ~~the~~ choreographic inhabiting of paronomastic²⁴ stillness necessitates a refiguring of the terms under which one can reflect theoretically, and act choreographically, on dance’s political ontology” (Lepecki, 2006:64). This notion of stillness and silence, embedded in *Stuttering* (2003), should be seen a contributing factor towards notions of the post-choreographic as:

Choreographic paronomasia as still-act offers a program for body, subjectivity, temporality, and politics that liquefies and slows down not only assumptions regarding dance’s ontology, but the infelicities and idiocies embedded in dance’s reproduction of modernity’s kinetic project of endless acceleration and agitation. This ontological slowing down initiates a different energetic project, a new regime of attention, as it recasts the figure of the dancer and its subjectivity into new lines of potentiality for the political ontology of the choreographic at the moment of the movement’s ultimate exhaustion (Lepecki, 2006:64).

²² A concept theorised by Andre Lepecki, as can be read in the chapter ~~Choreography’s~~ slower ontology” in his *Exhausting Dance: Performance and the politics of movement*, 2006.

²³ See glossary of terms. Originally used by John Duns Scotus in Medieval philosophy, the term was re-popularised by Deleuze and Guattari in their writings on becoming‘, as can be read in *Capitalism and Schizophrenia: a thousand plateaus*, 2003. The philosophical and performative implications of this word in Stern’s work will be discussed later.

²⁴ See glossary of terms.

A slower ontology of movement is entrenched in Stern's work, as most performances begin with a barrage of noise, image and motion, but it's the participant's inevitable slowness and silence that allows them to sense the work's *voice*. The paradox of this interactive work is that, ~~the~~ piece asks them not to interact, and often results in Butoh-like gestures, a heightened body-awareness, a flesh informed by and influential in language, but that cannot be captured or experienced in full" (Stern, 2009:136).

Not only is this work paradoxical in nature, but it is ironic too, as the more one quiets and narrows the focus and intention on that locus of interaction, the more it amplifies (through the various technologies) the sense of awareness and perception. In the work, Ginslov notes how,

The five senses and awareness of self, become heightened and allows for a discursive interaction within the self, between the many selves, feelings and ideas, that come alive during performance ... For this to come alive during such performances, a sense of quietness is necessary for intense focus and listening to occur at these loci of interactivity (Ginslov in Birringer, 2008:4).

As a participant in the work, I experienced how ~~the~~ poetics of silence opened up the possibility for listening to subtle and otherwise muted modulations of meaning, through a direct confrontation with objects" (Lepecki, 2006:56) and with my body. Furthermore, the focused slowness of a seemingly-boring gesture exposed the gestures' potential through the use of repetition, as ~~repetition~~ creates a form of standing still that has nothing of the immobile" (ibid:62). As expressed by Lehmann (2006), in a postdramatic (and post-choreographic) context repetition takes on a different, or even opposite meaning: ~~formerly~~ employed for structuring and constructing a form, it is now used for the de-structuring and deconstructing of story, meaning and totality of form" (Lehmann, 2006:156).

However, with a more rigorous examination, there is no such thing as true or exact repetition, as ~~the~~ very position in time of the repeated is different from that of the original [and] we always see something different in what we have seen before" (ibid:157). Therefore, repetition is also capable of producing a new attention punctuated by the memory of the preceding events. ~~It~~ is not about the significance of repeated events but about the significance of repeated perception" (ibid). This notion of constant novelty of the body-in-time-and-space, the unfurling potential of

interactivity within that trinity, strongly provokes the theory of haecceity, a body always becoming, which is an inherent concept in *Stuttering* (2003).

Mine/Your/Our Haecceity

The dance or choreography at play in *Stuttering* (2003) is one of process, not product – because it, the performance or choreography, has already begun and therefore has no end. Furthermore, the act of repetition falls into temporality; –The falling into time that the still-act initiates is also the activation of a proposition for an ethics of being that is always an active entanglement with time” (Lepecki, 2006:63).
Furthermore,

Does not the paradox of repetition [lie] in the fact that one can speak of repetition only by virtue of the change and difference that it introduces in the mind which contemplates it? By virtue of difference the mind *draws from* repetition? (Deleuze in Lepecki, 2006:61).

While exploring Stern’s interactive work I found myself in a site of emergence, where my enfolding actions, my implicit body, resulted in the unfolding of space and time – this site was one of –processuality that is on principle open and has structurally neither beginning, nor middle, nor end” (Lehmann, 2006:155). I found myself within a digitally-actuated rhizome, and due to the nature and purpose of the piece, I found my body-in-time-and-space existence amplified, expressing the haecceity of the body/situation that I was in.

A body is not defined by the form that determines it nor as a determinate substance or subject nor by the organs it possesses or the function it fulfils... There is a mode of individuation very different from that of a person, subject, thing, or substance. We reserve the name *haecceity* for it... They are haecceities in the sense that they consist entirely of relations of movement and rest between molecules or particles, capacities to affect and be affected... For you will yield nothing to haecceities unless you realise that that is what you are, and you are nothing but that... You are longitude and latitude, a set of speeds and slowness between unformed particles, a set of nonsubjectified affects (Deleuze and Guattari, 2003:260-262).

In *Stuttering* (2003) it was emphasised that I was the art – I am space, time and body; I am the interaction, effect and affect; I am *matter*. I was never present in position, only ever in passing – a body in its interdeterminacy. Every point of arrival was immediately and simultaneously an agent of departure, as –being bodily here

materialises in the in-between of interaction, but in a way that does not imply the immediate presence of a body” (Stern, 2009:140).

Arrival/Departure

Electronic digitality, far from eviscerating the real and occluding the body, invests in bodily affectivity. As such, it has the capacity to go beyond the aesthetic perception of the object and engender a non-representational experience’ (Ridgway in Stern, 2009:2010).

Although the body is flesh, it does not remain just flesh. Digitally realised interactive environments allow for a rhizoidal transformation of the body, where it may entertain conventional notions of time and space while it simultaneously inhabits the potential to permeate alternative, irrational and paradoxical nodes of time and space. A body, a space and a time with no beginning, middle or end, ensuing the-body-in-time-and-space in progress, constantly becoming, which relentlessly invests in corporeal affectivity.

As we dance on the edges of machines we are projected towards the post-choreographic. The notion of body, time, space and interaction in a post-choreographic context unfolds and unfurls, and resisting conclusion is its nature. Likewise, this research resists conclusion, and after unremittingly submerging myself in this discourse I am unsure of whether my thoughts, and my contribution to the debate of post-choreography, are just arriving or just about to depart...

Glossary of Terms

Body-in-time-and-space: I hyphenate body, space and time as it is to be thought of as one idea, not three separate notions. A trinity, where all three elements are inherently connected and dependable on one another. Within the field of digital dance that leans towards the post-choreographic the body is inherently a component of time and space due to the body’s very existence, and therefore its actuality in time and space. Considering that in this field the body has the ability to penetrate other notions of time and space (such as real-time and cyber/virtual space, which is discussed in the

paper), I feel it best to hyphenate the term as it refers to the fleshy body in physical space and present (now) time, as to not confuse the various notions of time and space, with alternative meanings and connotations.

Haecceity: Literally translated as this‘ or this-ness‘, haecceity refers to property of self: the essential property that makes an individual uniquely that individual.[Mid-17th century < Medieval Latin *haecceitas* < Latin *haec* 'this']. (Microsoft Encarta 2006, Microsoft Corporation)

Moebius Strip: A Moebius Strip is a surface that can be formed by taking a long, rectangular strip of paper, rotating the ends 180° with respect to one another, and joining the ends together to form a loop. The Moebius strip is a two-dimensional surface that has only *one* side. This can be demonstrated by drawing a line along the length of the strip. The line will come back to the starting position *twice*—once on the opposite side of the paper, and once again to complete the line, i.e. it is not possible to paint it with two colours. Another curious property is that if the Moebius strip is cut along the line down the middle of the loop, it will become a single two-sided loop, instead of falling apart into two loops. The Moebius strip is named after the German mathematician August Ferdinand Möbius, who was a pioneer in topology in the 1800s. Attached is Appendix C, an example of A Moebius Strip – follow the instructions on Appendix C. In the context of interactive digital art, A Moebius Strip firstly demonstrates the enfolding nature of the implicit body‘ and secondly, the multiplicity and expansion of space and objects (or bodies) within space.

Paronomasia: –A composite word from the Greek *para*, both alongside‘ and beyond‘, and *onomos*, name‘, that indicates slight variations on meaning proper to the pun” (Lepecki, 2006:62).

Real-time: Actual time of occurrence: the actual time during which something happens. Immediacy of data processing: the time in which a computer system processes and updates data as soon as it is received from some external source such as an air-traffic control or antilock brake system. The time available to receive the data, process it, and respond to the external process is dictated by the time constraints imposed by the process. (Microsoft Encarta 2006, Microsoft Corporation)

Real-time systems: Digital systems or computer programmes that utilise real-time, or RTOS (real-time operating system), are systems that are designed to respond within a certain specified time. Real-time or time critical‘ operation is essential for many everyday tasks, especially for controlling vehicles, robots, industrial machines, and

automated systems. General-purpose operating systems do not work in *real* time in this sense. They will perform many tasks for many users, which may involve loading or saving files and displaying the results. They will schedule these tasks as well as they can, and may perform them very quickly, by human standards. However, the results cannot be pre-determined, and this is essential for real-time operations. Real-time operating systems are often, embedded, or built into systems such as lifts, machine tools, traffic lights, and other products where they are invisible to users. Real-time operating systems are often modular in design, however they can up-scale from an embedded run-time executive to a fully distributed multi-user multi-tasking multi-processor operating system, like the systems at play in Stern's *Stuttering* (2003). (Microsoft Encarta 2006, Microsoft Corporation)

Reconfiguration: I have chosen the composite word reconfiguration in the context of the post choreographic, as configuration relates to the way the parts of something are arranged and fit together as well as the shape or outline of something, determined by the way its parts are arranged. If choreography has undergone a re-evaluation in the context of twenty-first century digital performance, resulting in the post-choreographic, then one could say that conventional choreography has been deconstructed and re-assembled, re-arranging the modes of choreography, resulting in a re-configuration of the paradigms surrounding choreography, hence the employment of the word reconfiguration.

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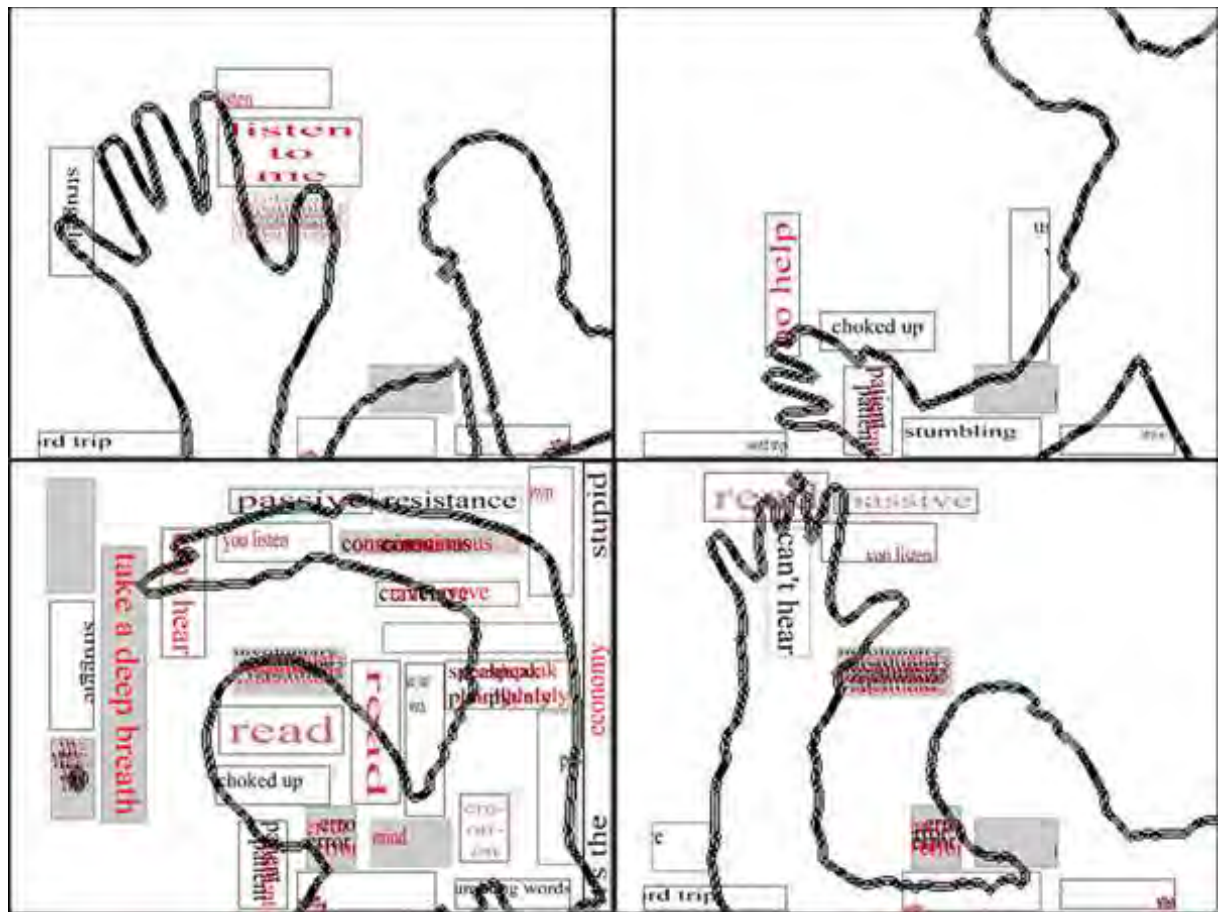
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Appendix A



Stuttering (2003) by Nathaniel Stern. Mixed media.

The projection (containing thirty-four trigger points) that is broken into a Mondrian-like mirror, as well as a depiction of the participant's virtual twin.

Appendix B

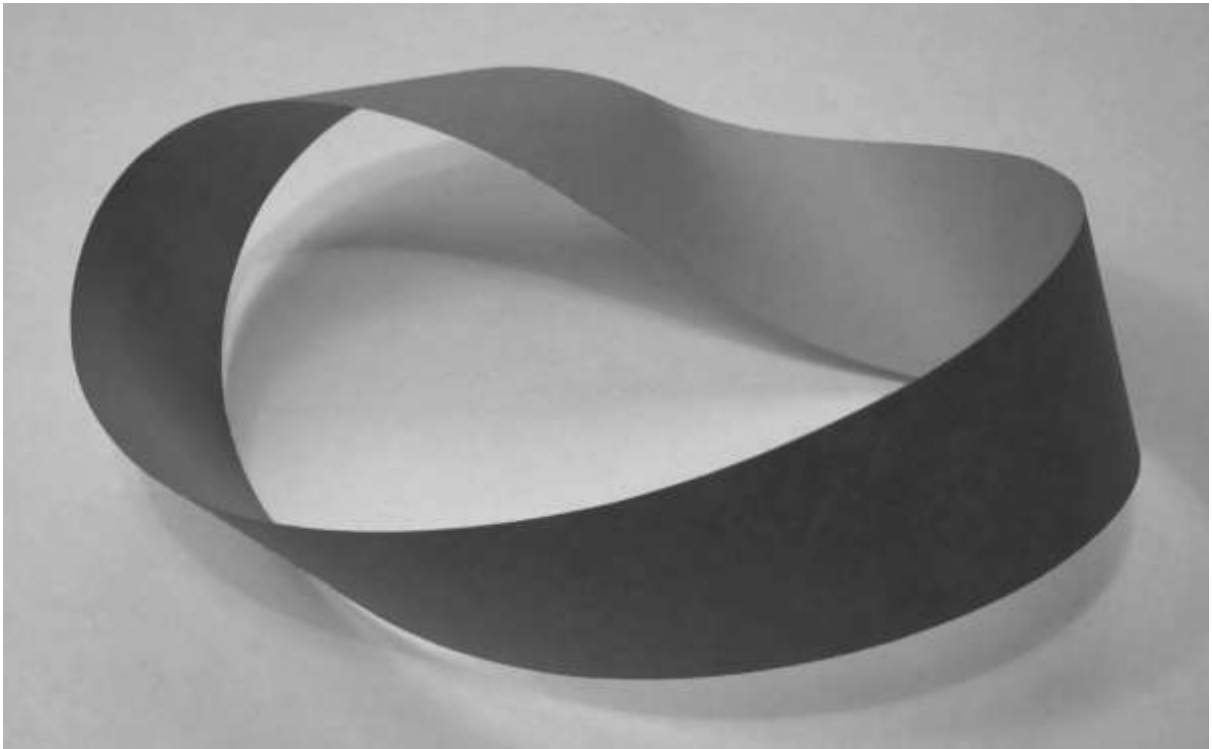


Stuttering (2003) by Nathaniel Stern. Mixed media.

A depiction of participants in the work, where the Mondrian-like projection and floor-found quotes can be seen.

Appendix C

A Moebius Strip:



Accompanying this document is a paper Moebius Strip, which looks like the above picture, with this object one can demonstrate Stern's implicit body.

Step 1:

Take the accompanying Moebius Strip and with a pen continue the line in the centre of the strip. Notice how the line ends at the beginning, while simultaneously covering both sides of the paper. Therefore, the strip has no orientation (top is bottom, underneath is above and vice-versa) and it is indeterminate, as it has no beginning or end, but it continuous.

Step 2:

With a pair of scissors, cut the entire pen line – just the line, do not cut into the line from the outside. Notice that when the incision cuts back into the beginning of the incision the strip does not dissect into two (a binary) as expected, but rather morphs into another strip – extending the materiality of itself. Like time, space and the body, the strip unfolds into more, an example of constantly becoming.

Ruth Levin-Vorster

The body-space nexus as the portal to ‘Presence’. Activating this body-mind state through the ‘engaged body’ consciousness and embracing spatiality

In this paper I discuss the notion of presence with regard to my history with actors in theatre performance. I posit a body-mind state which I term ‘the engaged body’ as the central ingredient to activating and attaining presence. I argue that this same state needs to be developed in dancers, from traditional ballet to contemporary forms. Despite the use of the body as the dancer’s primary tool for performance and the rigorous physical training which she undertakes, a disconnection between the body-mind-spirit ensues, and with it the sacred layer of performance often remains elusive and absent. I look at methodologies and theories of practitioners’ like Brook and Godowsky in theatre and Alban in dance to draw comparisons and stimulate thinking and debate. Within the engaged body is an awareness of and cultivation of an individual response. I question whether the personal involvement of the performer’s psyche in the text or choreography needs to be cultivated in order to activate the body-mind relationship in a more visceral way. I suggest that an important aspect of training and professional work is to work out the triggers of each performer that ignite her imagination and awaken her body. I posit the notion of embracing space as an integral element in cultivating presence. I suggest that space is the invisible but equal and active partner of the body. I suggest that presence is a universal performance phenomenon that transcends cultural and gender specifics. Presence connects a diverse audience through the invisible yet felt and easily recognizable sacred layer of performance.

**The body-space nexus as the portal to ‘Presence’:
Activating this body-mind state through ‘the engaged body’ consciousness
and embracing spatiality.**

Ruth Levin-Vorster
UCT Dance Department & GIPCA

I would like to begin this paper by locating myself and the perspective from which I write. I am an artist, I work as a director in the fields of theatre, dance and at present film. I choreograph, write, teach and occasionally perform. I write from a body of empirical experience and not as an academic or scientist.

I use certain terminology in this paper the meaning of which I would like to define at the outset:

Sacred: a quality that is experienced by an audience as being endowed with purity. This quality exalts the ordinary into the sublime.

Presence: a heightened consciousness that draws the audience towards it.

Engaged body: a body-mind union that is activated and awake and from which an energy or charge radiates out from the performer.

Body-mind: a consciousness where the body and mind operate as one and in union. The performer is not divided into a thinking head and moving body.

Embodiment: to make incarnate; to give an energetically tangible and three-dimensional form to movement or action.

Internal space: a space inside the individual e.g. a psychological space.

Middle space: the meeting between two or more internal spaces within an external location.

Dynamic space: space that holds tension.

Chouretics: the study of movement.

Sacred geometry: geometry that reflects patterning that is found in the molecules of creation.

*The sacred is a transformation, in terms of quality, of that which is
not sacred at the outset.*

(Brook, 1993: 60)

For the sacred to occur in performance, be it theatre or dance, a particular level of embodiment needs to be achieved. I posit a heightened body-mind consciousness to be the essential ingredient enabling a performance to transcend into a sacred dimension. I have termed this body-mind state ‘the engaged body’; a body-mind activation and a heightened listening and attunement with the body-mind to one’s internal and external environment. This body-mind state is energetically and noticeably charged, the vibration of which creates a magnetic quality which draws the focus of the audience towards it. The engaged body depends on activating the body-mind relationship of the performer so that the movement or action radiates out into space in terms of energy.

This challenge of sensitising the body so that it can reach and resonate with the audience pre-occupied many theatre practitioners in the 20th Century. As a director and teacher of theatre and movement I have been largely influenced by the thinking of Brook and Grotowski in theatre and Laban in dance. I will discuss more on their ideas further on in the paper. I believe the engaged body state is one that can and must be taught as part of both the actor and dancer’s training. Yet I find this critical ingredient of performance often overlooked and missing in the craft of teaching students and working with professionals. The engaged body state requires consistent training to harness a different kind of muscle which develops the degree of concentration needed to realize and maintain this heightened body-mind consciousness.

Renowned theatre director Peter Brook, has had a long and prolific career that has been an experiment in and search for a universal language of theatre which resonates with and connects an audience despite their barriers of language and culture. I have been fortunate to meet Brook several times and to benefit from his ideas. Brook found this resonance in the vibration that the body and voice of the actor transmits to her audience, as well as the formation of space between an audience and the performers. To achieve this, a rigorous training ensues to sensitise the body-mind ‘so that every cell of the body can be pushed to reveal its secrets’ (Brook, 1987: 41), and the invisible can be made visible.

Jerzy Grotowski is well-known amongst theatre practitioners for his rigorous body-mind training system in which he strips away all habitual behaviour. The performer develops beyond her own clichés and tricks of movement and performance into a present and

awakened state where endless variations of expression become possible. Grotowski achieves this via a system of ‘an eradication of blocks’ (Grotowski, 1969: 35). When he worked with Brook’s actors in Paris, Brook recalls that his actors were a series of shocks: ‘The shock of confronting himself in the face of simple irrefutable challenges. The shock of catching sight of his own evasions, tricks and clichés. The shock of sensing something of his own vast and untapped resources’ (Brook, 1987: 38). Both Brook and Grotowski endeavoured to engage their actors daily with a dimension beyond the ordinary and technical, so that in performance, with the additional energy of the audience, flight into the sacred dimension has the potential to occur. This meant instilling a depth and rigor of practise and discipline into the actors as well as a pursuit to reach into the extraordinary.

Both Brook and Rudolph Laban (whose ideas I discuss later on in the paper) were pre-occupied with manifesting a sacred quality in performance. Brook defined this as ‘Holy Theatre’ in which is implied an awareness of other fields of energy all around us which, when tapped into, guide us towards a ‘quality’, ‘whose true nature we entirely ignore but which we are perfectly capable of recognizing when it appears either in ourselves or in another person’ (Brook, 1993: 59). It is this ‘quality’ that he terms sacred. ‘It is not communicated through noise but through silence’ (Brook, 1993: 59). Both Brook in theatre and Laban in dance, seem to be pointing to a listening and sensing with the performer’s whole being to the unmanifest energies within the meeting of text or choreography with a performer and space. This requires from the performer an openness and ability to continually take risks in the quest to manifest this invisible and changing network of energetic relationships.

Grotowski speaks of a ‘courtesan actor’ and a ‘holy actor’ (Grotowski, 1968: 35): the former acquires skills and masters tricks, while the latter learns to understand her instrument in order that she can eradicate all that stands in its way of pure expression. As Brook puts it, ‘To protect oneself, one ‘builds’ and one ‘seals’. To open oneself, one must knock down the walls’ (Brook, 1993: 23). The actor must learn to know the potential and myriad possibilities of her body and voice, so that she uses the whole body as a resonator and not just the head or chest. ‘[T]he actor who investigates closely the possibilities of his own organism discovers that the number of resonators is practically unlimited’ (Grotowski, 1968: 36). In his essay The Slyness of Boredom, Brook describes it in this way: ‘Sensitive means that the actor is at all times in contact with his entire body. When he initiates a movement, he knows the exact place of every limb’ (Brook, 1993: 20). This understanding of the resonators within the body

must apply equally to the dancer. The choreography, if absorbed with the whole living organism that is the mind-body-spirit, will afford the dancer the possibility to dance the invisible into the visible and in so doing awaken in herself and in the spectator that which is universal and experienced as a quality of the sacred. This requires the dancer to risk vulnerability. Grotowski encapsulates the fear in doing this: 'We are afraid of being changed into pillars of salt if we turn around, like Lot's wife' (Grotowski, 1968: 37). Brook posits that if we look to be secure in our performance we begin to douse our creativity. I suggest that it is this act of yielding that is part of what allows the performer to tap into the sacred. It is an approach that can be taught and that the performer must become accustomed to.

Arriving at this body-mind state requires a particular training that can only reach full development over time. It involves physical practice of a kind that will engage the body-mind union, bringing it into harmony and into the present. In my own processes to achieve this purpose I most often use Ashtanga yoga; a rigorous and athletic yoga which connects the body-mind through breath and movement. It is a powerful system for activating the flow of the body's energy and this internal motion can easily be felt by the performer. I move on to a series of stick exercises that develop a heightened listening and sensitivity within the individual and between performers. These exercises serve to gradually 'unmask' the performer until only the 'naked and uncluttered' person exists, focused in the present and open to creative stimuli. This is a timeous task which builds over time as the performer begins to recognize this 'empty space', where the body-mind is undisturbed by its habitual distraction of past or future, and is simply present, embodied and open. It is only at this point that I will begin work with the text or choreography.

As my work moved to include working with dancers, both student and professional, I discovered that despite the body being their primary tool of expression for performance, the engaged body state is seldom present. Engagement with material is technical and on the surface, so that investment only happens just prior to or in performance. It has been my experience that when the process of in-depth body-mind engagement with the material begins with the early phase of rehearsal the dancer will cross over into the sacred dimension in performance more easily.

To this purpose I believe breath becomes a critical ingredient and I find that its role in dance is often neglected. Breath ignites and breath moves. I have discovered that dancers will often

ignite parts of their bodies while leaving other parts 'cold'. When I ask them to ignite the particular left out area with awareness and breath, an almost alchemical embodiment of the entire body occurs. With the engaged body in dance my starting point will often be breath and silence; a listening to where the body finds itself in the current moment, and an awareness of and placement of the breath into different parts of the body until an honest, felt and embodied response is ignited. 'To find a living quality, one must be sensitive to the echo, the resonance produced by the movement in the rest of the body' (Brook, 1993:70).

Throughout my years of teaching and directing performers I have observed a common disengagement in the same area of the body be it actors or dancers, namely the upper back and neck. I have found that when I remind a performer to activate this area, a shift in the felt vibration of the performance occurs instantaneously. My subject matter for my current screen dance work has taken me into the field of Traditional Chinese Medicine. In this science the mind is housed in the heart. I have begun to wonder whether the engagement of this back area reflects an activation of the individual's heart and therefore mind. In addition to this, I have found that when a performer breathes, senses and projects to her surrounding space through her back, the same kind of engaged body activation occurs.

To access the sacred dimension in performance I suggest that the dancer's mind, body and emotions need to be in a heightened and complex relationship with her material so that she quests to reach, conquer, or arrive as she dances. The choreography needs to be motivated inside the dancer beyond a cognitive understanding of the story which she is dancing.

To understand what activates or engages a performer's psyche with regard to her creative process I find to be another essential component to an embodied dimension in her work. When approaching the development of character I do an exercise early on that helps me to identify which aspect of the performer's imagination triggers her engaged body response. For some it is the physical look of the character, her clothing and hair, for another it is their choice of food, for another still it is smell or sound and so it goes on. The triggers which I will later use to map her unique trigger focus points for performance, are almost always simple and to do with the essential things that make us human. The route into this exercise is through the body of the imagined character, how she moves through space; her weight emphasis, her rhythm/tempo, her breath and where in her body she carries her tension. This process of tapping into a physical life that is not her own, opens up the psyche to other

possible selves which emerge in three dimensional form, guiding the performer to move and respond in ways that are unfamiliar to her. The performer is being prepared to operate within a different body-mind dynamic, the heightened concentration of which leads to the kind of embodiment necessary to open the gateway to the sacred in performance. Understanding the dynamics of her character means that the performer moves in space in a specific and intuitive way. The shapes she carves and the pathways she chooses when moving reflect the meeting of her internal psyche with the external situation. Internal space and external space, with all that they inhabit, merge and are reflected in the performer's choice and pattern of movement.

I suggest that this necessity of investment of the individual psyche with the performance material applies equally to dancers. Core motivation and intention are what needs to be transmitted through every aspect of the dancer's body. For this to occur it is necessary to uncover the hidden dynamics of a work of choreography so that the dancer can find her personal hook into the life of the work. I suggest that understanding the dynamics within the choreography will ignite a richer embodiment of the movements that the dancer carves into space. Understanding why a character moves in a certain way and distinguishing between the movements which reflect her internal hidden life of the character vs. the external public face of the character will deepen her intention as she dances the changing personal and relationship dynamics of the character. I propose that space reflects both personal and relationship dynamics.

When choreographing original content for dance, sensing space and how it reflects the dynamics of my chosen subject becomes essential. When working with an existing dance text the reverse process becomes important in order that the choreography is embodied with depth and resonance. Watching choreographer Mat Eks' *Giselle* in Edinburgh I was struck by the vibration that I felt within my own body as I watched the dance unfold. The performance carried a heightened exchange of movement and emotion and the resonance carried into the audience. It is here that both performer and spectator cross a threshold into a shared dimension of 'quality' in art. Ek, works with classical dancers and actors creating new works out of the dynamics of the story, be it classical works such as *Giselle* or *The House of Bernarda Alba* or original works. The dancers seem to me to engage with the material with their body, mind and emotion.

I want to posit the notion of embracing space as an integral element in cultivating presence. The dancer's engagement with dynamic space embodies her whole being in the dance and extends the layers, timing and emotion of her performance. She is not merely performing the dance but living anew a connection between her body and living space. Space or spatiality is as essential as the engaged body to the activation of presence. Indeed the engaged body implies an awareness of and connection to spatiality. I use the term 'spatiality' to indicate the different categories of space from external locations or sites to internal spaces which include psychological, cultural, familial, emotional and spiritual, to name a few. There is a third category which I have called middle space, a term I have appropriated from Michel De Certeau's middle place. 'A middle place, composed of interactions and inter-views, ... a narrative symbol of exchanges and encounters' (De Certeau, 1984; 127). This description of the meeting of two or more internal spaces within an external location describes the fluidity of space and the dynamic energies that continually fill it and move within it. It is these dynamic energies, that dancers need to dance and actors need to perform. Here I wish to introduce Rudolph Laban and his notions of space and movement which revolutionized dance and performance thinking in the early part of the 20th Century and which has influenced my understanding of working with spatiality greatly.

Laban ignited the dancing world's imagination with his notion of space as a living entity, comprised of the same molecules we find in all life forms from plants through to animals through to human beings. This concept of 'living space' led Laban to posit that movement is embodied space and that the relationship between the body and its surrounding space is an interdependent nexus between two kinetic fields of motion. They reflect and reveal each other. Movement is the embodiment of space.

Empty space does not exist. On the contrary, space is a superabundance of simultaneous movements.

(Laban, 1966: 3)

In my Masters, 'Embracing Space', I used this notion of living space and its relationship to the body to generate original content and choreography for dance theatre productions. I did this by activating internal spaces in the performers on a theme and then juxtaposing these into external locations that served to ignite dynamic middle spaces. The choreography that ensued was vital and dynamic. I continue to use dynamic spatiality to generate choreography in my

dance practice; however I have since discovered that this notion of living space is equally potent in preparing the dancer and actor in activating existing choreography and text. It rests on engaging the performer's body with space and the patterns, layers and rhythms within it. I believe that this aspect of the work is critical to creating presence and a depth of performance and I suggest that it must partner the technical training of both dancer and actor.

While there are a myriad of ways to activate and practice the embodiment of living space, I would like to refer to Laban's *Choreutics* as an example of training in living spatial geometry. Laban connected the pathways of human movement to the patterns of movement within the cosmos. He studied Plato and Pythagoras and extended their notions of spatial harmony to the world of movement and dance. He took Plato's five geometrical solids that map all the possible movement pathways of the universe and transposed the dancer's body into them in order to understand what is possible for the human body in terms of movement. Laban describes these as 'Solids that intersected and interacted in such a way as to produce all the various discords and harmonic resolutions that are found in space within the universe' (Newlove & Dolby, 2004: 25). He believed that these five solids not only developed the dancer's kinetic intelligence and provided the choreographer with a myriad of dynamic movement possibilities, but brought them both into communion with a sacred geometry that is woven into space and, when embodied, reflects these metaphysical patterns through the body.

According to Valerie Preston-Dunlop, who worked with Laban over a period of 12 years, Laban developed his *Choreutics* from an understanding that the universal geometry we find in nature, architecture, painting and music is equally woven into human movement. Its maps can be used to innovate choreography by both following patterns or breaking rules, but more importantly can provide the performer with an understanding of human movement governed by the same laws of motion as the universe, '...in every trace-form, created by the body, both infinity and eternity are hidden' (Laban cited in Counsell, Winter 2006: vol 24, No.2). Movement is 'about mathematical ratios, the harmonics of proportion, how all these things are embodied in things in our life – light, music, cosmology, all living life' (Preston-Dunlop in *Living Architecture*. DVD. Dir. Edmunds, B. 2008). Laban connects movement to other processes in life so that the dancer communes with space rather than simply moves across it. His three grids: the Dimensional Cross, the Diagonal Cross and the Diametral Cross cover 27 points of orientation available to the mover which have corresponding rhythmic and

emotional qualities. These 27 points are encompassed in the shapes of the Icosahedron and the Dodecahedron. Embodied correctly movement becomes about following intention: whether to move up beyond herself, to retreat back into the past, to advance forward into the future, to cut across, or to hover in the middle and the present moment, the dancer explores intention as part of direction. This intention directs the motivation of the movement so that the dancer becomes part of the living material of the dance. The body-mind of the dancer becomes embodied in the movement.

Given that the focus is on the nexus of the body and space, movement becomes subordinate and intrinsically linked to the environment which contextualizes it. [M]ovement is relevant in as much as it may 'express' aspects of the body/space nexus.

(Sanchez-Colberg, 1996: 45)

Laban believed that human 'rhythmic vitality' had become lost in technical advancements and that this needed to be re-remembered through engagement with space.

'If natural movement follows a greater cosmic pattern, modernity is for Laban the culmination of a historical Fall, such that it is necessary to teach what was once innately known. The goals of choreutics are therefore spiritual as well as aesthetic. To twist and reach into the corners of his geometries is to realign oneself with the underlying order of the absolute, reintegrate the dancing body into 'harmonies' of a universe whose essence is divine'

(Counsell, Winter 2006: vol 24, 109)

To engage viscerally with the choreography I suggest that a dancer must understand these subtle and complex nuances of the maps her body carves into space. This awareness of what Laban termed 'dynamospheric' space, 'the space in which our dynamic actions take place...' (Laban, 1966: 30) can be used to engage the dancer with the fine, varied and layered vibrations of space in order that engagement with the choreography becomes tangible and felt. The dancer connects consciously with the invisible layers of space which have been woven into the choreography. According to Laban, the mover traces forms in space which

comprise moments of past, present and future. If the dancer can unearth which part of the movement she is mapping, her body begins to engage with the layers of the material.

As I observe and work with dancers I have begun to consider that including spatial understanding within the dancer's training and making it an essential part of understanding the choreographic landscape of any particular dance and repertoire she learns and performs, will improve and increase manifold the quality of engagement and possibilities for unveiling the sacred dimension in performance. I suggest that dance training, from classical ballet through to contemporary forms and African dance, includes the essential component of dynamic space. This requires the trainer and the dancer to enter the alchemical make up of the movement and choreographic work. The rigour required for this to be achieved comprises a detailed analysis of body-space content.

The processes that I have referred to in this paper can be used universally, i.e. with performers of every creed, race and culture as well as across a range of different artistic practices. Presence and the sacred dimension in performance is a universal phenomenon that transcends language in performance. It is a felt layer in performance that serves to break down that which separates individuals, and connect the audience through that which is essential to being human – spirit.

I have practised my own processes which I described above, with actors in the UK, Scotland and Ireland, in Israel (with Arabs and Jews) and in South Africa with at least 6 different cultures. I learnt many of the processes in France with mostly French actors. I have worked with people ranging in age from 14 to 70 years, and the results, despite age or culture, elicit the same response: They 'unmask' the performer and in so doing connect one performer to another and to her audience.

Brook writes about his experience with the universality of human truth in many of his books. One such view is expressed:

Man is more than what his culture defines; cultural habits go far deeper than the clothes he wears, but they are still only garments to which an unknown life gives body. Each culture expresses a different portion of the inner atlas: the complete human truth is global, and the theatre is the place which the

jigsaw can be pieced together.

(Brook, 1987: 129)

What interest me about Laban's choreutics is that it develops kinetic range in the dancer rather than to dictate form. In fact, how the dancer twists into corners, advances or retreats, and explores depth and height is left open to interpretation. It is the spatial directions that are prescribed. Choreutics doesn't dictate interpretation but rather kinetic possibility, which can be interpreted in a myriad of ways by different bodies and psyches. '[D]ancers become practiced in a corporeal regime that by definition eludes given forms, any presumptions about what shape the moving body must adopt' (Counsell, 2006: 108). The development of kinetic range enables the dancer to move beyond what is either prescribed or natural. I believe this to be an important aspect of training alongside the specific form which the dancer is acquiring. It develops and challenges the whole movement organism of the dancer. This will reflect formally in terms of layered texture, detail and depth.

To conclude: I am interested in the word 'embodiment'. The definition of this concept I like the most is 'to render incarnate' (Collin's English Dictionary of the English language, 1979: 478). To incarnate through the body is what I believe to be the essence of the job of a dancer or actor. To do this effectively implies an awakened body-mind and engagement with dynamic space. Such engagement, if practised consistently over time, will open the dancer and actor to an additional and deeper dimension in performance that is immediately felt by an audience via physical resonance and response in their bodies. The sacred dimension has a portal when the awakened body fuses with space to reveal the invisible.

Space-time configurations unfold in a flower-like manner; they swallow and engender formations; they wither and die and are reborn often filled with entirely unexpected inner and outer possibilities.

(Laban, 1966: 36)

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Sara Matchett

Deconstruct to Reconstruct: A Holistic, Psychophysical Approach to the Enhancement of Dance Training and Performance Making

My proposed paper presentation is part of an ongoing exploration into developing a psychophysical and somatic approach to performance, which uses the Self as a starting point. The research is located at the interface between tradition and contemporaneity in that it draws from various traditions such as the Sanskrit system of Rasa, body mapping, journey mapping, Reichian therapy, bioenergetics and yoga, amongst others. In this paper I am particularly interested in exploring this approach with dancers, having worked predominantly with actors. Part of this psychophysical and somatic approach to making and performance, involves an aspect of Fitzmaurice Voicework termed Destructuring. Destructuring allows the breath to flow through the body in such a way as to move through and unblock any blockages and habitual patterns that may have formed in the muscles of the body. The thinking behind allowing breath to move through and release blocks connects to the idea of freeing the body of any tension, so as to enable a spontaneous breath. Spontaneous breath, in my opinion, allows space for imaginative expression. The notion of deconstructing to reconstruct is explored through breath and body in an attempt to enhance the live sensorial presence of the performer in relation to the audience. The breath is explored as an authentic and embodied element that is experienced somatically by the performer. Part of my research involves mapping the performer's breath within their physical body. The process of mapping in performance also relates to mapping as a means of making sense of lived experiences through mapping breath, body, language and imagination. Here, breath is investigated as the impulse as well as thread that connects body, imagination and language. The paper intends to focus this research around the well-being of the dancer in an attempt to develop a holistic, psychophysical and somatic approach to enhance dance training and performance making.

Deconstruct to Reconstruct: A Proposal for the inclusion of Fitzmaurice Voicework® in the training of Dancers

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Preamble

This paper forms part of my PhD research around exploring and developing a psychophysical and somatic approach to theatre making and performance, which uses the breath as a starting point. My research is positioned within the University of Cape Town's Drama Department and endeavours to draw from various traditions, methods and theories such as the Sanskrit theory of *Rasa*, Fitzmaurice Voicework® and the Michael Chekhov Acting Technique.

At this point, I think it necessary to contextualise the paper within the broader ambit of my PhD research. To this end, I provide a brief explanation of each of the traditions, methods and theories I propose to integrate in developing a psychophysical and somatic approach to theatre making and performance.

Rasa is associated with the over 2000 year old Sanskrit treatise on Acting, namely the *Natyasastra*, in that it is the core premise of the aesthetic theory presented in the treatise. *Rasa* in the context of performance can be translated into a sensation experienced in the body of the performer and ultimately in the bodies of the audience (Schwartz, 2004). It is, in my understanding, essentially an experience of an emotion inspired in an audience by a performer. According to John Russell Brown (2005:5), „By starting with *Rasa*, understood as the sensation or predominant feeling of the person to be played, performances become able to reflect and re-create the lives of both actors and audiences“. *Rasa* is comprised of nine emotional states, namely love, laughter, sadness, anger, bravery, fear, disgust, wonder, and peace (Meyer-Dinkgrafe, 2005).

Another aspect that inspired my interest/exploration originates in my engagement with Fitzmaurice Voicework®, which has enabled me to identify two areas as being

key to the technique; that of Destructuring and Restructuring. According to Fitzmaurice (Fitzmaurice and Kotzubei, 2005:1):

Destructuring involves reducing excess bodily tension, specifically around the breathing process, to allow for more spontaneous and varied sound-making, sound which is connected to your body, your ideas, and your imagination. Restructuring involves learning to breathe in the most physiologically efficient way to support the voice without losing spontaneity.

Restructuring, according to Fitzmaurice (2011), brings intention into the practice, while still allowing for spontaneous imaginative expression. Restructuring, in my experience, involves structuring the spontaneous, imaginative sound that is experienced and allowed to flow through the body in the process of Destructuring. My experience is that the combination of Destructuring and Restructuring allows for a supported, spontaneous and imaginative performer.

Thirdly, even though I have no practical experience of the Michael Chekhov technique, my readings into his work and conversations with practitioners who work with this technique, however, have planted a seed that needs practical exploration on my part. I have an inclination that Michael Chekhov's explorations into acting with energy, imagination and creativity (Petit, 2010) will play a pivotal role in my research explorations.

At this stage, my PhD research speaks to an investigation and re-imagining of what Stanislavski termed psychophysical acting (Zarilli, 2009). Through my enquiry, I am curious to explore the notion of deconstructing to reconstruct through breath, body and voice in an attempt to enhance the live sensorial presence of the performer in relation to the audience. It is my intention to investigate how the voice is experienced as an authentic and embodied element that is sensed somatically by the performer. Here, breath is investigated as the impulse as well as thread that connects body, voice, language and imagination.

Introduction

In this paper I am particularly interested in investigating the possibility of engaging this approach with dancers, having worked predominantly with actors and theatre makers in the past. To this end, the paper serves as a proposal to include the

Fitzmaurice Voicework® in the training of dancers, in an attempt to develop a holistic, psychophysical and somatic approach that considers the well-being of the performer. This is not to say that the current training at the University of Cape Town's School of Dance does not consider the well-being of the performer in training, but rather to offer a method that may complement and enhance the current training process. My proposal is also based on my knowledge that performers in the Department of Drama are trained in aspects of movement and dance, as part of a holistic approach to performance training. This to me opens up questions and possibilities around the inclusion of voice training for performers in the School of Dance. I posit that my experience of Fitzmaurice Voicework® provides a practical way into achieving this. I recently participated in the first part of the Fitzmaurice Voicework® Certification programme in Los Angeles. I intend to complete the second part in January 2012. I have subsequently been implementing the work as part of the training of student actors in theatre voice practice.

Fitzmaurice Voicework®

It think it useful to note that Catherine Fitzmaurice, founder of this work, came to her discoveries through practices that include Bioenergetics, Reichien Therapy, Yoga, Shiatsu, and Euro-American voice practice (Fitzmaurice, 2011). Years of Fitzmaurice practically exploring these modalities have led to what is now termed Fitzmaurice Voicework®. The scope of this paper does not allow me to go into the detail of these modalities, except to say that they all fall within the field of Somaesthetics, an area I am currently exploring as a potential conceptual lens for my PhD research. Shusterman (2000:2) defines somaesthetics „as the critical, meliorative study of the experience and use of one's body as a locus of sensory aesthetic appreciation (aesthesia) and creative self-fashioning.“ He (2006:2) further characterises the body as „...the basic instrument of all human performance, our tool of tools, a necessity for all our perception, action, and even thought.“ Shusterman's definition of somaesthetics resonates with Nair's (2007:51) explanation of the role of breath in performance:

Breath is located in the body and serves as the basis of theatricality in everyday life, through combining speech, action and thoughts in relation to an explicit level of meaning. The psycho physicality of human embodiment is activated through the act of breathing. Breath as the fundamental source of energy to all human actions, reactions, emotions and speech, is an inseparable element in the nature of human

embodiment. The movement of the breath is the movement of the body and the flow of breath is the flow of language, and therefore meaning.

According to Kotzubei (2004:2), Fitzmaurice Voicework® Master Teacher, „[b]y opening up the breathing and becoming aware of a felt sense of the breath traveling throughout the body (which it literally does in the form of red blood cells), we can develop a greater life force, a greater presence...“. This connects with Fitzmaurice’s notion of „Breathing is Meaning“ (Hampton and Acker, 1997:247), where:

[Destructuring] encourages the breathing (as power source and therefore timing) and the body (as resonator and therefore tone) to respond organically to shifts in mood and idea, thus achieving variety and complexity of meaning and eliminating unintentionally dry, flat delivery (ibid:249).

Broadly speaking, Fitzmaurice Voicework® can be divided into two main components, that of Destructuring and Restructuring.

Destructuring

My experience of Destructuring has led me to understand it as a process that allows the breath to flow through the body in such a way as to move through and unblock any blockages and habitual patterns that may have formed in the muscles of the body. The thinking behind allowing breath to move through and release blocks, in my opinion, connects to the idea of freeing the body of any tension, so as to enable a spontaneous breath. I agree with Fitzmaurice (2011) who suggests that spontaneous breath allows space for imaginative expression. My understanding of Fitzmaurice Voicework® is that the notion of deconstructing to reconstruct is explored through breath and body in an attempt to enhance the live sensorial presence of the performer in relation to the audience. The breath is explored as an authentic and embodied element that is experienced somatically by the performer and is investigated as the impulse as well as thread that connects body, imagination and language (be it verbal or corporeal). The spontaneous or „surprise“ breath (Fitzmaurice, 2011) as it is sometimes referred to, allows for imagination to be expressed through sound that has its origins in the body. In other words the sound is in and of the body; it is deeply connected to the body and not seen as something separate. Breath, I argue, is what initiates the sound and weaves an interactive thread between body and sound. The training of dancers may not necessarily focus on the production of vocal sound. I

propose, however that the Destructuring work has the potential to enable the performer in training to somatically experience the breath as an authentic and embodied element that assists in the expression of embodied meaning. By this I mean performance that is invested with intention and meaning that is conveyed to and includes the audience. Essentially, I argue that the live sensorial presence of the performer as a channel for expressing meaning is what enables the audience to co-make meaning. The „liveness“ of the performer allows for a feedback loop to be experienced between performer and audience. I posit that breath is the means of communication that creates the feedback loop, particularly when there are no words as such that are expressed. The breath, in Fitzmaurice’s terms is the meaning (ibid); it is the thread that connects the performer to their own body and to the bodies and breath of the audience.

A large part of the destructuring work involves inducing a tremor in the body. The tremor is a reflexive action and is the body’s natural response to bringing it back to balance. If I cast my mind to situations when my body tremors, I notice that the tremor usually occurs in response to external stimuli, such as cold, hunger, fear, excitement, and the like. According to Fitzmaurice (Fitzmaurice and Kotzubei, 2005), what actually happens is that the Autonomic Nervous System (ANS) comes into play here by creating a tremor as a reflexive action that brings the body back into a natural state of balance; it is in a sense the body’s way of „healing“ itself. Fitzmaurice (ibid:1) elaborates on this:

The involuntary tremoring does a number of different things. It may speed up the breathing and the heart-beat to oxygenate the blood, it loosens muscles, and it gives you an adrenaline rush, primarily. It does these things to enable you to be alert, with pliable muscles, so you are ready for anything.

The process of destructuring involves placing the body into certain modified yoga postures to physically induce a tremor, in the first instance. It is important to note that this is not a yoga practice. The breath used in yoga is very different to the breath used in this work. Fitzmaurice argues (ibid) that essentially the yoga breath is not conducive to a performer, in that yoga breathing is not functional for performance. Fitzmaurice (ibid) elaborates:

In and of itself, yoga is not useful for the voice. It's useful for the body, and it may make you aware... But a yoga breath, a breath that is controlled as usually taught in yoga, is not...[a performer's] breath. [A performer]... has to be a little more raw, more available, more spontaneous. And the stretches and tremors I use work specifically in physical areas that are impacted by breathing in order to develop that spontaneity.

In this practice, therefore, the breath is never held and breathing happens through an open mouth. Performers do not breathe in through the nose as is the case with yoga breathing. The argument here is that performers need to be ready to respond with breath, body and sound at any given moment (Fitzmaurice, 2011). Once the tremor starts, the ANS takes over and the idea is to allow the spontaneous „surprise“ breath to flow through the body and thus allow the tremor to move through the entire body. The tremor may be induced and begin or start in the leg, for example. By surrendering to and allowing the breath to flow, the tremor is allowed to move freely and spontaneously from the leg through the entire body. In this way it also loosens up the muscles in the body. While this is happening, the performer allows the breath to „fall“ out in the shape of „fluffy“ deconstructed sound, thus allowing breath to spontaneously move through the body and at the same time connect body and sound; it enables an experience of the voice as vibration in the body. In my experience, what the trembling also does is bring the performer to a tangible sense of „aliveness“ in their body. Physiologically the tremor heats up the blood and stimulates the adrenal glands. This, from personal experience, has the effect of bringing one to a tangible sense of being present to and in one's body and I would argue, by association, being present to an audience. It is important to note that all the Deconstructing positions may not necessarily induce a tremor. For example, some of the positions involve arches that open up and stretch the body to allow breath and sound into parts of the body that in everyday use are not necessarily inhabited by breath and sound.

Restructuring

My experience of Restructuring is that it brings intention into the practice, while still allowing for spontaneous imaginative expression. According to Kotzubei (2010:4), „Restructuring is about focusing the resultant freedom of breath, energy, musculature, awareness, feeling, imagination and melding it with thought into effective communication“. For me, Restructuring practically involves breathing into the lower part of the ribs, allowing the belly to release and then engaging the transverse muscle

in propelling and supporting the sound on the out-breath. The engagement of the transverse automatically lifts the ribs up and out and then allows them to slowly lower as sound is released without them collapsing. Here, the Central Nervous System (CNS) comes into play. According to Fitzmaurice (2011) this is the natural way of speaking. However, years of living in the world have in many instances created particular breathing and speaking habits induced by stress, for most people. Restructuring involves structuring the spontaneous, imaginative sound that is experienced and allowed to flow through the body in the process of Destructuring. It allows a return to the natural way of speaking. Students, in a sense, have to unlearn the habits that have formed over the years to allow for the original way of breathing and speaking to come back into being. In my experience, once the mechanics are re-learned and re-remembered, they are developed and ultimately become second nature, similar to driving a manual car or riding a bicycle. It happens automatically after a while. Fitzmaurice (ibid) maintains that it is inherently the way the body and breath want to engage in the creation of sound. The combination of Destructuring and Restructuring allows for a supported, spontaneous and imaginative voice (and performer as a whole). Once the physical action of Restructuring is „in“ the body, students start to engage what is termed the focus line in the expression of sound. Instead of focusing on the actual mechanics of breathing in Restructuring, students start to visualise the movement of sound powered by breath and activated by the engagement of the transverse muscle, moving down from the centre of the body (where the transverse muscle is located), around the groin, up the spine, and through the back of the head and out through the space between the eyes. The focus line engages the spine in the process of speaking and in my experience makes for vitality, presence and clarity. The engagement of the focus line also assists in connecting performers to each other as well as performers to the audience. The flow of inhalation and exhalation extends beyond the body of the performer and out to other performers and the audience. In this way it creates a tangible feedback loop that is so often referred to in the study of communication. Restructuring sound also enables the performer to extend the voice in multiple directions without hurting it. This is due to the sound being supported and powered by the transverse muscle, which is located in the geometrical centre of the body. It centres the sound and grounds it in the body without straining the vocal folds.

A Case for Inclusion of Fitzmaurice Voicework® in to the Training of Dancers

I have over the past five months been engaged in teaching this technique to first and third year students of Drama and have conducted an introductory workshop for MA students. Most of the focus to date has been on the Destructuring aspect of the technique. I plan to start teaching the Restructuring component in more detail in the second semester of this year. I too, have been practicing the Destructuring sequence on a regular basis. The following section will provide insight into the experiences of Destructuring as reflected by a sample of students I have taught over the past five months as well as my own experiences of the practice. In this way, I hope to pave the way for conversations around how this method of voice training can be included in the training of dancers in the University of Cape Town's School of Dance.

I gathered my data by setting the students a task where they were required to reflect on their understanding of Destructuring and then reflect on their experience of it. The findings below are based on the tasks the students submitted. When analysing the responses from a sample of seventeen students, I noticed that their responses could fit into four key areas. Below is an outline of what I discovered under each of these areas.

Awareness of Self, Others and Surroundings

The majority of the students reflected on the process of Destructuring as having given them a greater sense of awareness of themselves.

One student comments on how for her:

...deconstructing has honestly opened a whole new world of self-awareness... I feel like I have become aware it seems, of each muscle in my body, each sensation... This [process] should help me to become a better performer, that is able to communicate through a released body and organic voice to any audience.

Another notes that „I am learning to release control over my breath, to listen and be aware of things“.

The awareness also seems to include an awareness of how breath and physiology are connected. A student reflects on this:

In my own process of destructuring, I have become more conscious of myself – noticing physiological features of myself that I have never been aware of before.... I have become aware of significant and, in some cases, even drastic physiological changes.... My breath is much deeper, reaching further down in my body. Every time I do the exercise, my breath feels like it reaches deeper than it did before, travelling further into the extremities of my body and flowing around my body with more ease.

The process of Destructuring seems also to have assisted in extending this awareness to spatiality. A student notes „I have simultaneously gained an increased physical and spatial awareness of my own body“.

This is further extended to an awareness of surroundings as can be deduced from the following reflections:

- „My self-awareness and awareness of my surroundings improve“.
- „Sometimes I have a sense of internal energy and feel more responsive to my surroundings“.
- „It was the first time I felt like I experienced an honest state of focus... I got a „sense“ of my body as a whole: each part of my body felt awake, alert and connected to the ground.“
- „I have additionally noticed that during and after doing the destructuring exercise, I feel much more present and aware of myself and my surroundings, and my senses feel heightened“.

The awareness seems to also be felt on subtle vibrational levels as noted by one student: „If I reflect now, however, I feel as though a connection to and awareness of my breath, and how breath relates to my body has been established. I feel more aware and sensitive to the vibrations occurring within myself“.

The notion of vocal and textual embodiment is evidenced by the following reflection: „One thing that I have noticed when doing this process is how text feels in your body. After each class I could gradually begin to feel my poem in my body as if I was embodying my poem“.

Breath As A Tool For Identifying And Releasing Tension In The Body

A number of students reflected on how, through the process of destructuring, they have been able to identify where they hold blocks and tension in their bodies.

Students note:

- „My own process of deconstructing has increased my ability to detect tension in my body... I regularly find myself tensing certain parts of the body while carrying out everyday activities, which I would have not been aware of before“.
- „[I am aware of] which body parts need more work. For example which muscles are holding the most tension“.
- „I find that the process will at times reveal parts where I am holding tension and make me aware of the state my body is in, be it exhaustion, hunger, sadness or joy“.

Some of the observations extend to identifying emotional blockages that are held in the body. A student reflects how:

With these exercises, I am in fact, working through suppressed emotions. I have a habit of suppressing emotions and I have realised that I accumulate immense amounts of tension around my shoulders, neck and lower back because of this....When I realised this, I started doing the exercises every night. I find that I sleep better, I have less neck and back pain and, most importantly, my imagination and ability to perform organically has drastically improved.

Two other students comment on this:

- „Not only is deconstructing focused on a physical release but it is also centred on an emotional and mental release of tension“.
- ‘It is as if these exercises work in casting off bodily and emotional tension“.

These observations extend to how the process of Deconstructing has assisted in releasing the tension or blocks they hold in their bodies. A student notes how:

The process of deconstructing is, I find, an extremely effective way of alleviating tension associated with the body and consequently the voice. After the deconstructing process I feel more alert and feel more supported vocally... Most noticeably I feel the deconstructing process has had a huge impact on my posture. I find myself walking taller, with more awareness of my breath.

Breath As A Means Of Accessing Emotions

A couple of students have started to make tangible connections between breath, emotions and where these are held in the body. One student reflects:

I then learned that your emotional “blockages” are manifested in muscular blockages and that when I do the exercises, these muscular AND emotional blockages are released. My body therefore “feels” the sadness or that specific emotion, without me being sad or angry.

Another comments on how, „[i]t is interesting to learn how emotion can be generated and how you can become aware of where different emotion comes from by performing a simple series of exercises“.

Another reflects:

In retrospect, the process itself is teaching me a lot about letting go and allowing the body to have a mind of its own. This has been particularly challenging for me as I like to be in control. Emotionally it is releasing things that I had no idea was a result of my bodily state and this has been extremely refreshing for me as an actor to experience.

Another comments on how the process of Destructuring has enabled her to connect to and access emotions in her body and how this, in turn, has assisted in vocally expressing and conveying emotion:

Through the destructuring process I have experienced first-hand that through activating the ANS my body has felt more balanced and I have accessed emotions... Many times during the exercise I started laughing. In the beginning I didn't understand and was scared I was being disrespectful so I held it back, but when I allowed that emotion to happen freely I discovered many things. By letting laughter and sudden joy enter into how I said my poem I found a new joy in my poem that I could not access before and did not know how to express in the speaking of my poem.

Breath As A Tool For Discovery And Making Meaning

The previous student's reflection begins to touch on the idea of breath as a tool for emotionally connecting with the content of a dramatic text and how these discoveries/connections can be made through the body in the first instance, before engaging the intellect.

A student speaks directly to this idea: „I also realised, that sometimes one's body must first experience an idea and become present. Then, suddenly, one's intellectual awareness kicks in“.

Another notes that, „After all these experiences, the destructuring process has really opened my eyes to the fact that breath affects the entire body and from an acting perspective the ability to express“.

Another comments: „I also feel much more creative and full of ideas as my mind is alert and working in synch with my body...Destructuring helps me feel more what is happening in my body“.

A Self-Reflexive Response

The following is taken from a self-reflexive „exam“ I had to complete as part of my training as a Certified Fitzmaurice Voicework® instructor:

The month's work together, and especially the first two weeks where we focussed on Destructuring, started to bring me to an immediate experience of the physical as well as emotional blockages that are present in my body and life. The release I felt over the four weeks and continue to feel is tangible; the effects on my relationships with others on professional and personal levels are evident. I feel equipped to deal with experiences (physically, mentally, emotionally and spiritually) that present themselves to me, in an intuitive and case-by-case manner. I suspect this has to do with the Destructuring work bringing me to being present to what is in my body from moment to moment. I started to realise and allow my breath to consciously shift patterns and habits that had established themselves in my body. I continue to do roughly thirty minutes of Destructuring every morning as part of my meditation practice. What I'm finding is that it is providing me with practical ways of dealing with pressures, events, workload, and expectations I am faced with. Being present to and 'in' my body, as it were, seem to have the effect of enabling me to really experience being mindful to what is presenting itself to me. I arrived back home from Los Angeles and started work immediately. The stress and pressures of a new year starting, new courses, new students, registering for my PhD etc. 'hit' me. I 'hit' the ground running as it were. My usual pattern would be to allow these stresses and pressures to permeate my being at work and home. In short, I have had a tendency to allow stress to affect me in such ways as to debilitate me. This time the experience has been different. I'm finding that I am able to be with what presents itself to me without letting it stress me out. I attribute this to the daily Destructuring that I have incorporated into my meditation practice. I am also becoming acutely aware of the different experiences in each Destructuring position and how they shift from day to day. This brings me to an embodied experience of energy as something that is fluid and in a state of continual transformation, rather than a fixed and static entity. I'm beginning to experience the healing power of breath in working through and releasing blockages in my cellular/muscular body. I also have a sense that breath is patterning new pathways in my body. I have for the past couple of years experienced tremendous pain and swelling around the cervical area of my spine. The Destructuring work seems to have released and relieved this considerably. My sense is that the Destructuring work is bringing me to a

somatic understanding of the genesis of this pain being in my thoracic area, and the Destructuring work seems to have released something in this area which has resulted in an easing up of tension and stress in my cervical area. The idea of Destructuring being a valuable diagnostic tool is evident to me. Friends and colleagues are commenting on a clarity in my appearance and disposition. In short I am realising Destructuring as an integral tool to living and being present in my life.

This paper has not provided much data on the effects of Restructuring. I do not have student reflections on this, as I am yet to introduce Restructuring to them. I do however have my own reflections that formed part of the „exam“ I mention above, which may provide useful information on what it entails and how it could be useful in the training of performers:

I 'got' the idea of Restructuring in my head before I started to 'get' it in my body. I found the first week of Restructuring very frustrating, especially after experiencing and allowing flow into and through my body with the Destructuring work. Having to bring the Central Nervous System (CNS) into the practice was difficult. Perhaps this is because the experience of Destructuring started a process of releasing my need to control. Working with and controlling the breath through the engagement of the CNS somehow felt like I was bringing the control I had been allowing to be released through Destructuring, back into the picture. And I didn't want this at that particular point in my process. The second week of Restructuring was easier. It started to make sense and I started to experience the relationship between Destructuring and Restructuring. I let go of 'working hard' to get the Restructuring right and started to allow the flow of Destructuring to inform Restructuring. I realised that my daily yogic practices, which include pranayama and in particular three stage yogic breathing had turned me into a first class belly breather. The experience when I started to somatically 'get' Restructuring was and continues to be a liberating one. I experience my breath and voice quite differently to what I have been used to. The sound feels like it is rooted in my body. The experience of the transverse powering and supporting the sound fuelled by breath, tangibly allows me to feel the voice as sensations in my body. Connecting the action of the transverse with the activation of the focus line also brings me to a tangible experience of the voice as an energetic channel of communication between performers and between performers and audience. I haven't performed on stage for a while and currently have no intention of re-entering the stage as a performer. However, I am experiencing that when I do Restructure in my daily life, that I feel a clarity and confidence in my presence. Restructuring while teaching an academic class to students in a lecture hall seems to give me the confidence I have been trying to engender over the years of academic lecturing. People seem to be taking what I say seriously. The relationship between Destructuring and Restructuring are starting to play out, as a beautiful dance in my life and the interplay between the ANS and CNS seem to be bringing a tangible sense of balance into my life

Conclusion

As mentioned in my introduction to this paper, Movement Studies and Dance form an integral part of the curriculum for students of performance in the Department of Drama at UCT. My understanding of this is that it provides a holistic training that engages the students physically and vocally in the process of performance. My sense is that ideally it creates an embodied performer who has a tangible sense of their relationship between their voice and their body. I argue that the inclusion of movement and dance in the training of performers in a drama department is of vital importance. My question remains, however, as to why in the training of dancers in the University of Cape Town's School of Dance, voice training does not form part of the curriculum.

It is my hope that this paper has demonstrated how the inclusion of Fitzmaurice Voicework®, in particular, could inform the holistic education of dancers, equipping them with physical and vocal skill with which they can enter the professional world of performance. It is further hoped that this paper has demonstrated the value of Fitzmaurice Voicework's ® contribution towards developing a holistic, psychophysical and somatic approach that considers the well-being of the performer.

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Order and Improvisation – Bridging Divergent Processes

This paper aims to critically analyze the choreographic process of “mem-Re..”, a 20-minute solo created in 2010, as a means to discuss the methods by which a choreographer (working specifically within a context that relies primarily on improvisation as the tool and source for generating vocabulary) may find an effective language to: i) set improvisations, ii) articulate instructions/cues for composition/arrangement, and iii) deliver criticism on the process. The paper will firstly and briefly discuss Klein’s (2007) definition of choreography and how this could be applied; after which a personal definition will be ventured, inspired further by the observations of Lavender and Predock-Linnell (2001). Secondly, observations of my own choreographic process will be offered as a means to address a practical resolution, for both choreographer and performer, for the seeming contradictions implied by the terms improvisation and structure. This will include a brief discussion of how a choreographer might approach finding an effective language with which to structure improvisations, deal with composition and/or arrangement, as well as deliver criticism on the process and/or a performance. Lastly, this paper will briefly discuss the challenges facing a choreographer using such potentially divergent processes and provide examples of improvisations (and the phrasing thereof) that proved most effective during the creative process.

Order and Improvisation – Bridging Divergent Processes

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Introduction

In 2010, as a postgraduate student specializing in choreography, I presented a 20-minute solo titled “mem-Re..” which was created through a process of improvisation with a performer exploring the theme of memory. It soon became apparent that, because I was employing my performer as the source of the final product, both the subject matter and movements were unknown until, through the process, they became known to me. This meant that I experienced a great deal of artistic uncertainty, right up until just prior to the final product being performed.

As a young choreographer, the uncertainty made it difficult for me to critically analyze my work, or to distance myself from it, ultimately limiting my ability to make decisions that could have been in the best interests of the performer and performance.

This led me to ask: What do I consider the role of the choreographer to be, and how would I ultimately and ideally like to choreograph my own work? My initial research commenced by looking at the way in which other researchers and practitioners have interpreted the role of the choreographer, and I have found resonance with the definitions and insights offered by Klein. This literary research highlighted what I had already experienced as a young choreographer: a potential contradiction or divergence between using improvisation to generate vocabulary, and using a more structured approach. The final stages of my research have involved applying these findings to my own experiences as a young choreographer working with improvisation for the creation of a full-length physical theatre production.

The Role of the Choreographer

Klein (2007:1082) describes choreography and the role of the choreographer as:

[The] creative act of setting the conditions for things to happen, the choreographer is the navigator, negotiator and architect of a fluid environment that he/she himself/herself is part of.

This description suggests that the choreographer's role is to create and maintain the environment within which „things“ happen, or to set the parameters within which a certain creative exploration can take place. Klein's statement also hints at the notion that the choreographer should not be rigid and restricted him/herself, but rather flexible and open to changes by the environment s/he is setting.

The act of choreographing, according to Klein, is therefore reliant on a flexible environment with fixed parameters. Thus Klein (ibid:1084) reiterates that “the choreographer is no longer concerned with the creation of particular patterns or instances, but is providing conditions for things to happen”. The idea of making things happen without setting patterns, or providing flexibility through structure, appears divergent.

The question then arises: how does such a seemingly divergent choreographic process work and how, specifically, is the choreographer able to harness or use the given environment around him/her to effectively evoke responses? Klein's (ibid:1087) answer to this question is:

If the world is approached as a reality constructed of interactions, relationships, constellations and proportionalities and choreography is seen as the aesthetic practice of setting those relations – or setting the conditions for those relationships to emerge – choreographic knowledge gained in the field of dance or harvested from perceived patterns in nature should be transferable to other realms of life.

What can be perceived as the natural “relationships” between performers that emerge during the choreographic process contribute towards the final product; they come alive when performed. Klein's interpretation of the choreographer's role does not end - or even begin - with setting mere movements, but creating and arranging the environment in which performers can use their specific performative language to create new images or meanings. This requires setting parameters, which may include both physical and verbal cues or instructions, for the exploration of specific tasks. And the environment here includes the physical space, time, and even the performers. All of these elements contribute to the experience of the choreographer and the performers, and therefore form part of their environment.

Klein (ibid:1084) adds that:

The challenge in such work is to work with the individuals as an artist, to bring their memories, experiences, physical knowledge, moods etc. into the creative process, giving space for such processes to be recalled and developed within the work. The choreographic framing has to happen for the whole individual- including their thoughts and memories. This leads to issues of „steering“ and group- dynamics as the act of choreography takes political dimensions.

The challenge arises for new choreographers dealing with the “political dimensions” of such a process as they are still finding a language for, or method with which, to approach the creative process: How does a young choreographer consider all these elements and harness the use of the environment to its optimal capacity? How do choreographers determine whether their work was successful, or when one process was more effective than another in contributing towards this success? How can such a process be evaluated?

Predock-Linnell and Lavender (2001), in their critical discussion on how to teach choreography titled *From Improvisation to Choreography: the critical bridge*, venture a definition of a „good choreographer“. They mention three aspects that they consider crucial in the development of any choreographer, no matter what the methodology, namely: “[i]mprovising... composing... and criticism” (ibid:196). According to Predock-Linnell and Lavender (ibid:200), improvisation can be understood as both “free and structured” and they stress that improvisation “has to prepare students to deal with the compositional challenges they will encounter at more advanced levels”. Predock-Linnell and Lavender go on to emphasise that improvisation cannot be taught in isolation, but it has to be accompanied by a clear understanding of composition and criticism.

Composition, then, is the act of “shaping and forming material” (ibid) and they extend this discussion by mentioning that “students become artists through the development of a critical consciousness...this manifests itself as the ability to make specific decisions about the shaping and forming of dance materials” (ibid:196-203). This suggests that the compositional component or aspect of choreography which the student has to acquire is the physical act of working with bodies in the space, shaping the gestures/phrases/actions that they generate to convey the set of relationships mentioned by Klein.

Finally, Lavender and Predock-Linnell (ibid:196) observe that *criticism* - the third aspect of choreography crucial for a student choreographer to master - is the act of “observing, describing, analysing, interpreting, evaluating and revising both the work in progress and the completed dance”.

As Lavender and Predock-Linnell (ibid) mention, these three aspects of choreography are “complementary” and “intertwined”: neither can be effectively used or analysed without the other. Therefore, one is not able to choreograph without a sense of critical consciousness. If one improvises without composition in mind, then a physical performance will lack visual substance and dynamic range.

For my own purposes, taking these discussions and observations into consideration, a working definition of the role of the choreographer was constructed:

The choreographer is responsible for creating the environment in which performers can explore physical expressions, which includes setting the parameters of individual tasks for interpretation by performers. The choreographer is also responsible for ensuring that the improvisations set are effective or appropriate, by discovering and refining the most effective language; as well as for refining and arranging the physical expressions generated by performers. The choreographer then takes ultimate responsibility for delivering the work and receiving criticism about it.

Between Improvisation and Composition

By combining methods of structural arrangement with improvisation I hope to find a sound way of working choreographically to address some of the challenges that I have experienced. These challenges have included: offering a performer a certain sense of ownership of the generated movement; clearly defining the instructions for an improvisation; and, finally, selecting and refining the most effective phrases or images from the improvisations.

If the choreographer accepts responsibility for shaping the environment in which physical exploration and expression take place, then they will obviously become more reliant on a performer’s individual style; the challenge of this working method is that

the patterns and shapes generated may reflect more of the performer's personal expression, and less of the choreographer's vision.

As a young choreographer I was faced, therefore, with what seemed to be contradictory or opposing aspects, namely: needing to elicit creative input from performers; and wanting creative ownership of a process.

Beyond a solo and doing it differently with a group

Creating a solo was a difficult task: I was not able to rely on two bodies, for example, to lift or support one another, but wanted to create similar feelings or images using only one body. However, it did allow me to see how much vocabulary could be generated by one body and also how a number of diverse fragments of movement exploration – phrases and images - could be effectively arranged for performance.

Essentially, I started the solo three times. The process started in early September, and by the end of September we had reviewed and restarted; in the middle of October we made yet another attempt to start the creative process. Each time, we were basing our explorations on what we had done before.

This developed a shared language between my performer and I. If I asked her, for instance, to “dig in”, she knew exactly what quality I was expecting that movement to have, because our first few rehearsals had focussed on exploring the *quality* of the words that had been recorded in each of our the journals. Other words included “reflect”, “burden”, “withhold” and “shine”.

I am currently in the process of choreographing a full-length production with a group of five diverse performers, and I am trying to make similar use of very specific words in the process with them. I have also learnt to “build up” or layer/develop an improvisation more effectively than before. For instance, an improvisation might start off simply by asking all of the performers to jump, in whatever shape or form, but remaining on a single spot. What is emphasized is that they should first feel comfortable with a basic “on the spot” jump. I then extend the exploration by drawing their attention to levels: to jump as high, or as low, as they possibly can; and then still further by asking them to jump by only using one body part, for example a finger, a

toe, or their head. These simple tasks quickly reveal certain recurring patterns or developing relationships, and it is these patterns that I compose and arrange towards a final product.

Another improvisation that has proven effective has been to give the performers instructions or cues to carry one another from one side of the room to the other, or within a specified area. This spatial parameter is then also linked to a situational or imagined parameter: their action of carrying should be associated with a personally imagined but recognizable or emotional situation: for example, a mother carrying a child or a soldier carrying a dead or injured body. The relationships that have emerged have been surprisingly similar to the thematic relationships that are the motivation/source of inspiration for the work as a whole .

Conclusion

Klein (2007:1084-1085) observes:

I believe that the way we organise our pots and pans has a direct implication on the way we organise our children and our relationships in general. However, it is hardly the pots that determine the order of our world directly, but a deeper, imprinted unconscious order, which governs humanity, society and the individual. A crude reading of nature (hierarchical, compartmentalised-thinking, etc.) leads to a limited repertoire of patterns from which to create conditions for living, as people are set in, and by one another, in certain relations.

I find this observation particularly beneficial when I consider the rich variety of options available to choreographers and how we tend to limit ourselves. “Choreography, then, is a creative activity fraught with intention and design but fertilized by the spontaneous and uncalculated” (Beiswanger, 1962:13). It is, in a sense, arranging pots and pans, but the recipe of what should be contained in the pots and pans is unknown. A choreographer can create the right environment to guide and support performers and put the tools in the most effective order, but in the time and space of performance, it is ultimately up to the performer to create and sustain the meaning of movement.

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Estelle Olivier

Towards a [UN]Cultured Performer: Connecting Physicality and Performance

The constant discrepancy between the dancer's aspiration towards virtuosity and the actor's search for embodiment creates an ever widening gap between emotion and motion. In an age of technological advancement, theatre that resonates on a visceral level with its audience often ends up competing with entertainment that promotes a denial of the body and a focus on the visual senses and/or intellectual mind. Certain questions arise for theatre practitioners: Are we competing to produce super human performers or are we trying to resonate with the rich and diverse physical and emotional landscape that is the human condition? By treating the performer purely as an athlete we run the risk of losing a fully embodied performance. Conversely, an excessive focus on emotional engagement can strip the performer of authority on stage, communicating without a pliable instrument. Is there a compromise? The South African performer finds him/herself in a uniquely 'Cultured' Space, where the potential for unique and fresh performance is ever present. However that potential only has room to grow within the acknowledgement of our diversity. Theatre practitioner Eugenio Barba's (2007) theories on pre-expressivity offer theatre practitioners a platform for using neutrality as a foundational technique that allows the performer access to both the Acculturated and Inculturated body. This enables a holistic approach to training stage presence and emotional engagement that connects physicality and performance.

Towards a [UN]Cultured Performer: Connecting Physicality and Performance

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Introduction

“The methods or conventions of drama are not just technical preferences; they are, at the same time, ideas of reality and ways of seeing life that have been shaped by the interests and assumptions of a particular culture” (Regan in Murray, 2003:37).

Regan (ibid) points to a truth that I believe summarizes the crossroads at which South African theatre makers find themselves. To contextualize, I consider theatre makers to be practitioners responsible for creating entertainment for popular culture purposes as well as practitioners who choose to reflect the human condition in their work. From an educational perspective, this also includes educators and academics that have the responsibility of shaping and stating future trends.

As practitioner my own perspective has been influenced by receiving the majority of my training in formalized dance but most of my teaching experience from working with drama students, teaching movement and physical theatre at a tertiary level. This has given rise to a research focus on the concept of an embodied performer. The idea of bridging the gap that exists between the dancer’s aspiration towards virtuosity and the actor’s search for embodiment – between motion and emotion - has always fascinated me. As educator, researcher and choreographer I have discovered that there are concepts and training techniques from both performance genres that can be advantageous in an attempt to find an embodied performer. In this paper my focus falls on concepts that have originated from theatre and performance, that can be appropriated to benefit the development of the dancer.

Living in a post-apartheid, multicultural, multiracial reality, we have a multitude of cultural influences as well as training methods and conventions to follow, unpack or even discard in our effort to create theatre. Along with this increased diversity has

been the growth in technological advancement, influencing the kind of performer and type of theatre that is currently being shaped. In this paper I will attempt to discuss some of these influences, with a specific focus on addressing the question of whether it is possible or even viable to find a collective identity in theatre, without losing or discarding the unique qualities associated with different cultures. I will also discuss the influence that this paradox might have on the way that performance is taught at a tertiary academic level where diversity is becoming more standardized. These ideas and concepts in this paper are informed by the ongoing practise-as-research that the curriculum at the US Drama Department offers.

Culture and Popular culture – The Virtual divide

Technological advancement is rapidly changing the way humans connect. Popular culture worldwide, is progressively favouring virtual space. So radical is this trend that American anthropologist Amber Case (2011) refers to modern humans as Cyborgs¹. Case argues that human-made tools, such as cell phones or computers, automatically create virtual or cyber space, within which individuals create a second self – essentially as an extension of his/her mental self, as can be seen in her presentation *We are all Cyborgs Now: Amber Case* (ibid). The use and inhabitation of this virtual space is quickly becoming more accessible and normalised; for example, through social networking platforms such as Mix it, Facebook and Twitter, entertainment in the form of 3-D films, or computer games such as Xbox or Wii. This use of technology is now accepted as a necessity for modern survival, often at the expense of an understanding and utilization of a more tangible space.

This shift toward a more technologically orientated culture creates a chasm between our physical and mental self. While these technological advancements become increasingly astonishing, an instant-gratification button-clicking culture is quickly eradicating standard practices and understandings of a corporeal self and of physically intelligent methods of communication. Daily body language has changed: popular culture embraces the ineffective posture of EMO teens or the iPod culture where individuals are often rhythmically disengaged from one another; this suggests

¹ Cyborgs are defined as organisms to which external components have been added for the purpose of adapting to new environments (Case, 2011).

that we are on the fast track towards excluding the rich landscape of physical aptitudes from our non-verbal communications, driving individuals towards a disembodied self.

These cultural trends have a profound effect on performance where the physical body is the primary tool of communication. Theatre that resonates on a visceral level with its audience is competing with entertainment that promotes a denial of the body and focuses primarily on the visual senses and/or intellectual mind.

In South Africa this rapidly advancing techno-culture is emerging alongside a broad spectrum of other equally complex transformations. As theatre makers we may be aware of the influence that cultural, religious and political customs and tendencies have on our theatrical domain. These systems have an impact on our understanding of the human condition and our way of approaching theatre-making. Taking this diverse mix of social and cultural influences into consideration, along with current technological advancements, it seems relevant for educators and practitioners in certain contexts to ask whether we are still interested in creating the kind of theatre that is on demand? Performer, director and educator, Simon Murray's academic interest focuses on the interdisciplinary. His research is inclusive of a diversity of fields, such as cultural studies, sociology, politics and the history of theatre, and his latest research focuses on the practices and history of physical theatre (University of Glasgow, 2011). From this perspective, Murray identifies the following question as one of the key concerns of theatre makers in the 21st century: "Is the attempt to define and create a *universal* language of theatre either possible or desirable?" (Murray, 2003:27). This paper proposes that this question is equally pertinent for dance makers in the 21st century, but more importantly the question needs to be critically framed for South African practitioners: is the attempt to find a universal language of dance in South Africa relevant or desirable? Further considerations then include: what aesthetic are practitioners trying to create? Within that aesthetic, what physical shape are performers required to have? And how should these bodies be trained?

The Performer's Instrument

The body is the common denominator between daily life and theatre; as a result, shifts and changes in body language and physical communication are vital to a

theatre-maker's understanding and portrayal of the human condition. Whilst remaining aware of these cultural and techno-cultural influences, practitioners must confront how the constant discrepancy between the dancer's aspiration towards virtuosity and the actor's search for embodiment creates an ever widening gap between emotion and motion.

Certain questions arise, specifically for theatre educators and academics that are responsible for shaping the values and approaches of future theatre practitioners towards becoming trendsetters rather than trend followers: Do we seek a universal aesthetic, pushing performers to become technicians² or even athletes as promoted by popular television series *So you think you can dance?* Are we trying to create super human performers to compete with the world of cinema or computer entertainment that have unlimited visual possibilities - in effect creating theatre for popular culture purposes? Or are we trying to resonate with the rich and diverse physical and emotional landscape that is the human condition? By treating the performer purely as an athlete we run the risk of losing a fully embodied performance. Therefore, to refer to the dancer as an athlete, on the one hand, merits the incredible skill and devotion it takes to be physically capable, but on the other hand terms such as this one can force a rift between interpretations virtuosity and embodiment. It is a potentially dangerous label that can motivate a dancer to become a machinist, stripped of the tools and aptitude necessary to access an emotional landscape.

Conversely, an excessive focus on emotional engagement can strip the performer of authority on stage, communicating without a pliable instrument. Can a compromise between virtuosity and emotional range be found to allow a truly embodied performance - mind and body working harmoniously – to be achieved?

In my experience of training and supervising drama students, technical abilities vary greatly and the process of undoing ineffective habits of both Inculturation³ and

² By technician I am referring to a person that has an understanding of the formal mechanics of movement and the ability to execute shapes and patterns with efficiency and ease.

³ Inculturation is daily behaviour that occurs naturally. It has been absorbed since birth in the specific culture or social setting in which an individual has grown up (Barba & Savarese, 2007:257).

Acculturation⁴ to arrive at a more articulate body or instrument is lengthy and complex. Those students that demonstrate an ability to access an emotional reality that is recognisable for observers are not necessarily the most skilled technicians, but they seem to intuitively understand how to embody, often unaware that they are organically integrating the mental and physical self. In the context of teaching or training a range of different bodies, the recurring consideration for me has been how to shape a body to become articulate through the translation of principles, rather than favouring a specific shape or quality. Be it a physical appearance or ability that already exists through some predisposition of culture, upbringing or genetics or a body that has a natural understanding of how to create presence and an ability to translate concepts. This is often visible when a performer is typecast, essentially performing an extension of the natural self or Inculturated body, and is in effect praised for being themselves on stage. On the other end of the scale, many performers are used for the opposite reason: cast purely for their ability as technician or virtuoso, without an emphasis on embodiment or a more personal articulation of an emotional landscape.

Part of this discussion is focused on the questions that practitioners may have surrounding the stereotypical interpretations or representations of a performer's body aesthetic. A paradigm shift seems to be taking place in South Africa concerning concepts about the performers' ideal body aesthetic, but it is not yet fully formed. Choreographers and practitioners have access to a diversity of body shapes, sizes and abilities associated with a diversity of race, gender, culture and ethnic groupings. Progressive research in the fields of science, medicine and psychology, for example, are also offering a wealth of lenses through which the body can be observed and interpreted: My body my culture; my body the machine; the creator/creation; the storyteller; the artwork; the disabled body; or my body the cyborg. These viewpoints make us aware of many differences, and at the same time emphasize many similarities.

⁴ Acculturation is a stylization technique, a modification of natural appearance (Barba & Savarese, 2007:257-258).

The theories put forward by theatre practitioner and researcher Eugenio Barba (2007) do not put focus on the external shape of a performer but rather on how articulate their body is. He believed that “performers mould their body according to specific tensions and forms and it is these very tensions and forms which create lightning in the spectator” (ibid:255). To the audience, these interpretations appear organic and truthful because they originate from a physical place that resonates with the audience. Articulate performers understand the meaning of these forms and tensions and choose appropriate pathways and/or patterns to make them visible.

Barba’s theories on presence in performance offer insight on how to teach across diverse cultural realities. He believes pre-expression to be foundational to many performance techniques regardless of the culture from which the technique originated.

The pre-expressive state refers to a basic level of organization common to all human bodies, and thus all performers. At this level a performer works essentially with energy; emotion and shape become secondary layers. Therefore, the focus is simply translating presence in an organic way. This is a performance concept of “presence ready to re-present” (ibid:258).

Pre-expression, therefore, offers the performer a way to find neutrality that still engages the body-mind connection: it requires the performer to have a mental awareness without actively engaging in intellectual thought; at the same time it requires a sensory awareness of the body and its relationship to space. In order to generate this awareness, the performer is challenged to reinvestigate their perception of their body. This is an important tool for addressing the disembodiment brought about by technological advancements, as well as the diversity of ethnic representations that have influenced performance.

My experience of young performers is that they often have a distorted sense of the relationship between environment and their body as a result of their tendency to live in an internalized virtual space. Performing in tangible three-dimensional space, or having an accurate kinaesthetic awareness, becomes difficult for these young

students: their experience of how energy can be translated and/or expressed is diminished by less engagement in physical activity.

When performers focus on pre-expressive neutrality, it seems viable that any technique or aesthetic could be used at the secondary level to create a performance. Jacques Lecoq recognized that different training methods should be devised for different performance outcomes (Murray, 2003:23). Thus, when using pre-expression as a foundational principle of performance training, it does not matter whether a natural, daily, culturally rich, stylized technique - or combination of these – is used, as the performer's basic understanding of how to articulate the body will be clear.

Pre-expressivity guides the performer away from using antics of in- or acculturation that may have previously succeeded in creating a level of engagement with the audience. It encourages the performer to focus on how energy may be shifted to connect with fellow performers and the audience. In this way a performer can begin to understand the shape or tension that the body is adopting, without the use of stereotypical responses or interpretations. Pre-expressivity also improves the performer's and/or choreographer's ability to generate an appropriate vocabulary to embody the theme or subject matter of each new work, so that the body is truly articulate.

Conclusion

By using pre-expressive neutrality as a foundational training principle for performers who use the body as their primary tool of communication, the gap between motion and emotion can be bridged. Performers can be taught to articulate each and every physical language clearly, and with authority, on stage. It is up to theatre makers to then find the balance between including the daily vocabulary of inculturation, and the techniques of acculturation, to communicate a particular subject matter onstage.

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Proximal physicalities: A discussion of the effects of juxtaposing opposing physicalities in the performance series “Retrospective – altered daily” at the 2011 Dance Umbrella in Johannesburg.

“Retrospective – altered daily” is an eleven day performance event that premiered at the 2011 Dance Umbrella in Johannesburg, and was performed each day in various theatre foyers at the Dance Factory, Wits Theatre and University of Johannesburg Arts Complex. Repeated each day, the „dance” (dubbed “Trio F”) is an extension of ideas presented by Yvonne Rainer in her seminal work, “Trio A” (1965). Much like the original, “Trio F” is a relishing of all things antithetical to a conventional perception of dance – there is no phrasing, no virtuosity, little rhythm, no variation or repetition and, essentially, no intended meaning behind the movement language. The dance is also performed with the aloof, pedestrian, task-based physicality typical of Rainer and the Judson Dance Theatre of the 1960s. This base language is then tampered with each day by borrowing the extraneous theatricalities and various physicalities of other well known dance and physical theatre productions and inserting these on top of the movement language. The work borrows from works by both local and international choreographers such as Lloyd Newson, Pina Bausch, Gary Gordon, Robyn Orlin, Neliswe Xaba, Vaslav Nijinsky, Kazuo Ohno and Steven Cohen. The resultant performance then becomes a space where these opposing theatricalities and physicalities collide in an intertextual, and often uncanny, hybridisation of unoriginal and borrowed signifiers. This paper reflects on the process of creating and performing “Retrospective – altered daily” with particular attention to the collision and collusion of both antitheatrical and theatrical physicalities in the work.

Proximal physicalities: A discussion of the juxtaposing of opposing physicalities in the performance series “Retrospective – Altered Daily” at the 2011 Dance Umbrella in Johannesburg.

Alan Parker
Rhodes University

In September 2010 I was afforded the opportunity to learn the first three and a half minutes of Yvonne Rainer’s seminal work *Trio A* (1966)¹, as taught by visiting lecturer Kathrina Farrugia at the Rhodes University Drama Department in Grahamstown. The playful and experimental work of the Judson Dance Theatre in the 1960s and of Rainer in particular, had previously attracted me and learning the dance over a three day period renewed my interest in this particular work and, perhaps more importantly, in this mode of performance and distinct physicality. I have long been enamoured by the aloof and pedestrian performance quality and “unenhanced physicality” (Rainer in Lambert-Beatty, 2008:154) characteristic of many of the Judson artists, what Rainer refers to as “the neutral doer” (in Copeland, 1986: 7) and Copeland dubs “the objective temperament” (1986: 10). It was through my own personal experience of this “object-like presentation of the body” (Hargreaves in Rosenthal, 2010:53) that I was inspired to explore this physicality in greater detail in the performance series *Retrospective – Altered Daily* (2011).

In learning *Trio A* and observing my peers perform the dance, I was intrigued by the way in which the dance shifted in relation to the particular body performing it and the particular musical track played in the background, without the performance quality, movement vocabulary or performer physicality ever changing in any particular way. Through my familiarity with Rainer’s infamous „No Manifesto“ I was aware of the dance’s intended rebellion against conventional dance practices and expectations:

No to spectacle no to virtuosity no to transformations and magic and make-believe no to glamour and transcendency of the star image no to the heroic no to the anti-heroic no to trash imagery no to involvement of the performer or spectator no to style no to camp no to seduction of the spectator by the wiles of the performer no to eccentricity no to moving and being moved (Rainer in Carter, 1998: 35).

¹ *Trio A* is a “four-and-one-half-minute phrase originally performed as a set of three simultaneous solos by Yvonne Rainer, Steve Paxton and David Gordon at the Judson Church on January 10, 1966. It was then called *The Mind is a Muscle, Part I*” (Banes, 1980: 44-45).

Despite this familiarity I was still struck by the shifts in tone and mood that occurred in the dance when the music changed, even though the performers were trying their utmost to keep the dance isolated from the music itself. There emerged a sense of underlying meaning in the dance – a meaning that was unclear and nonspecific but apparent nonetheless, and this emerging meaning had little to do with the dance itself but rather with the spatial proximities of the performers and the music they were moving to. Joan Acocella, in speaking in reference to Cunningham’s work (a noted influence on the Judson Dance Theatre), describes this kind of meaning as “pre-meaning” (1997:15) - meaning that arises not through the intention of the choreographer or performer but rather through the chance encounters of bodies, space and time in the moment of performance. *Retrospective – Altered Daily* was an attempt to see how far the relationship between a Rainer-inspired dance language and added theatricalities could be pushed. I was interested to see if possible meanings might arise from such juxtaposition, and if so, what these possible meanings might be. I was also interested to see what might happen if the antitheatrical „neutral doer“ was placed in close proximity to another performer in another performance style and physicality. In essence, the underlying premise of the work was merely „to see what happens“.

Retrospective – Altered Daily was created over six weeks in January and February 2011 as an eleven-part performance series that was performed over eleven days at the Dance Umbrella in Johannesburg. It was performed by myself, collaborator and designer Gavin Krastin and members of the First Physical Theatre Company in the foyers of various theatres where other Dance Umbrella programmes were scheduled to be performed. In this way the work became a site-intervention, performed in and amongst the audience waiting to enter the theatre for another production, and where the audience was given the agency to choose whether or not to watch the performance happening in front of them. Each day the performance changed in terms of the extraneous theatricalities that were added to the movement language. Due to my own interest in dance history and the local dance archive, I decided to further complicate the relationship between the dance, the theatrical elements and the opposing physicalities by adding theatrical elements and physicalities „borrowed“ from existing dance and/or physical theatre productions – thus a „retrospective“. Each day the performance of *Retrospective – Altered Daily* took on the music, costume and accompanying physicality of another production, without altering the movement itself or the performance of the core movement language. As the programme note explained:

What if... what if the movement really does mean nothing? What if you add a little *something* to nothing? Does the nothing become *something*? Is the *something* something new or is it something else?

Repeated each day for eleven days, the „dance“ (dubbed *Trio F*) is an extension of ideas presented by Yvonne Rainer in her seminal work, *Trio A*. Much like the original, *Trio F* is a relishing of all things „un-dancey“ – no phrasing, no virtuosity, little rhythm, no variation or repetition, and essentially, no intended meaning. Every day the extraneous theatricalities of another production are then „pasted“ on top of it. Why? To see what happens (Programme note, *Retrospective – Altered Daily*, 2011).

In this way, the Rainer-inspired dance, *Trio F*, was performed eleven times, each time in a different design environment, to different music and in close proximity to a different physicality in the form of another performer. The work was intended as a retrospective so I wanted to draw from productions I believed to be significant to the development of contemporary dance and physical theatre both locally and abroad, and where possible, to draw from works that had been performed at the Dance Umbrella in previous years. The eleven existing performances selected for this project were (in order of performance): Yvonne Rainer’s *Trio A* (1966), Gary Gordon’s *The Unspeakable Story* (1995), Lloyd Newson’s *Enter Achilles* (1995), Pina Bausch’s *Bluebeard* (1977), Steven Cohen’s *Chandelier* (2002), Robyn Orlin’s *Daddy, I’ve seen this piece six times before and I still don’t know why they are hurting each other* (1999), Nelisiwe Xaba’s *Plasticization* (2006), Vaslav Nijinsky’s *The Rite of Spring* (1913), Gary Gordon’s *Shattered Windows* (1993), Kazuo Ohno’s *My Mother* (1981), and Dominique Boivin’s *Transports Exceptionnels* (2007).

In creating the work the most important concern for me was to ensure that we did not parody any of the selected productions, but rather tried to capture an essence of each work that could sit alongside and on top of the Rainer-inspired *Trio F*. Through the use of selected theatrical elements such as music, costume, set and props, Gavin Krastin (the production’s designer) and I tried to create fabrications of the originals that would serve as adequate signifiers in reference to the original productions. In addition to the visual and aural elements we also tried to capture a sense of the physicality of each production that could be performed alongside my performance of the *Trio F* phrase. In this way I would serve as the constant „neutral doer“ in all eleven performances, placed in juxtaposition to the different theatricalities and physicalities changing around me each day. To avoid parody I was reluctant to try and copy actual choreography from the original works, and chose rather to

capture the physicality and performance quality of the various productions. We, therefore, did not recreate choreography from works such as *My Mother*, *Enter Achilles*, or *Bluebeard*, but rather observed the performers in recordings of the works and tried to „express as they express“, thereby creating a sense of the performing body in the styles of butoh, tanzteater, or physical theatre.

It was this fear of parodying the original works that led me to choreograph the Rainer-inspired *Trio F* rather than merely performing *Trio A*. I wanted this version to clearly reference the original and to incorporate similar antitheatrical ideas, such as avoiding eye contact with the spectator, evading rhythm and dynamic by using an “uninflected distribution of energy” (Banes, 1987:45) and removing, as much as possible, any sense of performer expression and/or transformation. I also wanted to distance myself from the creation of this version, so that the dance itself did not necessarily come from my body nor suit my particular movement sensibilities. Similarly, I did not want the movement to be created in response to any kind of theme or idea or emotion. *Trio F* therefore came out of a lengthy process of movement creation and distillation in conjunction with the performers of the First Physical Theatre Company, where we used various formalist tasks and games to create the movements of the dance. These were then strung together, edited and learnt by all. We then added selected motifs from *Trio A* into *Trio F* to retain Rainer’s voice in the dance.

A similar process of research and play led to the creation of the various other physicalities and movement languages. For *Retrospective 9 - Shattered Windows* the company was able to watch a recording of the 2004 reconstruction of the 1993 original work. Selected movement themes such as the violent convulsing of the body and the vigorous running and diving onto the floor, were observed from the recording and used as a means to capture the expressive, tormented and aggressive physicality of the work. While the movements of the performers are not identical to those in the original, the violence and the aggression of the performers’ physicalities (compounded by their close proximity to the aloof and disconnected performance of *Trio F*) creates a clear parallel. The performers, dressed in the costumes from the 2004 reconstruction, alternate between dancing *Trio F* and screaming and throwing their bodies onto each other and onto a mattress placed on the floor, with the driving and relentless score by Philip Glass blaring in the background. One audience member who witnessed the performance of this particular retrospective commented on „how exciting it was to see *Shattered Windows* again“, apparently forgetting that this was in fact not the same production she had witnessed years ago.

Similarly, for *Retrospective 5 - Chandelier*, photographs of various performances by Steven Cohen were studied as a means to recreate the stylised and sculptural poses and body contortions common in Cohen's work. Various design elements from his body of work were also used in addition to the chandelier itself. While I performed *Trio F* wearing a chandelier similar to Cohen's original, Gavin (wearing a kudu horn stiletto and roller skates) moved around the foyer in a Cohenesque manner, creating sculptural, sexually suggestive and „grotesque“ poses in relation to the dance. Ironically, during the performance at the Wits Theatre some audience members seemed to confuse us with the actual Steven Cohen and commented on their excitement at „seeing Steven Cohen“.

The final instalment of the performance series, *Retrospective 11 – with digger*, borrowed from the well travelled production *Transports Exceptionnels* (2007) by Dominique Boivin, where a man and a mechanical digger dance together to a recording of Maria Callas. I wanted to incorporate this particular work into the retrospective series as it had toured to South Africa in recent years and had been performed at the Dance Umbrella in Johannesburg in 2008. I was also intrigued by the combination of the two physicalities – man and machine. In *Retrospective – Altered Daily*, *Trio F* is performed alongside a remote controlled toy digger, operated by Gavin Krastin, to Maria Callas' recording of Saint Saëns *Samson et Dalila*. I chose this performance as the final instalment and thus the end of the series due to its unusual combination of physicalities; a living human body and an animated, battery operated machine, both severely limited in their abilities to move – the performer limited by his unwillingness to express and move freely and the digger limited by its manufactured structure and lack of control. Interest for me lay in this relationship where, despite the severe limitations, both are capable of making meaning in relation to each other.

What initially began as an experiment in meaning-making and the interpretation of signifiers also uncovered a multiplicity of other concerns relating to ownership, authenticity, and originality. Responses from audience members have varied greatly. As noted earlier some have interpreted the performances almost as reconstructions of the original works, completely ignoring the collusion of different physicalities and the disjuncture between the theatrical elements and the physicality of the performer. Others have commented on the apparent arbitrary nature of the work and its lack of coherence in terms of performance styles and intended meaning. It has also been suggested that *Retrospective – Altered Daily* is a

work aimed predominantly at the seasoned dance-watcher – those who are familiar with dance history and who are therefore able to interpret and read the specific signifiers borrowed from other productions. They are the ones who are able to „get it“, to see the intertextual references and to revel in the wit or the strangeness resulting from such juxtapositions. I am more interested, however, in the experiences of the unseasoned dance audience, relatively unaffected by specific references to past productions, and the ways in which these individuals are able to uncover possible meanings in the juxtaposition of signifiers. Does a man drinking a beer and running around another man (who is involved in a strangely boring dance), while undressing to reveal a superman suit mean anything to someone who has never encountered Newson’s *Enter Achilles* and the gendered and political themes raised in that work? Does the presence of the „strangely boring dance“ change the interpretation of a person who has encountered Newson’s work? Do we view the butoh body, or the expressive body or the traumatised body any differently when it is placed next to the neutral, unengaged, real-time performer?

As a performance experiment *Retrospective – Altered Daily* is an ongoing research endeavour and presently has raised more questions rather than offering any definitive findings and/or observations. The reflections and observations offered here are only initial enquiries, to be explored further in the future through subsequent performances of the series and through the development and growth of the series itself.

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Jill Pribyl and Kristina Johnstone

Who are we dancing for? Cross-cultural collaborations at Makerere University, Uganda

This paper investigates how dance training and performance opportunities facilitated by New York University (NYU) and the Norwegian College of Dance (NCOD) faculty benefit the dance students of Makerere University. Recognising the various motivations and expectations of each institution, this paper questions the notion of collaboration and whether one can ever speak of collaboration 'on equal terms' (Bharucha, 2000). This paper aims to investigate and challenge notions of the trained dancing body from a western construct and considers the impact of these exchange programmes on the students involved, particularly the Ugandan students of Makerere University. In an academic atmosphere like Makerere where research and theory is the main focus with little emphasis on the practical, how does practice inform and influence theories and trends? Can the dancing body evaluate itself and how does learning other techniques expand or explain diverse perspectives, if at all? This paper accesses the ideas of Rustom Bharucha (1984; 1997; 2000) who writes from an Indian, postcolonial perspective, to interrogate the power structures present in these cultural exchanges. To what extent do the parties involved perpetuate existing (western) notions about what the dancing body should be? Who defines the dancing body? Who are we dancing for?

Who are we dancing for?

Cross-cultural collaborations at Makerere University, Uganda

Jill Pribyl and Kristina Johnstone

Introduction

Approximately one hundred and fifty children from Lwagula Memorial Primary School are standing on a stage that shakes with each step. They are singing a Norwegian folk song entitled *Nakatanza*. The song tells the story of an old greedy woman, but it seems that few, if any, understand the meaning. They are putting emphasis on their right foot, stamping down with strength and creating an accented rhythmic pattern. The parents in the audience are very happy to see so many whites in the compound on this hot Saturday afternoon in the dusty outskirts of Kampala, the largest city in Uganda.

The performance is a culmination of a week long pedagogical practical examination for the Norwegian College of Dance Students who are participating in a collaborative project with the Makerere University Department of Music, Dance and Drama dance section. The students who enrol in the three year course at NCOD are required to come to Africa for a month to find the „roots of dance“, as described by Ann Kristin Norum, Vice Councillor of the Norwegian College of Dance and head of the delegation to the Uganda. In her iconic paper „An anthropologist looks at ballet as an ethnic form of dance“, Joann Kealiinohomoku (1970) has questioned notions of „primitive“ dance and how traditional western dance scholarship has placed dance forms on an evolutionary scale. One would think that the idea that Ugandan dances are somehow connected to the „roots of dance“ or that dance forms progress in a linear fashion for that matter has long been dispelled, at least by dance scholars. It is thus interesting to note the exotic and even romanticised air in the Vice Councillor’s statement when she refers to „the roots of dance“ and how such views to an extent inform the collaborative projects that are the subject of this paper.

This paper investigates two cross-cultural or „intercultural“¹ exchanges between Makerere University and New York University on one hand, and the Norwegian College of Dance on the other. Since 2007², the Dance in Education Department of New York University visits Makerere as part of a NYU Study Abroad Programme. The programme, entitled „Advanced Dance Practicum“, is one of an extensive range of Study Abroad Programmes offered by NYU and is a „dance-making cultural exchange programme focused on fostering community building through the arts“ (Damast, 2009). The exchange programme with the NCOD was initiated in 2010 with Norwegian dance students travelling to Uganda for the first time in 2011³. When one looks at the groups from NYU and the NCOD, it is clear that the ratio of men to women is typical of western dance institutions, one man and fifteen, or even twenty, women. In contrast, currently the dance section of the MDD Department has eleven full time students, seven men and four women. While an investigation of why this is so is beyond the scope of this paper, it certainly begins to reveal that any construct of the dancing body at Makerere would differ greatly from that of western dance institutions such as NYU or the NCOD.

The politics of cultural exchange

Both the abovementioned programs claim to be collaborations rather than institutional and curricular driven exchanges between both faculty and students from Norway and New York. Both projects involve visiting students from the US and Norway who take classes with Makerere dance students, teach groups of Ugandan children and work towards the presentation of a collaborative performance as the culmination of the exchange. Recognising the various motivations and expectations of each institution, this paper questions the notion of collaboration and whether one can ever speak of collaboration „on equal terms“ (Bharucha, 2000). Indian cultural theorist, Rustom Bharucha, provides a valuable framework for interrogating the politics and challenges of cross-cultural collaboration in the performing arts. Bharucha is overtly critical of some Western approaches towards intercultural theatre. He observes that

¹ Intercultural theatre practitioner, Richard Schechner, defines interculturalism as „a shared space between two or more colliding cultures wherein the interactive nature of this cultural exchange within a no man’s (sic) land challenges the old ways of seeing“ (in Samuel, 2001:69).

² The idea for a dance exchange programme between New York University and Makerere University was first formed in 2006 when Jill Pribyl, lecturer in dance at Makerere University and at the time artistic director of the Kampala Ballet and Modern Dance School travelled to New York with the *Nnabagereka*, queen of the Buganda kingdom and founder of KBMDS, and met Deborah Damast, professor in Dance Education at New York University. The idea was to forge a link between these three institutions: Makerere University, the Kampala Ballet and Modern Dance School and New York University.

³ The collaboration with the NCOD was initiated by Dr. Sylvia Nannyonga-Tamusuza, head of the dance section at the Makerere Music, Dance and Drama Department, who has a long standing relationship with Norwegian institutions.

Those of us located in the so-called „Third World“ find that the routes of cultural exchange are already mapped for us, even before we enter them (if of course we are invited to do so in the first place). Invariably, we meet through the patronage of First World economies, which have the necessary capital, infrastructure and technology to „map“ the world in the first place (Bharucha, 1997:33).

Discussions with participants and personal involvement in the abovementioned collaborative dance projects with New York University and the Norwegian College of Dance, respectively, reveal many difficulties and challenges in the execution of these projects. It is interesting to note how Susan Bamutenda, one of the Ugandan mentors in the New York University/Makerere University collaboration, emphasised „African solutions for African problems“, having just completed a two-week intercultural exchange programme (Bamutenda 2010: interview, 27 January). When asked how she feels about exchange programmes with collaborative partners from „first world“ nations, Bamutenda says:

We can get all these people coming and telling us what to do, but they do not understand the culture. And until you understand the culture...there's knowing the culture and there is understanding it (Bamutenda 2010: interview, 27 January).

In the case of dance, there are certain assumptions surrounding dance and the „its ability to speak across cultures using movement as common language“ (Shapiro, 2008:253). As the two examples presented in this paper will show, such assumptions of universality obscure the complexities of intercultural exchange. Shapiro writes that „housed in this assumption is the notion that when dance is experienced as a cross-cultural event we have created some form of positive partnership between differing peoples“ (Shapiro, 2008:254). Thus, rather than accepting these projects as inherently valuable simply because they are a site of cultural exchange, there is a need to critically question how trajectories of cultural exchange are indeed mapped out and interrogate their role in dance and dance exchange projects. Bharucha writes that

The number of workshops and papers and dance demonstrations does not prove that something truly meaningful is being exchanged between performers and scholars in Europe, America, and India. It is all very well to support the idea of workshops (as I do), but one needs to question what actually goes on within them (1984:259).

What is the value of these intercultural practices and who gains from them? Looking at, particularly, the impact of these cross-cultural projects on dance students at Makerere University, there seem to be an urgent need to constantly question „who is using whom“ and „who are we dancing for“ in these shared spaces.

Dance at Makerere University: an ‘academic’ pursuit

The study of dance at Makerere University⁴ is located in the Music, Dance and Drama Department which is, to date, the only tertiary institution offering a dance programme in Uganda. Although Makerere University has played a central role in the development of the performing arts in Uganda, the university’s „specific role has remained [largely] unexplored“ (Kaahwa, 2004:88).

The Music, Dance and Drama Department was founded in 1971⁵. This was one of the first occasions since Ugandan independence (1962) for the „serious study of these intertwined aspects of African cultures (Sicherman, 1995:25). Until then, the programmes offered at Makerere had a strong Eurocentric base. Guided by the prevailing European norms and under the guise of „universality“ there was little space for study of East African subjects and therefore Ugandan dance. Although the course offers contemporary dance⁶, which is a western originated theatre dance form, the focus of the academic programme is on traditional Ugandan dance and other African dance forms. However, in the study of dance, the emphasis at Makerere is clearly on the study of theoretical or so-called „academic“ subjects (implying that dance is not an academic subject), rather than on the practical aspect of dance study.

Both exchange programmes discussed here, have a strong practical dance component, although one notes the differences in the practical training of the Ugandan students on one hand, and the American and Norwegian students on the other. The dance programmes at NYU and the NCOD require that the body be trained to be strong, mobile and conversant in a variety of „dance techniques“, which one could argue is a western construct of how the dancing body should be trained. The call for proposals for this conference mentions the notion of the dancer as super athlete who has an elaborate training regimen which includes not only a variety of dance forms, but also a number of other activities, such as body

⁴ Makerere University was first established in 1922 as a technical high school. From about 1937, Makerere began to develop as an institution for higher education and, in 1949 it became a university college, affiliated to the University of London. There was considerable growth from the 1950s and in 1970 Makerere University became an independent institution of higher education. It has been considered one of the oldest and most prestigious universities in Africa.

⁵ Drama had been offered previously at the English Department in the faculty of Arts. Margaret McPherson, head of the English Department at this time, played an important role in establishing a specialised Department for the study of Music, Dance and Drama. The Music, Dance and Drama Department currently offers a range of courses in the performing arts, employing „an integrated approach to the performing arts of music, dance, drama, story telling, song, mime, and ritual“ (<http://www.mdd.mak.ac.ug>: Background: para.2).

⁶ Instead of the term „contemporary dance“ which is employed in South Africa, the term „modern dance“ is used at Makerere.

conditioning, to train the body to be as strong, as flexible and as mobile as possible. Within this western construct of what defines the dancing body, the dance students at Makerere University, could be seen, and *are* often perceived by outsiders, as lacking in „technical proficiency“. However, considering the athleticism needed to perform traditional Ugandan dances such as *Kizino*, one should question the notion of what is defined as „technically proficient“ and who defines „athletic“.

As part of the exchange with the NCOD, the Makerere dance students took a series of jazz dance classes and the Norwegian students in turn learnt *Kizino*. It is fascinating that the NCOD comes to Uganda to teach jazz dance, a form of dance that has its roots in Africa, is distinctly American, and, as David Savran writes:

Whatever it was, jazz could not be delimited or quarantined. It consistently muddled (and challenged) class-based, racial, and ethnic hierarchies-both musically and otherwise - and quickly became a touchstone for a wide range of social and cultural issues. Moreover, it was credited by both its supporters and detractors with being the first distinctively American art form to disseminate US style, culture, and modernity across the globe (Savran, 2006:460).

It is clear from this statement that jazz dance, like any other form of dance, has a distinct socio-cultural context. Moreover, the Makerere dance students wondered why they were not given the opportunity to learn the Norwegian traditional dance that the NCOD students perform in the final performance at the Main Hall at Makerere. It is also interesting to note that the teaching of *Kizino* to the Norwegian students, which is a traditional dance from Western Uganda, emphasised the historical and cultural context of the dance as well as its vocabulary, while the jazz classes were conducted without any theoretical or historical background of the dance form, and focussed strictly on learning movement, or „technique“. That „technique“ is a construct is further illustrated by one of the Makerere dance students, Guy Zzwa, when he says:

By the end of the week we had learnt part of the choreography for the final performance and we were certainly better technical dancers than were at the beginning of the week since this [the jazz class] was a technical class, all the movements gradually developed with time both technically and rhythmically. (Zzwa 2011: Project Evaluation, 14 March).

The implication of this is that the traditional dance classes the Makerere students take throughout the year are *not* „technical classes“, although Zzwa himself notes that the format of the classes is in fact not very different:

The teaching style in this class was no different from the one of the *Kizino* class being that most of us were taking such classes (jazz dance) for the first time, the teacher often introduced a movement phrase and then later broke it down to for us to learn; after a while she increased the speed and, voilà, the movements were there (Zzwa 2011: Project Evaluation, 14 March).

A valuable contribution of both collaborative programmes is, however, that they offer Makerere's dance students more opportunities to take practical dance classes. In Makerere's dance programme, little time is allotted to practical dance classes with students attending two three-hour sessions per week. There are no practical audition requirements for students to take up dance, with students at times not even selecting dance as a course themselves, but rather being assigned to the course by the university. While the MDD Department is forced to take whatever dance student they can get, students at both NCOD and NYU are required to audition to enter the programmes. The acronym MDD is still at times used derogatorily to refer to students of this department as „*Musiru Ddala Ddala*“ (very, very stupid). This certainly suggests that, with the exception of some individual scholars⁷ who value the performing arts, the broader society in Uganda do not yet recognise Music, Dance and Drama as areas worthy of study at the tertiary level. When asked why dance is not seen as a viable subject to study at Makerere University, Dr. Sylvia Nannyonga-Tamusuza, an ethnomusicologist and coordinator of the dance section at Makerere, states that

Ugandans don't see dance as something that one would need to study at the university level. People dance in primary school and if they have the talent they join a traditional dance troupe (Nannyonga-Tamusuza 2011: interview, 8 June).

The practical study of dance at Makerere is consistently under threat of disappearing due to the undervaluation dance and poor resources, and in fact, the dance section's low enrolment has led Makerere University to discontinue the dance degree as of August 2010. The degree may be reinstated because of the Norwegian collaboration which promises to bring in teachers, funds and opportunities for faculty members to travel to Norway, which likely suggests one of the most important contributions of such dance exchange projects with Makerere University.

A further explanation for the way in which dance at Makerere is valued, or rather, not valued, can be found in the broader Ugandan educational philosophy and Uganda's colonial

⁷These scholars include, for example, Rose Mbowa, Dr. Sylvia Nannyonga-Tamusuza and others.

inheritance which has had a profound effect on the position of the arts, and dance⁸ within the Ugandan education system. In terms of Ugandan attitudes to education, academic development with the concerted aim to pass exams is valued highly (Kajubi, 1991) to the detriment of, for example, educational approaches that aim to develop both mind and body. This advances the view that

Education is a cultural construct, so that the way that we teach is very much so dictated by the culture that you're living in and what is appropriate there (Damast & Brown 2010: interview, 17 January).

However, while this view was articulated by one of the facilitators in the New York University/Makerere University collaboration, the particular challenges encountered in both the exchanges interrogated in this paper, suggest that the collaborative parties at times showed little awareness and understanding of each other's different cultural and educational constructs.

The difficulties of collaboration

The collaborations with NYU and the NCOD have a similar format. Both projects span the spectrum of *dance training*: the university students learn from each other and are introduced to new and unfamiliar dance forms, such as Ugandan traditional dance or jazz dance; *dance teaching*: teaching teams of Ugandan and American or Norwegian students are formed to develop lesson plans that are co-taught to groups of Ugandan children; and, *dance performance*: the projects culminate in a collaborative performance by the university students and the children who perform newly created dances. The notion of sharing of each other's dances, the collaborative lesson planning and teaching format as well as the shared performance platform indicate the idea of using dance as a social leveller and a means of achieving integration as well as some kind of „common understanding“ among the participants. However, tensions among participating parties calls into question the extent to which integration or a „sharing“ is really able to take place in these „exchanges“. Any form of cultural exchange confronts complex issues of power and ownership. Bearing in mind the positioning of the collaborative parties, on one hand in Uganda, a „Third World“, „developing“ nation and on the other, in the US and Norway, both „First World“, affluent countries, Bharucha's question whether „economic inequalities can be included in one's respect for cultural difference“ (2000:2) is pertinent. A certain unease caused by economic

⁸ Rose Mbowwa writes that in the schools, which „aimed to civilise natives...playing the traditional drums and dancing were punishable with manual labour such as cutting grass, fetching water, and digging: it was also forbidden to communicate in native languages, which were derogatorily called „vernaculars““(1996:88).

differences appeared on multiple levels during the Study Abroad Programme. Notice Damast's comment:

[Our students] are going into debt for this trip, which I think our Ugandan teachers didn't realise...NYU doesn't pay for any of it. The students have to pay for it and I do think that's something our counterparts and our teachers don't think of here (Damast & Brown 2010: interview, 17 January).

However, while some of the Ugandan students may not have been aware of this, one could simultaneously argue that the possibility to access funds is far greater for a university student in the US than one in Uganda. Pribyl, the programme coordinator in Uganda, supports this viewpoint when she says:

If you're buying me dinner at the Fang Fang restaurant, I can't believe that you're a poor student in the US. I don't believe you! You've paid for your ticket over here...If the opportunity came to any Ugandan to go to New York if they could raise the money, they wouldn't be able to do it! (Pribyl 2010: interview, 25 January).

Other observations and interviews with participants suggest that this cultural imbalance and the power relations at play in the exchange programme are not only economically determined, but also historically and socio-politically. Some of the language in the interviews suggests certain naïve assumptions of intercultural exchange as „an overriding global phenomenon that transcends class, race and history“ (Bharucha, 2000:255). Just as Bharucha contests the notion of „free cultures“ (Bharucha, 2000), it can be argued that Makerere University's position as a university in a „Third World“, „developing“, „postcolonial“ nation constructs a particular relationship of power in relation to New York University, a private, affluent university from the „First World“, „superpower“, the United States of America.

In addition, the fact that the exchange programme with NYU is a NYU Study Abroad Programme makes the project accountable to New York University, both in terms of content and realisation. Similarly, the project between Makerere and the NCOD was funded by entirely by the NCOD. In addition, prior to the Norwegian students' visit to Kampala, teachers from NCOD travelled to Makerere to teach Afro-jazz and pedagogy, and Ann Kristin Norum, Vice Councillor of the NCOD, transferred funds to renovate the dance studio in the Department. Thus, despite Nannyonga-Tamusuza's assertion that „any collaborative project is like a marriage that requires negotiation and renegotiation“ (Nannyonga-Tamusuza 2011: interview, 8 June), both „collaborations“ demonstrate that the funding bodies make the final decisions and form programmes that they consider best suited to their own students. In what is a potentially fascinating meeting of cultural and dance contexts, one is led to question

how much room there really is for dialogue. Alfdaniels Mabingo, dance graduate of the MDD Department and one of the Ugandan participants in the collaboration with NYU, illustrates this when he says:

NYU take the lion's share of the benefits...They go back, they teach the dances they have learnt, they teach the songs, the choreography. They have dances to perform...The teachers from MDD are paid. So, we become employees, not partners (Mabingo 2010: interview, 22 January).

This imbalance of power is further exacerbated by the different motivations and expectations of the collaborative partners. For example, as the collaborative programme with NYU is an accredited Study Abroad Programme, the New York University students receive course credits and are graded for their work and the classes they teach. While the Makerere University students are required to submit a written report to their dance lecturer, the Programme does not count as a course per se and students are not marked for their participation and performance during the running of the two week collaboration. Pribyl who is aware of these multiple issues says in an interview that

It seems like the grade is high pressure for those New York students to take charge in the teaching and our students, they'll just back down, that's how they are. And maybe it's colonialism, maybe it's because [the New Yorkers] are louder, they talk faster and [the Ugandan students] think, ugh, you're at NYU, you must know more than me. You're a graduate student. I'm just an undergraduate student. I mean, I'm sure there's a lot of inferiority complex going on with the students as well (Pribyl 2010: interview, 25 January).

Susan Bamutenda, an arts facilitator with In Movement: Art for Social Change and one of the Ugandan mentors in the exchange programme, described how her mentoring process from the first time the programme took place to the latest 2010 exchange, has changed to counter some of this perceived inferiority:

I don't know whether it's a colonialist mentality, where [the Americans] say something and that's it, because this is the fourth NYU exchange I was part of. Before, there hasn't been a lot of discussing and planning together. [The Americans] will talk ... So this year the mentoring was more into „look, we need to hear you [Ugandans] speak, we need to be part of the discussion (Bamutenda 2010: interview, 27 January).

Similar challenges can be identified in the evaluation process of the NCOD/Makerere exchange programme. The Makerere lecturers, who have been involved in the teaching process with the NCOD students, are not invited to the Norwegian evaluation process as the students will be speaking Norwegian. However, both the Norwegian and Ugandan lecturers are at the evaluation with the Ugandan students. Statements made by the Ugandan dance students reveal the gaps in achieving any kind of shared expectations among the various

institutions. In addition, the words of Angela Namaganda, one of the Makerere dance students, illustrate the language barriers and cultural differences that need to be overcome during the week-long co-teaching with Norwegian students. She says:

The other challenge was about the lunch which consisted of bread. The fact I am used to heavy meals, I felt so bad on receiving bread, especially during the first two weeks, for lunch, but I got used to the situation. As it is said that, not all that glitters is gold, this project also had challenges that include language barriers, whereby Norwegian students were so much into speaking Norwegian as we also spoke Luganda sometimes. This at times created a gap between Ugandans and Norwegians (Namaganda 2011: Project Evaluation, 14 March).

All of the above mentioned issues contribute to some of the difficulties experienced in the lesson planning and teaching phases of both exchange programmes. Pribyl, who originated the idea of forming cross-cultural teaching partnerships when the programme first ran in 2007, conveys a different opinion after the 4th workshop in 2010 when she says:

I think that that whole idea of collaboration is great but I just don't think it works...I thought that at least it would take people out of their comfort zone...but it just doesn't quite seem to work. I think because their level of experience is so very different (Pribyl 2010: interview, 25 January).

To the contrary, the coordinators from NYU, Deborah Damast and Jenny Brown seem to view this collaborative process positively. While recognising some challenges, Damast says:

[Our students] definitely learned so much from their partners and from collaborating. That's a whole other level of collaboration, designing a lesson plan with someone from a different cultural background and different concept of pedagogy...(Damast & Brown 2010: interview, 17 January).

The above discussion illustrates how the New York University/Makerere University collaborative programme is, like any form of cultural exchange, subject to the power relations between the partners involved, even in the face of good intentions. Bharucha's point of view, that „in the so-called „Third World“...the routes of cultural exchange are already mapped for us“ (1997:33), in this context is again a reminder of global inequities.

Practice and theory

Despite the abovementioned difficulties of collaboration, both exchange programmes provide the opportunity to interrogate the intersections of dance training and dance teaching at Makerere University on one hand and NYU and the NCOD on the other. Unlike Makerere University's dance programme, the collaborative workshops have a strong emphasis on dance practice. The creative dance format used in the workshops with NYU incorporates a lot of group work, collaboration and problem-solving, which seems to indicate an emphasis on the *process* of dance-making. However, unlike the NYU approach to collaborative learning, the jazz classes taught by the

instructor from the NCOD, employed a “skill and drill” teaching strategy, a legacy that many dance teachers have inherited from their teachers in western dance technique. According to Ann Kristin Norum, the NCOD uses a didactic approach to the teaching of dance technique. The basic premise of the model is that learning is rational and contextual (Norum 2011: Teacher Workshop). In direct contrast, the MDD model for the teaching of dance „technique“ includes both theory and practice and is more fluid in its approach, often involving co-instruction and a communal approach to teaching and learning. Although one instructor may be in charge of teaching the dance, the musician and other members of the teaching staff often help break down the steps and join in with the dancing, whereas in a typical western style class where the teacher is the expert and lead the class from beginning to end. The MDD students notice that there is little time for questions during the jazz class that keeps everyone moving for the whole class. As Mabingo Afdaniels, who teaches at the MDD Department, states during the NCOD project evaluation:

I realised that I had to change my teaching strategy when the students did not bring notebooks to class and did not appear to be interested in learning the cultural context in which the dance was situated. I quickly changed my approach and had them up and moving for the entire two hours (Mabingo 2011: Project Evaluation, 12 April).

The core curriculum of the NCOD appears to be rooted in transmission ideology. The teachers from the school rely on „command-style teaching“ (Mosston, 1998). The focus of the program is to create proficient technical dancers who can also teach. Norum states that “a good dance teacher must be able to demonstrate good technique (Norum 2011: Teacher Workshop). In contrast the NYU Dance in Education program focuses on developing the individual through the art of dance and utilises creative movement as the foundation in the program. While students are encouraged to maintain and develop their technical skills, the students are encouraged to develop their artistry as well as their own personal voice through the art of dance (Damast 2005: Kaleidoscope Class, March 11). The teaching approach at the MDD Department of Makerere University, however, can be seen to be directly related to the context of dance in Uganda, where dance and community are inseparable. Even in urban centres where middle class Ugandans hire traditional dance troupes to perform at their weddings, it is not unusual to see guests join in the dances. Dance embodies tribe, nation and gender in its various manifestations. Rose Mbowa, former Head of the MDD Department at Makerere, writes that

Traditional performance presents itself as a communal form of cultural practice that is highly structured and formalised and yet, open to improvisation, spontaneous intervention and general participation (Mbowa, 2000:204).

The Ugandan dances taught to visiting students are thus community dances that require the group to ensure a successful performance. In contrast, it could be argued that western dance forms are often based on individual reinvention within a particular style. The classes taught by the NCOD instructors are varied and increase in complexity throughout the four week workshop. However, reviewing the final collaborative performances, one notes that the dances, particularly those performed by the Ugandan children who participate in the creative dance teaching project, display a lack of variety and complexity. In performance, the adults' dances often look better rehearsed and display a high energy, whereas the children's dances (which were performed by both the children and adults) are generally monotonous and lacking in energy and dynamics. Considering that most of the children are in fact skilled performers of traditional Ugandan dance, it raises questions as to why when they were performing creative dance, the movement tends to look non-descript and „murky“ (Brown & Damast 2010: interview, 17 January). Judith Lubega, a Makerere dance lecturer comments: „our Ugandan children seem to do better when they are moving all their body parts at once and not their body parts separately“ (Tusiime 2011: interview, 19 May). The movement preferences of the Ugandan children are not exploited and challenged during the workshops that emphasize a western approach to teaching both technique and creative movement. Although the NYU students are briefed on the movement and learning styles of the Ugandan children, the NCOD students seem less equipped to incorporate these preferences into their teaching approach. Talking specifically about the collaboration with NYU, Pribyl states that

Out of all this mix, the people that get the most out of [the collaboration] are the grown-ups [the New York University students] that learn the Ugandan dance and the grown-ups [the Makerere University students] that learn Deborah [Damast]'s dance. Why? Because I think that when you do movement that is not your own style, you learn a lot about yourself...[With] the kids it's just like „oh, you're so cute, let's take a picture“ and we don't really get to know them, see what they can really do or push them in any particular way (Pribyl 2010: interview, 25 January).

The experiences of the adults, who are challenged to learn each other dance forms, seem quite different. Makerere dance student, Dennis Kasamba, comments on the work „Salsaganda“, a new dance work performed and co-created by Ugandan and Norwegian students saying:

The dance was interesting because it involved us and the Norwegian students. The class comprised of a warm-up, moving across the floor, creating phrases and then putting them together. Professor Jill's way of composition/creation involved even us the students;...we created material under her supervision and

then she added them onto her material. Looking at Jill's way of composition, she worked with the dancers based on their technical ability (Kasamba 2011: Project Evaluation, 14 March).

In this complex work of cultural appropriation and negotiation is it possible that trying on a new movement style and working with people from other cultures can help us to understand ourselves?

Conclusion

Despite the many challenges encountered in both exchange programmes, one can also note a number of benefits. One of the contributions is the notion that these programmes aid in demystifying university by letting children learn from and collaborate with university students. In addition, the coordinators of the programmes, for instance, express the view that only do their students gain from the experience, but the programmes add value to their respective departments as a whole. Pribyl, coordinator of the NYU exchange at Makerere articulates the view that a partnership with New York University adds credibility to the Music, Dance and Drama department's position within the larger structure of Makerere University. She says:

The reason to get Makerere involved was to help sustain the dance programme. To say that we have this project going on, you [Makerere] shouldn't really get rid of us...That's always a threat and so to have a real collaboration or partnership, whatever you want to call it, I thought would help us (Pribyl 2010: interview, 25 January).

This view is echoed clearly by Pribyl's NYU counterpart Deborah Damast which, perhaps importantly, does highlight one of the shared experiences of this exchange programme⁹. As such, one could argue that the programme plays an important role towards validating dance and dance education as viable areas of study within tertiary institutions. Similarly, the month-long collaboration has the approval the Vice Chancellor of Makerere. Although the university had abolished the dance degree only months earlier due to low enrolment, it seems that dance at Makerere is now in a period of resurgence, a kind of renaissance. A brightly coloured banner, designed, printed and carried to Uganda from Norway, hangs from the Faculty of Arts building saying „Let Them Dance“. Judith Lubega Tusiime a Makerere dance lecturer reflects on the Norwegian project stating:

⁹ In an interview with Deborah Damast in 2010 she says: „...at NYU, we're always the underdog. Dance Education is always the last to get anything. We're always having things cut, we're always fighting, fighting, fighting. We just lost a studio to music technology!“ (Damast & Brown 2010: interview, 17 January).

It seems that the visitors gain a lot from the experience of coming to Uganda. We Ugandans don't even think about travelling, unless we are going upcountry to visit relatives. What I can say about interacting with people from other cultures is that it gives us (Ugandans) an opportunity to take a closer look at ourselves (Tusiime 2011: interview, 19 May).

This paper aimed to investigate and challenge notions of the trained dancing body from a western construct. However, it is still unclear if, through the exchange programmes at Makerere University conducted with New York University and the Norwegian College of Dance, dominant perceptions of the dancing body were altered in any way. There are many more areas to interrogate in these western hierarchies that determine what the dancing body should be and who, finally, we are dancing for.

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Samantha Prigge-Pienaar

Complexity and emergence: methods for modeling the dynamic systems of physicality and performance

Three of the questions posed by the Confluences Conference caught my attention:

- *Is cultural specificity a useful indicator in assessing Dance in the post-colonial performance arena?*
- *Is there a space to share the diversity of human stories?*
- *What are the multiple roles for dance educators, administrators, pedagogues, teachers et al for the range of bodies with whom we interact and the multiple needs of these dancers and athletes?*

Posing questions often assumes or encourages finding answers through polarity: the answer is either this, or that. This is the context in which scientific advancements and academic research are most commonly situated. Training performance and physicality demands a different approach – one that is capable of encompassing the multivalent characteristics of essentially phenomenological processes. Recent interdisciplinary research into mind-body evolution has given rise to some methods or metaphors for understanding performance and physicality in a way that simultaneously supports multiplicity and specificity, diversity and uniformity, commonality and individuality. These metaphors do not offer support of potential opposites through compromise, hierarchy or contradiction but through the far more dynamic and subtle processes of complexity and emergence. Corning (2002: 5) states that “complexity theory gave mathematical legitimacy to the idea that processes involving the interactions among many parts may be at once deterministic yet for various reasons unpredictable” and describes emergence as “a legitimate, mainstream concept” that has “allowed scientists to model the interactions within complex, dynamic systems in new and insightful ways”. This paper will consider the role that complexity theory can play in effectively re-addressing the perceived dichotomies, contradictions and divergences facing contemporary dance and movement educators.

Complexity and emergence: methods for modeling the dynamic systems of physicality and performance

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As the questions highlighted for this conference suggest, academics, educators and practitioners of contemporary performing arts, most specifically in urbanized, westernized contexts, share an environment of perceived dichotomies, contradictions and divergences. They are expected to assume multiple roles addressing multiple needs across multiple platforms and within multiple contexts. A keynote address by Prof Kerri-Lee Krause (University of Stellenbosch News, 2011), Director of the Institute for Higher Education at Griffith University in Brisbane, at the recent conference on the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning at the University of Stellenbosch highlighted this:

The role of academics at universities has changed immensely over the past years, so much so that lecturers today have to play a wide variety of roles...Academic work has become fragmented, and academics have numerous roles to play – not just research. You have a disciplinary identity, but also institutional and corporate identities.

Krause commented optimistically that this diversification could present opportunities for public scholarship which might entail a “responsibility to focus research on social, civic, economic, educational, artistic and cultural well-being of communities beyond the academy” (ibid). A list such as this one intimidates me. And not because I do not feel capable of addressing each and every one of those responsibilities – but more because of what the grammatical structure in which it has been offered suggests – namely the isolated focus and sequential accomplishment of a list of diverse and specialised topics or areas of interest (see Figs.1-8). Nowadays that innocent preposition of the English language - “and” – elicits immediate anxiety in me, especially if it occurs in a sentence or paragraph that also contains words such as “multicultural”, “multimedia” or “multiplicity” – in fact, “multi-anything”. What I would prefer to do, of course, is to rearrange the list into something more simultaneous and dimensional (see Fig. 9) or (see Fig.10) or (see Fig.11) to more

accurately represent what I sense/feel my understanding and practice of these isolated units already is. I suppose my anxiety is similar to that felt by my students when I pin a list of criteria about an assessment of a performance task onto the noticeboard and they suddenly experience doubts about their understanding of, and ability to do, what they have been organically and simultaneously responding to over weeks.

In **Physical Theatres: A Critical Reader**, Murray and Keefe (2007:3) explicitly state that: “physicality is too often relegated to a mere supporting role to the word”. In many cases this hierarchy has been addressed by swinging the pendulum and foregrounding physicality at the expense of the verbal. As Murray and Keefe (ibid:2) state, more recent trends in books articulating the theory, history and practice of theatre and performance have attempted to redress this apparent divergence between word and image by acknowledging the “prevalence of the plural”. In their own reflection of these trends, Murray and Keefe (ibid:3) have simultaneously published two volumes “to unravel and map out that complex network of propositions, actions, events and dispositions which arguable constitute – and have constituted – the landscape of *physical theatres/the physical in theatres*”.

As their connected volumes evidence, directors, choreographers, actors, dancers, educators and researchers have been searching for alternative methods of observing, training and articulating physicality in performance throughout the 20th and into the 21st century motivated, as Ana Sanchez-Colberg (2007:21-25) sums up, on “a mistrust...of language which aims to articulate, and thus contain, universal truths without questioning the material practices which gave rise to that language...”. And as I sit/stand here, reading/hearing/interpreting my own words, I become aware of how insistent the notions of linearity, opposition, contrast, contradiction, sequence are in our language of academic discourse. But what I would like to address in this paper is not simply the presence of words, but emphasis on the word; in other words, the tendency towards valuing singularity and specialization that is often implicit in language construction.

In the same way that Murray & Keefe (2007) refer to *physical theatres/the physical in theatres* as an attempt to reflect plurality within the predominantly singular frame of semiotic signification, I would like to offer an alternative to the potential opposition

set up with the binary phrase “performance and physicality” by referring to *the physicality of performance/performance as physicality*. Embedding these key terms in this way is a grammatical/literary, and therefore philosophical and ideological, attempt to represent their combined independence/dependence and capture their simultaneity, in a form of communication that tends towards the singular and sequential. In essence, it is an attempt to use the principles and patterns of embodiment to observe and articulate embodiment.

Ervin Lazlo (1996:2), in his discussion on “a new view of the world...taking shape in the minds of advanced scientific thinkers the world over”, suggests that “until very recently, contemporary science was shaped by a mode of thinking which placed rigorous detailed knowledge above all other considerations”. In other words, knowledge should proceed in depth first. Some scientists now recognize the challenges of this ideal towards specialisation: “it is no exaggeration that geologists and biologists have difficulties understanding each other even when their interests are relatively close. And what goes for specialized disciplines goes also for individual workers within the disciplines” (ibid). So if specialization is no longer the most highly revered form of knowledge, then does this suggest that breadth of knowledge – less detail but more diversity – should be valued? Based on observation, this would seem to be the case in educational contexts where cultural, language, stylistic and ideological diversity are prevalent (or it might be argued even necessary, as in the humanities) as attempts have been made to counter the consequences of speciality barriers through diversification. This has meant more extensive teams of implicit or explicit expectations that students and practitioners will expose themselves to a multitude of global possibilities, and reflect this exposure in their training, research and practice. But throwing “and” between numerous fragments of information or experience, no matter how close they are in content, purpose or consequence, will not automatically or inevitably connect the dots, and create a coherent understanding of reality.

The embodiment of specialisation and diversification embedded in language has become the dominant method of organisation on many levels, from the individual and social, through to the institutional and national. Our own movement and physical theatre training program at the University of Stellenbosch Drama Department has

over the last few years and at various stages - in response to pressures to prepare student performers for the „industry“, and to equip them with the cross-critical outcomes necessary for lifelong learning, and to assimilate methods and approaches from around the world, and...and...- offered: contact improvisation, yoga, Alexander technique, Feldenkrais, mime, clowning, release techniques, contemporary dance techniques, improvisation. If each of these is perceived as a specialised method, and the training program organised simply as a frame in which to contain them, then the list of possible specialisations to include becomes endless...and the organisational elements (staffing, space, outlines, criteria) for these specialisations becomes equally endless. As a practitioner and educator I either have to become a master of many (forms, styles, approaches) or a master of many (staff members or teachers that are masters of many).

This “patchwork approach” (ibid:3) borne of diversification is what gives rise to contradiction or divergence – “gaps in knowledge” or “isolated patterns”. In psychiatric terms this is referred to as multiple personality disorder: a complex, chronic, dissociative psychopathology characterised by disturbances of memory and identity...its distinguishing feature is the ongoing coexistence of relatively consistent but alternating subjectively separate entities (Kluft, 1991:161). In the context of performing arts training and practice diversification elicits a similar personality disorder: “drilling holes in the wall of mystery that we call nature” without “connecting the probes” (Lazlo, 1996:3). In this interpretation, diversification creates complication but not necessarily complexity.

Complexity is a familiar word in the English language: it has been used to describe personalities, buildings, organizational structures, workflows, ecosystems and organisms. In the last three decades the term has been reframed by its emergence in the scientific context of Systems Theory. Systems theory was introduced in 1977 by physicist Ilya Prigogine whose interest in the evolution of life led to a scientific discovery with the capacity to be applied to “every open system in the universe, whether a chemical system...a germinating seed, a highway system, a corporation, a social system, a star, or an individual human being” (Harris, 2007:50). Emergence and complexity are central to systems theory. A key quality of complexity theory is the dynamic relationship between parts (to each other and to the whole) which

scientists have observed gives rise to a potentially divergent or incongruous view of reality. As Corning (2002:5) states: “complexity theory gave mathematical legitimacy to the idea that processes involving the interactions among many parts may be at once deterministic yet for various reasons unpredictable” and describes emergence as “a legitimate, mainstream concept” that has “allowed scientists to model the interactions within complex, dynamic systems in new and insightful ways”.

Complexity and emergence are key concepts of recent research into the evolution of the human mind-body. The mosaic principle, referred to by Biologist Chapouthier (2009), explains that two basic phenomena provide the keys to any evolution towards complexity - juxtaposition and integration - and that they are involved in a constant process of coinciding and combining. Bill Harris (2007:53), founder of Holosync, refers to the learning capacity of the human body-mind as an open dissipative system which is able to tolerate vast amounts of disparate input from the environment without losing its inherent stability and order: “the greater the complexity of the system, the greater the amount of entropy [inefficient energy] it can dissipate” (ibid).

The most significant aspect of complexity theory is its reference, in scientific terms, to what poets, visionaries and artists have intuited, sensed, experienced and explored for generations/ages– the ambiguity and paradox at the core of human experience. Viewing knowledge generation from the perspective offered by systems theory challenges theories that propose learning to be a product of critical episodes, and knowledge to be a fixed or static entity. Physicist David Deutsch (1997:16) explains that increasing specialization following from increasing knowledge (exposure and diversification) is common in the science of medicine, but that “the opposite, unifying tendency is also present, and is becoming stronger”. Deutsch (ibid) argues that understanding is based on “the overall balance between these two opposing effects of the growth of knowledge: the increasing *breadth* of our theories, and their increasing *depth*. Breadth makes it harder; depth makes it easier”. Research also suggests that some systems are able to integrate greater amounts of input than others; and that complexity does not necessarily equate to chaos or lack of coherence, and simplicity does not necessarily equate to lack of variation or depth.

To counter the potentially negative effects of diversification on performing arts training, without ignoring the value, depth and individuality of approaches and techniques from cultures around the world, Eugenio Barba and the International School of Theatre Anthropology (ISTA) study “the technical basis of the performer in a transcultural dimension” (Odin Teatret, 2010). In other words, rather than meeting the demands of diversity and complexity by training through the imitation and representation of aesthetic styles, physical techniques or cultural forms (Odin Teatret, 2010), the ISTA practices a particular view of learning that favours the understanding, application and embodiment of principles and parameters.

As practitioners are aware of embodiment themselves, Murray and Keefe (2007:2) hint at the subtle distinction between complexity and complication:

The impulse to acknowledge, and indeed celebrate, complexity is not a perverse desire to complicate for the sake of complication, far rather a recognition that histories, influences and theatre makings are rarely ever simple and linear. To pretend that they are is alluring, but does little to take us towards an understanding of how theatre works in all its creative and often frustrating „messiness“.

Complexity and emergence offer metaphors for understanding, and methods for observing, practicing and articulating, the *physicality of performance/performance as physicality* in a way that simultaneously supports multiplicity and specificity, diversity and uniformity, commonality and individuality. These concepts support potential opposites less obviously through the explicit acts/structures of compromise, contrast or contradiction by offering a dimensional frame or lens of perception that allows perceived contradictions and divergences to dissolve/dissipate at the same time as they come more sharply into view. This is the unconscious/organic methodology of evolution: an immersion in the physical necessarily values the individual [hu]man as the ultimate agency in whatever [hu]mankind and society can collectively accomplish (Dewey, 2004: 3).

Does this sound paradoxical? Indeed, paradox is the essential/foundational characteristic necessary for understanding in the modern scientific context. Paradox and ambiguity are no longer the playing grounds of the poet or visionary alone, but belong also to world of the scientist and practitioner. Complexity and emergence offer practitioners appropriate portals to enter and navigate the complex territory that

is *the physicality of performance/performance as physicality* on their own terms, according to their own material conditions, without dictating/predetermining the „look and feel“ of the outcome. As Sanchez-Colberg (2007:23) points out, practitioners truly concerned with discovering the „language beyond words“ need to discover “a metaphysics of the theatre via an immersion in the physical”. This suggests working on the level of essence/principle rather than technique/form – not only in the context of production (what the final performance looks like/how it is received), but more importantly in the contexts of observing, assessing, articulating, preparing, and documenting physicality. If the condition or state of the individual person, methodology or discourse discussing or describing *physicality of performance/performance as physicality* continues to honor the singular, linear world of semiotics, signification and narrative then the power of the very thing being witnessed or described or taught vanishes...

Conclusion

Research and academic enquiry are founded on the quest to further knowledge, to advance human understanding. The methodology of enquiry often tends towards the selection and isolated scrutiny of quantifiable units. The act of posing questions often assumes or encourages finding answers through polarity: the answer is either this, or that. This is the context in which scientific advancements and academic research have most commonly been situated – especially when the spoken or written word is elevated to a singular status.

The challenge then for those suffering from multiple personality disorder in the context of the performing arts is to replace „techniques“ with *systems*: specific technical principles may be fundamentally supported and adhered to in a system, but the qualitative, contextual methods of interpreting, experiencing and expressing these remains *emergent*. As Berteau *et al* (2009) state: “It is a fundamental characteristic of complex systems that the interplay of the various elements brings unique additional capability”. For those truly concerned with retaining the essence of physicality and performance this means discovering, interacting with, refining their methods of observation, reflection, articulation and practice of *physicality in performance/performance as physicality* to embody an essentially emergent (qualitative and novel) quality whilst operating within institutionalized structures

that are fundamentally organized according to quantitative outcomes, objectives, timelines and assessment criteria. This requires holding the simultaneous responsibility of scientist and poet – able to break a complex phenomenon into detailed, quantifiable units whilst simultaneously shattering the illusions of security, stability, self-containment and [time] that these units promise.

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No simple answers: A holistic approach to the issues concerning obesity and African dance

In the past few decades, South Africa has witnessed an increase in obesity (Goedecke et al 2006). It occurred from young to old, female to male, black to white and urban to rural - no group of people has been exempt from this phenomenon. Trends cannot be pinpointed to any single cause, although the effects of this health condition are serious and diverse. Research indicates that obesity is preventable: that there are several ways to combat and reduce its development. One of the most effective ways to reduce the onset of obesity is through regular exercise. One suggested activity for black South Africans is to participate in dance, particularly traditional, black South African social dances, which could be offered to the public in a studio setting or community halls as an aerobic activity geared to fighting and diminishing obesity. This paper begins with an exploration of what “traditional, black South African social dance” actually is, and whether its very nature precludes it from use as aerobic exercises. I then proceed to de-problematise South African traditional dance in a South African context by differentiating between “rural” and “urban” black South African dance forms, the position of dance in each context and questioning the use of either in an exercise regime. Lastly I examine obesity-related health disorders in urban areas and offer solutions and interventions in this regard.

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This paper begins with an exploration of what traditional, black South African social dance actually is, and whether its very nature precludes it from use as aerobics exercise. I then proceed to de-problematise South African traditional dance in a South African context by differentiating between rural and urban, black South African dance forms, the position of dance in each context and questioning the use of either in an exercise regime. Lastly, I examine obesity-related health disorders in urban areas and offer solutions and interventions in this regard.

The question of whether South African social traditional dances should be used as aerobics by black South Africans is a complicated one which elicits many emotional responses. The definition of social traditional dance is explained by Welsh in a manner we can all understand.¹

Many „purist“, or should one say conservative people, believe strongly that the use of traditional, black, South African social dance as aerobics would be disrespectful and

¹She states: “Social traditional dances generally and explicitly imply a consistency that has its own boundaries and parameters. Implied in the definition of social tradition are the requisite confines of the rules and norms of that society that the art form manifests” (Welsh, 1996:178).

demeaning and would negate the significance of these dances which represent different cultures. Purist societies feel threatened because the trivialization of dance is happening again: first it was for the purpose of entertainment on a Western stage and now for the reason of fitness. I use the word „culture“, in the sense of to “inhabit, cultivate, protect, honor with worship” (Williams, 1983: 87). The word is one of the most complicated in the English language:

This is so partly because of its intricate historical development in several European languages, but mainly because it has now come to be used for important concepts in several distinct intellectual disciplines and in several distinct and incompatible systems of thoughts” (Williams, 1983: 87).

Another viewpoint is that limiting the use of traditional, black, South African social dance would separate it from the people and restrict its growth. Thus, within the dance community at least the issues of authenticity, preservation and trivialization are still relevant and it remains imperative to consider all sides of the debate before exploring the possibility of using traditional social dances in the domain of aerobics. Purists argue that there is more to traditional dance than exercise. Discussions on traditional South African social dance occur within a framework where the concept of African-ness is still being evaluated. In the present, post- and neo-colonial era, negotiations of African cultural identities are often informed by the summoning of the pre-colonial past. Bhavnani *et al*, explain identity as:

any individual can identify themselves on a myriad of levels: in a personal sense, a social sense, on an ethnic, cultural, spiritual or religious basis and by way of their moral values. As a consequence, identities can be seen as flexible or even conflicting. (1994)

Many South African government agencies have made great efforts in forging a national cultural revival. This revival of traditional dance forms is taken quite seriously as conducive to the process of psychological decolonization, for example, the institution of Heritage Day, annually celebrated on 24 September. It is a moot point that the historical contextualization of traditional, black, South African social dance usually serves the intentional, or unintentional, politicization of the art form today. This is explained in following sections of the paper.

Obesity has already been identified as a problem that can be solved by promoting a healthier lifestyle, including proper diet and exercise such as dance. The latter poses

another major concern regarding the possible trivialization of a culture that has suffered the indignity of subjugation and disrespect under colonial rule. However, the fact that traditional South African social dance forms have a history of functionality arguably bears upon the implications of limiting its use in a present urban context.

Setting the Stage or the “Gym”: African Dance (History)

Scholars have grappled with the notion of a primitive aspect to South African life as perceived in our social/traditional dance discipline for the greater part of the 20th century. It has become increasingly important to understand what traditional, black, South African social dance means in an age of global modernity, where cultures, traditions, art forms, values and information are constantly exchanged through the media and other lines of communication across the world. First theories in the discourse were created with the scholarship of European and Euro-American historians in contact with what they termed the “primitive dance[s]” of pre-colonial “Africans” (Castaldi, 2006:35). According to Hanna, in *Africa’s New Traditional Dance*, „primitive“ was based on fear of the unknown by Westerners under the dictatorship of a Eurocentric mind-set that saw African dance as uninhibited, sexual and therefore vulgar (1996, Foulkes 1999, Askew 2003).

I place “Africans” in inverted commas because the term “African” denoting an individual living on the continent known as Africa, (today) is a construct that was applied to black people on the continent by Europeans.

There are different scholarly discourses around the use of the term “African”. Although there is the notion of sub-Saharan Africa², I am in favour of utilizing “African” because of the popularity of the word and its ancient usage. Owen Alik Shahadah agrees with Fanon by saying that Sub-Saharan Africa is the term used to describe those countries of the African continent that are not considered part of North Africa. In 19th century Europe and the Western World, the area was sometimes

²According to Fanon, “[t]he Sub-Saharan is rooted in racism, which in part assumes that a little sand is an obstacle for African people. This barrier of sand hence confines the notion of some invisible border which divides the North of Africa from the South. This barrier of sand hence confines/confined Africans to the bottom of this make-believe location, which exists neither politically or physically.” (Fanon, 2005: 29).

referred to as “Black Africa”. “Africa as a whole was commonly known as „the dark continent“ a term that was usually intended to refer to the Sub-Saharan region” (Brijnath, 2007: 371). This was partly due to the skin colour of its inhabitants and partly because much of it had not been fully explored or mapped by Westerners. According to these scholars these terms are now obsolete and often considered to be pejorative.

In the eyes of many predominantly white anthropologists and ethnologists theorizing on South African traditional social dance during the colonial era, “the ability to dance [became] a kind of litmus test about a people’s revolutionary development” (Castaldi, 2006: 35). According to the writings of these analysts and the testimonies of missionaries and colonial officers: “dance establishes the animality of the primitive because dance itself is interpreted as an instinctual reaction, springing from the body and by-passing the mind” (ibid). In Curt Sachs’ *World History of the Dance*, (1937) quoted by Castaldi, the “mastery” of “pygmoid San men” in the field of dance not only justified their conquering by the white man; their entrancement is the cause of their inability to defend themselves and a testament to their low evolutionary status” (Castaldi, 2006: 39). Clearly, early South African traditional dance theories were entrenched in a white, colonial paradigm that claimed the superiority of Western culture and intelligence over the savage, primordial “African” and reducing dance to mere “moto reflex... uncontrollable hopping and hand gestures” (Castaldi, 2006: 39). Interestingly, if we perceive South Africa traditional dance as a collection of random muscular movements requiring no prior thought or astuteness, it is quite obvious that its use as aerobics exercise is acceptable. According to the *Oxford Dictionary*, aerobics is defined as a method of “physical exercise for producing beneficial changes in the respiratory and circulatory system by activities which require only a modest increase in oxygen intake and so can be maintained” [http://dictionary.oed.com/cgi/entry/50003544?single=1&query_type=word&queryword=aerobics&first=1&max_to_show=10]. (Accessed February 8 -2011)]

However, this biased perspective changed with the increased awareness that South African social traditional dance is more than „primitive dance“, as defined by the

colonials and the realization that the multitude of dance styles from ethnic³ groups and countries across the continent comprise particular disciplines.

In addition, Pearl Primus in *Africa traditional dance: An Artistic, Historical and Philosophical Inquiry* 1963; Jackson et al 2003 explains in the same breath that dance in Africa is not a separate art, but a part of the whole complex of living and dance is only a part of the whole ceremony and it is filled with supernatural powers. Then that means South African traditional social dance is not merely a collection of physical movements, but life expressed in dramatic terms; Opuku (1967) and Owusu-Frempong (2005) explain such claims in a deeper context. The dance is not simply a fictional performance removed from the audience as one would find in Western theatrical convention, but it is a living, breathing expression of social communication and ritualistic ceremony.

In many African cultures, dance is seen as a gift from ancestors. Dance scholar Robert Thompson writes that South African traditional dance - and art - can be defined as “social acts of filiations, extending human consciousness into the past and the time of the founding fathers. It is essentially a timeless tradition, shaping ultimate values.” (Thompson, 1974: 28) Jackson et al (2003) comment on the same context that traditional dance is about shaping the ultimate values and thus, dance, or history, should be treated with the utmost respect. There is an element of formalized religion in South African traditional social dance that commands reverence and the understanding that, as one participates in or engages with different forms of dance, one is involved with a greater “dynamic”, “harmonious” and even supernatural form of ritualistic social interaction (Primus, 1963: 5) and Jackson et al, (2003) with the latest interpretation that there is a form of spirituality that takes place and dynamic that goes with co-ordination which is required. In the poetry that is Primus’ writing, she describes the spirituality of South African traditional dance as follows: “The dance is strong magic. The dance is spirit. It turns the body to liquid steel. It makes it vibrate like a guitar. The body can fly without wings. It can sing without voice and dance is strong magic and life” (Primus 1962; 5). Apter explains similarly, but within

³Ethnicity refers to a collection or nation of people who are more than a mere collective group, but an aggregate consciously related by common origins and shared experiences. Incorporated into a group’s ethnicity is a distinct language, religious belief and political institution which are passed down to following generations. (Cashmore, 1984).

a Haitian aspect, that African dance is harmonious, graceful and it embraces the spiritual being (2002: 242).

South African traditional social dance is also deeply representative, with many dances choreographed with the specific intent of communicating a particular idea, or depicting an element of social or religious life. In his essay, *African traditional dance: Bridges to humanity*, Tracy D. Snipe states that although “South African traditional dance may be entertaining, it functions primarily as a cultural and artistic expression of the community; in Africa the notion of art for the sake of art is a foreign concept” (2004: 63). Each movement of the dance is not simply say a rotation of the limbs, but becomes a symbolic representation or mimicry of customary activity. Doris Green gives a descriptive example of how dances are inspired by daily existence as in the fishermen’s dance: the *Rawar Masunta* from the Birnin Kebbi of the Sokoto State of Nigeria; fishing and farming are the primary means of making a living in this area and thus many of their dances concern fishing and farming. She notes:

In the fishermen’s dance „Rawar Masuta“, women who claim descendency from fishing families perform this dance. The women hold cloth in their hands, this cloth represents the fishing net which is cast into the water. In order to cast the net successfully, a certain stance is developed which is the stance used in the dance. The body is carried in a forward high position and the hands imitate the collecting of fish. The hands are thrust into the water, forward low position of the arms, and slow drawn to the waist, trapping the fish between the hands and body as they are gathered (Green, 2004: 17).

I have thus far established that South African traditional dance carries important ritualistic and communicative significance, which completely negates its purpose when lost or ignored. It is also important to understand that the way in which South African traditional dances are practiced is integral to the communication of their meaning. This includes the setting, costumes, music and language. Primus asserts that one “cannot really speak of African traditional dance without at least a few words about costume, because it show cases the aesthetic part of dance, it show cases the timbre and add to the feel of the movement” (1963: 8-9). Additionally, Apter (2002; 234) and Owusu-Frempong (2005: 87) explain that music and language are also integral to the performance of South African traditional dance. Green posits, “African

traditional dance is not like any other form of dance. Its relationship to music, thereby language, is what chiefly distinguishes it from any other art form” (2004: 18).

It would be difficult, and far beyond the requirements of an exercise regimen, to translate this all-encompassing notion of dance performance into an aerobics context. Obviously, the very nature of South African traditional dances require they occur within specific contexts, with specific purposes conveying specific meanings, with specific accoutrements utilized to ensure that the practice is as precise as possible. Some dances are so sacred that only certain members of ethnic groups who created the dances have witnessed them, particularly the ritualistic ones. Thus, one can hardly expect these to translate into a gym context. To remove essential meaning from the movement one would reduce millennia-long traditions of art, development and social behaviour to a mere flexing of muscles. Without the music, the correct language, the proper costume and setting and, most importantly, the ritualistic and symbolic significance at the forefront of the performance of South African traditional dance it ceases to be the very thing it purports to be.

Transformation of urbanised dance and township

I have not yet examined the complexities of urban and rural South African social traditional dance. The next part of this paper will explore specifically the significance of dance in urban, black South Africa. Much of the previous discussion still stands when one speaks of the significance of traditional social dance in most of the rural areas in South Africa. Emphasis of the significance and deeply-rooted social, religious and cultural implications of dance performance is a feature of traditional dance in the rural⁴ areas of South Africa, as well as most other cultures across the continent.

It is important not to fall into the trap of believing that traditional social dances have been in a state of inertia since some romanticised, primitive age of antiquity. Instead, as Sarah Rubidge states, “the forms of expression through which cultural mores and

⁴ Rural areas, also referred to as „the country“ or „the country side,“ are sparsely settled places away from the influence of large cities. According to Blakely (1984), major features previously used to define rural include simple life, agriculture, smallness, homogeneity and dullness. Such areas may be distinguished from more intensively settled urban and suburban areas, and unsettled lands such as the outback or wilderness. People in rural areas live in towns, villages, on farms and in other isolated areas. Rurality can also be determined by population density; rural areas have an agricultural character, remote communities, and limited or absent public transport, usually requiring people to use their own cars, but if this is impractical they may walk, cycle, or ride a horse or a donkey.

perspectives are articulated are fluid and not static; social traditional dances are always developing” (Rubidge, 1998: 3). The significance of South African social traditional dance in urban areas is of course no less important than in the rural areas. However, dance does inhabit a different space in the progression of quotidian existence, due (largely) to the interactions of different cultures and the residual political, socio-economic and psychological effects of colonialism. South Africa is “the most urbanized and industrialized state of the continent and ... has had the most consistent governmental control of its development” (Bloom, 1964: 347). Pick and Cooper explain, by mentioning the fact that the discovery of gold in South Africa in 1872 and 1886, its townships⁵ have been host to scores of migrant workers not only from the hinterland of the country, but from as far as the Congo, in search of work in the city (1997:27). During the last decades of the 20th century, „black“ South Africans have been drawn to urban⁶ areas, commonly referred to as „townships“, by the promise of higher general standards of education, better housing and employment opportunities, the possibility of piped water and decent sanitation services and food subsidies (Louw, 2004: 110).

The apartheid⁷ government followed the trend of many colonial governments in attempting to “contain and retard urbanization for ideological and political reasons” (Bloom, 1964: 347). The stability of the apartheid regime relied on the ability of the government to restrict the formation of a substantial “urban proletariat”, but despite “intensive pressure, urbanization has spread consistently in extent and influence” (Bloom, 1964: 348). The result of this urbanization has been the increasing presence of extremely diverse populations from across the country and in the townships; this multicultural explosion has led to the creation of an urban dance culture unique to the landscape of urban South Africa. The dynamic interactions of these different cultures have given rise to many dances synonymous with contemporary South African

⁵ The allure of a better lifestyle is often romanticized, as living conditions are very poor: migrant workers have been forced into exemplified, horrible living conditions, and so-called „housing“ frequently consists of structures improvised from old pieces of iron, sacking, wooden poles, mud, and anything else that comes to hand.

⁶ Urbanisation in a South African context is seen as the movement of people from rural to so-called „developed“ cities. The rapid expansion of this process in the 19th century was due to the development of the mining industry, railways and national economy.

⁷ Apartheid was a social and political policy of racial segregation and discrimination enforced by a white minority government in South Africa from 1948 until 1994. The term derives from the Afrikaans word denoting apartness. Bear in mind that not all white South Africans supported the apartheid government.

culture, such as the Gumboots dance, the Pantsula and neo-traditional dances that include many movements that come from the domestication of other ethnic groups. Another offshoot of multicultural exchange in a South African urban context is the melding of foreign musical conventions and instruments with South African traditional dances, such as the use of the djembe, a multi-tonal drum from Mali/Senegal, in dances that are supposed to use traditional drums of particular ethnic groups. Likewise, the original meaning and precision of (rural) dances are altered when re-performed with specific purposes in mind, such as political protest. This is largely due to changes in lifestyle and the complex interaction and subjugation of cultures that makes up modernity. The rhythms of life are no longer marked by the changing of seasons or the rotation of crops; instead they are marked by the arrival of a monthly pay cheque or the hooting horns of the commuter omnibus each morning.

The subject matter of dance has transformed with the context and thus the nature and significance of dance in daily life must adapt accordingly. One must also consider that with an increasing black, urban middle class embracing the social constructs of colonialism, the reception of social traditional dance is altered. "If the cause of urbanization was need for expansion, growth, and production, the end result was the destruction, reconstruction, and adaptation of social traditions (Crenshaw, 1993: 45). In comparison to the Ugandan matter, Rubidge's article verifies that many upper middle class, urban, black Africans have had "little exposure to their indigenous cultural practices which [have been] gradually abandoned in favour of the culture and arts of the colonizers" (Rubidge, 1998: 2). In addition, dance can be seen as the medium to re-appropriate one's culture.

Contoured along the lines of class, personal sensitivities and cultural associations, the concept of urban, black South African traditional social dance is a complex one. Arguably, it would be more realistic to utilize urban dance styles to create exercise programmes for those living in the inner city and surrounding townships who suffer from obesity. Pantsula, gumboot and kwaito dances can easily expand studio weight losing programmes: they suit urban society and derive from township urban settlement. Furthermore, despite their formation within a historical context of rich cultural exchange, many urban dances do not have the same level of sacredness and exclusivity that inform traditional rural dances. They are in many ways more accessible, because they often present mixtures or hybrid forms of traditional, rural

dance, transformed through interaction with other cultures via personal exchange or the media.

Why dance matters

The World Health Organization defines obesity as a *body mass index* (BMI) of more than 30 kg/m², and has recently identified it as chronic disease (Goedecke et al. 2006; Van der Merwe and Pepper, 2006). Increased body fat mass – a characteristic of obesity - leads to changes in metabolic functions that lead to diseases such as hypertension and type 2 diabetes (van der Merwe and Pepper 2006). Affecting over 1.3 billion worldwide, obesity has for a long time been associated with wealthy, developed countries, such as the United States of America, Great Britain and Europe. However, “obesity is becoming more and more of an issue in developing nations, including South Africa (Goedecke et al, 2006). Obesity leads to ankle, knee and hip replacements due to increased weight pressure. More than 29% of men and 56 % of women in South Africa are classified as suffering from the condition. Out of these, the groups most at risk are black women: 58.5% of black South African women above the age of fifteen are considered obese.

There is a growing concern that young people, especially girls and young women, are also at risk: “10% of young South African women aged 15 - 24 are considered to be obese, and some studies suggest that in the near future, the rate for 18 year olds will be as high as 37%” (Goedecke et al, 2006). In addition to hypertension and type 2 diabetes, “obesity can lead to *osteoarthritis, sleep apnea, coronary heart disease, psychological problems* and even some form of *cancer*” (Goedecke et al, 2006). Attendant psychological issues may seem obvious, such as body image issues in individuals - “specifically women, who had been overweight in their youth, have lower incomes and a higher household poverty rate as adults than their peers who were a “normal” weight as adolescents” (Goedecke et al, 2006). However, body image issues may not prove overly burdensome for overweight black South African women, since the connotation of a larger body type is much more positive among black South Africans, than among whites of the same nationality. According to Goedecke et al, an overweight body type “symbolis [es] happiness, beauty, affluence, health and a negative *HIV/AIDS* status” (2006), as the disease’s victims often suffer

significant progressive weight loss. An obese individual's attempt to diet with a view to attaining healthy body weight could, they fear, be interpreted as the onset of AIDS.

Furthermore, "South Africa's black population was misinformed for decades with the notion of "benign" or "healthy" obesity "(Van der Merwe and Pepper, 2006: 316). There are many diseases to which obesity can lead, such as "*dislipidaemia and ischaemic heart disease (IHD)* that affect the black population at a drastically lower rate than other ethnic groups" (Van der Merwe, 2006: 316). By extension, it was assumed that obesity had few, to none, adverse circumstances for blacks and therefore needed no concern. However, "studies within the past ten years make it clear that obesity among black people still leads to hypertension, diabetes and *glucose intolerance*, and that further, IHD is on the rise among black urban dwellers"(Van der Merwe and Pepper, 2006: 317).

Yet, when considering obesity, the distinction between rural and urban black South Africans is an important one. Urban-dwelling individuals, in particular women, have significantly high BMI's and therefore higher rates of obesity than those who live in rural areas. With the shift from a rural to an urban setting come changes in diet, physical activity levels and types of leisure activities. "The higher fat content and lower carbohydrates and fibre level of a Westernized urban diet are much more conducive to the development of obesity than a more traditional rural diet" (Goedecke et al, 2006: 56). In addition, "the stress of urbanization could also be a factor in the development of chronic disease such as obesity" (Ridder Underhay et al, 2005). It is therefore reasonable to state that rural and urban social set ups have different contexts that create different needs. The above mentioned diseases are treatable, but medication is not easy to come by and certainly not inexpensive. It is important to acknowledge that healthy food is more expensive than greasy food that is detrimental to one's physical well-being, and that small-scale agriculture is limited due to space in the city. "There is a shortage of healthy, low-fat food and fresh fruit and vegetables in the townships. The majority of the local shops sell cheap fatty foods; street vendors' stalls sell fatty meat and sausages." A response from one of the interviewees from Khayelitsha, Cape Town, to an inquiry conducted by Kruger et al *Obesity in South Africa: challenges for government and health professionals 2 June 2005*. Thus, it may be helpful to find ways of making nutritious and filling food available to the majority of the population who may not be able to afford it. This verifies the fact that healthy

food is scarce (local shops do not stock it) and the majority of the people are not accustomed to popular township cuisine and are mostly uninformed of the dangers around fatty and junk food. Notwithstanding the facts that available healthy food might be viewed as foreign and the shops not profit as expected, it seems imperative that education drives about township dwellers' food life style is initiated.

The benefits of dance

Unless our natural responses are deadened by a restricted upbringing or some other circumstance, we would all like to dance in some way. We all move differently when happy or elated; and we all celebrate social events with music and dance. Even the smallest children, before they can walk properly, bounce and sway to music. Dance exercises the whole being and it helps one to feel comfortable in and with one's body: to be aware of it, even to be friends with it as one was during childhood. More than this, dance develops inner discipline, sensitivity to others, and awareness of one's own feelings – all valuable strengths in negotiating daily life. Best of all, "as a way of executing exercises it is fun – it involves a *release of energy* which allows you to dance just for the joy of living" (Schrader, 2005: 10).

To start with, you will gain *physical strength* from doing dance exercises regularly, but it will be strength in keeping with your own body proportion. Robert Cohan explains that "you should not develop large thigh or big arm muscles from dance work, but rather strengthen your whole body the way it is" (Cohan, 1986: 12). This does not mean you will not change your physical shape: you certainly can change your shape radically through dance exercises, but you will have to do the workout every day. Even if you only "work three times a week, however, you should soon begin to notice an improvement in your *physical stamina*" (Cohan, 1986: 12). Most of us lead lives that are too sedentary for our own good health. The human body is designed to move, and if forced to stay in one position over a long period the need to move or to stretch becomes overwhelming. It matches the need we have for water, food and breath. A great part of the circulatory system of the body is achieved by muscular movement: "The contraction of the muscles helps pump the blood back to the heart, as well as moving the lymph around our bodies" (Cohan, 1986: 12). At the end of a dance workout, while you may be tired physically, you will at the same time feel much brighter, lighter and clearer, think more lucidly, be calmer and feel more

focused than before. Cohan adds up by saying that “The type of workout that dances give you is arguably better for most people than aerobics or jogging” (1986: 12).

It is nowadays clear that, for some people, jogging puts too much sudden stress on the heart, while aerobics, for all its good points, results in excessive wear and tear on some of the leg tendons and joints. Cohan agrees that “Dance exercises will build slowly through the class, so that you will not wear one part of yourself first and the kinds of movement that are involved in dance are those that build muscular stamina, while *strengthening the heart and lungs slowly and carefully*” (Cohan, 1986: 12). A dance workout will give you an opportunity to work on yourself in very specific ways. Concentrating on particular movements and *muscular coordination*, you finally accomplish them and the sense of achievement will give you enormous satisfaction. As you stay with the training, the effects will show in your daily life. You will be more *aware of yourself*, walk with *more grace* and stand with *more poise*. When you start using and interpreting the dance movements you have mastered as a means of self-expression, more dramatic changes will occur, for you will become more aware of your feelings and how to communicate them. Cohan explains it by saying that “regular dancing will put you in touch with yourself - with your body, your emotions, and your powers of concentration, memory *and logic*” (1986: 14). Basically, you will rediscover your body and analyze its working, figure out why it is not working well enough, and how you can change bad physical habits or habitual ways of moving. You may want to strengthen and stretch yourself, change the way your body feels to you and make it more responsive and sensitive to your demands. As you try to improve your body’s movements, you will collide head-on with your fitness, which at this stage will be determined by the tonality of the body which, in turn, will reveal how much you have lost in terms of fat. You will at all times have to remember all that you do and why. Dance movement cannot be done with only a part of your attention, because everything eventually depends on how you do it. Dance offers an enormous variety of cardio elements such as loss of water through perspiration and balancing the immune system through repeated exercise regimens. You will find yourself with a light body mass, loss of unnecessary fat, sufficient breath, self-confidence and physical and mental centeredness. In addition, you will improve your understanding of your own emotions and psychological abilities.

Conclusion

Referring to the question of whether African traditional social dance should serve as aerobics in community centers for urban South Africans who suffer from obesity, the conclusion is clear: certain dances should not be used. Dances that are sacred and designated to specific ethnic groups and purposes should not be tampered with. My initial gut-feel is the same as that of many people I interviewed: a resounding “No!” When I asked some of the women in Zolani Community Centre in Nyanga⁸ about this idea, they approved it happily and offered the following explanation: “We don’t fit in when we go to „white“ gyms: they are expensive and we have to drive or take a taxi. We don’t feel comfortable there because most of the women who attend these „white“ gyms are skinny already”. These opinions were confirmed by female members who are active in cultural societies of the township such as Zolani Community Centre.

However, since a major characteristic of African art is its utility within society, it would seem pretentious and repressive to divorce South African traditional social dance from the needs of the people. Still, one must take into account the history of oppression and subjugation that African culture as a whole has been subjected to. Within this framework, one must maintain sensitivity towards the ease which survives in the modified version of Western discourse. The adaptation of traditional social dances in urban areas requires much thought and analysis. A delicate balance must be achieved in allowing the dance to develop and change in accordance with the people’s (changing) needs while securing an acceptable union of utility and form.

It is my view that the suggested conversion of South African traditional social dances into aerobics exercises should present a totally new reflection of contemporary life, while borrowing from the modern vocabulary of urban tradition, as for instance, found in resistance forms. Reflecting a South African national identity formed and

⁸ The name „Nyanga“, originated from the Xhosa word „nyanga“ which means the „moon“. Not only does Nyanga have a specific meaning in the Xhosa language, but it is also the name for the second largest township, or black urbanised area, in the Western Cape province of South Africa. It was established in the 1960’s after Langa, (the Xhosa word for „sun“) the oldest black urbanised area. Nyanga was established in part, due to the migrant labour system.

reformed within one's own culture - and there is only one way to do that and that is through dance - could foster an altogether healthier lifestyle among South Africa's urban population, while promoting a sense of national pride. One cannot deny the inevitable loss of certain cultural values through the increasingly global exchange of art and ideas. As Rubidge states, one must find a way to mediate between "the desire to retain the integrity of indigenous cultural traditions and the desire to address, through dance, the intricacies of the contradictions embedded in a post-colonial (modern) identity" (Rubidge, 1998: 3)

In South Africa the fusion of different cultures and ideas is exciting in the midst of diversity and the embracement of multiculturalism where different ethnic identities share common geographical space, as in urban settlements. I believe that to equate South African urban dances in a form of exercises that promote weight loss is a brilliant idea, because it will aid the current national obesity dilemma. Considering the sensitivity of rural African traditional dance functions, it seems evidently safer and more convenient to use South African urban dances to this effect: they depict attractive African qualities within a modern urban context and their functional codification will provide a living testimony to national health with a touch of Afrocentricity. To apply such aid to the obese community, we will be saving lives and helping to create a healthier environment.

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Anita Ratnam and Ketu H. Katrak

Contemporary Indian Dance in Today's Global Reality: Successes and Challenges

In a postcolonial and increasingly globalized world, cultural specificity retaining openness to other cultures and willingness to function inter-culturally and trans-nationally is a significant rubric in evaluating dance. Contemporary Indian dancers today retain resonances of classical Indian dance with other movement vocabularies creating hybrid choreographies. Cultural translation i.e. making myths and divinities accessible to diverse audiences remain challenging. We explore several cutting-edge issues--the aesthetics, pioneers, audiences, the major tropes of Contemporary Indian dance, its "Indianness" and global affects. We discuss the successes and challenges facing Contemporary Indian Dancers. Their need to showcase new work with sympathetic audiences was addressed by Anita Ratnam's prescient talent in initiating and co-curating "The Other Festival" in the heart of traditional Chennai (1998-2008). Further, in the face of competition from Bollywood film and television, we suggest that a dancer's live human body remains compelling for a live audience. Ratnam's performing body illustrates Contemporary Indian dance's hybrid choreography using minimalism, meditative aura and silence showcasing a taste (rasa) of how this style translates in a South African context.

Contemporary Indian Dance in Today's Global Reality: Successes and Challenges

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Introducing Contemporary Indian Dance

What are the aesthetics, techniques, and idioms of Contemporary Indian Dance? Who are the pioneers and primary artists performing in this style today? Who are the audiences for this work in India and in the vast Indian diaspora? In this essay, we delineate the multiple idioms of this style, named as such since the 1980s (with earlier pioneers such as Uday Shankar in early 20th century), and explore its multi-vocal and hybrid vocabularies including resonances of Indian classical styles (especially bharatanatyam and kathak) along with other movement traditions of Indian and Asian martial arts, yoga, modern and postmodern dance.

We assert that in our increasingly globalized world, cultural specificity that retains openness to other cultures and that function inter-culturally and trans-nationally is a significant rubric of Contemporary Indian Dance. We explore what is “Indian” in this style without being narrowly nationalistic, but rather locating significant cultural signifiers that function as entry points into the choreography of this style. This may include the use of mudras (hand gestures) that evoke an Indian aesthetic along with a modern-dance style body placement using the floor, or it may include the sound of a Carnatic (South Indian classical music) style flute or violin along with the sounds of the piano and saxophone. The style is vibrantly hybrid in movement, sound, use of space, and costume and even as it retains an Indian aura of color or sound, it also evokes a global look and affect.

The retention and reinvention of Indian classical styles such as bharatanatyam from within marks the best of Contemporary Indian Dance. This is not a matter of simply changing a jati (foot-pattern) or wearing black (as Hari Krishnan puts it) and hence becoming contemporary! Rather, transformations from within traditional movements, and re-inventing Indian traditional myths to give them new, even feminist interpretations is part of the choreography of Contemporary Indian Dancers such as

Anita Ratnam. Among her recent works entitled, *Ma3 Ka*, and *A Million Sita-s*, Ratnam skillfully brings Indian goddesses into our contemporary lives and plays with their many legends and stories. She stresses that her artistic graph attempts to “populate her world with interesting women.” These feminine characters become metaphors for a larger reality that include humour, satire and often a provocative retelling and reshaping of the familiar narrative. Using dance, spoken word, improvised movement and personal memory, much like many post modern choreographers in the West, Ratnam imbues these multiple inspirations with her own signature style she has named NEO BHARATAM. Indeed, Ratnam’s use of goddess traditions is a significant aspect of her signature style. Here, she works from within tradition even as she transforms and reinvents it.

The use of Indian myth and goddess traditions raises the issue of cultural translation that face dancers who present their work to diverse audiences across the world today. How does an artist make these stories accessible and alive for our present time? In Ratnam’s work, as also in Toronto-based Hari Krishnan’s, one discovers a fascinating representation of mythological figures, often abstractions of their qualities rather than literal depictions. For instance, in Ratnam’s piece entitled *7 graces*, the Tibetan goddess Tara is depicted not literally but via her many abstract qualities of femaleness, compassion, and meditateness. Similarly, Krishnan’s Contemporary Indian dance piece entitled *Owning Shadows* explores the dark side of human nature as embodied in the lust and greed of a figure such as the demoness Surpranaka from the epic, *The Mahabharata*.

Ratnam has been described as “a contemporary classicist.” She is a deeply thoughtful artist who engages in the process of her creative choreography in Contemporary Indian Dance. She notes:

You start with nothing. Just the empty space, the idea and your body. To trust your physical presence in silence is the best way to begin all choreography in contemporary dance ... The style of dance I now practice is called Neo Bharatam, a form that is the synergy of all my classical and meditative movement techniques, flavored by my life experience as an Indian woman. To be a contemporary dancer in India is to challenge oneself everyday ... Dynamic and fresh, contemporary dance is like a prism, reflecting and refracting the main flashes of life as we see and live it.

(Ratnam,2008)

Ratnam's reinterpretation of the sacred, drawing energy from Indian female goddess traditions that are recuperated uniquely, is the cornerstone of her contributions to Contemporary Indian Dance. The sacred in her hands transcends narrow religious and regional frameworks to touch humanity in any culture, bearing a meditative quality, a yoga-like life-energy that links human beings even through the commonality of the breath. This sacred feeling is also part of our collective unconscious in the Jungian sense. While universal, Ratnam also grounds the sacred for herself in the local, regional, and ritual traditions of her Tamil heritage without narrowly limiting it.

The sacred is accompanied often in many traditions, and certainly in India, with the sensual as expressed via color, decoration, and the fragrance of flowers or incense. Hence, even as Ratnam's interpretation of the sacred steps away from narrow religiosity, she evokes an Indian aesthetic resonance in her bold and careful embrace of *aharya* (decoration) in her contemporary dance. She does not reject color and ornamentation as some Contemporary Indian Dancers do, drawing attention only to the body. Although the pioneer Chandralekha's choices of clothing for her dancers – vibrantly colored cotton saris rather than silk – made a significant statement, she worked against the over-decorated classical dancer who became a female spectacle. But Ratnam delights in the sensuality of the spiritual, also an Indian aesthetic tradition. Hence, she selects from a wealth of Indian fabrics and colors used in inventively designed costumes for specific pieces, such as bright red organza for loose pants and fitting top, or heavily woven cloth like tapestry as seen in her work, *7 Graces*, or the heavy midnight-blue silk to create an amply pleated sari down to the ankles in *Neelam*. Her thoughtfully chosen unostentatious jewelry does not distract from the dance itself, but adds to its overall aesthetic quality. Ratnam's clothing signature is to creatively add or remove a piece of fabric from one dance item to the next, replacing a scarf with a necklace, or a waist-belt with a loose pallu (the end of the sari) hanging in the back instead of the front as in the traditional draping – such subtle changes keep the audience's senses nourished with *rasa*.

Ratnam's choreography draws from many different streams of dance. Although *bharatanatyam* is most visible (studied from a young age at Kalakshetra in Chennai), she also trained in *kathakali* and *mohiniattam* (both from Kerala). She holds an MA

degree in Theatre Arts and Television from the University of New Orleans, and a PhD in Women's Studies from Mother Teresa University (Chennai) with a dissertation on "The Challenges of Reconstructing Kaisika Natakam, a ritual temple theatre tradition."

In Ratnam's Contemporary Indian Dance work, *'7 graces'*, that she co-choreographed with Hari Krishnan who also served as Director, the overall fabric of the movement and staging is guided by a resonant use of color. There are seven lushly colored squares on stage beginning with black, and then moving to saffron, blue, red, green. As an illustration, the "blue" section uses two mudras (hand gestures) commonly used in classical Indian dance, namely, patakam and alapadma although with placement of the body is very different from classical bharatanatyam¹.

Ratnam is one of four choreographers in Contemporary Indian Dance featured in a recently made DVD entitled *'Beyond Tradition'* where she states that she draws upon Indian aesthetics, in color or sound or other affect in her Contemporary choreography. She further notes in her own evocative words that this functions as "a choric refrain" in her work. This visible and vibrant connection with the Indian affective world brings a unique beauty to Ratnam's contemporary work along with a boldness in use of the body and of space that are influenced by other sources, both Western (in terms of technological stage-craft) and Pan-Asian in drawing on movement vocabularies such as Chinese martial traditions of tai-chi and wu-shu. Ratnam notes also that in her use of space, she aims to bring the character that she may be representing into herself rather than disappearing into the character.

In the "Green section" of *'7 graces'*, Ratnam and Krishnan evocatively use abhinaya (gesture language and facial expression to convey emotions and narratives) in new ways, quite distinct from traditional Indian dance. Most artists of Contemporary Indian dance do not usually venture into giving traditional abhinaya a contemporary expression. Most of them commonly play with the nrta (abstract movement of classical Indian dance). Rather, Ratnam portrays abhinaya via a layering of the

¹ Patakam shows the palm of the hand with all fingers held close together. Alapadma shows the five fingers spread out and curved.

navarasas, moving fluidly among the emotions of love, fear, sorrow, and so on, rather than focusing on one primary rasa².

In Contemporary Indian Dance, collaborations among performing artists—dancers, visual artists, musicians—is highly significant though not all artists excel at such interactions. Pioneer Chandralekha was adept at collaborating with visual artists and musicians in her choreographic process. Ratnam too is remarkable for having fostered collaborations among performing artists in India and across national borders when she works with Krishnan who is based in Toronto, Canada. Other significant pioneers in Contemporary Indian dance such as Astad Deboo, based in Mumbai, Shobana Jeyasingh, and Akram Khan based in London have brought collaborations with other performing artists and musicians to new heights. Deboo has collaborated with artists from Manipur in India's neglected northeast region. He has worked with their martial arts traditions called thang-ta in his work called *‘Celebration’*, as well as with their tradition of drum-dancers called pung cholum in Deboo's choreography in his work entitled *‘Rhythm Divine’*. Akram Khan has collaborated with high-profile artists such as French ballerina Sylvie Guillem in his work entitled, *‘Sacred Monsters’*, with actress Juliette Binoche in his work, *‘In-I’*, and with sculptor Antony Gromley and dancer Sidi Larbi Cherouki in *‘Zero Degrees’*.

Apart from increasingly transnational collaborations, Contemporary Indian Dancers rely on festival venues that showcase their new and experimental work. In this regard, Ratnam's prescient talent is worth underlining in initiating and co-curating *‘The Other Festival’* in the heart of traditional Chennai for ten years from 1998-2008. *‘The Other Festival’* provided space for many dancers such as Aditi Mangaldas, Astad Deboo, Akram Khan, Daksha Sheth, Mallika Sarabhai, Navtej Johar and Bharat Sharma who are all at the forefront of Contemporary Indian Dance today. One of the laudatory goals for Ratnam and co-curator, Ranvir Shah was to create new audiences for this work and their work has been enormously successful and influential in creating new spaces as evident in many new festivals today showcasing innovative artistic work in India.

² The ancient Indian text of dramaturgy, *The Natyasastra* (written anywhere from the 2nd to the 5th century) delineates the navarasas that translates as the nine primary human emotions of love, laughter, fear, anger, valor, sorrow, disgust, wonder, and peace.

Although audiences in India were not very welcoming of innovations in dance in the 1960s and 70s, the climate began to open up since the 1980s partly in response to globalization and the impact of the internet and technology in India. However, general audiences, and traditional Indian dancers remain skeptical of certain kinds of Contemporary Indian Dance particularly when they may feel “lost” in responding to abstract choreography without the familiar Indian music or narratives taken from Indian myths and epics. For instance, a recent visit by the London based Shobana Jeyasingh Dance Company to New Delhi was received with excitement and openness by young artists in India who welcome experimentation in hybrid movement and music, and bold uses of space; however, but senior classical Indian dancers based in India did not receive these innovations positively.

In general, there is a dismal lack of infrastructure support for artists located in India. Arts administration as a valid and valuable field of study is still an anomaly. Dancers face enormous funding struggles and often face the challenge of accepting corporate funding with or without strings attached. These factors have deep impact on dancers’ emotional wellbeing. The Indian government usually selects classical Indian dancers as “representatives” of Indian dance to international festivals rather than artists in Contemporary Indian Dance. The Indian state usually does not foster new, experimental, edgy work. Contemporary styles cannot compete with the traditional styles in being funded to present their work outside India. And even in the Indian government’s support for classical Indian dance, there is an additional, troubling premium on “young” dancers rather than mature ones who in fact can showcase the art with greater depth and profundity than the younger artists. Cultural organizations such as the Sangeet Natak Akademi, India’s national apex cultural body, provide modest grants and support for research and dance programs. As an Executive Member of the Sangeet Natak Akademi and on the selection panel for enrolling contemporary dancers, Ratnam acknowledges the tremendous hold that classical dance forms have over state and international perception of a homogenous “Indian identity”. The future of contemporary Indian dancers and dance makers in 21st century India remains bleak and depends almost entirely upon the individual artist to create, promote and tour his/her work.

Along with funding and resources, dancers and other performing artists today face another huge challenge, namely, enormous competition from popular media such as film, television, and varieties of smart electronic gadgets and the internet. In this digital climate and the era of the virtual body, it is still important to find ways to keep the live human body compelling for audiences. In India, the vast popularity of Bollywood style dance with its speed and overt entertainment goal is very different from Contemporary Indian Dancers with three to four decades of work that presents creative work requiring thoughtful rasikas (art appreciators) who do not want instant and easy escape from their mundane lives. In contradistinction to Bollywood dance's speed and easy appeal, in much of Contemporary Indian Dance movement is increasingly slowed down, and minimalism prevails including a meditative aura and use of silence—these are challenging for today's audiences to appreciate.

Towards Concluding

Nonetheless, despite the difficult issues of funding, audiences, venues, Contemporary Indian Dancers, as true artists, continue their work with integrity. They may not be regarded as “stars” such as the familiar ones of Bollywood cinema; however, their live performing bodies incorporate the movements, tropes and affects of this dance style that captures an Indian and a global affect appealing to diverse audiences across the world.

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Gerard Samuel

SA dancing the other: age and disability

Why should we bother with other bodies on our stages? How is dance by the older dancer and the dancer with disabilities valued? How does the liminal space between perfection and deficiency offer a sneak preview of peak performance? This paper will unpack understanding of the „other“ in the SA context. It explores the other as a complex cultural group that negotiates issues of integration and inclusion under the welcoming umbrella of Afro-Contemporary dance. As American scholars, Betty A. Block and Peggy V. Johnson (2011) assert, “This cultural shift in thinking opens the door to another world for dancers with disabilities – a world that used to be dominated by highly skilled, “elite” dancers This paper hopes to excavate what absences are being made present by „others“ such as the older dancer in SA, through its discussion of dance and age, and dance and (dis)ability.

SA dancing the other: age and disability

Gerard Samuel

Keywords: other, contemporary dance in South Africa

At the risk of over exposing what are burning questions for me, around dance, age and disability, I offer in this paper the intimate processes of my investigation (still in its infancy) of three specific weeks of these intersecting fields. I am very deliberately positioning more questions than answers in this writing as a reflection of an enquiring and purposeful research methodology - one of life history (Dhunpath, R. & Samuel M. 2009). At the beginning of 2011, as a former professionally trained classical ballet dancer, now in forced early retirement through injury, I could in my new role as dance academic, deliberately set out, to re-experience training in the art of classical ballet, in Cape Town. This paper hopes to excavate what absences are being made present by marginalized groups in South Africa. Through a discussion of marginalized groups, the older dancer and dancers with disabilities, I hope to destabilize or broaden a current norm - that of young and athletic, able dancing bodies.

This paper questions whether we should bother with other bodies on our stages? How is dance by the older dancer and the dancer with disabilities valued? Could the liminal space between perfection and deficiency offer a sneak preview of peak performance? It will unpack some understandings of the „other“ in the South African context and suggest that the other is a complex cultural group that negotiates issues of integration and inclusion under the welcoming umbrella of Afro-Contemporary dance. As American scholars, Betty A. Block and Peggy V. Johnson (2011) assert, “This cultural shift in thinking opens the door to another world for dancers with disabilities – a world that used to be dominated by highly skilled, “elite” dancers” (2011:16).

The paper explores three fragments: first impressions, pain and embarrassment as dominant markers of the dancing body and invites one to transcend these tyrannies.

Week 1: my first impressions

„The Ballet Shop“ who would have thought the name could be so intimidating /alienating... it“s not a place for everyone. Just as a Golf shop is likely to have a specific customer profile, the term „ballet shop“ sets itself apart from dance shop though it may sell clothing that a range of dance forms could potentially use in the various training methods and performance expressions for that form. The idea that classical ballet training (and perhaps performance) requires a very specific set of clothing for males including tights, jockstrap and ballet shoes, is part of the induction into this world of dance. This entry point could represent the earliest collision with this form of ethnic dance (Kealinohomoku 1983) especially when one has to shift one“s own notion of comfortable clothing in which one could freely move, and thus dance. This discussion of free movement and the orderliness of ballet training on the body will be discussed later.

It is very evident from the outset that athleticism in this dance form is highly prized as most pictures in the stairwell leading to the shopping space are of mostly white women in gravity defying leaps with bodies contorted in positions that could be described as being anything but pedestrian.

Even the opening times of 12h30 – 18h30 already suggests this is not a regular store. In suburb like Rondebosch, in Cape Town, it could be argued that the shopping hours of most clothing stores is between 8h30 - 17h00. Could this client base of wannabe ballet dancers be that powerful and or specific to drive a new ordering of opening times? What could some of the reasons be for this phenomenon: the availability of staff or the slow consumer traffic in the mornings or the availability of both mothers and daughters as its primary consumers? I would state that it is all of the above.

I noticed my own body recede into „clown mode“ to defend itself against the youth-filled presence in the store. I became animated and mercurial in the presence of the several women in the shop. No one suggested it was odd / unusual for me to be there. I am there as Gerard a former male classical ballet dancer and not current Director of the UCT School of Dance. Yet, I am in the presence of a Masters student who I am personally supervising (we have just had a working lunch). Later she arrived with a former post graduate student of mine who had just completed his Honours work with me and the manager of the store, who is also a former post graduate student of mine. Given that Anita (the Masters student -not her real name), and Maria (the store manager...also not her real name) and I have all worked intensely on an experimental dance film as director, research assistants, film crew, and performing artists only a few months earlier, the scene is filled with multiple and complex relationships . To complete this „family“ portrait, the assistant manager is also a recent graduate (from the class of 2009). In summary, this group whilst perhaps in an uncomfortable situation was all very well known to me and I to them but the power relationships had considerably shifted.

When I leave this store, I am already thinking of my earliest memory of a shoe shop in Couper (the main) street in my home town in KwaZulu-Natal, Stanger, where I bought my first ever pair of tights and ballet shoes which were made of soft, black leather. I can vividly recall the embarrassment or my apology that is associated with being in this indulgent (sic) space – a shoe shop for women. I remember that same hushed question from the staff at the store of whether I had on the proper or appropriate underwear in order to fit on the tights. How could I have known that the nylon black, stockings/ tights was for girls only even though I was being told that boys in ballet do wear such tights/stockings? I also remember that amidst all of these confusing messages, I liked that from now on , I was not going to be like other boys... I was eight years old.

In my forty sixth years, I felt that purchasing black Capezios /performance tights would be stretching my hopes too far. That somehow, I was pretending to be a ballet dancer as I was once before. I needed new ballet shoes and my old make - Teplovs it seems were no longer available/ being manufactured. I felt lost. The ease and pride of walking in to a dance store / ballet wardrobe and asking for my exact shoe size and specific fit was gone. I was like a child once

more, seated on bench and having various sizes tried on me like the proverbial Cinderella. It was exciting to recognize that feeling again of pliable supple feet in the new white canvas shoes even if it hurt a little.

As for the tights, I opted for olive green „Made in China“ cotton lycra variety- footless tights as opposed to the silky, black , knee length /shorter lycra cycling shorts that were flapping in roadside stalls in Claremont.

Could there be something distinctly arrogant and male in the specific form of dressing for the male ballet dancer? How do costumes/ dress assert its presence as a cultural dominance of and through a dance form? The tight fitting stocking clearly has origins in Europe from 16th and or Baroque period (Gregory 1972). It could be argued that in spite of the modesty (sic) of the dances of French and other European courts of this era, the revealing male genital pouch, as it is thrust forward in such clothing, is a very visible presence of patriarchy that was later propped up in African colonies. What can be said of the agency of the classical ballet male dancer in a post-colonial world; one that continues (and is expected) to wear this type of clothing in general? If one agrees with the notion that this type of revealed body has such power, then a perpetuation of a male arrogance must also be viewed in sharp relief with the unassuming waif- like-dancer for the female ballet dancer – the definitive sylph.

I entered the ballet class ...I was the only male dancer in the room full of twenty female dancers (a familiar territory for me) of varying ages .

One of the first things I noticed was my inability to remember a series of individual dance sentences/ exercises. The conventions of breathing before the start of each exercise at the barre and holding the finishing pose until the pianist takes his/her foot off the pedal to mark the exact end point of the movement were utterly ingrained in me as I performed these conventions almost without thinking. I did not feel an urge to compete by throwing my leg higher than the dancers around me only a frustration at not being able to remember. I did notice that as the hour passed I was able to pick up the exercises faster and faster. By the end of class I could “mark” the exercise even if I could not actually perform it as may have been expected by the teacher.

By the centre practice, I took off my much need reading spectacles to use my head to spot. Turning/ *pirouettes* was one of my most favored movement sensations. I delighted in jumps and flying leaps too, particularly the Bournonville style jump that has a rebound quality. Without my spectacles everyone and everything was blurred. I was in a very familiar room, the very room in which I had trained and later performed many of my classical ballet and other dance examinations some 20years ago. I was surprised that I could still spot even though I was in my own impressionist /Degas painting.

I chatted with the teacher afterwards and she was delighted with use of the head especially at the barre or in her words - “you were someone who intrinsically knew where to place their head without being told... who looked like they were dancing”. She used the expression being in the “glorious space” of dancing from inside and that I would need to slowly re-discover the balance between the strength and the flexibility in the body. I knew that I would need that before I could

enter the sacred or peak performance realm. Perhaps a (re)visiting of that glory is what other older dancers and I are looking for?

We also spoke of the more mundane matters of the pain the body would „naturally“ suffer - stiffness ; soreness; muscle fatigue as being a totally normative and unquestioning position should one wish to dance classical ballet. I wondered whether “ballet pain” was different from “contemporary dance pain” or any other pain associated with a dance form.

I got thinking about race given South Africa’s history. Is it possible that one of the few women of colour in the room (there may have been only four coloured women present) came over to chat to me as I am clearly not White (especially since I had a dark tan from the summer of 2010). Perhaps it was evident to this dancer that I too, was part of the „newbie“ group; had two left feet and was somehow in her view also the other in this class. I was reminded of KwaZulu-Natal based dance academic Clare Craighead’s tirade of unavoidable skin as a cultural signifier which I suggest cannot be ignored in one’s fervent desire for nation building(Craighead.2006).

Week 2: painful

Pain. The second week was painful not because I did not want to return to the ballet class but that I was more aware of the physical pain and effort that it takes to execute some of the so called rudimentary movements that are part of this dance form. My left hip and backs of both knees seem to ache but mostly the pain was in my calves/lower legs. I observed how imbalanced strength and suppleness was throughout my body. How masterfully the body seems to compromise itself in order for it to execute or present a movement in spite of severe limitations. I no longer seemed to have any „advanced“ range of back bend. By this I mean I can bend backwards but I do not have any part of the range that was once my back bend (hopefully some deepening / advanced range will reveal itself in the weeks to come). Consequently, the first exercise at the barre that required a conventional full back bend was mostly articulated through a much smaller upper back and neck movement with as much grace as I could muster.

Strength in my lower leg was virtually absent making any work on *releve* inconsistent. I acknowledge that this labelling of „absent“ is in relation to a refined and powerful strength that is a norm for the professional ballet dancer where one is required to achieve and maintain one’s balance on both feet and especially on one foot. I noticed, that my left foot which I had injured in 1993 (which subsequently led to my forced retirement from the life as fulltime professional ballet dancer, was not any weaker than my right foot. Was I just being a hypochondriac (Carson 1992) or had I suffered impairment? In other words, what did the dancer find that was the disabling - the body or environment?

The other male dancer in the class seemed of a similar age to me, perhaps a little younger given his less traditional attire. I noticed an immediate air of competition between us just as British writer, Jane Albert had observed of the dance teacher, Dianne Harrison. In her article written in the Dance Gazette which had as its particular focus the subject of dance and age, Harrison remarks, „It’s about trying to train them to be the best dancers they can be with the body they have, and getting them out of that competitive mode” (Albert 2006: 20). The other male dancer

and I stood at opposite ends of the dance studio, a room that has black painted ballet barres that are fixed at hip height around the studio not unlike the confines of a boxing ring. I made too many mistakes during each ensuing *barre* exercise to fully notice whether he was coping (learning and representing the exercises) better than I was. He did not „check me out“ in what may be construed as any kind of homo-erotic/ gay agenda. On the contrary, at the end of class he was quite open about his intimate kiss with a young female dancer (not that this is any „evidence“ of any agenda gay/ straight).

In an apartheid era, one could have labelled the male dancer described above as White. Could a space like the ballet class that is frequently associated with the male homosexual be a safe haven for hetero-sexual relations across the so called colour bar¹? How are race and gendered relations (hetero/homo-sexual) being interrogated through exploratory choreographies of fusion and nation- building in a diverse/poly cultural society in Post -Apartheid SA? How does the teaching of ballet engage with issues of race or does a „coconut“/ „egg yolk“ syndrome persist for Black- or Chinese-dancers who studies classical ballet as a dance form?

What deconstructions exist for racism or racist practices in ballet in SA? Do answers lie in SA Contemporary dance or Afro-Contemporary dance with its (un)resolved integration of dance forms? What will survive the fall out of various hierarchies and power relationships when divergent dance cultures meet? How will source and target cultures operate in libortory environments or how will the new Egyptian, Tunisian and perhaps Libyan dancers articulate her dance in the face of the hegemony of classical ballet given rapid shifts in North Africa in February 2011? The role of SA Contemporary Dance and its re-presenting of the Other as a societal glue may well provide much needed answers to some of questions raised above.

For Ballet on the other hand seems to survive due to its insular approach , a tyranny of codes and norms that include an notion of perfect motion and ideal dancing body.

I steadfastly continued with ballet class, in spite of imperfect motion / movements. I attempted to ignore my new dancers body that is a little flabby around the middle , and weak at the extremities making new deals / negotiations with my dancing body in 2011. Strangely, the moment of the *reverance* was most potent. On the one hand its signifies the end of the ballet class (and a reversal of the mounting pain), on the other it marks a beginning of a return to one’s other self or ordinary non-dancing self.

One could imagine that a return to dance training will have some particular aspect of the ballet class give rise to moments of euphoria. Whilst the second week did have longer passages of fluid movement none of these snippets of dance could be described as triumphant. This revealed and reinforced the notion that to dance ballet is to accept the embedded notion of perfection that is at once desirable and an unattainable goal.

¹ The Immorality Act of 1950 prohibited sexual relations between whites and non whites. “Since Cape Town historically had the highest rate of miscegenation, these two laws [Immorality Act and Prohibition of Mixed Marriages Act of 1949] probably hit its citizens the hardest, although there are no geographical statistics for the 20,000 prosecutions under the Immorality Act” (*own insertion* in Bickford-Smith V. et al .1999: 157)

Week 3: embarrassment

How do we come to feel embarrassed by our bodies when we dance? Does the lesson (sic) originate in one's infancy and continue throughout one's formative years (Santrock 1983). How does the multiplicity of social variables of eg. Victorian family, Calvinist school or a repressive government act as modifiers of one's views of one's own body and other bodies that are dancing? How is this phenomenon different from culture to culture and over Time? What is distinct from the presentation of an „embarrassed body“ and a „confident body“? How does this absent-presence confidence affect the way in which some- bodies learn to dance? If the training of classical ballet has been criticized as being „unnatural“ though normative and yet full of pain (Samuel 2009), is a return to training in ballet by the older dancer (a term which needs to be explained) located in a kind of Sado-masochism (Carson 1992: 361)? Why is an unnatural way of the moving body that is found in ballet so widespread and popular?

My 3rd lesson began well before I entered the ballet class and studio space. I was congratulated / validated by a woman (perhaps of a similar age to mine) in the car park. Could this shout of approval / support hide an embarrassment? Why does my return to dance class seem significant for others? What does it represent or signal to them? Some of these spectators included the class pianist or accompanist, and a former student (who only last week sold me my new ballet shoes), who now cheered me on. Students of the School of Dance who were attempting to watch me through the window panes supposedly without my knowing were also curious bystanders.

I found it very difficult to focus on my warm-up and this re-entry of a once before completely comfortable zone. I was reminded by their curiosity, that „taking class“ is more than a return to a space of familiarity. It represents a return to the daily training that is the life of a professional ballet dancer. It is the zone in which one pits oneself against a norm – perfection that is already known to be unattainable. To recognize any measure of excellence of one's output in the minutiae or details of a specific dance exercise in the ballet class is to have the goalposts of that earlier perfection to be shifted once more. Taking class is also a time and space of internal dialogues that percolate. In most daily ballet classes for the professional dancer the various movements are repeated. The issue here is the complex series of variations of the individual steps or movements that seem inexhaustible. Isolated dance steps and or movements are like „words“ that the ballet master/teacher group into various „sentences“ with particular punctuation (sometimes the grammar makes the movement sentence incomprehensible and at other times sublime). But are we ready to accept new varieties of Englishes as espoused by professor of linguistics, Rajend Mesthrie and others in terms of Dance in SA ?(Mesthrie 2002: 339) Or do we hold fast to a dominant aesthetic for all dance forms whether wheelchair dancers or older dancers?

The work ethic in class is often intense, highly judgmental and often operates through sharp criticism of the dancer's bodily actions. Is everyone in the class from pianist, to fellow dancers and class teacher complicit in this arrangement? How is this any different in the preparations or training for athletes/ sportsmen? If critical Dance pedagogy suggests that dance students learn more effectively through support, encouragement and facilitatory approaches, then why is my

dominant experience of the learning of ballet in general a deconstruction of the body into component parts and a highly specific reassembly of the body through a strict often autocratic teacher? This could be explained by the issues of ballet's 400 yr old heritage that must be preserved and therefore re-enacted in relation to a notion of traditions that are fixed and must be taught to subsequent generations. All bodies types wanting to study/train in classical ballet must therefore comply with strict rules and conventions.

Clearly some bodies will be excluded from this confining regimentation for the range of bodies that may want to dance ballet. Is this not discrimination or Othering? Yes it is.

And yet, in spite of this discrimination for an elite who have mastered the rudiments of classical ballet like myself an execution of the first two bars of a simple *Port de bras* with *adage* in the Centre practice of the ballet class made this forty something, older dancer feel like he was dancing in the most natural way and without any embarrassment or pain.

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Sonja Smit

Becoming: Transformation and Embodiment in Ankoku Butoh practices

This paper is an investigation into the transformative potential of Ankoku Butoh techniques and performance philosophies. Ankoku Butoh which means the “dance of utter darkness” is the avant-garde dance form developed by Tatsumi Hijikata in the 1960’s and 1970’s. The focus of this paper is on how presence in Ankoku Butoh is embodied by the performer through a process of absence. At the core of the Ankoku training is the necessity of finding an „erased“, or „empty“, body which involves a careful stripping of the individual’s habitual movement patterns and social behaviours. The purpose of this „erased“ body is to embody the material or subject matter of the dance. In this way the subject (performer) becomes the object instead of representing it. This shift in body consciousness heightens the presence of the performer suggesting alternative approaches to embodiment within contemporary dance training methods and philosophies. This enquiry centres on the process of preparing for the Ama-no-gawa (2010), a First Physical Theatre production choreographed by Frauke (Caroline Lundblad) a third generation exponent of Ankoku Butoh. The experiential aspect of being involved in Ama-no-gawa informs the observations and conclusions drawn from this research. Alongside this interpretative research methodology, is a qualitative engagement with texts related to theories of presence, absence and becoming within contemporary performance philosophies

Becoming: Transformation and Embodiment in *Ankoku Butoh* practices

Sonja Smit

This paper investigates the ideas of becoming in Ankoku Butoh performance practices and techniques. The focus is on how Ankoku Butoh's emphasis on absence (or detachment) enhances the presence/transformation of the body in performance. The investigation is informed by my own miniscule experience of Butoh training and performance in the process of preparing for *Ama-no-gawa* (2010), choreographed by Frauke with the First Physical Company Theatre. My understanding of Ankoku Butoh (from a western position), is a method for transformation which happens on a very physical, even molecular level, within the body. Butoh is known for its condensed energy, which is often interpreted as a slow-motion dance, and the characteristic white paint that decorates the bodies of the dancers. It must be stated at the outset that Butoh is something slightly different to every person who comes into contact with it and my own observations are subjective and not exhaustive. Previous investigations¹ into Butoh often focus on its mystical qualities attempting to intellectualise the form, which seems to contradict the deeply physical nature of this performance. If Butoh is mystical, it is only able to become so through an intense commitment to the body and the moment of performance.

Ankoku Butoh is an avant-garde performing art developed by Tatsumi Hijikata and Kazuo Ohno originating in Japan in the late 1950's. For the purpose of this study, I have focused more attention on writings about and by Tatsumi Hijikata, since his influence has more directly impacted on my own experience of Ankoku Butoh, specifically the *Hakutôbô* (White Peach) Butoh body. Hijikata in his "dance of utter darkness"² endeavoured to evoke the immediacy of the body through performance. Butoh scholar,

¹ Such as Viala, J and Masson-Sekine, 1988. *Butoh: Shades of Darkness*. N; Fraeleigh, N. 1999. *Dancing into Darkness: Butoh, Zen, and Japan*.

² To clarify, I refer to Ankoku Butoh rather than the usual Butoh, this distinction is made in order not misinterpret the word outside of Japan (Truter). Ankoku means "utter darkness" (coined by Hijikata) and Butoh refers to dance in a more general way, Kurihara Nanako notes, "The word "buto" is used in compounds such as buto-kai, a European-type ball dance or shi no buto, the medieval European dance of death (Nanako Kurihara. 2000. Hijikata Tatsumi: The Words of Butoh. *The Drama Review*. p. 12

Vincent Truter states that, “The Ankoku Butoh body is sentient and stubborn in its defiance of codification and as such can only be left to its own devices, outside of rational thought” (2007:101). In Ankoku Butoh, the body is not used to communicate aesthetically or through meaning, but as “a defiant entity that owns its own abilities to generate meaning” (Truter, 2007:34). Hijikata’s originating impulse for Ankoku Butoh was principally a revolt against codification, today, however, Butoh has trailed off in many different directions and a range of codes and methods have been developed to find this body in revolt (Roquet, 2003:49-50). Hijikata himself never really claimed a mastery of the total transformation and embodiment he desired,

This nearby breathing “I” will make the faraway “me”, who having become so, in other words, numbed with cold and who no longer knows whose ancestor I am, aware of myself as a single virgin body. What I dance there is not even the “becoming butoh” of experience, much less the mastery of butoh. I want to become and be a body with eyes just opened wide, tensed to a snapping point by the strained relationship with the dignified landscape around it (Hijikata cited in Polzer, 2004:171-172).

In this passage Hijikata highlights the difficulties inherent to Butoh practices. The transformation that Hijikata desired can happen only when the dancer is so immersed in the experience of performing that he/she is no longer dancing but being danced. This immediacy is what makes the dance so powerful and provoking and it is here that revolt of the flesh still exists. The paradox of Hijikata’s desire for immediacy and revolt against codification is the technique necessary to find this expression in the body. In the course of Hijikata’s experimental exploration of the body, methods and exercises developed to achieve this sense of immediacy.

While Hijikata’s early work was characterised by harshness and spectacle and performed by male bodies exclusively, it is in his later work on female bodies that his choreography ripened (Vincent, 2007:61, Roquet, 2003:34). Hijikata distanced himself from his intellectual avant-garde influences in Tokyo and focused his attention on his Tōhoku childhood and the *Hakutōbō* group³. Instead of the masculine harshness and spectacle of

³ The core dancers of the *Hakutōbō* group were Ashikawa Yōko, Saga Kobayashi and Momoko Mimura. Most of these dancers were untrained; Ashikawa Yoko for instance was an art student when she started working with Hijikata.

his previous explorations⁴, he was now obsessed with transformation: to dissolve the space between the subject and object (Truter, 2007:61). The method of erasing and silencing the self became a fundamental aspect of the Hakutôbô group and where the notion of becoming and transformation started to emerge. Hijikata internalised his new found appreciation of the disruptive powers of the feminine. He spoke of a deceased older sister of his that had taken up a place in his body, “She says to me, „You're totally immersed in dance and ex-pression but what you are able to express emerges somehow by not expressing it, don't you think?“ Then she quietly disappears. She's my teacher; a dead person is my butoh teacher” (Wind Daruma, 2000:77).

It is this idea of expressing, by not expressing, that is at the centre of Ankoku Butoh training and performance practices. In *The Critique of Judgement* Immanuel Kant states, “In a literal sense, and according to their logical import, ideas cannot be presented” (1952:119). Kant argued that artists can only attempt to represent ideas through “negative presentation” or “non-presentation (1952:151).” This is done by not representing the thing to be expressed and is known as the Kantian safeguard. Kant’s idea of a negative presentation points to the limits of representation and I would argue that Butoh is also preoccupied with the limits of what can be expressed through the body. A central concern of Hijikata’s dance was the transcendental divisions between form and content; an attempt to dissolve the space of the dancer with the environment. The literal impossibility of this total transformation reveals the instability of the symbolic order⁵. Instead of attempting to represent ideas, Butoh is preoccupied with processes of transformation and becoming. In this way meaning is suspended through becoming. Jean Viala notes;

Hijikata conceives of dance as the need to break through the shell formed by social habits, which keep the body lagging behind the revolutions already accomplished in contemporary thought. For him the body is not a means but an end, not to be used to transmit ideas, but on the contrary, to question, to rethink, to recreate. Dance is not a linear composition, not a syntactical arrangement of body movements, but rather the exploration of the exemplary depth of the body itself; not a desire to pronounce a discourse, but to search for meaning (Viala and Masson-Sekine, 1988:64).

⁴ For example; *Kinjiki* (1959 trans: The Forbidden Colours) and *Hijikata Tatsumi to Nihonjin: Nikutai no Hanran* (1968, trans: The Japanese and Tatsumi Hijikata: Revolt of the Flesh)

⁵ The symbolic order can be understood as the paternal function associated with language and the laws constructed by language. the way we make sense of the world through the organisation of language. As Elisabeth Grosz notes: “the law abiding operations of socio-linguistic systems” (1989, *Sexual Subversions: three French Feminists*. (Australia: Allen and Unwin.) p. 42)

This idea of meaning as a process of becoming, which so important to Butoh practices, resonates with the notion of the haecceity as theorised by Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari (1988:260). Haecceity⁶ is the “this-ness” of a particular thing, the quality of a moment. It is the here-and-now-ness, the distinct qualities of a particular thing which separates it from others of a similar kind. Deleuze and Guattari state that, “A haecceity has neither beginning nor end, origin nor destination; it is always in the middle. It is not made of points, only of lines. It is a rhizome.” (1988: 263). Butoh can be described as rhizomatic⁷ through its focus on dissolving the space between the subject and object. Frauke, our choreographer, would often say, “There is no position”. In Butoh the aim is never to stop moving, never to stop responding, otherwise there is no dance. The body does not aim to reach a position or to complete steps; the focus of this movement is elsewhere and never completed. The momentary quality of the experience, of becoming something else is heightened here. This is what Butoh aims to do at the expense of its impossibility, the limits of expression. The body might never achieve this full becoming or total transformation but it aims to.

This focus on becoming in Butoh can be interpreted as a subtle non-didactic questioning of perception. In a post-capitalist context where desire is predetermined and regulated through mediation, Butoh practices, focused on developing the physical knowledge of the body, institute a fresh approach to dance performance. Hijikata states, “Still more, to a production-oriented society, the aimless use of the body, which I call dance, is a deadly enemy which must be taboo... that explicitly flaunts its aimlessness in the face of a production oriented society” (To Prison, 2000:44-45).

Performing Butoh is a challenging process requiring an intense devotion on behalf of the performer to listen to the body. This listening is what evokes the responses that eventually become the dance. It is in this way that the subject becomes the object –

⁶ The term haecceity was originally coined by medieval philosopher John Duns Scotus. Not as a synonym of quiddity which refers to the universal qualities of a thing.

⁷ The idea of the rhizome as theorised by Deleuze and Guattari, is a move towards thinking beyond binaries. “Nature doesn’t work that way: in nature, roots are taproots with a more multiple, lateral, and circular system of ramification, rather than a dichotomous one. Thought lags behind nature (1988:5).

through an intense commitment to the intelligence of the body without pre-empting the next step but by being the step. Frauke is a third generation exponent of Ankoku Butoh who trained at SU-EN⁸ Butoh Company and the Body Weather farm in Japan with Min Tanaka⁹. Frauke is very inspired by the Hakutôbô body and our training for *Ama-no-gawa* was focused on finding an erased and empty body to embody the material of the dance. In this sense the subject (the dancer) becomes the object (material of the dance). This is not mere imitation of an object but a process of becoming the object at the expense of the dancer's own individual characteristics and habitual movement patterns. This is incredibly difficult because the body with its ego demands and habitual patterns is not necessarily ready to become object, to enact this intelligence. Butoh techniques and exercises focus on absencing the habitual and ego demands of the body aid in breaking down the armour of self.

In Hijikata's writing we can see the intense inquiry and questioning of the socialised body. The Japanese word for this "body stamp" is *Inkantai*; a personal seal or stamp which is used instead of a signature (Polzer, 2004: 41).

This form, (...) is [just] a shabby "body stamp". It's lacking, but because it's a body thing, you can't just recklessly make it vanish. Because this body has no written contract, it just arises as a simple credo of faith" (Hijikata in Polzer, 2004:40)

The "body stamp" Hijikata refers to is the social body which has been developed from childhood, our own signature as an individual. The stripping of individuality is both physically painful and confusing as a process, but very necessary for the body to take part in becoming. Hijikata himself observed that it is a complex and sometimes painful process, that shifting into a body can make one cry (Hijikata in Polzer, 2004:40).

In the training sessions, it became clear to me how in each exercise, the principle of „becoming“, of altering the „body stamp“, is pursued. In preparation for *Ama-no-gawa*,

⁸ Choreographer SU-EN is based in Sweden and trained under Tomoe Shizune and Yoko Ashikawa in the *Shizune and Hakutôbô Butoh group*, which was originally formed by Hijikata. (<http://www.suenbutohcompany.net/>)

⁹ Dance Practitioner Min Tanaka started and has been developing the *Body Weather Research* since the 1970's. This is explored through farming and dance work in Yamanashi in rural Japan. Min Tanaka was a student of Hijikata and Ohno (<http://bodyweather.blogspot.com/2009/03/min-tanaka.html>).

which explored the material and movement of the cosmos, we rehearsed at least eight hours a day and six days a week. The mornings were devoted to training and the afternoons to learning the material. The training space was quiet and focused on finding Butoh alignment, strength in the centre, emptiness and an available body. The strength of the centre of the dancer is very important; the stomach of the dancer, his/her *git* (belly power) is activated so that the rest of the body can be available and absorb the material. Hijikata explains this quite well:

“When I seriously consider the training of a butoh dancer, I think that what's important are the kinds of movements which come from joints being displaced, then from walking disjointedly for a couple of steps, with one leg striving to reach the other (Shibusawa Tatsuhiko and Hijikata, 2000: 52).

A lot of attention is given to emptying the body while at the same time, strengthening the *git*. The joints in the body are all given careful attention in every training session to find emptiness and disconnection in the joints. This emptiness can be described as an intense sense of weight and release in which the muscles are relaxed while the disconnection enables the dancer to find more isolation in body parts. Finding emptiness prepares the body making it available for the production of the materials. Many of the exercises we did in the morning training sessions were specifically created¹⁰ for strengthening Western bodies in learning to dance Butoh. Below I describe the Butoh posture, the “metal pipe” and “strings” exercises as three approaches to altering the “body stamp” and preparing the body for transformation.

In Butoh posture the body is pushed backwards and downwards altering the „body stamp“. The relationship with the floor is very important; instead of trying to defy gravity, Butoh embraces gravity and the body’s proximity to the earth. The *gravity line* (alignment) shifts the body of the performer, the weight goes into the heels cutting the hips and causing a slight bend in the knees. The head, hips and heels are shifted backwards and in one line with the arms hanging at the sides while the legs hang loosely

¹⁰ Many of these exercises were created by SU-EN to prepare the Western body for Butoh. Since Butoh was developed specifically on Japanese bodies, it requires a change in the posture; for instance to stretch and develop the Achilles tendons.

in the joint sockets. The gaze is also shifted to the periphery instead of a strong focus in the eyes; we create a soft focus in which the eyes swim in their sockets. This new position, through a shift in weight, activates a different sense in the body. The peripheral and unfocused use of the gaze shifts awareness of the performer to begin the process of diminishing the space between subject and object.

In both the “metal pipe” and “strings” exercises, a lot emphasis is placed on developing the back of the body. The body’s relationship to space is more sculptural and the back of the body is very important in articulating the material. Specific, to the Hakutôbô body is the rounded and deeply contracted lower back and arched legs. The metal pipe exercise is performed in the Butoh posture with quick small steps with the energy directed from the centre and a peripheral focus. The “metal pipe” serves quite a few functions; it is like an energiser, at the same time it focuses the performer and also activates the *git* power of the centre and the disconnection in the joints. The metal pipe is a strict and physically demanding exercise, which generates heat and speed in the body creating energy in preparation for the material. The metal pipe is directly followed by the “strings” exercise which is just as challenging.

The build-up of speed, heat and fast energy is condensed into the “strings” exercise. Remaining in the posture, the performer now focuses on the image of strings coming in and out of the body changing the performer’s relationship to space. Small steps are taken to avoid losing the sense of the gravity line and once again movement is initiated from the centre. In my own experience, in this exhausted and challenged state you are so pre-occupied with finding and maintaining the gravity line that you have no chance to think of anything else or to be expressive. Your entire focus is on the task at hand which is continued into the material. This aids the performer in finding a kind of presence that is part of the process of becoming, while working with the material (object) of the movement.

The round Hakutôbô back inspired the materials used by Frauke in *Ama-no-gawa* and the majority of the material started from the base of the spine. In over-simplified terms the

material can be described as the source of the movement, and the body's response to this stimulus is the dance. The first material we learnt was darkness, which was conceptualised as a verb and not an intellectual or conceptual idea of darkness but rather, the extreme contracting gravitational force of a black hole sucking matter into it. In order to activate this sense in the body Frauke used onomatopoeic words and sounds to provoke these movements in the body. The use of onomatopoeic language in Butoh was developed by Hijikata and is referred to as Butoh Fu (Butoh notation). The sound kind of corresponds to the quality of the object or material. Kurihara Nanako notes that, "Through words, Hijikata's method makes dancers conscious of their physiological senses and teaches them to objectify their bodies. Dancers can then, "reconstruct their bodies as material things in the world and even as concepts" (Nanako, 2000: 16). These onomatopoeic words and sounds are used to further stimulate the responses to the material. *Git*, for instance, is a word used to activate the centre, and "*goo goo gooh*" is the sound of the clay material. The response to the sound is immediate and cannot be pre-empted by the performer, which enhances this idea of becoming rather than representing.

The response to words is both an internal process, involving the imagination of the performer, and an external process. You respond to the texture, shape and speed of the movement. When we worked on darkness or sand, for instance, the focus is on how that material will affect the body from the outside and also from within. To say that Butoh aims at stripping individuality and at the same time engages the imagination seems contradictory. In Japanese culture, however, the conflict between mind and body is not as pronounced as it is in Western culture, what I'm referring to is the physical imagination or intelligence of a body. Body and mind are not conceived of as separate entities thus the imagination of the performer, his/her physical knowledge, is important for the production of the materials. Paul Roquet observes Butoh works as, "destroying the barrier between the external world and the deeper layers of imagination within the body" (2003:25). This is not an imaginative process of creation such as developing a narrative, but rather the recollection and embodiment of sensory experiences. The physical knowledge; that a stone is harder and heavier which feels different to the texture and weight of a stream of water or the lapping of dogs. Materials are not always performed in isolation and with

more experience the performer can be affected by a material like wind, from the outside, or in a specific area in the body, whilst internally responding through a quality like sand.

The speed of a particular material determines the rhythm and where the body will go. Speed means something else in Butoh training and can roughly be understood (but in a very physical way) as the intention of the material. Butoh is often regarded as a slow motion dance which is an inaccurate description. It is most likely the lack of conventional flow and rhythm and the condensed energy in Ankoku Butoh that makes it appear to be slow (Truter, 2007: 37). In fact, some materials are incredibly fast and impact driven. Materials such as light and lightning are examples of materials which are more impact driven. The material cannot be imitated so the experience and production thereof needs to be fresh every time. Since the movement is reliant on the moment and producing the material, there is very little space to sublimate the movement into something more harmonious. The Butoh dancer is constantly working to stay true to the speed of the material, this labour becomes the dance.

The commitment to listening to the body in Butoh practices creates awareness in the body that enhances the presence of the performer. Butoh activates the body's intelligence through listening and responding from a place that is not consumed by rational and socialised ideas on what a movement should be, or look like. It searches for the body's logic and responds from this logic. This is achieved through a process of absence in which the dancer allows the body to articulate its intimations of sensory experiences. The Butoh body's responses are not determined by rational ideas structured into movements, but by the sentience of the body. In conclusion, Butoh as a dance form can be seen as a process of becoming and embodiment that reveals the physical intelligence of the body. It is a research into movement that is essentially through the body, and from the body.

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Adrienne Sichel

Whose body is it anyway? Observations on the objectification and exotification of the (South) African dancing body

When a dancer, and specifically a dancer from Africa, sets foot on the stage (or enters a studio) culturally embedded preconceptions come into play. The black dancer may be considered to have the “wrong” feet, the “wrong” line, the “wrong” full-bodied silhouette, the “wrong” colour. The issue around black bodies on the South African ballet and contemporary dance stages first seriously surfaced as a heated topic of debate in 1990, during apartheid, when Jay Pather gave a paper at the Dance in our new decade forum discussion at Dance Umbrella in Johannesburg.” What is it that has been created as a blueprint for body type and body movement that is so exclusive, that is so difficult to attain that so few actually fit this description?” is one of the still pertinent questions he posed. Nelisiwe Xaba, from Dube, Soweto, who had been training at the Johannesburg Dance Foundation, would gradually answer Pather’s concerns (which he also rigorously addressed in his teaching and choreographies). Classical ballet was among Xaba’s subjects. Her physical shape counted against her but she persevered on a scholarship at London’s Rambert School of Ballet and Contemporary Dance. After collaborating extensively (in a tutu) with Robyn Orlin, since the late 1990s, as a dancer-choreographer Xaba began inventively confronting the exploitation of the black female performing body (inspired by Sara Baartman, the “Hottentot Venus”) and how she (Xaba) , and fellow Africans, are still regarded as “exotic” on European stages. Aesthetics prove to be in the eyes of the prejudiced, or informed, beholders.

Whose Body is it, anyway? Observations on the objectification and exotification of the (South) African dancing body

Adrienne Sichel

“To become part of a culture, discipline, or project, bones need interpreters – paleontologists, painters, sculptors, and kin. Stories must be told about them.”

Professor Kopane Rapele states this in the introduction to the Life of Bone – art meets science exhibition at University of the Witwatersrand’s Origins Centre (April-May 2011). He is of course referring to what is left after human remains- which turns out, are far from inanimate – are stripped of their flesh and musculature.

In living, breathing, form the dancer is that interpreter, that storyteller, for and about the human societies they are born into and develop in. But it makes a very big difference what that storyteller-in-motion looks like and how she, or he, is perceived by the people viewing her; or him, and within which cultural and socio-political context.

History, ancestry and genes, one of the chapters in the publication which accompanied the exhibition, is devoted to the internment of the remains of Sarah Baartman (1789 -1916), in Hankey, in the Eastern Cape, on August 9, 2002. Author Professor Himla Soodyall, a leading scholar in genetic diversity and human migratory patterns, at Wits University, graphically recounts how she handled Baartman’s brain and vaginal tissue salvaged from the Musee de l’Homme where they had been on display until 1974. This chapter includes Diana Ferrus's now famous poem welcoming Baartman home to her resting place.

Sarah Baartman, dubbed the “Hottentot Venus”, was a domestic worker who sought fame and fortune on the European stage in 1910. It is well documented how this idealistic Khoisan dancer was reduced to a freak show, in life and after death, starting in London and ending with her death in Paris in 1916. Sketches and paintings of her near naked form perpetuated her exoticism.

Not everything has changed since Sarah was so cruelly exploited. Centuries later, after the heyday of ethnological show business, when a dancer who deviates from the dominant culture’s aesthetic norm, and specifically a dancer from Africa, sets foot on the stage (or enters a studio) culturally embedded preconceptions can come into play.

In a theatre dance context, based on my own experience as a journalist and critic, the African dancer may be considered to have the “wrong” feet, the “wrong” line, the “wrong” full-bodied silhouette, or be the “wrong colour” (to be in a Swan Lake corps de ballet) . He, or she, may be deemed to be “exotic” or “primitive” or “erotic” when compared to the ethereal Caucasian or perhaps any other prototype.

This highly sensitive issue concerning the viewing, stereotyping and presentation of black bodies on the South African ballet and contemporary dance stages first seriously surfaced as a

heated topic of debate in 1990, during apartheid, when Jay Pather gave a paper at the Dance in our new decade forum discussion, at Dance Umbrella, in Johannesburg. Quote: "Dancer's bodies are trapped in images and therefore by definition a lack of reality. In South Africa body images of dancers are all the more ridiculous than if you want in Europe or America since the majority of the bodies in South Africa don't look that anyway and why should they? Why are there so few black women contemporary and ballet dancers? What is it? What is it that has been created as a blueprint for body type and body movement that is so exclusive, that is so difficult to attain, that so few actually fit this description?" (Quotation in Staffrider Special Edition Culture in Transition Vol 9 Number 4, 1991 p88). These are some of the still pertinent questions he posed about the relative absence of female black dancers in South African ballet and contemporary dance.

"In performance," writes Pather in his paper Dance In Search of Commonality (co-authored with Jazzart Dance Theatre in 1991, published in Staffrider Vol 9 Number 4, 1991 p88) "audiences need to see a whole cross section of body shape and body types, fully functional and toned so that dance in its essence as an experiential ritual and not just a visual narcissistic picture show, may flower."

In her teaching and choreography Sylvia Glasser was directly and indirectly exploring the same territory in respect of varied, representative, body shapes and particularly with the emphasis on the "experiential ritual" aspects. To the extent that when the ballet trained Glasser, who had since the mid 1970s been experimenting with fusing African rhythms and rituals with Western modern dance techniques and vocabularies, started the non-racial Moving Into Dance Community Dance Teacher's Training Course (CDTTC) in Braamfontein Johannesburg, in 1992, classical ballet technique was banned. Glasser and her institution were developing and refining the Afrofusion technique (developed since 1977) and edudance teaching methodology.

The theoretical component of the CDTTC curriculum offered anatomy and physiology; developmental psychology, edudance pedagogy and notably history and anthropology of dance. To quote Glasser in for the graduates about the graduates - The 10th Anniversary of the Community Dance Teachers Training Course booklet (p5) "At all times we have reflected both African and Western cultural values and aesthetics in our teaching."

A holistic, indigenously focused academic training approach as practiced notably by Jazzart, Moving into Dance and Siwela Sonke Dance Theatre has produced generations of not only African male dancer-choreographers but female dancers who are totally confident with their bodies. They have passed on their beliefs and skills to younger dancers through their teaching and choreography. Among the female trail blazers are Jazzart Dance Theatre's Dawn Langdown; Moving Into Dance's Portia Lebohang Mashigo, Constance Kau and Sonia Radebe; and Siwela Sonke Dance Theatre's Ntombi Gasa and Nelisiwe Rushalaung.

Nelisiwe Xaba, from Dube, Soweto, who had been training at the Johannesburg Dance Foundation (JDF), graduating from the Proficiency Certificate training Course in 1989, would gradually answer Pather's concerns (which he also continues to rigorously address in

his teaching at the University of Cape Town and choreographies and the Siwela Sonke Dance Theatre). Classical ballet – the Bournonville technique - was among Xaba’s subjects. Her physical shape counted against her but she persevered on a scholarship at London’s Rambert School of Ballet and Contemporary Dance.

In an unedited interview I conducted in 2009 for a profile which was published in *Art South Africa* (I dance as I wish Vol 8 2 December 2009) Xaba said “When I was young I never thought I would be a dancer. When I finished at the Johannesburg Dance Foundation I felt I had wasted four years of my life. I had to work another six years to get to where I am today. It takes 10 years.”

Responding to the question about not possessing the required hips, or silhouette, for a ballet dancer Xaba replied: “Nothing was right. I should have just stopped. It took me to want to do it on my own terms and not wait for a job. It took me to do doing five minute solos.”

Since 1997 till today she has been collaborating extensively (sometimes in a tutu) with Robyn Orlin. Firstly in the Vita Art Prize installation *Keep the home fires burning* then Orlin’s *Orpheus ... i mean Eurydice ... i mean the natural history of a chorus girl* (produced by The Market Theatre in 1998). Subsequently Xaba, on the strength of those five minute solos, has emerged as a highly individualistic dancer-choreographer in her own right inventively confronting the exploitation of the black female performing body. Using her own extensive international touring experience as a reference for her choreography she was mainly inspired by Sarah Baartman.

Two centuries on Xaba and fellow African artists have discovered, as they gratefully receive commissions and tour to international festivals and theatres, that they are still regarded as stereotypes on European stages. Aesthetics prove to be in the eyes of the prejudiced, or informed, beholders. When Xaba collaborated with Kettly Noel (who is based in Mali) on their *Correspondances* (2008) they tackled issues facing African dancers. Chief among them was, according to Xaba, “How we African artists present our work. If it is mainly seen in Europe it is important to acknowledge that consciously. Who is consuming what you are doing? You can either play with it or feed the consumer what they want.”

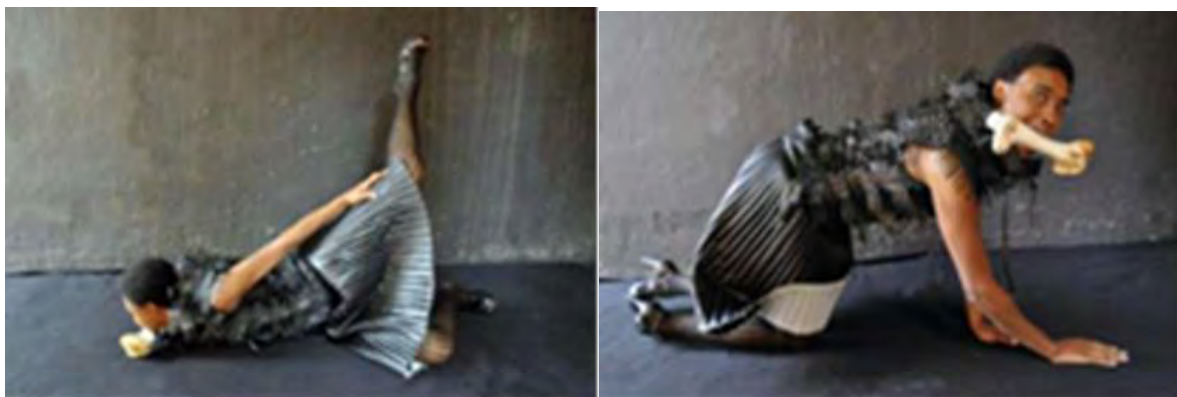
And are African artists viewed as exotic in Europe? “Oh, yes. The manager of the *Salia ni Seydou Company* from Burkina Faso told me they (*Salia Sanou and Seydou Boro*) did a piece in which they didn’t take their T shirts off. They heard girls saying it was so boring; they weren’t interested at all to see their work. They have fantastic bodies. I don’t do my work to sell my body, my body is an instrument. I could stand at the traffic lights in South Africa and just sell it.”

In *Rodney Place’s Couch Dancing* (A fictional biography of Sigmund Freud - A Sculpture & Performance Work choreographed by Robyn Orlin and curated by Stephen Hobbs at The Market Theatre August 13-22, 1998) a poster image has the performer, Nelisiwe Xaba, holding a slim line, knee length, white plaster cast against her naked body. The cast does not obscure her protruding posterior.

That silhouette became the focus of Xaba's *They Look at Me and That's All they Think* (2006) which she created in collaboration with Strangelove fashion designer and director Carlo Gibson. Xaba's deeply ironic sense of history and surrealistic theatricality was extended in *Sakhozi Says Non to the Venus* (2008), directed by Toni Morkel and designed by Strangelove, which was commissioned for the opening of the Musee de Quai Branley, in Paris, the institution which houses the ethnographic material previously housed by the Musee de l'Homme.



Nelisiwe Xaba Sakhozi performing her *They Look at Me and That's All they Think*
Picture: Suzy Bernstein



Satire, dance technique and conceptual ingenuity underpin Nelisiwe Xaba's *Sakhozi says 'non' to the Venus* directed by Toni Morkel. Picture: Suzy Bernstein

While *They Look at Me and That's All they Think* interrogated Baartman's experiences and paralleled them with her 21st century counterparts touring in Europe, Sakhozi deals more specifically with the 21st Century Venus and the xenophobic policies and attitudes affecting

African immigrants,. In the final section of this solo piece Xaba has her own visas printed on a cleaner's apron and headscarf.

This perspective of "the other" cannot be divorced from the general objectification of the female dancing body. Body as object. In the chapter *Standing in Awe, Sitting in Judgment* Julie Sandler (*Dancing Female lives and issues of women in contemporary dance* edited by Sharon E Friedler & Susan B Glazer: p197)) points out „the contradictions felt by most women raised in Western culture: how can a woman be an active subject when so many messages have indicated that she ought to aspire, above all, to be a beautiful object?"

How is that beauty defined? That question turns into a quagmire when applied to the African dancer, particularly females. If the dancer is not ultra-thin or ethereal (to meet mainly Western standards) is she merely "exotic", "full bodied" or "primitive"? To again quote Sandler "what does it say about a culture if the body is valued above all as object – for form independent of function? What does it say specifically about the female body in our culture?" (Subhead *Taking a Look at Looking* paragraph: p199).

From an African perspective dancers, in social and to extent theatrical contexts, do have a function. The community can dance to perform rituals (marriage, burial, initiation), to perform political protest, to heal. In certain communities the large body (male and female) can be regarded as a symbol of beauty or having attained wealth. Certainly at theatre or dance festivals I have attended in communities, or on stages, big (deemed to be overweight or obese in Western parlance) bodies tend to get a special reception as they appear. The appreciation soars when she, or he, prove to be masters of their chosen dance form - whether traditional dances or urban forms such as gumboots.

On the professional theatre dance stage it has been more difficult for large African bodies to be represented aggravated by the fact that post-apartheid the definition of "who is African" has become violently contested. My personal view is that there are two women – Siwela Sonke's *Ntombi Gasa* and The Forgotten Angle Theatre Collaborative's Tracey Human – who as artists (dancer-choreographers who are also experienced teachers) have championed artistic excellence on the South African stage with their well endowed bodies.

In her essay *Women in Dance*, published in the *Moving into Dance Mophatong History and Anthropology of Dance Research Projects* (2001- 2002) dancer- choreographer Constance Kau tackles how their gender and race has affected South African female dancers. The section the body as a dance instrument (p77) is introduced with two quotes. The first: "In African culture the body is an expressed symbol of „Muntu" (humanbeingness) and both male and female complement each other's beings. (KW Assante1998:276 *Sensuality and Sexuality as Dual Unity in African Dance*). The second is a passage from Friedler and Glazer (p177-8) describing the ravages and rigors of theatre dance training on the "ideal female dancer in many Eastern and Western theatrical styles".

Kau's response to this codification and body stereotyping is:"The above ideology excludes most women especially black women because they have voluptuous hips and breasts and overall the women gain weight more easily than their male counterparts. In contemporary

dance styles or post-modern dance the “perfect” body shape is not as much a necessity as it is in classical ballet. Women who are big bodied are given a chance.”

The writer-researcher singles out Sylvia Glasser, Jeannette Ginslov, Tracey Human, Gladys Agulhas and Robyn Orlin as choreographers who work with “dancers who are differently shaped. ... Dancers who are hard working and can deliver the job without conforming to the thin, delicate and vulnerable look.” (p177).

An antidote, if not a solution, to this slavish emulation of physical and aesthetic framing is being provided by a select number of dancers and choreographers from Africa (and notably South Africa). They are laying claim to their bodies which are shrouded in post colonial or post apartheid histories (or both). At the fault lines of gender, race and diverse ethnic identities they are creating performances, iconographies and discourses which dispel mythologies and explode preconceptions. After all, it is *their* bodies.

Linda Vargas (Lynn Fernandez)

Out the box: Flamenco dance for every (body) in the multicultural classroom

As a flamenco dancer and educator I have conducted many flamenco dance workshops at a number of schools. During many of these workshops I became increasingly concerned with what I observed happening in dance education at these schools and with the challenges and constraints which seemed to be affecting dance in education. I observed how in many instances classroom diversity as well as inadequate teacher training and supervision all seemed to result in dance being approached in a tokenistic way. I began to reflect on the educational and social factors challenging dance education in these schools. I then conducted a Qualitative Action Research with an Auto Ethnographic, Self Study approach using the Living Theory Methodology as a point of departure. I used my knowledge of Flamenco and dance education to devise a series of classes for primary school learners from diverse backgrounds. I obtained written consent from the school and parents, to video each class and together with learners and teachers I then critically reflected upon the experience. I became aware the educational and personal value of flamenco dance and of how it can provide learners from diverse backgrounds and physical abilities opportunity to be able to dance together.

Out the box: Flamenco dance for every (body) in the multicultural classroom

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Introduction

As a flamenco performer and dance educator, I have been invited to give numerous dance workshops at primary and high schools, primarily in KwaZulu Natal. During these workshops I have become increasingly concerned with how dance education was being marginalised in the curriculum in many of these schools. Even though dance had been officially introduced to the arts and culture curriculum, I discovered that it was facing many challenges. South Africa has emerged out of a divided past where we were „boxed“ and labelled during apartheid, and where thinking and culture was colonised by the colonisers. In my workshops, I observed how disrespect for diversity and other ways of being, still remains in many individuals and social formations. I observed the negative impact of this prejudice on dance in the school curriculum. In short, I observed that many teachers, and therefore their learners, were approaching dance education in a way which still evidenced boxed thinking.

In a new democracy like that of South Africa, nation building is regarded as vital to growth and prosperity. Soudien suggests that in addition to its educational challenges, South Africa has the task of trying “to build the nation” (Soudien, 2007: 8). In the schools that I visited, I observed how classes have become a reflection of the diversity of South African society and opportunities for meaningful intercultural interchange were highly sought after. I use the term „diversity“ to include differently abled learners and those whose bodies do not conform to the physical stereotypes of certain dance forms. I discovered that due to the sensitive nature of many dance forms having associations with cultural differences, their introductions at educational level were often challenging.

I began examining the educational aims of the South African Education Department together with other governmental policy documents. I discovered that one of the

operational principles of the Arts and Culture policy in education is that of “nation building,” where “mutual respect and tolerance ... facilitate the emergence of a shared cultural identity constituted by diversity” (Department of Arts, 1996: 7). Education which redresses the “past cultural biases and stereotypes” (Department of Arts, 1996: 11) is one of the goals of education in South Africa. “Dynamic interaction” of cultures is seen as possibly leading to “subtle cross pollination of ideas, words, customs, and art-forms, culinary and religious practices” (Department of Arts, 1996: 5). If movement is “common to all people, heedless of language and cultural barriers” (van Papendorp & Friedman, 1997: 5), I reasoned that perhaps dance is indeed highly suited to social interaction and healing.

Soudien suggests that “for better or worse, Africa is deep inside the global system” (2007: 11) and is engaged in a two-way process of globalisation where “Africanization or indigenous knowledge systems are *already* engaged in articulation with the global world” (Soudien, 2007: 10). He suggests, that those who endeavour to reform the educational curriculum and those who seek to implement its ideals are often misaligned, “where the school is being held to standards that the system is not *geared* to achieving” (Soudien, 2007: 16). In the case of dance education it is not so much the curriculum that is failing, but rather that our teachers are ill-prepared for both the standards they are expected to achieve and the diversity which continues to be challenged.

Why did I feel the need for intervention?

During my workshops at schools, I was led to enquire of the teachers that I spoke to how they were including dance in their classes. I discovered that for many of the teachers that I spoke to, dance education was more often than not, undervalued or misunderstood, and there was a general reluctance to include dance in their learning programmes. I began to ask these teachers what problems they were encountering. I discovered that few of the schools that I visited were able to employ specialist dance teachers to assist them, and so many generalist school teachers found themselves trying valiantly to include basic dance movements into the school plays at best, or avoiding dance altogether at worst. Some of the teachers that I interacted with were even asking learners to teach one another, while others invited guest dance companies to perform or give a workshop. While many of these interventions are valuable, I

believe they lack the continuity that dance requires for it to be able to play a meaningful role in shaping and influencing individual growth, as well as physical, emotional and psychological development.

At the schools I visited, I realised that dance is often viewed by teachers and students as a collection of boxes which are perceived to have limited or restricted access. These boxes are often placed into further boxes of classification as either art, cultural, urban, educational or professional dance. I observed that there are also the racial, cultural and gender „boxes“ which seem to be constraints. In the classes I taught, I came to realise that classical ballet is often regarded as elitist and predominantly suitable for European females, African traditional dance as belonging to certain tribes and cultures, Indian classical dance as belonging to Indian culture, and hip-hop, contemporary dance and jazz dance as basically reflecting American and youth sub-cultures. I observed how rejection of dance from certain learners was often based on physical, cultural, racial and gender preconceptions, and how many teachers did not have the knowledge, time or inclination to study dance in order to teach it effectively at even a basic level. Many of the teachers I spoke to had limiting perceptions of their own dance ability, („I can't dance.“ „I am uncoordinated.“ „I am nervous to teach dance.“ „I don't know how to do those dances“) which often prevented them from even trying to include dance in their classes. It is perhaps for these reasons that they chose to include music, drama and art, while dance was either ignored, or poorly taught.

The shortage of adequately qualified dance educators also concerns Sharon Friedman, (2006) dance educator at University of Cape Town. She identifies the need for dance educators who have been trained in all aspects of dance as well as child learning and development in education. She points out that this does not necessarily mean „dance studio teachers“. I feel this is perhaps due to the fact that dance education does not seem to have appropriate direction or overall „vision“ in order to maximise its educational potential in schools.

Lynn Maree (2004) in her examination of dance education in KwaZulu Natal (KZN), also found that dance in primary education was often the subject given to the class teacher to teach, which led to random lessons with very little shape, context or

connection to dance educational outcomes. Maree also attributes the lack of teacher expertise to the fact that there is no guiding encouragement taking place to assist teachers and to address the issues facing dance education in KZN. She found the educational outcomes for dance being fairly well approximated in the Crawford Schools in KZN. From my personal experience at this school, I would suggest that perhaps this is due to their specialist teacher expertise. All in all, Maree's findings resonated with mine.

I began to reflect on some of the enormous challenges I observed facing dance in education in many of the schools that I visited. I believe dance requires specialist technical expertise and that there are very few dancers or teachers who are able to master more than one or two dance styles to any degree of excellence. I believe that when dance is taught by someone with limited passion, knowledge or expertise, each dance style will be dishonoured to some extent. It is only in the hands of experts that each style can inspire and flourish. This raises further questions, which I do not intend to address here but do have implications for the rest of this paper. Who are these experts? How can they be integrated into mainstream dance education? Should their expertise and knowledge be used to guide dance education curriculums? What is the nature of the additional training they may require? How will they need to adapt their teaching techniques and pedagogy in order to embrace the diversity found in many classrooms?

I believe the way forward lies not in what is taught, but how it is taught. I believe the how of dance education should be examined in the light of the current diversities of more than one kind (e.g. socio-economic origin, culture, mother tongue, religion, race, differently abled, dis/advantaged) in many classrooms and that traditional approaches to dance education should perhaps be transformed to embrace this.

The values which informed my research approach

I do not believe that dance in education should be approached in the same way that dance is taught to willing volunteers. As an elective subject or extra mural activity it attracts students who are willing to learn to dance, whereas dance in mainstream education needs to engage many unwilling participants often from diverse backgrounds and abilities. This is where I believe modification of teaching and

pedagogy is required. The challenges which I observed in the schools that I visited are not unique but they are comprehensive and are exacerbated by dance experts who continue to ask “whose dance should be taught? To what end?” (Friedman, 2008: 131) and who insist upon certain physical and cultural stereotypes which often lead to exclusive, rather than inclusive practice.

In my teaching I have observed how in dance (as well as sport) the body is intrinsic to our “common ground” (van Papendorp & Friedman, 1997: 5). However dance moves one step further and explores the „common ground“ of emotions as well. Dance offers wonderful opportunities to explore the emotional worlds of different cultures or ways of being and provides opportunities for individuals to „connect“ at a fundamental level. In many ways this is also true of sport, but unlike sport, which often encourages a spirit of competitiveness, dance can penetrate to deeper levels where the emotions provide opportunities for „connection“.

I believe all people dance: whether it is for celebration, recreation, tradition, or religion. From the moment we are able to stand on our two legs and bob up and down families encourage the child’s innate ability to dance. During many years of teaching, I have observed how this innate capacity is often not developed further and in such instances, it is not uncommon that by adulthood the capacity and inclination to dance may completely disappear. Not only is this a personal capacity that is neglected and often lost, but I would suggest that it can also have social implications which extend beyond the individual into the fabric of family, community and workplace.

I have observed how encouraging children to dance together can lead to a shared joy, which can form the foundation of mutual respect and tolerance by finding „common ground“ through shared experience. While sport is able to encourage the breaking down of barriers in similar ways, dance often penetrates to different and even deeper levels of identity and commonalities and can also provide opportunity to embrace and include physical and „bodily“ diversity as well. I believe South Africa, with her divided past, is still in need of the opportunity for her people to connect. Dance provides a rich opportunity.

Why flamenco in education?

As I began to envision teaching flamenco in a „new“ way I realised that many would ask „why flamenco?“ particularly in Africa, and why choose to dance in a way that is not related to one’s inherited culture? I reflected on my own experience. I am South African by birth, but Flamenco, a dance originating in Spain, has encouraged me to embrace broader perspectives of other cultures which extend beyond my immediate culture and to shape an identity and a „voice“ that I could not find in the culture into which I was born. Kaplan reflects: “... speaking a foreign language ... is a chance for growth, for freedom, for liberation from the ugliness of our received ideas and mentalities” (Kaplan in Palmer, 1998: 26). I realise this may not be true for everyone, but it has been true for me and therefore may be so for others. I reasoned that those who felt that their inherited culture did name them may still perhaps benefit from becoming aware of how others dance and another way of being. I reasoned further that if this was so, then flamenco in education may provide opportunities to explore plurality of identity in a way that helps to transcend cultural, racial and gender divisions and to break down the barriers of boxes of racial categorisation.

Flamenco is concerned with individual emotional experience and this is intrinsically linked to the social experience. In the origins of flamenco, people came together from various cultural and religious backgrounds to dance and to share and support one another in their mutual suffering and search for emotional release. Flamenco developed out of a multicultural interchange (Pohren, 1980; Mitchell, 1994; Leblon, 1995; Edwards, 2000). The marginalised or excluded in Spanish society, expressed their individual emotional pains and joys in a community of empathetic sharing which evolved into an oral tradition of song and dance called flamenco. These multicultural origins of flamenco (Jewish, Islamic, Protestant, Gypsy, Catholic, Greek, Indian etc) suggested to me the possibility of shared experience amongst individuals who were different in a number of ways.

Sen, (2007) suggests that individual identity has many aspects which should not be regarded as fixed, but that can change, so that one can and does choose much of our individual identity. One person can be a South African citizen, of French origin, with African ancestry, a Christian, a man, a dancer, a school teacher, a feminist, and a heterosexual, a supporter of gay rights, a tennis fan, a pianist, and an

environmentalist. According to Sen, (2007) these affiliations may not all have equal priority for the individual and in fact, may also change in order of priority in different circumstances. He suggests that while some aspects of identity may not be changed, some affiliations are in fact a matter of choice.

From my personal experience, I believe this to be so. When I was introduced to flamenco it became the lens through which I viewed the world: an opportunity to experience life beyond the culture into which I was born. My exposure to flamenco has enriched my understanding of self and others which has extended beyond my given culture. Palmer suggests that we are “drawn to a body of knowledge because it sheds light on our identity as well as on the world ... we did not merely find a subject to teach - the subject also found us” (1998: 25) Palmer quotes Alison Kaplan, a French language teacher, who questioned why people would want to adopt another culture. Kaplan then gives the following response: “Because there’s something in their own which they don’t like, that doesn’t name them.”(Kaplan in Palmer, 1998: 25)

I believe that all children can benefit from discovering what names them (Palmer, 1998: 25). I have come to realise that this is perhaps one of the advantages of growing up in a multicultural society where everyday interaction with other cultures may provide such possibility. I feel privileged to have benefitted from a dance education and have come to realise the educational and personal value of dance and flamenco. I was fortunate in that I had parents who could afford to pay for private dance tuition and therefore I was given the opportunity to explore more fully what named me. I am saddened by the fact that this opportunity is not available for all children.

I reflected on my own teaching and began to examine it in light of the diversity I was encountering during my workshops at schools. I began to realise that if I wished to embrace diversity that perhaps my teaching practice and pedagogy needed to transform. This transformation would require me to search for new vantage points from which to examine what was, what is, and what could be. In this I was mindful of Smuts ...

... I wish to emphasise how important it is, not merely to continue the acquisition of knowledge, but also to develop new view-points from which to envisage all our vast accumulated material of knowledge. (Smuts, 1927: 6)

I decided to design and teach a series of classes for primary education using flamenco dance as a framework to address some of my concerns. I chose flamenco because it is the dance form I am passionate about. I also believe its stamping and clapping techniques are accessible to a majority of people and that it can embrace and include all nature of physiques and body types. During my research I became more aware of the profound personal and social benefits of flamenco in education through my intervention.

My theoretical framework

As a child, I began my dance studies with classical ballet and have performed and taught dance for many years. I was introduced to flamenco (a style of music and dance which originated in Andalusia, Spain) when I attended a professional performance of flamenco at the age of fourteen. As a third generation, white South African girl, of European descent, I gradually became aware of the fact that identity is complex and that my inherited culture did not fully resonate with my inner, personal being. I felt compelled to study flamenco. Sen's theory of what he calls "the illusion of a singular identity" (2007: 8) highlights the importance of recognising the individual's ability to reason and choose aspects of their identity, as opposed to "unquestioning acceptance of received beliefs," (Sen, 2007: 9). I felt fortunate in that I stumbled across flamenco which has allowed me to express myself in a way that transcends my inherited culture.

Sen's view of multiculturalism asks whether human beings:

Should be categorised in terms of inherited traditions, particularly the inherited religion of the community in which they happen to be born, taking that un-chosen identity to have automatic priority over the affiliations involving politics profession, class, gender, language, literature, social involvements and many other connections?

Or should they be understood as a person with many affiliations and associations the priorities over which they must themselves choose ... (2007: 150)

Sen regards the neglect of the plurality of affiliations and the need for freedom of choice to decide on the priorities of these affiliations, as helping to sustain the illusion of a unique and choice-less identity imprisoning people into boxes. He suggests that an important goal of multiculturalism should be to “enhance the capabilities of children to live „examined lives“ as they grow up in an integrated country” (Sen, 2007: 160). To this end, he highlights the importance of providing children with opportunities to learn about the diversity of world cultures and to learn to reason and understand the choices that human beings can and do make.

I believe this to be true and that dance education provides unique opportunities to explore world culture (including what individual cultures regard as the ideal body for dance), while simultaneously allowing children to discover what may name them. It seems to me that Sen is suggesting that sharing is inherent to individual growth. I believe as I share who I am with another, both of us potentially become open to change and transformation as well as connection. I would argue that it is this mutual interchange which informs individual and collective learning and forms the foundation of an empathetic society.

During my workshops, I also encountered the gender stereotypes that certain cultures often instil. The perception was often that boys do not dance; that dance is effeminate, or that certain dances are restricted for males or females only. I observed how this can, and often does, leave some boys at a further disadvantage as they struggle to overcome these misconceptions. I observed how perceptions of dance were often related to perceptions of race, culture and gender with the effects of being boxed into categories still in evidence.

South African dance educator Lliane Loots, has explored some of the gender gaps or boxes that came to be associated with dance in the past, and how many of these issues are still evident in South Africa (Loots, 1995). She suggests that assumptions regarding what is appropriate feminine behaviour and what is not appropriate masculine behaviour are heavily embedded in the stereotyping involved with classical

ballet training and appear to have infiltrated other dance forms as well. In my experience this is so. The teachers I interacted with mentioned that many boys were often reluctant to have their masculinity challenged by what they perceived to be a feminine activity.

In dance education, there are those who believe dance education should aim for and achieve professional standards and there are those who believe it should embrace educational values (Smith-Autard, 1994). I believe this division continues to incapacitate the progress and successful implementation of dance into the classroom and that dance can embrace both simultaneously. I concur with Smith-Autard who suggests that new models for dance education should be sought which extends beyond the professional and educational aims.

I examined the requirements for dance education (Education, 2002), and I began to wonder if it would be possible for me to teach flamenco in a way that was inclusive, skills-orientated, educationally relevant, as well as accessible and enjoyable for a diversity of learners with diverse physiques and abilities. In order to envisage a way forward, I critically reflected on my experience as a language and drama educator, as well as my dance experience as teacher, performer and examiner. I tried to embrace the skills development of professionals as well as the values of educationalists (Smith-Autard, 1994). My critical question became: “How do I aim to respect diversity and simultaneously embrace educational and professional standards?” I realised that my introduction of flamenco needed to be carefully considered. I did not want to instil misperceptions of dance or culture.

My research methodology

I used the Living Theory Methodology of Jack Whitehead and Jean McNiff as an approach to Action Research which explores the lived experiences of individuals. It demonstrates how within any lived experience, individuals may experience living contradictions and living standards of judgement can be used to explain these contradictions and individual influence (Whitehead and Mc Niff, 2006). Whitehead explains that:

A living theory is an explanation produced by an individual for their educational influence in their own learning, in the learning of others and in

the learning of the social formation in which they love and work. (2009b: 104)

I decided to use this approach to action research as “a form of self reflective practice” (Mc Niff, 2002: 6). In Living Theory, the methodology of an individual emerges during the enquiry and its form is unique in accordance with the individual’s ability to be inventive (Whitehead, 2009a). In this way what I did, and why I did it became a reflection of my inventiveness as well as a reflection of my embodied values and beliefs in interaction. This allowed my methodology to emerge during the research process.

In a living theory methodology the individual includes the unique constellation of values that are used to give meaning and purpose to their existence. In the course of the enquiry these values are expressed, clarified and evolved as explanatory principles in the explanations of educational influence in learning (Whitehead, 2009b: 112).

There are certain qualities which are characteristic of a Living Theory Methodology: the use of „I“ as a living contradiction, action reflection cycles, personal and social validation and inclusion of values and principles to explain educational influence (Whitehead, 2009a). For this reason, the „I“ in my report became inseparable from the values which informed my practice and my methodology.

I also used the Auto Ethnographic approach of Ellis (2004), which endeavours to align culture and self. I also used the Self Study approach of Pithouse et al:

Part of the strength of many self-studies is a holistic approach that acknowledges the intersection of the personal and the professional. Perhaps because studying the self almost inevitably leads to reflective critique, there is certain dissatisfaction with the *status quo* and a concern about change, social justice and professional action (2009: 58).

This dissatisfaction with the *status quo* led me to seek alternatives. Margaret Farren suggests that there is a need for individuals to have a space in education “to develop their own voices” (2008: 65). I believe “All theories are hypotheses created by

people” (Zuber-Skettitt, 1992: 57). I began a process of reflexive critique where my self study became enriched by my interaction with others and resulted in concern about change transforming into social action.

Schön (1983: 55) explains the process of critical reflection “in” and “on” action in order to understand and improve practice. I discovered that I, as a dancer, have been engaged in this process of critical reflection for my entire career. I have come to realise that in order to refine and improve my teaching practice, individual critical reflection is essential for progress. It felt natural for me to transfer this practice to my research.

For Jean McNiff and Jack Whitehead (2005), there are two important reasons why teachers should do action research: firstly to improve practice, and secondly to generate new theory. McNiff and Whitehead suggest that teachers rather than external researchers are best placed to evaluate and improve their own work and that teachers should be able to improve practice, as well as generate new theory and knowledge. They also suggest that sometimes one’s research is inspired by the fact that something is working well and you want to describe what is happening. You want to explain what you did and why you did it so that others can see how you evaluated your work and they too can learn from it.

What did I do and how did I do it?

I enrolled for a master’s degree in education and conducted a pilot study with grade five learners at a girl’s school in Durban. I reflected on my lifelong experience of being a dancer and a dance teacher, and of the pilot study, and then devised a course of eight, one hour classes for a class of grade seven learners at a co-educational school in Durban. I tried to adapt my understanding of traditional flamenco in order to align it with the aims of the educational curriculum and other relevant theory, in order to introduce it to a diversity of learners. During this stage of the study, regular critical reflection helped me modify my pedagogy and teaching techniques in accordance with my aims and values.

I did not impose traditional flamenco style but allowed learners to express their individuality through their movements as they interpreted the choreography. I focused on developing sound clapping and stamping techniques, using the body to express

emotions and engaging learners in in-depth critical thinking. My aim was to engage learners in a holistic learning experience. I tried to encourage respect for individual difference as well as mutual collaboration. I did this by dividing the class up into smaller groups to allow students to reflect on their own and others' progress. I encouraged them to clap the rhythm for one another and to develop sensitivity to each performer's needs and skills. I also encouraged them to give constructive critique rather than destructive criticism. I established a safe space by introducing my only class rule: no laughing at, only laughing with one another. In this way I encouraged maximum participation and reduced the fear of peer ridicule when students took emotional and physical risks.

I linked the individual experience to the social experience in order to develop awareness of common ground and individuality. I did this by incorporating many „times of reflection“ where I stopped the class and we sat down as a group to reflect individually and collectively on experience. I tried to make work fun wherever possible and to encourage an atmosphere of mutual respect and trust, especially when individual's performances and abilities were critiqued. I gave each class a basic structure and a specific educational focus:

- Intellectual and physical skill
- Emotional expression
- Group work
- Partner work
- Creativity
- Communication
- Skills development and
- Performance.

Evaluation of my intervention

I asked learners and teachers for written, as well as oral reflections on their experience. When I reflected on these together with the videos of the classes, I discovered evidence that their learning had been influenced and mediated by my aims and values of inclusion, respect, enjoyment, skills development, critical thinking and love. We all observed profound individual and collective transformation of

perceptions. These included transformations of perceptions of self, others, dance education as well as the development of heightened group empathy in a class previously described as „divided“. All reflections of participants included an overwhelming sense of enjoyment and awareness of personal and group transformation.

We observed on the videos how children from a diversity of backgrounds and abilities were able to dance together as one. I realised that flamenco can be experienced in a way that individuals do not have to conform to a physical racial or gender ideal, which they may not see as achievable or desirable. Learners who had been previously excluded due to dyslexia or hearing impediments were able to participate in a profoundly meaningful way with the rest of the class. The child with dyslexia admitted after only one lesson that she had „let go of her fear of dancing“. Individual and group empathy developed when emotional experiences were shared and I observed improved ability in critical thinking as the course progressed. With the use of „private performance“, I realised that respect for the sacredness of the moment can be encouraged through dance as private experience within the group.

A hearing impaired learner who had been isolated from his peers showed the courage to dance silently in front of his peers. I realised how when given a safe environment all could potentially find their voice and speak. I observed how this physical voice, as opposed to the vocal or literal voice, is intrinsically linked to the emotions expressed through body movement. Another learner previously described of as „at risk“, discovered his incredible innate talent as a dancer resulting in increased self esteem, peer approval and transformation - for the better - of his behaviour and academic performance in school.

There was evidence that the basic stamping and clapping actions were accessible to learners who had had little or no exposure to dance and found great appeal amongst the boys. Those with previous dance experience found the timing and musical phrasing stimulating and engaging. I saw evidence that my choreography challenged and stimulated learners of various abilities and engaged their emotional, physical, spiritual and intellectual abilities in holistic or inclusive learning. (Smuts, 1927; Rayner, 2004) We – the learners, their teacher and I - observed how the body is one of

the most honest forms of communication and became aware of how the truth of the individual and the moment can be powerfully communicated by the body.

I saw evidence that children of all abilities and backgrounds can benefit from developing an understanding of their body as communicator and gaining more control and awareness of this ability. The lifelong scholarship of Marcel Jousse (1886-1961), focused on the “original language” of man being “corporeal” (Sienaert, 1990: 96). He identified the “corporeal – manual” (Sienaert, 1990: 96) expression of the body and concluded that the whole body communicating the thoughts and emotions of the individual was “the most faithful form of human communication” (Conolly, 2002: 3). This was confirmed by students and teachers in written and verbal reflections, revealing how they had engaged in the experience at a far deeper level than merely learning the steps and made profound shifts in their confidence and understanding of self and others.

What are the broader implications of this research?

The new knowledge which emerged from my intervention was my understanding of an approach to flamenco dance which is out-the-box: value-driven, inclusive and educationally-relevant. While such an approach may not be able to be fully generalised, I do believe aspects may be transferable. While I retained many elements of flamenco in its pure form in my teaching, I transformed traditional approaches to one which was value-driven. Many flamenco purists may reject this transformed approach, fearing the contamination of flamenco and its consequential transformation into something unrecognisable. I cannot help but reflect upon the fact that transformation is inevitable in any dance form whenever it interacts with new social influences. This is the organic nature of dance: it is continually influencing and being influenced. Flamenco is no exception.

My new perspective of flamenco in education has allowed me to envisage other dance styles also possibly being approached in similar ways. I am in no way suggesting that the purity of original forms be abandoned. There will always be those who will wish to study the dance style in its pure form and hopefully, there will be those who wish to teach it that way. What I am suggesting is that perhaps a midway approach could assist the successful integration of dance into mainstream education, especially in the

early years of education. Here, skill and expertise that are grounded in educational values could be encouraged, so that dance becomes a holistic experience and contributes to the wellbeing of individuals as well as society.

I believe first impressions are lasting ones and for this reason, I feel compelled to insist on general education experts being given the opportunity to engage the young in early dance studies. I do, however, feel that these experts may need further training in the educational aims and values of dance. I believe that the success of my research may well have been due to the years of experience that I have had teaching and dancing flamenco, as well as due to my many years of engagement in education. The overwhelming positive responses of the teacher and learners to their experiences (including written and oral responses), have confirmed my belief that all children can benefit from a values-based dance education.

Currently, as dance struggles to find purpose and place in education, the age-old adage of „united we stand, divided we fall“ seems to take on new relevance. If dance educationalists become exclusionary and box dance into traditional packaging imposing traditional standards for exclusive use by a select few, I believe they will continue to divide the world of dance from within. I believe the diversity within the dance box should be embraced. Continuing to fuel the debates of whose dance is more suitable or worthy of a place in mainstream education seems pointless. This results in a general stalemate as dance practitioners continue to place the various dance styles in hierarchical formation, according to their own perceptions of educational or professional value. Until this division is addressed, I believe the spirit of discontent and competitiveness will continue to paralyse the progress of dance in education. Dance experts and educationalists need to align their vision for dance: the challenge then becomes not what, or whose dance should be taught, but how.

Africa faces many challenges in education.

Against a backdrop of declining educational performance, at both the systemic level and that of learner performance ... no one will deny that Africa faces many challenges ... the general picture of African educational systems is bleak ... schools are not functioning, children are not performing adequately and teachers appear to be failing. (Soudien, 2007: 7)

The South African Department of Education continues to seek solutions for the challenges it faces in trying to improve education for all. The Revised National Curriculum Statement (RNCS) attempted to do that (Education, 2002), but Outcomes Based Education (OBE) has met with much opposition (Schalock, 2001) and the Department of Education is once more searching for alternatives as the curriculum continues to be revised. When a curriculum attempts to embrace the diversity and complexities of a multicultural society, I believe challenges emerge. I would suggest systemic and other social issues have enormous influence in the classroom and that solutions may lie beyond the parameters of curriculum. As the OBE curriculum exits and the new curriculum (The Curriculum and Assessment Policy) is yet to make an entrance, I am left wondering if dance will be even further marginalised as the Creative Arts curriculum falls under the Life Skills learning area in the intermediate phase. With teachers under pressure to cover so many components and teach so many skills, there is the likelihood that dance may slip under the radar.

Focus on teacher training will assist the challenge of how to open the boxes of dance styles available in South Africa in a way that includes and transcends professional and educational values. Here, learners can be encouraged to respect difference in the broadest possible sense, while simultaneously searching for common ground. The contents of each box needs careful examination and adaptation to suit a diversity of learners including the physically-challenged (Samuel, 2008). This requires respect for such diversity as well as for the dance form being introduced. Dance has many flavours and I believe young learners should be encouraged to taste as many as possible in the primary phase in order to decide if they would like to choose any as a main course. This introduction of the various dance styles to the unaccustomed palate is where I feel vision and skill are required. Understanding of culture, depth of knowledge of dance and teaching techniques as well as educational values is required.

Just as the human voice speaks in many languages so the human body uses many languages to communicate. Learning to speak or dance in different tongues, helps to open the lid of many boxes and reveal wonderful new opportunities for connection and intercultural awareness which may help to encourage respect for diversity. Here I use the term „diversity“ in its broadest sense to include physical ability as well.

Perhaps young children in a multicultural society should be introduced to a wide variety of dance styles in order to allow them to choose which, if any, they are drawn to and to provide them with enriching ways of sharing difference. This may also assist those learners who are physically challenged to find a dance form which aligns with their physical mental and emotional being. It may also allow them to avoid the pitfalls of the often idealised search for the perfect body for dance, or the cultural exclusivity of many dance forms.

Flamenco with its multicultural origins, gender inclusivity and physical accessibility provided me with a perfect framework to introduce dance to a diversity of learners. I now suggest that perhaps values based flamenco could be used to introduce dance to a multicultural classroom where diverse boundaries seem to divide and thereafter other dance forms may receive less resistance. I can only speculate on such ideas but am left wondering ...

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Steven Van Wyk and Christy Giesler

Ballet Blanc or Ballet White? Unpacking Whiteness in South African Ballet

The Post-colonial moment is one in which critiques of whiteness have risen to prominence in discourse, such as Critical Whiteness Studies. We propose that critiques of whiteness in relation to ballet are salient in post-apartheid South Africa. In the course of this debate-style discussion, Steven and Christy seek to unpack ballet through the lens of Critical Whiteness Studies. Drawing from the global discourse on whiteness, arguments from international authors on the subject are transposed onto the politicised existence of ballet in South Africa. After facilitating a broad understanding of the field of Critical Whiteness Studies, the paper explores how the history of ballet in South Africa has positioned the art form in a particular way vis-a-vis whiteness. Working from our perception that ballet in South Africa seems to have reached a stalemate, we propose avenues through which ballet may find new inspiration and direction – namely through focussing reflexively on ballet’s own purported whiteness. To model or understand how this reflexivity may manifest, we consider examples from extreme ends of the spectrum – George Balanchine in America and Dada Masilo in South Africa. The debate-style format of the presentation encourages a multiplicity of perspectives, including those of the audience, whose opinions will hopefully be provoked and voiced.

Ballet Blanc to Ballet Black? Unpacking Whiteness in South African Ballet

By Steven van Wyk and Christy Giesler

Introduction

If I say “ballet”, what do you think? I'll tell you what I think - Pointe shoes, long-limbed ballerina, white tulle, pale floaty chiffon, classical music... and above all else, a skinny white female. And maybe if I stretch my imagination a little further I can include high legs, acrobatic partnerwork, exciting jumps, etc... I can also tell you what most people think – and I mean the man on the street – Ballet is white people's dancing.

And if the perception exists that ballet is a dance of white folk... why is that so? Why does the perception persist? And what can we do with that information.

Whiteness

Judy Helfand, a prominent author on Whiteness, defines whiteness in America as

A body of knowledge, ideologies, norms and particular practices that have been constructed over the history of the American colonies and the US with roots in European history (Helfand:1).

Although her definition is focussed on America, whiteness globally is associated with privilege, dominance and oppression. Everywhere, it seems, constructions of whiteness function to maintain race and class hierarchies that benefit “white” people (ibid).

Whiteness is a social construction that is contingent. This is evident by the manner in which the meaning of whiteness has shifted over centuries, with its continual reconstructions happening in ways that predominantly privilege white people. Understanding what constitutes something/someone as “white” has evolved over a long period of time. For example, Italian and Irish immigrants to the United States who, although initially seen as non-white by American citizens of European descent

who had naturalized earlier in American history, later came to be seen as “white” through a process of social integration during the nineteenth century.

Critical whiteness studies

The origins of Critical Whiteness Studies are primarily found in the writings of early twentieth century African-American scholar-activists, especially labour historians, interested in analysing the economic components of white privilege. The chief exponent of these early analyses is W.E.B Du Bois, the civil rights activist. Since the major social problems facing African-Americans at this time were in relation to white people, it is unsurprising that studies of whiteness continued almost exclusively from African-American writers, such as Malcolm X and Ralph Ellison. Later in the twentieth century, with the rise of post-structuralism the field turned introspectively to an examination of the social construction of whiteness.

Critical Whiteness Studies continued to prosper due to the rise of cultural studies in the 1990s, when the construction of whiteness in cultural products, especially film and literature, came under scrutiny (McKinney, 2005:14). Although dance scholars, such as Brenda Dixon-Gottschild (2005) have examined blackness, it is only more recently that Performance Studies has cast a critical gaze toward issues of whiteness.

Invisible Centrality

The dominance of whiteness is maintained chiefly through its invisibility.

Cultural studies critic Richard Dyer comments that

trying to think about the representation of whiteness as an ethnic category in mainstream film is difficult, partly because white power secures its dominance by seeming not to be anything in particular (quoted in McKinney, 2005:14).

Whiteness’ invisibility is dependent on its centrality, the way in which it is positioned as the “norm”, or the “unmarked”.

it is the way black people are marked as black (and not just ‘people’) in representation that has made it relatively easy to analyse their representation, whereas white people – not as a category and everywhere as a fact – are difficult, if not impossible to analyse qua white (quoted in Bonnett, 1997:173).

Why look at ballet through the lens of critical whiteness studies?

Interestingly, the fallacy of universality comes up prominently in studies of both whiteness and ballet. One of the key myths of ballet is that it is *the* central, neutral position in dance, from which other forms follow and/or are located peripherally. As with whiteness, ballet is often connected to ideas of the 'classical' and therefore 'superior/basic/generic'. This connection is reinforced by ballet's historic connection with Western-European and Northern-American (read white) culture.

Critical studies of ballet through the lens of whiteness are currently thin on the ground, although gaining momentum as a locus of study. Dance studies, as with the social sciences broadly, has focused historically on marginalized “others” to generate critiques of queerness, blackness, femaleness etc.

Scholars writing in the Critical Whiteness Studies attempt to “avert the critical gaze from the racial object to the racial subject; from the described and imagined to the describers and imaginers; from the serving to the served”.

It has been historically ignored that ballet is as much an ethnic dance as the ethnic dances that colonials sought to have replaced. Hawaiian anthropologist Joann Kealiinohomoku describes the resistance with which she was met when she analyzed ballet as an ethnic dance in her renowned article “An Anthropologist looks at ballet as a form of ethnic dance” (2001). This essay was ground-breaking when it was first published in 1969 because it revealed how western ethnocentrism had positioned ballet so centrally as a form of dance that it seemed to exist aculturally as a universal art form, “the assumption being” as Rob Baum explains, “that Europeans derived the ballet through organic action and cosmological efficacy, or as a matter of ontology”, and not as the product of a particular cultural heritage, that of “Caucasians who speak Indo-European languages and who share a common European tradition”. “By ethnic dance, anthropologists mean to convey the idea that all forms of dance reflect the cultural traditions within which they developed”. Once again, the idea that ballet is 'above enquiry' is reinforced by its heritage of connection with white elitism and hegemonic white power. However, when we look at ballet through the lens of whiteness as a cultural phenomenon, we discover that just as whiteness is just another *other*, so too is ballet is yet another *other*.

Political Pointes: Ballet in South Africa

Whiteness is slippery due to its invisibility, which helps avoid confronting racist legacies. Yet since the canon of South African ballet historically excluded black voices and kept whiteness invisible, not many studies of South African dance have focused on representations of whiteness. No doubt, its history as the 'untouchable' nobility of South African dance has created the illusion (for various reasons) that it is above such academic endeavour, but the reality is that it is, in fact, an illusion.

I believe that whiteness and ballet mutually reinforced one another's construction of superiority. If one considers that the ideology of colonialism was built on the premise of white European supremacy and that "theatrical performance has long been utilized as the disseminator of a dominant ideology" (Gainor, 1995:xiii), then one must consider the ways in which ballet disseminated this ideology of white European supremacy. Ballet, historically positioned as "beautiful" and "high art", developed in Europe from the Renaissance era with the white body at its metaphorical centre, aesthetically and in the cultural fabric of the stories being told. Although not created in response to colonialism, the whiteness at the heart of ballet could nonetheless be employed as colonialism's handmaiden to exclude white Europe's "others" from white ideas of beauty and high art.

Nineteenth-century Europe defined itself through the ways in which it constructed the idea of the "savage" as its opposite, whose primitivism, wildness, and lack of sophistication could hold a mirror up to Europe in which to see her civility and sophistication (Trouillot, 1991). The construction of colonial whiteness stood in direct opposition to the perception of the "savage" that they encountered (read invented).

European colonial powers spread around the globe their influence, control, and cultural products - cultural products, such as classical ballet, in which particular constructions of race, the body and feminine beauty were congealed. Under British colonial rule, South Africa inherited ballet, as well as the western European ideas of the body that came with it. Ballet is implicated in the "civilising process" of colonial culture, providing one model that could be employed in attempts to control, regulate and outlaw the overly erotic and disorderly "native dances" (Reed, 1998).

Freed from colonial rule, one would assume that the Afrikaner Nationalist Party Government would abandon ballet - a cultural product brought to South Africa by the English, from whom the Afrikaners had long sought independence - as a primary cultural and artistic proponent. Quite to the contrary, ballet prospered under the Afrikaner Nationalist Party government, who supported the art form with extensive state-funding, with the condition that only white dancers would perform (Friedman, 2010). “The apartheid government used ballet in much the same way that Nazi Germany did. They took these really athletic forms; they made it the hallmark of rectitude: the ideal body” (Pather, 2010). Where ballet took place was also important in terms of its socio-historical meanings in South Africa. The whites-only Nico Malan Theatre (now Artscape), which became a “symbol of cultural apartheid”, was where CAPAB was resident ballet company (Van Heerden, 2008:38). The apartheid government supported ballet because it could use the traditional centrality of the white body in ballet to exclude non-white bodies from the stage as well as the audiences of certain theatres, while reinforcing the notion of the white dancing body as the ideal – reinforcing its white supremacist agenda.

After the fall of the Apartheid regime, one would have imagined that whiteness, as a significant cultural influence, would gradually lose its power in South Africa. Ironically, since our once-scorned country rejoined the global stage, South Africans have been increasingly exposed to global flows of European and especially American culture disseminated via powerful channels of mass communication and entertainment. In her article on cyberwhiteness, Vicki Carter, for example, outlines how

neo-expansionism and neo-colonialism [are] facilitated by technologies. Eurocentrism and contemporary configurations of cultural imperialism are sweeping into new cyber-territories (1998:271).

This means that despite the obvious removal of white-owned government power, whiteness, as a privileged global signifier, still maintains a virtual invisibility and a position of centrality in the public mind. The grip of whiteness on the South African psyche becomes evident in fashion magazines, in the way in which ideals of beauty based on white bodies are unquestioningly promoted. The billion-rand market for

hairpieces that mimic the straight hair of Caucasian women, as well as the market for skin-lightening creams for black South African women is testament to the centrality of whiteness. Concealed in the consumerist agenda of the global market is the privileged position of whiteness in the commodification of beauty.

Black to the Future

It is not that there is anything wrong with ballet per se at the moment in this country, it is more that there could be something more right about it, more fitting with the times and the feel of a generation. Our opinion is that there are two chief ways in which ballet, for us, could align itself more strongly with the current South African socio-cultural milieu: by finding a more postmodern sensibility, and secondly by finding a more South African voice.

So how do you reconcile the desire for a contemporary sensibility with the traditionalism and historical baggage that accompany ballet?

By postmodernism we are not referring to the avant garde, but rather to a sensibility which has developed over time, at first as a response to modernism, and now as a dominant typology of culture and imagination.

To quote Ihab Hassan: “The concept of postmodernism assumes a theory of innovation or cultural change” (Hassan, 1981:31). The postmodern period is marked by continuity and discontinuity, thus “sameness and difference, unity and rupture, filiation and revolt, all must be honoured if we are to attend to history, apprehend change” (ibid:32).

So where in our proposal for ballet's future would we see the continuity and discontinuity which Hassan ascribes to a postmodern sensibility? The key is not to search for the way to do things, but rather to learn that a shift in the way practitioners think about the raw material usually leads to radical innovation – this innovation usually involves processes of alteration, deconstruction, reconstruction, re-invention, integration and even rejection in one phase or another. However, in order allow a post-modern sensibility to inform the creative process, the artist must let go of

insecurities and think outside the box. The form provides continuity while what we do with it undergoes constant innovation.

Perhaps by embracing a more 'post-modern' or contemporary mindset, ballet will be able to draw on (perhaps playfully, perhaps ironically, perhaps critically) its traditional associations, connotations and baggage to redefine itself.

How have choreographers historically found a way to use continuity and discontinuity to re-invigorate ballet? Well, George Balanchine captured the American public's imagination and drew audiences to ballet by blending classicism and modernity with a healthy dose of American personality (rhythms and dynamism capturing a sense of American energy, bold, brash, and vibrant). On the other end of the spectrum, Dada Masilo has been a commercial hit because she found a way to inject her Afro-contemporary works with the spirit of the times and a genuine South African flavour and voice through a critical engagement the western canon. There is thus continuity and departure.

Mirror, mirror on the wall... who's the fairest of them all?

- On Reflexivity

How could ballet find an authentic South African voice? One approach to South Africanising ballet has been to draw musically, thematically, or in terms of costuming and design from black South African culture. One can layer ballet superficially with distilled and finessed elements borrowed from an "other", but the overall effect of this is akin to the *divertissement* found in many ballets – it is merely ballet with a Chinese accent.

As black feminist Bell Hooks argues

When race and ethnicity become commodified as resources for pleasure, the culture of specific groups, as well as the bodies of individuals, can be seen as constituting an alternative playground where members of dominating races, genders, sexual practices affirm their power over intimate relations with the Other (quoted in Koza, 2003:101).

There is another option - a reflexive approach to the whiteness of ballet would enable one to find a South Africanness in ballet without resorting to appropriation. This

reflexivity does not seek to make ballet not white, or black, or queer... but by exposing the whiteness of ballet, this whiteness can be explored, providing stimulus and inspiration for new South African avenues for ballet.

One of the ways in which Masilo has done this is by commenting on whiteness, and particularly the whiteness of ballet. She employs the ballet *Swan Lake* as an icon of the ballet, and then uses her own version of *Swan Lake* to deconstruct the famed 19th century work and the whiteness at its heart.

We argue that critiques of whiteness provide a less well-trod avenue through which dance artists can question South African society. I find this avenue refreshing since while it problematizes post-apartheid South Africa, it does so without succumbing to the theatrically exhausted conflict between white and black in which the former is the oppressor and the latter is the victim.

African scholar in his assault on literary forms

We will have to donder [thrash] conventional literature: old-fashioned critic and reader alike. We are going to pee, spit, and shit on literary convention...; we are going to kick and pull and drag literature into the form we prefer... Because we are in search for our true selves (Mutloatse quoted in Kruger, 1991:149).

In this search for “our true selves”, we I would argue that in dance, railing against European forms would be to deny the multiple ways in which these forms are woven into South Africa’s cultural fabric. Approaches that disregard the canon and approaches that critique the canon from within – not mutually exclusive, although both can suggest new directions.

Contemporary notions regarding the use of ballet (vocabulary, style, costume, and subject matter) by prominent South African choreographers such as Masilo indicate a deconstructive, highly experimental, choreographic approach, and this approach might offer possibilities for alternative avenues of sustainability for ballet in South Africa.

The type of deconstruction of ballet and critiques of whiteness within ballet would neither valorise nor deplore the institution of ballet, but would aid the “demystification of received hegemonies” (Jamal, 2010:19).

To paraphrase Rita Felski’s comment on feminist strategies for subverting patriarchy:

it is not the text [in this case the performance text of dance] which reflects non-white experience that best serves critical whiteness interests, but rather the work which disrupts the very structures of symbolic discourse through which the hegemonic power of whiteness is constituted (paraphrasing Felski quoted in Cima, 1993:91).

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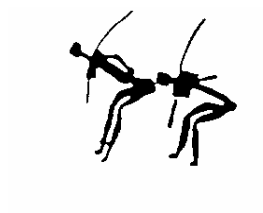
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Biographies

Carol Abizaid



Photo: Adger Cowans

Carol Abizaid's academic engagement in Cultural Anthropology as an undergraduate at Brown University, studying theories of memory, identity, and embodied repertoire in the every day of war at University of California, Riverside , and presently, in Trauma and Violence Transdisciplinary Studies at New York University has continued to direct her toward an inquiry of how culture and politics are performed and how practice and ritual is choreographed in the every day, specifically in the Middle East and Africa, more specifically observing women as object and subject of violences caused and inspired by hierarchies of religion, political, and social structurings. Living in the Lebanon for the first twenty years of her life in the context of a Lebanese Maronite home, and surviving a decade of civil war, she is in an unique position of being an insider-observer to reveal and unveil the violences women face in the name of preserving ritual, social, and theological practices and tradition. She intends to continue/open an interdisciplinary discourse considering psychic and/or physical breaches of women in the region caused by interrupting modernizations and the social political movement toward de-colonialization.

Rob Baum



Photo: David Sheehy

Dr Rob Baum lives and works internationally. Presently Associate Professor in Dance at the University of Cape Town, she teaches African dance ethnography, somatic practices and musical contexts. Her research interests include embodied trauma, gender in performance, collective memory and the phenomenology of absence (the subject of her first book, *Female Absence: Women, Theatre and Other Metaphors*). Her current book explores post-genocidal identity. Rob is a poet and feminist playwright dedicated to writing desirable roles for women, who has performed in theatre, dance and circus; worked with diverse clinical populations; and directed a theatre for people with intellectual and physical disabilities.

Magriet Botha



Photo: John Hodgkiss

Magriet Botha is currently doing a PhD (Fine Arts) at the University of the Free State. Her research involves boundaries, gaps, wounds, holes, lack and misinterpretations of allegory and the performing body. Apart from her studies and participation in art exhibitions, she is also an art teacher at St Michael's School for Girls, Bloemfontein.

Julia Buckroyd



Photo: David MacDonald

Dr Julia Buckroyd trained as a counsellor at the University of London and then as a psychotherapist with the Guild of Psychotherapists. She is a member of the United Kingdom Council for Psychotherapy. For much of her career she has worked at the University of Hertfordshire where she was made Professor of Counselling in 2002 and Director of the Eating Disorders Research Unit from 2004. In 2008 she left the university and now pursues a free lance career developing group therapies for people with disordered eating. She lectures and conducts workshops widely and has a clinical and supervision practice. Her first job as a counsellor 1984-89, was at London Contemporary Dance School where she developed an interest in the welfare of dancers that she has pursued ever since. Her book on dance trainees, *The Student Dancer* (Dance Books, 2001) suggested ways in which the better understanding of adolescent development might help to ensure that dance schools were generous and creative environments. Her parallel interest throughout her career has been in disordered eating. She has been a pioneer in advancing the argument that disordered eating is a means of emotional management and a substitute for words. A non-verbal art form which has rigorous standards for body shape, weight and size, such as a dance school or company, is a dangerous environment for the development of these conditions. Her hope is to make more widely known the perception that disordered eating of all kinds needs to be met with psychological understanding. She has written widely on this subject throughout her career. Her latest book, which will be published in September 2011, *Understanding Your Eating* (Open University Press).

Catherine Cole



Photo: Megan Sorel

Dr Catherine M. Cole is Professor of Theater, Dance and Performance Studies at the University of California, Berkeley, where she currently serves as Director of the Graduate Program in Performance Studies. She is the author of *Performing South Africa's Truth Commission: Stages of Transition* (2010) and *Ghana's Concert Party Theatre* (2001), which received a 2002 Honorable Mention for The Barnard Hewitt Award for outstanding research in theatre history from the American Society for Theatre Research and was a finalist for the Herskovits Prize in African Studies. She co-edited the book *Africa After Gender?* (2007) as well as a special issue of *Theatre Survey* on African and Afro-Caribbean Performance, and she recently served as Editor for *Theatre Survey*. Her dance theater piece *Five Foot Feet*, created in collaboration with Christopher Pilafian, toured North America in 2002-2005. Cole has published articles in *Africa*, *Critical Inquiry*, *Disability Studies Quarterly*, *Research in African Literatures*, *Theatre*, *Theatre Journal*, and *TDR*, as well as numerous chapters in edited volumes. Cole's research has received funding from the National Humanities Center, National Endowment for the Humanities, Fund for U.S. Artists, American Association of University Women, ELA Foundation, and University of California Institute for Research in the Arts.

Kathrina Farrugia

MA (Distinction) BA(Hons) LRAD



Photo: Matthew Farrugia

Managing a portfolio career as researcher, educator and choreographer, Kathrina Farrugia is a graduate of the Royal Academy of Dance (RAD)/University of Durham, University of Surrey and the Online Education & Training Course (University of London/Institute of Education, 2009). Supervised by Dr.Giannandrea Poesio and Dr. Anne Hogan at London Metropolitan University, her recently completed Ph.D. thesis outlines transmodern dance practices through revisions of *Les Noces* (1923) and the work of Angelin Preljocaj and Mauro Bigonzetti. As Lecturer in Dance Studies at the Faculty of Education (RAD), her interests reside in the analysis of 20th and 21st Century balletic forms alongside a transdisciplinary approach to resourcing histories (postmodern dance). She has guest lectured at the Drama Department, Rhodes University (South Africa). Kathrina has presented papers at the Dance Research Forum Ireland (2008, 2010), Congress on Research in Dance (2009), Society for Dance History Scholars (2009, 2011) alongside presentations at Kingston University, LMU and University of Surrey. She curated *1949-2009: a photographic exhibition celebrating continuity and change in dance teacher education and training*, organised the Faculty of Education's Conference (October 2009) and is on the organising committee for the European Association of Dance Historians' forthcoming *Dance and Cinema* conference. Kathrina set up dance company *three-fortyone dances* (www.three-fortyonedances.co.uk) in 2003, touring fringe festivals of Edinburgh (2004) and Brighton (2007) as well as other European venues (2005, 2006).

Ida Mara Freire



Photo: Kamile Hannah Freire

Dr Ida Mara Freire is Associate Professor of the Center of Sciences of Education, at the Federal University of Santa Catarina, Brazil. She has completed post-doctoral studies in Education and Disability Arts at The University of Nottingham. She is Director of, and a dancer with, Potlach Group of Dance with non-sighted and sighted dancers. She develops research, writing and supervises students for doctoral and masters degree that focus on perception, otherness, body, dance and blindness. She is a member of the international advisory editorial of Research in Dance Education. She is currently a visiting academic at the UCT School of Dance, where she is studying the concepts of forgiveness and dance in relation to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission.

Christy Giesler



Photo: Katie Mcluckie

Christy Giesler was born in Paarl and grew up across the Boland, Whale Route and Cape Winelands regions. After matriculating in 2005, she proceeded to further her studies at the University of Cape Town, from which she graduated with a Bmus(Dance) degree (with Ballet and Dance History majors) in 2009 and her Honours degree in Dance Studies in 2010. While at the UCT School of Dance she performed with a number of professional dance companies, including Cape Town City Ballet, Siwela Sonke Dance Theatre and Nhadanza Dance Theatre, as well as in many semi-professional and student works. Besides performing and choreographing for stage and film, she has worked as a make-up artist for stage and camera, and taken various commercial performing contracts both locally and internationally. Most recently she has returned from two months in India, and looks forward to expanding her experience in the field of dance research as well as choreography and performance in 2011.

Sarah Emma Iles



Photo: Gisela Iles

Sarah Emma Iles was born in Pretoria and completed vocational dance training at Pro Arte, Pretoria. She went on to gain qualifications in the health and fitness industry. Additional training includes contemporary techniques, improvisation and performance workshops at London Contemporary Dance School, and Dance Education at RAD/ University of Surrey. Sarah has taught FET Dance Studies since 2008, and dance and fitness classes for 18 years. Performance experience includes productions for stage, television, and site specific work. Ongoing involvement in the education and training field has provided a diverse set of skills and experience which ranges from workshop facilitation, course design and lecturing, to first-hand experience in rural schools where policy and support often find their greatest challenges. Sarah's preferred approach to movement is through somatic awareness, and she enjoys contact improvisation, butoh, and mask work. Apart from the arts, Sarah's interests include kinesiology, education, cultural studies and psychology. She is a proponent of lifelong learning, and has keen sense of the imperatives of a holistic inclusivity in learning environments; and teamwork in achieving sustainable educational outcomes. Sarah has three grown-up children, and lives in Stellenbosch with her lover and two cats.

Kristina Johnstone



Photo: Jamila Rodrigues

Kristina is currently engaged as a guest lecturer in contemporary dance and African dance history at UCT School of Dance and is the artistic director of the Wilvan School of Dance. She holds a Bachelor of Music in Dance degree, as well as a Masters in Music (dance) from UCT. Kristina has taught dance in Kampala, Uganda, and performed there with Okulamba Dance Theatre. Kristina has performed for choreographers such as Samantha Pienaar, Ariry Andriamoratsiresy (Madagascar), Reuben Orneilas (USA) and Tetsuro Fukuhara (Japan). She choreographed Shannon and the Heartstrings for Baxter Dance Festival and co-created and performed Featherweight at Dance Transmissions Festival in Kampala in 2010. Most recently she performed in the dance theatre production I Stumble Every Time for Dance Umbrella, Johannesburg.

Nadine Joseph

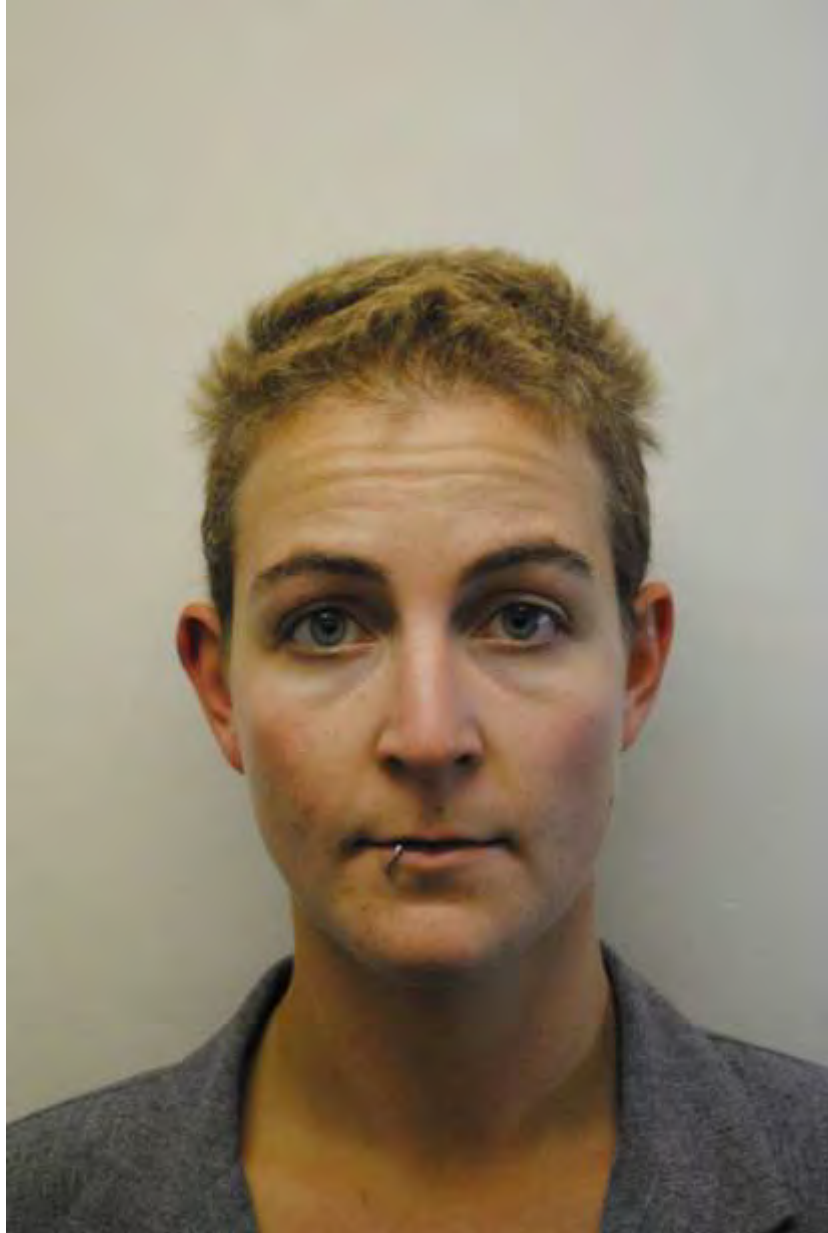


Photo: PJ Waugh

Nadine Joseph studied Philosophy and Drama as an undergraduate at Rhodes University. She has since focussed her talents on Choreography. Nadine has been performing at the National Arts Festival since 2008. Some highlights include Ama-No-Gawa (2010) for First Physical Theatre Company choreographed by Frauke, and wasHEd up fetISH, her piece for the New Voices Programme. Her works follow a minimalist, yet expressionist aesthetic. She focuses on the emotional turmoil of the performers as a choreographic tool to create work that becomes almost cathartic in its confessional - like nature. She plans to establish herself as a world renowned choreographer, with her company negatIve entertAinMent®

Dr Ketu Katrak



Originally from Bombay, India, Ketu is Professor of Drama at the University of California, Irvine (UCI). Katrak was the Founding Chair of the Department of Asian American Studies (1996-2004 at UCI). She completed her BA and MA degrees from St. Xavier's College, of the University of Bombay and completed her PhD from Bryn Mawr College. Katrak specializes in South Asian American Expressive Arts, Drama, Dance and Performance, Postcolonial, Asian American and Diaspora Literature; Third World Women Writers, and Feminist Theory. She is the author of *Politics of the Female Body: Postcolonial Women Writers from the Third World*; *Wole Soyinka and Modern Tragedy on the Nigerian Nobel Laureate*. She has published widely in journals such as *Amerasia*, *The Journal of Commonwealth Literature*, *Modern Fiction Studies* among others. Katrak's book, *Contemporary Indian Dance: New Creative Choreography in India and the Diaspora* is forthcoming from Palgrave Macmillan in Fall 2011. Katrak is the recipient of a Fulbright Research Award to India (2005-06), University of California, Humanities Research Institute's Fellowship (2002), The Bunting Institute Fellowship (1988-89) (Harvard/Radcliffe) among other awards.

Silumko Koyana



Photo: Eduard Greyling

Silumko Koyana started dancing in 1996 at the Zolani community centre in Nyanga involving himself with a project called Foreshore Arts Project established by Bheki Ndlovu and Maxwell Xolani Rani. The rich energy of the arts in Nyanga at the time was the inspiration to join the project. The project continued for about two years, after which he decided to pursue dance as a career by enrolling at the UCT School of Dance. While studying, he had opportunities to perform with Cape Town City Ballet on their tour to China in productions like Don Quixote and Fire Bird as well as extensively in School of Dance productions. After completing the Dance Teacher's Diploma, he performed in Germany and Bangkok for the South African embassy in its celebration of 10 years with Bangkok. He also worked with the Free Flight dance company under Adele Blank in collaboration with Cape Town Opera. Teaching experience was gained from teaching in Maxwell Rani's evening classes as well as in schools like Rondebosch Girls Junior and later the Jikeleza dance project which taught him a firm understanding of teaching and working with young children. Currently he teaches African Dance at the UCT School of Dance and works with the Nyanga Arts Development Centre (N.A.D.C). Silumko feels that this is an opportunity to give back to his community by teaching, choreographing, and performing, as well as sharing his experience with the youth that still needs to be developed and nurtured in Nyanga and the surrounding communities.

Gavin James Krastin



Photo: PJ Waugh

After receiving his Bachelor of Arts degree in art and drama (with distinction) from Rhodes University, he continued studying for his Honours degree (also with distinction) specialising in choreography, physical theatre, design and dance culture. He is currently reading towards his Master of Arts degree in choreography, also at Rhodes University, where he is researching alternative modes of dance and choreography through the combination of performance and the visual arts. This multi-faceted young man has many interests within the arts spectrum. He has performed in Heike Gehring's *In The Blood* (2008) and the National Arts Festival debut of Wesley Deintje's *The Hamlet Machine* (2008). Also in 2008 he performed in Tierney St John's (from Tulane University, New Orleans) *A Series of Us's* as part of an exchange programme between Rhodes University/The First Physical Theatre Company and Tulane University. 2008 continued to be fruitful as he performed for Sonja Smit in *Crooked*. He continued to work with Smit in 2009 when he performed in Smit's *How We Move The Dead*, which premiered at the National Arts Festival. It was in 2009 when Krastin began exploring dance films, as he choreographed and produced the dance film *Mottled* and later Nijinsky's *Sad Rabbit according to Alice* (2010). Last year he choreographed and designed *The Cybernetics of two Antiquated Lost Lovers – with an uninvited Trojan Horse* (2010), which premiered at the National Arts Festival, as well as *Triptych* (2010). He has worked as a designer on many professional productions, such as Acty Tang and Gary Gordon's *Listening to the Rain: a Tribute to Anthony Minghella* (2009), Heike Gehring's multi-award winning *Die Bannelinge* (2009) (Best Design, KKNK 2009), Frauke's *Ama-No-Gawa* (2010) and The First Physical Theatre Company's *So Loop „n Volstruis* (2010), which premiered at the 2010 KKNK. Earlier this year Krastin and Alan Parker, of The First Physical Theatre Company, collaborated in creating the site intervention event *Retrospective – Altered Daily* which premiered at the Dance Umbrella festival in Johannesburg.

Ruth Levin-Vorster



Photo: Christiaan Vorster

Ruth Levin Vorster is an inter-disciplinary artist working in theatre, dance and performance art. Levin has an MA in Theatre and Performance from the University of Cape Town (2006). In 1996 she graduated from The Drama Centre in London, where she remained to work as a professional director until 2002. After several works on the fringe in London and Edinburgh, Ruth was selected onto the Directors' Course at the Royal National Theatre. She went on to work as Assistant Director at the Royal Shakespeare Co. and The Royal National Theatre respectively. Levin has directed numerous productions in London and South Africa including the British premiere of *Murder by Hanoch Levin* (Gate Theatre London), *Calderon's Life's A Dream* (Old Red Lion London), *Lorca's Yerma* (Oxford School of Drama), *Mike Van Graan's Two to Tango* (nationwide tour), *Porra and Porra 2 – the Returnsh!* (Co-writer and director, nationwide tours), *Beauty Censored* (The Out The Box Festival), *Nine* (Baxter Dance Festival), *Waking Time* (Adderley St. Fountain) for the Spier Summer Festival and *Vertical & Horizontal i* (Spier Contemporary 2007/8). Levin is widely known in South Africa as a Director, Writer, Choreographer, Performance Artist and Teacher. Most recently Ruth directed Genet's *The Maids* at Cape Town City Hall and is currently GIPCA's 2011 research fellow at UCT's School of Dance working with screen dance.

Lindsay Kenneth McDonald



Photo: Alessandro Loi

A passion that was once a childhood hobby but now a way of life, dance has engrossed Lindsay in its infinite possibility. He started his training at a young age and after many years of competing and performing, he decided to study the performing arts further. He chose contemporary dance as a subject at the University of Natal where he achieved a BA Degree majoring in Performing Arts and Media and Communication. During his time in South Africa, he performed with various dance companies, choreographed his own work for festivals, and was awarded a scholarship for international studies from the National Arts Council of South Africa. He studied a post-graduate Professional Diploma in Dance Studies at the Laban Conservatoire of Dance in London. During his five years in Europe, Lindsay danced in various works in England, Scotland, Italy and France. Most recently, Lindsay has focussed his work on movement direction and devising choreography. His teaching style incorporates numerous contemporary dance techniques that aim towards developing the full movement potential of the body.

Sara Matchett



Photo: Faniswa Yisa

Sara Matchett holds an MA in Theatre and Performance from the University of Cape Town. She currently lectures in the Department of Drama at UCT. Her teaching profile centres around practical and academic courses which include, voice, acting, theatre-making, applied drama/theatre, and performance analysis. She is especially interested in interdisciplinary modes of creating. Her PhD area of research focuses on explorations into somatic and psychophysical approaches to making and performing theatre. As co-founder and Artistic Director of The Mothertongue Project women's arts collective, Sara has experience in the field of theatre in South Africa, Singapore, India, Kenya and Indonesia as a theatre-maker, performer, director and facilitator.

Dayne Nel



Photo: Dayne Nel

Dayne Elizabeth Nel is currently completing her structured Master's Degree, specializing in choreography, at the University of Stellenbosch. Last year she visited the USA to attend the PUSH Physical Theatre Summer Intensive in Rochester. She also facilitated movement workshops at the Outeniqua Kaleidoscope School Festival in George. Through this she became involved with the Living It's Ubuntu Teen Film Festival project, where she is also teaching workshops to learners. Dayne is very interested in community upliftment, and enjoys being involved with the Rachel's Angels Mentorship Programme, Habitat for Humanity, the Elize Botha Women in Leadership Programme as well as the local radio station in her hometown, Hermanus, where she is secretary of the Board. Last year Dayne was a recipient of the Rector's Award for Excellence in Culture as well as the H.B Thom and Fred Engelen bursaries. This year she is looking forward to attending the A.C.T Introduction to Leadership in Arts Masterclass as well as premièring her first full length Physical Theatre production, called mem-Re: , at the National Arts Festival in Grahamstown.

Estelle Olivier



Photo: Eva Du Preez

Estelle Olivier began her tertiary training in formal dance and completed her BMus Dance) degree (UCT) majoring in Choreography. Thereafter she completed an MDram in Physical Theatre (US). Since then she has developed her skill as a choreographer in various genres ranging from Children's Theatre, Physical Theatre, Musical Theatre and Community Theatre working with directors such as Francois Toerien and Marthinus Basson. She has also choreographed extensively for many of the University of Stellenbosch Drama Department productions including Cabaret (2008 & 2009) directed by Marthinus Basson. Estelle is also a performer with experience in diverse genres, including Classical Ballet, Dance Theatre and Physical Theatre, working with choreographers and directors such as Samantha Pienaar (I of Heart), Marthinus Basson (Pulcinella) and Veronica Paeper (Romeo & Juliet). Estelle is currently a lecturer in Movement and Physical Theatre, a freelance performer and choreographer, and core member of the MBody Physical Theatre Company under the Artistic Direction of Samantha Pienaar and Lanon Prigge. Her primary research focus is on developing methods of choreography for performers without formal dance training.

Merle Constance O'Brien



Photo: Wendy van Schalkwyk

Merle O'Brien is a rare combination of creative talent, intellect and power – as an Odissi danceuse, professional futurist and doctoral student at the University of Cape Town's School of Dance and Graduate School of Business. Her Phd research is a transdisciplinarity study of 'The Dance of Creativity' under the co-supervision of Dr Eduard Greyling, Dr Rob Baum and Prof. Walter Baets.

She holds a MPhil Future Studies from the University of Stellenbosch Business School, a BA (Drama) from UCT and as well an APR international PR management accreditation cum laude. She is the first African scholar of Odissi Indian classical dance; recognized as one the world's oldest codified dance forms; sculpted around the walls of the temples of Orissa. She is a student of acclaimed Odissi and Kathak Guru Smt Yogini Gandhi (www.yoginigandhi.com). Merle serves as the deputy president of the World Future Society South Africa, a policy think-tank of professional African futurists (www.wfs-sa.com). She is a Fellow and former president of PRISA, the Institute for Public Relations and Communication Management of southern Africa (www.prisa.co.za). Merle's work has received numerous accolades and she is recognized in the Mail and Guardian's 2010 Book on South African Women for playing an influential role in shaping the country's future.

Alan Parker



Photo: PJ Waugh

Alan Parker began his training at Rhodes University where he specialised in choreography, obtaining a Masters degree, with distinction, in Drama. Since 2007 he has worked with the First Physical Theatre Company as a performer, choreographer, teacher and researcher. In 2009 Alan became manager of the company and now also serves as Assistant Artistic Director. He has appeared in many First Physical productions including Gary Gordon's "Go"(2007/2010), Juanita Finestone-Praeg's "Inner Piece" (2009), and critically acclaimed butoh production "Amanogawa" (2010), choreographed for the First Physical Theatre Company by Swedish butoh performer Frauke. As a choreographer he has presented various works for the First Physical Theatre Company at the National Arts Festival in Grahamstown (2006-2011), the Dance Umbrella in Johannesburg (2007-2011), the Jomba! Contemporary Dance Experience in Durban (2007) and the Klein Karoo Nasionale Kunstefees in Oudtshoorn (2008/2010). He has also choreographed works for Acty Tang, Khomiso Theatre Productions and the Guild Theatre Dance Company. Alan also teaches extensively for the Rhodes University Drama Department in contemporary dance, physical theatre, contact improvisation and Ashtanga yoga, and lectures at both undergraduate and postgraduate level in the areas of contemporary dance, physical theatre and choreography.

Samantha Prigge-Pienaar



Photo: Lanon Prigge

Samantha Prigge-Pienaar was awarded a BA (Hons) in Directing from UCT School of Drama and a MA in Choreography from Rhodes Drama Department. She is currently registered as a PhD student at Stellenbosch University Drama Department where she is also employed full-time as Senior Lecturer in Movement and Physical Theatre. Samantha has conceptualised and choreographed/directed professional, educational and community theatre productions including several site-specific explorations. Samantha performed and choreographed extensively for Gary Gordon and his First Physical Theatre Company between 1994 and 1996 and since then has worked with several choreographers and directors, including Juanita Finestone-Praeg and Marthinus Basson. Samantha received the De Kat Slurpie Award for Most Original Production at the Klein Karoo Nasionale Kunstefees in 1999 for a collaborative work titled Grafwater: There is life after jumping (a true story). In 2006 she was nominated for the MEC Gauteng Awards for Most Outstanding Female Performer in Contemporary Style and Best Choreography, and she was awarded the MEC Gauteng Award for Most Original Presentation of a New Work in Contemporary Style for I of Heart. Samantha has been involved in performing arts training, education, assessment, research and publication for over two decades and her specialised interests include contact improvisation as a system of training, release-based techniques as means to liberate the performer, and research methodology for the performing arts.

Juanita Finestone-Praeg



Photo: Toni Ackermann 2005

Juanita Finestone-Praeg is a senior lecturer at the Rhodes University Drama Department and is an award winning choreographer. She is currently Artistic Director of First Physical Theatre Company in Grahamstown, South Africa. Her artistic work includes a commissioned work for the Women's Arts Festival in Durban in 1999 which was recognised with an FNB Vita Nomination for Most Outstanding Female Dancer, 37 degrees of fear (2004) also for the Women in Arts Festival and Breath (2009) which she reworked for a film by Acty Tang. Other notable works include Inner Piece (2009) and Monogram (2008). Her research interest is to engage critically and creatively with Performance Studies as a vital discourse and practice within the South African context. Finestone-Praeg has accumulated a diverse research profile with writing experience ranging from academic papers, dance education policy, Performance Studies and Choreography courses. She was Research Officer for First Physical's CD ROM, Physical Intelligence! Finestone-Praeg has accumulated over 20 year of teaching experience within selected tertiary educational structures as well as working within project-based professional theatre and community contexts. Some works created for performance here include: The Journey to Fez (choreographed in 2002 and re-constructed for the company: 2004 Dance Umbrella and National Arts Festival), I have danced with the spider (2003), Slow Island (2004), Stage(ed) Directions (2006) and Oh! The Places You'll Go! (2007), Study For Crying Girl (2009) and Moment(um) (2010). She teaches the Masters and Honours choreography as well as Contemporary Performance and Honours Physical Theatre coursework.

Jill Pribyl



Jill Pribyl has been creating dance theater works for over twenty years. She is a former Fulbright Scholar at Makerere University where she currently teaches in the Department of Performing Arts and Film (formerly the Music, Dance and Drama Department). Pribyl has an extensive performing career and has toured throughout the USA, Canada and Africa. Her work has been described as “unified, luminously beautiful and profound.” Her work addresses the demands of human relationships, the absurdity of daily life, issues of identity, gender, culture and age, and the cyclical nature of life. She explores both the humor and pathos of the human condition. In 2003, together with the first dance graduates of Makerere University, Pribyl formed Okulamba Dance Theater. Since its inception, Okulamba Dance Theater has performed in the Harare International Festival of the Arts, in the Nairobi Peace Festival and throughout Uganda. Pribyl received her Master’s Degree from the University of New Mexico with an emphasis in choreography and her CMA (Certified Movement Analyst) from the Laban/Barteniff Institute of Movement Studies in New York.

Maxwell Xolani Rani



Photo: Yoliswa Singiswa

Xolani Rani Maxwell is a lecturer at the University of Cape Town and holds a BMus (Dance). He specialises in South African dance technique, theory, and history. Rani has produced works and taught in South Africa, London, Germany, the United States, China, Jamaica, and Canada. He has presented papers at the daCi conference (Bahia, Brazil), and Confluences Conferences (Cape Town, South Africa). He is the founder and the creator of the African dance technique called Intsika meaning the “pillar” or the “strengthened”. He is experienced in teaching every level of African dance technique as well as African contemporary dance. He is convener of the course which encompasses both practical and theoretical studies in African dance. He is currently on the board of the advisory committee of the Western Cape Education Department.

Anita Ratnam



Photo: Ashish Chawla

Dr Anita A Ratnam, renowned dancer-choreographer of Contemporary Indian Dance, based in Chennai, India is recognized nationally and internationally, with performances across India and in the US, Canada, Southeast Asia among other locations. Ratnam has an MA in Theatre Arts from the University of New Orleans, and a Ph.D in Women's Studies from Mother Theresa University in Chennai. Ratnam has played a key role as presenter and promoter of new, experimental and edgy artistic work on the Indian scene. In this regard, she co-founded and co-curated "The Other Festival" India's first annual contemporary dance festival. Ratnam initiated the major web portal of Indian dance, www.nathaki.com that includes reviews, interviews, and feature articles on Indian dance across the globe. Ratnam also played a key role in the revival and restoration of Kaisika Natakam, a 13th century Tamil temple theatre ritual recreated in her ancestral village in Tamil Nadu, India. Ratnam is an Executive Member of the Sangeet Natak Akademi, the Government of India's national arts committee based in New Delhi.

Gerard Samuel



Photo: Catherine Martine-Smyth

Gerard M. Samuel is the Director of the School of Dance at University of Cape Town since May 2008. He holds a Diploma in Ballet from the UCT School of Dance which he completed in 1984. He obtained a Master of Arts degree from the University KwaZulu-Natal in 2002. Gerard was a professional dancer with NAPAC Ballet Company and The Playhouse Company Dance Company in the 1980s and 1990s. His career move to arts administration for The Playhouse Company sharpened his skills and he was promoted to the senior position of Dance and Drama, and later Arts, Education and Development Manager a position he held until 2006. He is a pioneer of disability arts and integrated arts projects in Durban, South Africa and in Copenhagen, Denmark with his LeftfeetFIRST Dance theatre group. He has worked at tertiary institutions in UKZN and Durban University of Technology and with some of South Africa's leading Contemporary Dance companies including Siwela Sonke Dance Theatre, The Fantastic Flying Fish and Flatfoot Dance Company. His choreographies include Prabhati, Milky Tears and Awaiting Islands and in musical theatre work - The Sound of Music. His dramaturgy includes the Indian dance dramas Chalo Cinema, Taal with the Nateswar Dance Company and The Coolie Odyssey with RASA Productions. He was the Artistic Director of several Gala concerts for the African Renaissance Trust & Office of Premier of KwaZulu-Natal, the Traditional arts festival and the historic South African Women's Arts Festivals. He is a recipient of the GIPCA Creative Arts Award in 2010 for which he has produced and directed "Place of Grace" a made for dance film. Gerard is currently a PhD candidate.

Sonja Smit



Photo: Richard Antrobus

Sonja Smit started her training at Rhodes University where she obtained a B.A majoring in Drama and Art History and Visual Culture. She obtained her honours in Drama and specialised in Choreography, Design, Contemporary Performance and Dramatic Literature, thereafter obtaining her Master's degree, with distinction, in Choreography. Sonja has worked as a guest choreographer, designer, film maker and performer for the First Physical Theatre Company. She is presently preoccupied with the body of the animal as a source and concept in the creation of movement and design. She created *How to Move the Dead* (2009: NAF), *Volstruismeidjie* (KKNK: 2010), *How a dead dog explains soccer to Sonja Smit* (Spier Contemporary, 2010) and performed in *Ama-no-Gawa* (2010, NAF). She has designed for various productions (*Tired...and still talking* 2009, *Zina and the Songbird* 2009, *Essay(ers) of a forgotten elegance* (2010), worked as artistic supervisor for Acty Tang's *Inscrutable* (2010: NAF). Sonja is also an aspiring film maker and presented *To the Wall*, at the Montage film festival (FNB Dance Umbrella: 2009) and created *Mole: A look at being looked at* (2009). She is currently reading for her PhD at Rhodes University.

Adrienne Sichel



Photo: John Hogg

Adrienne Sichel is a South African born theatre journalist and critic. On graduating with a BA degree in Speech and Drama (from the University of Natal, Durban), she began her journalistic career at The Pretoria News in 1970. In 1978 she focussed on arts writing and criticism and was appointed arts editor in 1981. In 1983 Sichel transferred to The Star Tonight, in Johannesburg, where she became a senior specialist writer in theatre and dance until May 2009. Her main interests have been the development of South African theatre as well as the evolution of South African and African contemporary dance. In 1987, together with fellow arts journalist and dance critic Marilyn Jenkins and Vita Theatre Awards director, and funder, Phillip Stein, she founded the concept of South Africa's Dance Umbrella as a free, non-racial, platform for all forms of South African choreography and performance. Dance Umbrella became a reality in 1989 and has acquired an international profile. Sichel is a freelance writer and researcher based in Johannesburg. She is the recipient of the Newspaper Association of South Africa's Alan Kirkland Soga Lifetime Achiever Award (1999) and a visiting research fellowship (2010/2011) in the Wits School of Arts: Dramatic Arts, at the University of the Witwatersrand.

Linda Vargas



Photo: Be Scott

Linda Vargas (Lynn Fernandez) is an educator, a visionary motivational facilitator and an expert in communication and rhythmical dance education. Her vision is to see people from a diversity of backgrounds and cultures engage with one another. Linda's talents and experience are vast as she facilitates educational and corporate workshops, performs, teaches and examines flamenco dance (a Spanish form) both nationally and internationally. She lectures and writes and presents papers for international conferences. She holds a Masters Degree in Education (full dissertation, cum laude) as well as B.A. Honours in Drama, LISTD (ISTD, London) and the coveted Checchetti Final Diploma.

Beyond her day-to-day passions, Linda co-founded the international organization Alianza Flamenca and is a member of its Board of Directors, as well as its panel of international examiners and syllabus committee. She founded the Linda Vargas Flamenco Dance Company in 1985 and is currently the Director. She performs, examines and gives workshops internationally (working mostly in Europe and Australia). Along with dance fellows, Linda has made regular performances at the Spanish Embassy in South Africa, Zimbabwe and Mozambique. Linda has also choreographed numerous opera productions including *La Traviata*, *Amal*, *Faust*, *Salome* and *Carmen* and performed in the SABCTV productions of „Tango“.

Steven van Wyk



Photo: Neil Roberts

Steven van Wyk holds a Performer's Diploma in musical theatre from Trinity College of London, and both a Bachelor of Social Science in dance and anthropology, and an Honours degree in Dance Studies from the University of Cape Town. Steven is a lover of theatre, and especially dance. He hopes to continue to indulge this love through as many avenues as possible, particularly performing, choreographing, directing, producing, writing and researching. As well as having danced for Bovim Ballet, Cape Dance Company, Eoan Group and Cape Town City Ballet, Steven has choreographed for Cape Town Opera, Cape Junior Ballet, the World Economic Forum and assisted Jay Pather choreographically on "Qaphela Caesar". In musical theatre Steven has appeared professionally in shows such as "Les Miserables", "The Sound of Music" and played Riff in "Westside Story" at the American Dance Festival in 2010.

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