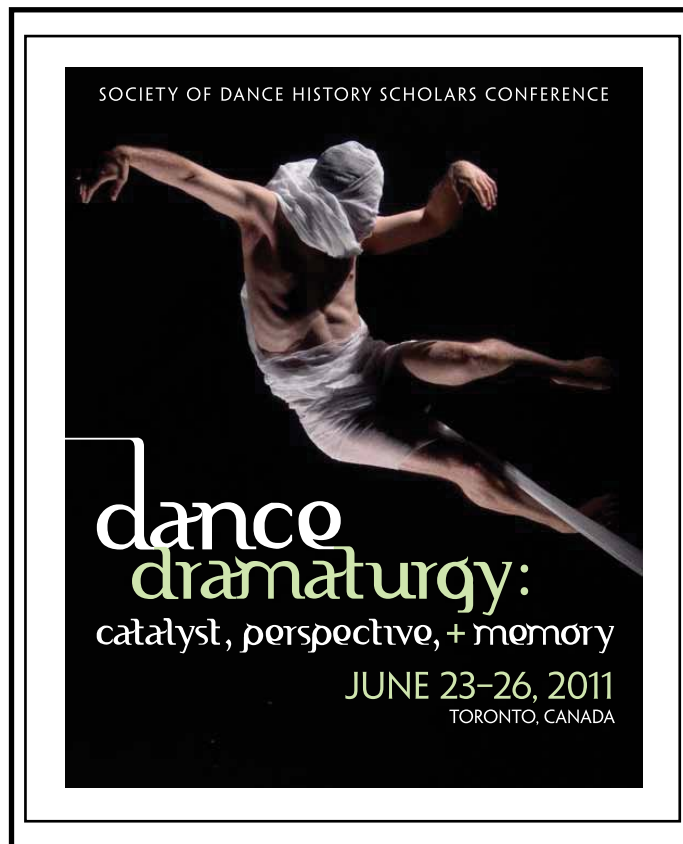




Proceedings



Dance Dramaturgy: catalyst, perspective, + memory

Thirty-fourth Annual International Conference
York University and University of Toronto
June 23–26, 2011

Society of Dance History Scholars

Proceedings

**Dance Dramaturgy:
catalyst, perspective, + memory**

Thirty-fourth Annual International Conference
York University and the University of Toronto
June 23-26, 2011

The 2011 SDHS conference, Dance Dramaturgy: catalyst, perspective, + memory, was held June 23–26, 2011 at York University and the University of Toronto. Each presenter at the conference was invited to contribute to the Proceedings. Those who chose to contribute did so by submitting pdf files, which are assembled here. There was minimal editorial intervention — little more than the addition of page numbers and headers. Authors undertook to adhere to a standard format for fonts, margins, titles, figures or illustrations, order of sections, and so on, but there may be minor differences in format from one paper to another.

Individual authors hold the copyrights to their papers. The Society of Dance History Scholars is not legally responsible for any violation of copyright; authors are solely responsible.

Published by the Society of Dance History Scholars, 2011.

Contents

1. Alterowitz	1
2. Bauer	11
3. Brooks	19
4. Farrugia	25
5. Fitzsimmons Frey	31
6. Goletti	39
7. Hamp	45
8. Heisler	53
9. Kattner	69
10. Kitahara	77
11. Kolb	85
12. Langley	93
13. Lee	99
14. Lenart	111
15. McMains, Parfitt-Brown, and Robinson	123
16. McNeilly	141
17. Mylona	157
18. Nakajima	167
19. Ochi	173
20. Osweiler	179
21. Pierce	191
22. Preston	201
23. Roberts	209
24. Stjernholm	215
25. Stolar and Sacchetti	227
26. Trencsényi	239
27. Uytterhoeven	247
28. Winerock	257
29. Wu	265

Process, Bodies, and Contemporary Ballet: Queering the Form

Gretchen Alterowitz

UNC Charlotte

Abstract

Deborah Lohse, artistic director of ad hoc ballet, creates contemporary ballets using theater, performance art, and film. This paper concentrates on Lohse's choreographic process and the relationship between the performing ballet body and the ballet body as a choreographic tool. I query contradictions that might arise as Lohse challenges the past by queering ballet, while endeavoring to maintain aspects of the form that establish its look. Using interviews and rehearsal and performance observations, I investigate how such conflicts feed her work, and how they are potential catalysts for contemporary ballet choreography that eschews the proscenium in favor of informal performance spaces and film.

This essay is part of a larger project looking at female, contemporary ballet choreographers and their work for female ballet dancers, which, in some cases, shows an interest in reimagining the female body on the ballet stage. In this paper, I focus on the challenges of queering ballet, particularly from a female standpoint, and what a feminine queer ballet might look like. Deborah Lohse is the artistic director and choreographer of *ad hoc Ballet*, a small company based in New York City. Over the past eight months, I have conducted several interviews with Lohse and her dancers, and recently spent two days observing preparations and the performance of her piece, *Ineffable*. Lohse is classically trained with a professional performing career in both ballet and contemporary companies, and is also a filmmaker who makes stand alone dance films and incorporates film into her live dance performances.¹ I chose her as the focus of this paper because she identifies as queer and does not shy from staging female sexuality. *Ineffable* lives in between definitions. It grounds itself in ballet, and then contests ballet's ability to sustain it.

I am using Eve Sedgwick's often referenced definition of queer, "the open mesh of possibilities, gaps, overlaps, dissonances and resonances, lapses and excesses of meaning when the constituent elements of anyone's gender, of anyone's sexuality aren't made (or *can't be* made) to signify monolithically."² The eroticism and desire expressed in *Ineffable* occur between two women, but I do not choose the word "lesbian" because that is not how Lohse languages her work or her identity. Moreover, the queerness of the piece goes beyond the expression of sexuality. Lohse plays with, and reframes, the very stability of ballet as a category of representation.

A queer female voice in ballet is, to say the least, marginalized by ballet's conception and construction of femininity. Lohse's work embraces the contradictions between a foundation in ballet and a queer identity, re-presenting female ballet bodies and relationships between female ballet dancers on stage. Although Lohse grounds her ideas and aesthetic in ballet, I don't know that I can call *Ineffable* a "ballet." Even as she remains committed to working with trained ballet dancers and speaks of what she calls the "ballet mind" as an important element in her choreographic process, Lohse's work tips into different territory by cracking ballet's facade of stable, normative femininity.³

A conclusive definition of ballet does not seem possible. It is a performed act as well as a training system, and has its own language in more than the naming and execution of steps. The ballet body becomes what Susan Foster has called a "body-of-ideas," created to engage in and personify ballet's philosophies.⁴ Many elements that make up a ballet are about an overall look, which is then tied to the movement

vocabulary we know as ballet. Male/female partnering, frontal presentation in a proscenium setting, virtuosity and display, gendered movement vocabulary, these are some of the blocks that, once linked, create the form. But it is unclear how many of the individual blocks are necessary for a work to be called a “ballet.” Ballet is present in *Ineffable*, although it is often obscured or merely referenced. In the obfuscation, Lohse troubles the form, reimagines femininity, and softens the boundaries between the performers and the audience.

Lohse’s artistic concern is that she works in a genre whose rigidity about gender relations rejects and silences her. Her work addresses the contradiction by embodying multiple identities at the same time. She is deeply attached to ballet and says, “Body wise, I’m still really drawn to the ballet body...it’s the line...the finite sense of...arriving.”⁵ But she expresses ambivalence about its movement vocabulary, noting “Everybody just keeps doing the same thing over and over again...We are all kind of feeding into this idea that ballet is one thing, so therefore it doesn’t move forward.”⁶ Instead of rejecting ballet outright, Lohse invites the competing issues to live simultaneously in her work while remaining devoted to the technique, its look, its work ethic, and the bodies it produces.

As a frame to explore what seem to be incongruous interests in Lohse’s work, I am making a distinction between the ballet body as process and the ballet body performed. There is much in the literature that describes the rigorous training of ballet dancers and the discipline the training instills.⁷ The ballet body as process is in a constant state of creation and maintenance, with daily class and rehearsals. The ballet body performed is conceived as the epitome of grace, restraint, and elegance. Masking the process of creation, and any effort or struggle in the presentation of beauty, is how the ballet body performed demonstrates mastery of the technique. Lohse relies on ballet as process to communicate, to be her voice in the studio and the aesthetic that chooses the dancers. She finds stability in the shared vocabulary and body experience, expresses a need to work with dancers who understand the aesthetic without explanation, and yet, is not attached to an outcome that looks like ballet.⁸ In fact, *Ineffable* doesn’t. Rather, the subtext of the work speaks to its foundations in ballet.

Rethinking ballet from a queer feminist perspective requires a negotiation of expectation. Female ballet dancers are expected to abide by culturally constructed, Western notions of beauty and femininity by falling in love with males, refraining from awkward positions, and displaying their fronts with *épaulement* to show a sense of line and suggest aplomb. The dancers in *Ineffable* embody some ballet characteristics some of the time, but their relationship refuses ballet’s investment in normalized femininity. Vida Midgelow, in her writing on “reworking” ballet, conceptualizes the political act of using ballet’s foundations to reimagine relationships and cultural mores, and I am applying this lens to *Ineffable*.⁹ Although the piece does not contain all the aspects Midgelow articulates, it does address ballet’s “canonicity.”¹⁰ *Ineffable* does not “rework” a particular ballet, but its structure, its characters, its movement vocabulary, and its framing point to, embrace, and then queer the form.¹¹

Ineffable is like many ballets, a wedding story, but in this case, the lovers are two women, and the performance takes place in an unusual venue for ballet, the 92nd Street Y. The large rectangular ballroom is set up with chairs for the audience placed in an oval, encircling the dance space in the center of the room. A brightly colored garland made of tissue paper also forms an oval, lying on the floor just inside the chairs, and a projection screen is placed at one end of the dance space. The two female dancers are dressed in floor length, white gowns with long side slits to expose their legs. Their hair hangs down their backs, and the ends, as well as their fingertips, have been dipped in white paint. Each dancer has a white line running down the center of her face, neck, chest, and back (see Figure 1). Stripes of white run down their legs, and their shoulders are painted white with glitter layered on top. Long, white false eyelashes and charcoal gray eye makeup give the dancers an otherworldly appearance (see Figure 2). They are dressed and made

up identically, barefoot, of similar build, and never move beyond the boundary of garland and encircled chairs.

Immediately upon seeing the dancers in costume, I note the reference to the *ballet blanc*, or white ballet, and the Romantic period (see Figure 3). Ethereal, female creatures, dressed in white, separated from the real world by the garland on the floor, Lohse's dancers suggest communities of *wilis* and *sylphides*, supernatural beings representing idealized, unattainable femininity. Instead of relating to a romantic hero figure, these creatures gravitate toward each other, and perhaps the otherworldliness of *Ineffable* assists the demonstration of female erotic agency (see Figure 4). There have been suggestions of eroticism between such figures in ballet before. As Peter Stoneley describes, these have been seen as Romantic communities of women who "demonstrate 'sapphic' tendencies, or who display an otherwise incoherent libidinal energy."¹² The sexuality Stoneley evokes, in such works as "The Ballet of the Nuns" in *Robert le Diable*, is only "incoherent" in that it does not square with ballet's heterosexist expectations. And he is careful to note, while it is possible to find a lesbian presence in ballet's history, it should generally be understood as a means to draw and excite male patrons.¹³

The sexuality in *Ineffable* is forthright, though not explicit, and it could still function to entice a male viewer. The dancers evince ballet's markers of femininity: they are graceful and delicate and wear dresses that cinch in at the waist to reveal the shape and lines of their bodies (see Figure 5). Portraying two beautiful, feminine ballet dancers in love, is potentially more queer than if Lohse chose to layer masculinity on female bodies, or contrast the roles in a butch/femme manner. Cross casting (by giving male dancers roles generally played by females) and cross dressing (having males dress as females) are more typical means of queering ballet, and Lohse's choice is compelling in its difference.¹⁴ I take note of what Janet Wolff has articulated as "the problems with using the female body for feminist ends."¹⁵ In spite of intentions, a choreographer cannot control the reception of her work, and bodies' "preexisting meanings" can prevail.¹⁶ Wolff's concern for how female bodies mean is more than relevant for this discussion, but I see Lohse's use of eroticism and female sexuality as contesting ballet's control over what kind of stories are told. She queers whom female ballet dancers can love and how they can reveal their desire, allowing them to move fluidly between subject and object positions.

Ineffable is broken into five sections with short films in between each. The structure is reminiscent of a classical *pas de deux*, which places the dancers and the audience in a familiar ballet situation. Instead of the *entrée*, *adage*, variations, and coda of the *pas de deux*, *Ineffable* has the Processional, Vows, Exchanging of Rings, the Kiss, and the Recessional. It is unnecessary to point out that females do not seduce or marry each other in ballet. By situating a gay, female wedding within a classical *pas de deux* frame, Lohse presents a confusing, queer dance union. Furthermore femininity is reimagined as desiring, as well as desired, within the source structure of the ballet, which is comfortable showing females in love, just not with each other. Framing the work as a wedding, a sanctioned demonstration of love and commitment, formalizes an acceptance of queerness.

The Processional is a duet reminiscent of the slow presenting of the female lead in the *entrée* and the establishing of roles in the *adage*. The Vows involve a solo for each dancer, although instead of being alone on stage, presenting a variation to the audience, the dancers face each other and dance *for* each other as a means of giving and receiving their wedding vows. The Exchanging of Rings involves mirroring and unison, and the Kiss is a sort of tango that incorporates partnering and sweeping movement across the floor, similar to the coda. During the Recessional, the dancers repeat the stately walking of the beginning, circling the space to end, kneeling and embracing on the floor, wrapping each other in the garland.

The movement vocabulary combines pedestrian walking and moments of stillness with sequential articulations that expose the insides of the arms and legs as the dancers

twist and rotate their limbs. They display their chests and throats and open themselves up by flinging their arms back and away from their centers. The hands are either shimmering and enunciating each finger or are held specifically with thumb and middle finger reaching toward each other. Repeatedly the dancers rotate their legs outward as they complete a small *développé* front to an extended *reverence* and close their feet pointedly to fifth position in *plié*, but then soon shift to parallel and lift the legs front again, this time bent, relaxed, and with feet dangling (see Figure 6).

Rather than displaying their bodies and movement for the audience, the dancers consistently orient themselves toward each other. They appear disinterested in how they are seen by others, or maybe even unaware they are being watched. Their gaze shifts between intense eye contact when looking at each other and soft focus in the moments they look out at the audience. The eye contact predominates much of the time and that connection often leads the dancers to touch each other's faces, or palpably trace the outlines of each other's bodies. During the Vows, the dancers face each other on a diagonal and dance their solos for each other. The first is based on sequential movements of arms, legs, and spine with much lying back in the chest and exposing of the neck. The dancer offers herself and her body to her lover (see Figure 7). The second is more directionally focused. It is linear and reaches and extends into the first dancer's space, taking up the distance between them. The meeting at the end of the Vows moves onto the floor and into a prolonged mirroring section in which the dancers line up the white paint running down their bodies by pressing themselves into each other, then pulling away to reveal the lines again (see Figure 8). More than at any other moment in the dance, the mirroring section suggests twinning. As the dancers move together, one forward, one back, the audience sees the two roles simultaneously, on almost identical bodies. I suppose this could be read as desire for the self, or could play to erotic fantasies of male viewers. But, the dancers move repeatedly between active advancement and receptivity, and in the exchange, I see the female body as both desiring and desired. The audience witnesses both experiences, and as they flood into each other, it becomes confusing who is initiating the movement or the action. The dance privileges mutuality and an experience of multiple layers of connection and sexuality.

Just as the relationship between the dancers is queered, so too is that between the performers and the spectators. Placing the chairs in the round gives each audience member a slightly different view of the work, and before the performance begins, Lohse encourages us to move around during the dance. In a proscenium setting, in which the dancers perform outwardly to their viewers from the confines of the arch, the choreographer has much control over how the bodies on stage are seen. Certain lines or body parts are emphasized, and in ballet, the fronts of bodies are prioritized. When the house lights dim, it is possible for the audience to forget they are seated amongst other viewers as they direct their attention to the movement on the lit stage. The darkness creates distance and the illusion of fantasy, and the stillness of the audience members, compared to the action of the dancers, adds to the separation.

Lohse gives up that choreographic control by placing the audience around all sides of the room and asking them to move. Views of the body that ballet considers less desirable are weighted equally in *Ineffable*, and every audience member is allowed a different experience of the work. Personal preference is given a role, for a viewer can choose to move or stay still. The lights only dim for the short films, so during the dancing sections, the time set up for people to move, the audience not only sees the "performers" move but sees the "spectators" move as well. This destabilization does not involve any sort of confrontation between the dancers and viewers. Throughout, the dancers' gaze stays with each other or vaguely looks out to the rest of the space. But there is a growing awareness on the part of the viewer of becoming a component of the dance, and subject and object positions become fluid. I read the displacement of the spectator, a further queering of expectation, as having to do with comfort, power, and disruption of fixed identity. Since the spectators have no choice whether they are seen, the situation creates a

sense of vulnerability. Lohse takes control away from the viewers by forcing them to become performers, while at the same time giving power by allowing them to decide what viewpoint they want to take.

In the end I am still confused about how to categorize *Ineffable*. I see an attachment to my ballet training in my need for a concrete definition, and I see my queerness in my comfort with fluidity. This is all to say, ballet is facing a quandary. Scholars and critics have lately been claiming it is dying, and the arguments point to many issues—ballet's over reliance on classical works both in production and in suggesting movement and thematic material for new pieces, its failure to produce choreographers who can speak to a contemporary audience, and its attachment to conventional relationships, on stage and off.¹⁷ One prevalent relationship in ballet is that between the male choreographer and the dancers. It is still all too rare to find female ballet choreographers receiving the same level of attention or commissions as their male counterparts. Contemporary ballet choreographers face the difficult but salient task of addressing ballet's relevance. Although it is challenging to queer such a deeply rooted form, perhaps through such attempts choreographers will embolden ballet to evolve.



Figure 1. Candice Thompson and Tammi Shamblin. Photo credit: Steven Schreiber



Figure 2. Candice Thompson and Tammi Shamblin. Photo Credit: Steven Schreiber.



Figure 3. Tammi Shamblin and Candice Thompson. Photo Credit: Steven Schreiber.



Figure 4. Candice Thompson and Tammi Shamblin. Photo Credit: Steven Schreiber.



Figure 5. Tammi Shamblin and Candice Thompson. Photo Credit: Steven Schreiber.



Figure 6. Tammi Shamblin and Candice Thompson. Photo Credit: Steven Schreiber.



Figure 7. Candice Thompson. Photo Credit: Steven Schreiber.



Figure 8. Candice Thompson and Tammi Shamblin. Photo Credit: Steven Schreiber.

Copyright 2011, Gretchen Alterowitz

Notes

1. Lohse has performed with *Sacramento Ballet*, *San Diego Ballet*, *Monica Bill Barnes and Company*, and *Doug Elkins and Friends*.
2. Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, *Tendencies*, (Durham: Duke University Press, 1993), 8.
3. Deborah Lohse, interview, May 22, 2011.
4. Susan Leigh Foster, "Dancing Bodies" in ed. Desmond, *Meaning in Motion: New Cultural Studies of Dance*, (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 1997), 236.
5. Lohse, May 22, 2011.
6. Lohse, interview, January 4, 2011
7. For example, see Cynthia Jean Cohen Bull, "Sense, Meaning, and Perception in Three Dance Cultures," in ed. Desmond, *Meaning in Motion: New Cultural Studies of Dance*, (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 1997), 272.
8. Lohse, May 22, 2011.
9. Vida L. Midgelow, *Reworking the Ballet: Counter-Narratives and Alternative Bodies* (London and New York: Routledge, 2007).
10. Ibid, 22.
11. See Susan Leigh Foster, *Reading Dancing: Bodies and Subjects in Contemporary American Dance*, (Berkeley, Los Angeles, London: University of California Press, 1986), chapter 2, for definitions of these terms.
12. Peter Stoneley, *A Queer History of the Ballet*, (London and New York: Routledge, 2007), 26.
13. Ibid, 4.
14. For examples of cross dressing and cross casting, see *Swan Lake* by Matthew Bourne (1995) and *The Hard Nut* by Mark Morris (1991).

15. Janet Wolff, "Reinstating Corporeality: Feminism and Body Politics," in *Meaning in Motion: New Cultural Studies of Dance*, ed. Jane C. Desmond, (Durham: Duke University Press, 1997), 82.
16. Ibid.
17. For examples, see Jennifer Homans, *Apollo's Angels: A History of Ballet* (New York: Random House, 2010) and Alastair Macauley, "For Ballet, Plots Thicken, or Just Stick?," *New York Times*, August 8, 2010, 4.

Bibliography

- Cohen Bull, Cynthia Jean. "Sense, Meaning, and Perception in Three Dance Cultures," in *Meaning in Motion: New Cultural Studies of Dance*, edited by Jane C. Desmond, (Durham: Duke University Press, 1997).
- Susan Leigh Foster, "Dancing Bodies" in *Meaning in Motion: New Cultural Studies of Dance*, edited by Jane C. Desmond, (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 1997).
- *Reading Dancing: Bodies and Subjects in Contemporary American Dance*, (Berkeley, Los Angeles, London: University of California Press, 1986).
- Homans, Jennifer. *Apollo's Angels: A History of Ballet*. New York: Random House, 2010.
- Lohse, Deborah. Interviews with the author, New York City, NY, January 4, 2011 and May 22, 2011.
- Macauley, Alastair, "For Ballet, Plots Thicken, or Just Stick?" *New York Times*, August 8, 2010.
- Midgellow, Vida M. *Reworking the Ballet: Counter-Narratives and Alternative Bodies* (London and New York: Routledge, 2007).
- Sedgwick, Eve Kosofsky. *Tendencies*, (Durham: Duke University Press, 1993).
- Stoneley, Peter. *A Queer History of the Ballet*, (London and New York: Routledge, 2007).
- Wolff, Janet. "Reinstating Corporeality: Feminism and Body Politics," in *Meaning in Motion: New Cultural Studies of Dance*, edited by Jane C. Desmond, (Durham: Duke University Press, 1997).

Address for correspondence:

Gretchen Alterowitz
 377 Robinson
 9201 University City Blvd.
 University of North Carolina, Charlotte
 Charlotte, NC 28223
 galterow@uncc.edu

Enfolding of the Aesthetic Experience: Dramaturgical Practice in Contemporary Dance

Bojana Bauer

Université Paris 8, Edesta, laboratoire d'analyse des discours et
pratiques du champ chorégraphique, France
FCT-Mctes, Portugal

Abstract

One of the main tasks of the production dramaturge is to give “feed-back”, to describe what she sees, to comment, interpret, question, reflect. Through analysing first hand testimonies of dramaturgical practice in contemporary dance in Europe, this paper discusses apparent tensions between critical and aesthetic judgment that are inherent to dramaturgical work. This empirical level is observed through a wider discursive, contextual and historical frame, allowing for a closer reading of dramaturgical operations specific to contemporary dance.

Introduction

Since dramaturgy became established as a concept, a practice, and a profession in the contemporary European dance in mid-‘90s, one of the most common ways to describe what dramaturgy does, is to say that it bridges theory and practice. This formula appears to make sense: a dramaturge is in most cases a theoretician or a critic who turns their theoretical knowledge into practice of performance making. My focus here will be primarily on the portion of the contemporary dance scene that functions on project based, free lance work, in which dramaturges often work as “production dramaturges” and have a background in humanities, theatre or performance studies or established aesthetic disciplines such as literature or musicology.

Taking the theory-practice bridging as a given has contributed to a great deal of vagueness in the attempts to define or theorize the phenomenon of dramaturgy in dance. The idea of practicing theory works much better in theory than in practice and the figure of an intellectual who produces discourse about the performance making, or gathers references for the choreographer, or structures dance material into intelligible performance, doesn’t quite make the case for the porosity or bridging.

One could indeed still think of a dramaturge as of a bearer of a knowledge that conventionally used to have its territory outside of the artistic process, in the realm of reception and criticism.

To counter this figure of an exterior knowledge, dramaturgs such as André Lepecki proposed for example a figures of proximity, or embodied dramaturgy (Lepecki: 2001) having the dramaturge immersed in the life of the creation, day in day out, sharing moments inside and outside of the

studio and being in constant dialogue with the participants of the project. This proposition, practiced by Lepecki in projects he shared with Vera Mantero or Meg Stuart for example, tries to imagine a dynamic of the process that would undo the image of the dramaturge as a subject of knowledge, a rational entity that would make sense out of the chaos of a creation. His statement had an important echo in the '90 when the proliferation of dramaturgs and dramaturgy besides sparking interest and curiosity produced some anxiety, as noted by Myriam von Imschoot. Imschoot herself described long hours she would spend lying on an inflatable mattress that was a part of scenography being immersed in the atmosphere of rehearsals of Benoît Lachambre and Meg Stuart (Imschoot: 2005).

Looking and talking

Since then, of course, numerous figures have emerged and one of the most repeated phrases is that there are as many dramaturgical practices as there are processes. Nevertheless, I will try to give a most simple description of what the production dramaturge does, aiming for a minimal common trait in practices of production dramaturgy and more particularly of dramaturgy during rehearsal. When rehearsals start, a dramaturge works with what is referred to as “materials”: movements, gestures, actions, situations, images etc, but also ideas. She does so through conversation, dialogue, feed-back, commentary, reaction, description, interpretation, suggestion. But she doesn't give instructions that will directly result in steps, actions, situations etc. . In that sense, dramaturgy is not a poetic practice strictly speaking. Furthermore, in contemporary dance, a dramaturge would not base her words on a normative poetic treatise, regulating the mode of making and composing of theatre-dance piece.

In the other hand, because she works “with the materials”, a dramaturge shouldn't be producing a purely theoretical discourse, concerned with its internal problems and questions, ruled by a scientific methodology.

So a dramaturge's work is based on verbal production, she looks at the materials and talks. In words of Hildegard de Vuyst, dramaturge for Alain Platel, the basis of her work is reflecting verbally what she sees (Turner & Behrndt: 2007).

Saying what they see, seems to be then that minimal common trait. Whichever more specific context, dynamic, configuration one observes, a general rule applies that a dramaturge works with words. She says what she sees. But, saying what one sees cannot be taken as a given. The question is both where one speaks from and “what one sees”. We have more than one eye and we talk equipped with different discourses.

Within this minimal definition of course a whole range of typologies of figures can emerge and a fuller understanding of dramaturgical work could only be achieved in careful case by case study, that outgrows this paper.

Still, the publication “Dramaturgy and Performance” by Cathy Turner and Synne Behrndt, provided us recently with some valuable documentation on a panorama of dramaturgical practices and their description, that allows me to detect two main tendencies within the basic “talking” of the dramaturge. In the description of dramaturgical work in contemporary dance and even theatre, one aspect that is put forward is that it is meant to contextualize, to think of the

theatrical, performative, choreographic process as a whole with its ideological, political, social implications.

Secondly, we notice that despite the implicit and explicit demands of rigor, criticality and grounding in theory, what comes back as one of the most repeated phrases is that dramaturge shapes the material.

If one sees quite clearly what contextualisation means and how it's done: interpreting images, movements as well as their spectacular framework through the interdisciplinary scope of cultural studies etc. the "shaping of the material" is seldom specified. It's often left hanging and seems to belong to some more intuitive process, where choreographic matter is shaped as if it was a sculpture.

I would add to this something that I've repeatedly heard choreographers and dancers say: they are weary of dramaturgical work that can "close things too soon", by naming them. The fear of "closing things too soon", by offering critical comments and interpretations can be read like reminiscence of defiance towards intellectual considerations in dance. But it can also mean something more precise: the necessity to leave things open, not to name them and categorize them, not to understand them as clear objects, as they appear in a rehearsal, is about bringing them on the aesthetic plane, thus confirming the tension between two concepts of art-making: intuitive shaping and critical contextualizing.

To understand the tension that seems to be inherent to dramaturgical work, one has to look to the dynamic of the contemporary dance world as a whole. In the years 2000 dancers and choreographers took possession of discourse, created collaborative contexts in which were regularly included critics and essayists such as C. Wavelet or Laurence Louppe, aforementioned Imschoot and many others. Plurality of theoretically informed choreographic practices emerged, materially, aesthetically and conceptually very different. Choreographers were more vocal than ever about their philosophical references and were engaging in self-reflexive meta-discursive works. Looking at the macro-level, during the late 90's and years 2000 dance in Europe went through the same process that visual arts went through earlier, i.e. of application of critical methods and procedures imported from humanities. As art theorist Thierry de Duve explains, the new imperative became developing critical thinking, doubt and questioning. The introduction of sociology, semiology, cultural and other studies, that cultivate critical judgment, gave prestige to art discourse and to art itself overshadowing the judgment that according to de Duve is still the most important: the aesthetic judgment (de Duve: 2008).

It seems as more than a coincidence that in this context dramaturgy lives its most important development and becomes very visible. But with its visibility it also appears to embody the polarity at work in the choreographic field between two types of judgment: critical and conceptual on one hand and aesthetic on the other, and even more so the problematic and unclear status of the aesthetic judgment and its relation to the critical judgment in the creative process in dance.

The fact that dramaturges were disengaging from their position of power related to knowledge, and choreographers and dancers engaging in new positioning in relation to knowledge produced a new kind of mapping of the field. However, redistributing faculties between the choreographer and a dramaturge in a fairer fashion, if welcome isn't the end of the problem, it only invites us to look closer at what is at stake.

The interview that I recently had with the French choreographer and dancer Laurent Pichaud, who also works as dramaturgical assistant to Deborah Hay, exemplifies quite well this problem.

Pichaud: “My comments have to do mostly with the part of work that Deborah calls staging – the group spatialisation of the solo materials that were previously worked on. When I make comments, they are very concrete, most of the time. I try and understand what she is looking for and then find a form that gives it readability. For example, if she wants to have a solo in tension with a group, I help her to make it visible on stage.

“Last summer, I joined a rehearsal for the first time in that process, while Deborah has already worked with the group for several months. She asked me to look at the run-through and try and understand the score. In that occasion my first comments could have only been formal. It wasn’t expected at all that I grasp the “Idea” of what was happening on stage. It makes me think of flower arrangement. We add flowers, we shuffle them around and at some point we feel that that’s it, that’s the bouquet. I watch the run-through as a bouquet. What are my implicit criteria to know that it works, that it’s done, I really don’t know.

“On the other hand, there is an important task of contextualisation that I do in relation to the theatrical representation. We are complementary in the sense that I am a choreographer belonging to a generation that is very concerned with a theatrical dispositif, with what is at stake in the concept and in the reality of representation.”

The strength of Deborah’s work is in the fact that she’s capable of bringing on stage a practice. However, her relation to the representational dispositif, theatrical space, light, sound, anything that is beyond of what is generated by the dancers themselves, is close to none. The language of exhibiting so to speak does not interest her very much.”¹

I give Pichaud’s example because he makes himself quite a clear cut distinction between the two forms of involvement and two forms of judgment that he exercises.

Clinch of judgments

What Pichaud calls “concrete comments” belong to the category of aesthetic judgment. The readability he refers to is not conceptual intelligibility, but rather the organization of spatial planes, figures and their relations, background and foreground, contrasts and similarities. Those are understood for themselves, as they appear, unmediated, without a concept.

This does not mean that what could be identified later as Hay’s aesthetic rests upon formalistic treatment of these elements, far from it. It suggests that there are aesthetic moments in the process of the making. I’ll come back to that later.

When Pichaud talks about making a bouquet, this quite strongly evokes the much more used word of shaping, or even structuring. However, the term “shaping” sounds somewhat more “of today” and it goes around the slippery terrain of aesthetic experience. It is rather easily noticeable that despite of ideas of proximity or embodied dramaturgy it isn’t all that popular to say that one sees choreography as a bouquet and even less that one doesn’t know why he considers a bouquet to be finished.

This happens because such judgment indeed appears to be problematic. Shaping something, leads to that something getting its final shape and judging that shape as good or bad, successful

or not, or as the usual expression has it: as something that works or not. If approached in aesthetic terms it finds itself in the teleological paradigm. It would also mean that it is intuitive and quite contradictory with the expectation of clarity being brought by the dramaturge. If she helps shaping material into something clear, but it's not clear how, then it's just another subjective opinion.

Looking at art scene in general, despite some strong voices such as de Duve, or Rochlitz, who argue for the necessity of aesthetics, it is generally perceived today that talking about aesthetic judgment in the post-modern era indeed is a reactionary move, it means giving in once again to dominating, hierarchical and even elitist structures that we hopefully left behind us together with modernism. The afore mentioned influx of critical and cultural theory only added to dismissal of aesthetics. But while de Duve, even if he talks somewhat against the post-modern wave, can laconically talk about aesthetic judgment resting on centuries of artistic and philosophical tradition, the situation is not quite the same for dance.

Dance never benefited herself of aesthetic judgment, because it was excluded from the aesthetic system altogether. If we are talking about art in the era of art, since the major aesthetic theories were established, dance never actually entered this era. The classifications of arts in Kant and Hegel's aesthetics purely and simply left dance out.

Hence, in dance, even more so than in art, the idea of aesthetic judgment is associated with vagueness, deprived of philosophical tradition, uncertain of its object. Often considered the object of fascination, or even treated by thinkers and philosophers as the transcendental condition of all the arts as suggested by Frédéric Pouillaude, dance then couldn't dispose of criteria of aesthetic judgment proper, but only be the absolute unmediated experience, beyond any inscription into materiality of an artwork (Pouillaude, 2009).

This could explain why, once narrative of art reached its end, as theorized by Arthur Danto, dance theory gained new momentum, embracing the interdisciplinary theoretical field and somewhat leaving behind its struggle with traditional aesthetics.

It got more ground in interrogating ideological implications in terms, culture, race, gender, of the very aesthetic experience it offers.

The increased visibility of dramaturgical work and of dramaturges is one of the symptoms of this internal movement of contemporary dance field and its theory towards manifesting critical reflexion.

We see now that whether we look at dramaturgical work on micro level of performance making practice, or on macro level of history of ideas and aesthetic discourses, we come full circle. The history only tautologically confirms the paradox that is identified in studio practices. Dramaturge should work on the conceptual level, but shouldn't "close things", or in other words, she should leave the shaping of things to intuition, but then the danger is succumbing to implicit ideologies, and so on.

This situation seems to be almost illustrative of the way faculties of judgment are described in Kant: we cannot at the same time have the unmediated knowledge and conceptual knowledge. They annul each other.

The very faculty of artists to create is their ability to experience things aesthetically, otherwise than according to their contingent cultural, social concepts. When an artist knows that something should be done a certain way, she exercises aesthetic judgment in the making of an artwork. In

dance, this could consist of producing bodily sensations that go beyond the established ones, or to produce body images that challenge cultural, social determinations and accepted concepts, but not only, as we'll see. If we follow that logic it would mean that even to criticize accepted cultural imperatives, or especially if one wants to do so, there has to be a unique experience of the subject, one has to temporally suspend clear conceptual readings as those are depended on contingent and established understandings. Then the dramaturgical involvement that exercises constant identification of empirical object through conceptualized knowledge would indeed be perfectly useless and would "close things too soon", countering the very possibility of creative production.

This seems somewhat obvious, and as we see, very old questions about the nature of creation are resurfacing. It shows, however that the notion of theory, as aristotelian *theoria*, where seeing equals knowing, has little to do with dramaturgical work.

Furthermore, it opens the possibility to shift away from the question of distribution of faculties amongst collaborating subjects, and observe it on the level of the process.

The plane of the process

But to do so, it would also be necessary to address the kantian undertones that emerge from the polarization of dramaturgical work as I described it. The possibility of aesthetic experience in contemporary artistic context, invites us here to turn to deleuzian inversion of Kant's philosophy into immanent plane, where experience would force new forms of thought, and abandoning aesthetic judgment based on transcendental categories. Elaborating on this epistemological discussion surpasses the problematics of this paper, but such a shift puts forward the plane of the process in which the aesthetic judgment as newness operates, in relation not to universal categories, but to what is shared as known and relevant to singular artistic practices. We can also think of the process as of that which organizes different types of knowledge into a singular configuration, beyond individual faculties of the ones involved in the creation.

Now we should perhaps come back to Pichaud's bouquet that we left off as being somewhat formal and teleological intervention. It's essential to note that his comments don't happen on a culturally undetermined territory. A "processes" is a temporally and spatially circumscribed ground, involving political, social, economical and aesthetic positioning.

Deborah Hay by no means produces her performances out of utter intuitive inspiration. Her choreographies are moments of exposure of her practice that questions, explores and challenges notions of training, practice, bodily behavior and memory. Choreographed bodies are a starting point, not a poetic end of her works. Hay's performances are created in several stages, starting with a solo score, consisting of simple steps and spatial indication and of impossible tasks, such as "being a spec of dust", or "being a mall" or famous "What if..." sentences. Performers work individually and alone on this score, confronting it with their bodily habits, memories and references, producing through repetition singular differentiations of the initial matrix, to then arrive at assemblage phase with a whole group.

Then in Pichaud's own words, he can give concrete and formal comments on readability because Deborah's material consists of solos that are already constructed with an inherent possibility to

be assembled with each other. They start from one common matrix, the score, and the fundamental dramaturgy is inherent to the solos.

In that sense, we could say that it is Hay's process that allows for Pichaud's implicit belief in common understanding of proportions, contrasts etc.

This common relates in one hand to known configurations between subject matter, aesthetic preferences, means of expression etc. and in other to the new experiences emerging from the constraints of Hay's score. Starting from these tensions Pichaud can propose new set of constraints that wouldn't allow for Hay's practice to settle in the self expressive metaphorisation of the practice on public stage. Rather, it's the question for Pichaud to conceive in collaboration with Hay a staging matrix, such as aleatory distribution of gender identities in the "I sing to you", that unfold together with the initial conditions of Hay's choreographic operation, thus surpassing the problem of critical judgment v. aesthetic judgment. This is probably what Pichaud refers to when he says that having the process is the condition for objectifying the work, or as I would put it, de-subjectifying particular individual agendas within the work. Aesthetic judgment within contingent operations of the process becomes then something like a barometer for the new, emergent experiences and something that allows letting go of constant interpretations and the security of already named representational and affective models.

Copyright 2011, Bojana Bauer

Notes

1. Bauer, Bojana, interview with Laurent Pichaud, Paris, April 2011, unedited

Bibliography

- Danto, Arthur, "The End of Art", in *The Death of Art*, ed. Berel Lang. (New York: Haven Publishing, 1984)
- Deleuze, Gilles, *Différence et Répétition*, Puf, 2000
- Deleuze, Gilles & Guattari, Félix, *Qu'est ce que la philosophie?*, Les Editions de Minuit, 2005
- Duve, Thierry de, *Faire école (ou la refaire ?)* – Nouvelle édition revue et augmentée, Presses du Réel, 2008
- Imshoort, Myriam van 'Anxious Dramaturgy', in Lepecki, André & Brizzell, Cindy (eds), *Women and Performance: A Journal of Feminist Theory*, 2003, Issue 26, Vol.13, No.3, pp.57-68)
- Imshoort, Myriam van "Letters on dramaturgy" lecture given at the event *Other Matters* 23 March 2005 at deSingel, organised by Sarma & deSingel, in collaboration with Damaged Goods, available online at www.sarma.be
- Kant, Emmanuel, *Critique de la faculté de juger*, Traduction revue et augmentée par A. Philonenko, Vrin, 1993
- Lepecki, André. "Dance without Distance." in *Ballet International/Tanz Aktuel* (English ed), 2001, pp. 29-31.

Pouillaude, Frédéric, *Le désœuvrement chorégraphique*, Vrin, 2009
Rochlitz, Rainer, *L'art au banc d'essai. Esthétique et critique*, Gallimard, 1998
Turner, Cathy and Behrndt, Synne, *Dramaturgy and Performance*, Palgrave Macmillan, 2007

Bojana Bauer
barsabar@yahoo.fr
bojana.bauer@univ-paris8.fr

Presenting and Dramaturgy

*By Bonnie Brooks
Columbia College Chicago*

Abstract

This paper presents views on dance and the artist-spectator relationship through curatorial and dramaturgical interventions in choreographic research and audience engagement, as exemplified in the Merce Cunningham Dance Company's June, 2011 residency in Jerusalem, Israel. The author makes the case that if dramaturgy is about the facilitation of ideas and the shaping of those ideas into meaningful content, then the presentation of art in social contexts is dramaturgical.

The central purpose of this paper is to begin theorizing the presentation of dance in its relationship to dramaturgy and particularly to the branch of dramaturgy that focuses on audiences and audience engagement with the ideas of the dance artists whose work they see.

I recently returned from a two-week trip to Israel, where I joined the Merce Cunningham Dance Company for the first half of June in a complex and extended residency in Jerusalem. The residency plan included seven performances by the company in two different venues; five public presentations by members and representatives of the company; ongoing film screenings of early film works featuring Cunningham by Charles Atlas and Nam June Paik as well as a looped screening of Charles Atlas's recent film of Cunningham's work *Ocean* performed in a quarry in Minnesota; two live VJ-DJ performance installations and one experimental music concert in a gallery at Bezalel College of Art and Design that one of the three presenter partners (They were: The Jerusalem Season of Culture, the Israel Festival and the Israel Museum) designated as the "Merce Campus;" four Master Classes in Cunningham technique taught by company members; four "Family Days" at the Israel Museum in which hour-long participatory movement workshops were offered to children and their parents; a DanceForms workshop deploying computer and dice-generated movement through chance procedures resulting in three extremely diverse dances referencing exactly the same movement resources; a Study Day for over 100 college and high school students offering them a chance to observe company class, rehearsal, a photo shoot and interaction with company musicians; a "Chance Brunch" for well-heeled patrons; seven pre-performance talks in or near the performance spaces; six post-performance visual arts talks covering Merce's collaboration with visual and film artists featuring work by Charles Atlas, Andy Warhol and Robert Rauschenberg in an exhibition at the Israel Museum entitled "Dancing with Art;" four resident bloggers in or associated with the company, and visual artist Kenneth Parris, who is creating visual images from "offstage" moments in the tour that are being published in the Artsbeat blog in the *New York Times*.

This recent international experience reinforced vividly for me, as a dance presenter for fifteen years in the United States (at Minnesota Dance Alliance and The Dance Center of Columbia College Chicago), what can happen with imagination, innovation, perspicacity, and labor. As a member of the Cunningham entourage and someone working on documenting the implementation of the Merce Cunningham Legacy Plan, I encountered first hand the degree to which these various interventions enhanced the experience of audiences watching Merce's ideas at work on the stage. The Cunningham Legacy Tour certainly presents a potent, poignant and for some presenters compelling reason to include the company on their seasons. The reasoning behind bringing MCDC

to Israel, however, went beyond that. The directors of the Jerusalem Season of Culture told me that they wanted to bring the company and develop the extended residency in part to say “yes,” a word that Merce often used when presented with new ideas and possibilities, and to bring many of the freeing concepts and experiences that underlie the Cage-Cunningham aesthetic to their communities. Participants in the DanceForms workshop, for instance, came to me after seeing the company perform and expressed excitement at how fully they could engage with Cunningham’s choreography having experienced some of the process he used. The artistic director of the Jerusalem Season of Culture, Itay Mautner, created a document riffing on my lecture *How to Watch a Cunningham Concert: Eight Entry Points and Three Exit Strategies*, that was printed in Hebrew and handed out to all audiences at both the Sherover Theater and Israel Museum. He reported that favorable feedback came from audience members about how valued the sheet was in providing ways to watch the work, engage with the music, and appreciate the visual settings. That was an instance where the lecture itself reverberated, in translation and through a second interlocutor, into the larger arena. It was dramaturgy within dramaturgy. Those of us serving as interlocutors in the residency were thrilled that what we were doing was stimulating further engagement and triggering new ideas around creating and facilitating connections between Merce’s work and ideas, and the people coming to participate and observe and respond.

Artists are, in the words of musician/songwriter/poet and painter Joni Mitchell, the canaries in the coal mine.¹ Artists understand that what they do has consequence. Because art is about ideas, art has consequence. The means by which art is accessed has infinite variety. What I want to talk about in this paper involves a sub-system of that variety, and within it, the contextualization of art exposure and experience, for spectators, audiences, and witnesses, as a strategic intervention or mediation aimed at improving the possibility that given work will have meaningful consequence in individuals, communities and societies. If dramaturgy is about the facilitation of ideas and the shaping of those ideas into meaningful content, then the presentation of art in social contexts is dramaturgical.

Like most things, dance presenting is pluralistic. In what I believe to be its best practices, curating and presenting dance is a dramaturgical activity that enlists shared power (between artists, presenter, funders, spectators) and complex negotiation (between most and often all of the aforementioned) in the animation of ideas in locales and communities.

I believe that the crossroads of artist-presenter-audience engagement offers multiple layers of dramaturgical possibility, as the work is contextualized for, and encountered by, the audience. I acknowledge that these are mediations. Not everyone wants mediation in their art-consuming experiences. But most, in fact pretty much all, of these mediations are voluntary and are experienced by choice by audience members who retain the agency to decline or withdraw if they wish. Tactics for these encounters range from traditional program notes, lectures and pre-and post-performance talks and tweets to audience response activities, community classes, blogging, and social networking tools. Often they deploy interlocutors such as myself, people not directly involved in the artmaking or art production but able to help interpret and point the way through various means of engagement. The search for further and deeper contextualization, for facilitating connections between audiences and artists and their ideas, is ongoing. But all of these activities, and the under-lying curatorial planning that lays the rail, create a socio-dramaturgical web through which the presence of artists and their unmediated and mediated ideas can affect, inform and provoke the societies and communities where these activities and presentations occur.

By curating a season of dance and performance works for viewing, possible participation, and public consumption, the dance presenter is undertaking the assemblage of a series of events designed to invite and provoke the making of meaning, stir discourse, and/or entertain and perhaps enrich the viewer or consumer’s experience. The

Cunningham residency in Israel is an especially sophisticated and labor intensive example of how long-term planning and careful communication, contextualization, curation, cross-disciplinary thinking and performance can animate community, push existing boundaries, provoke other artistic activity, and refresh art “consumers” without dumbing down consideration and the experience of an aesthetic that has been difficult and/or problematic and/or for some downright intolerable for almost 60 years.

Curatorial work involves first and foremost attempts to ascertain and create meaning with and through and about art – whether it be visual, performing, or other. At the preconference Dance Forum at the Association of Performing Arts Presenters meeting in January 2011, a panel of dance curators discussed the subject “Curating Dance – Perspectives, Facts and Challenges.” In her remarks, Judy Hussie-Taylor, who directs and curates or assigns curation at the Danspace Project in New York City, referenced the root word for curator: *CURITUS*. “Well looked-after, carefully prepared, anxious.”

Rob Bailis, artistic director of the ODC Theater in San Francisco, describes his curatorial work as follows, in an unpublished paper:

Curation is a rigorous practice. It is about focus, relationship of selected materials, clarity of aesthetic location, and intention of intellectual design - ultimately, it's about building context and strategic points of entry. In a sense, artistic vision is about total freedom, and curatorial practice is about choosing limits and, at least for a time, allowing the notion of boundaries...

In terms of what I look for when selecting artists to work with, at the most fundamental level I'm attracted to authenticity of inquiry, craft, knowledge of a chosen form and its history / context, deep awareness of personal identity, and an aesthetic manifestation that is the result of tireless exploration of materials.²

One of the other speakers on the Arts Presenters panel last January was Simon Dove, who presently chairs the Dance Department at Arizona State University and who was for a number of years the director and curator of the Spring Dance Festival in Utrecht, The Netherlands. He spoke eloquently about his commitment to working with living artists, seeking to create an optimum context for peer and audience dialogue. This, he stated, requires viewing audiences as participants rather than passive listeners or viewers, and requires imagining and stimulating a dynamic relationship in which the audience can actively engage with the artist's ideas. The dynamic relationship he describes is one that many dance presenters and curators seek to achieve with their curatorial decisions.

The Cunningham residency in Israel offers a particularly successful case study in achieving the dynamic relationship that Dove describes. All performances were sold out before the company arrived, so the residency activities were not a marketing tool yet were extremely well-attended even though the primary location of the Merce Campus was a three-floor walk-up gallery space and many activities occurred in the evening and not at times connected to actual performances. A cultural ecosystem of sorts, a concept discussed at length as part of the National Task Force on Presenting and Touring the Performing Arts in 1989,³ was established around the residency and within it many routes, pathways and trails of learning, engagement and inquiry were created. For almost two weeks, and despite the fact that activities were underway in three different locations in the city and in three different galleries in the Israel Museum, we encountered many people multiple times, adding to their experience in as many ways as they possibly could.

In considering the various dynamics inherent in creating such a residency, it is instructive to take a moment to problematize the financial economics of performing arts presenting. The availability and accessibility of formally presented works is usually dependent on successful transactions between the producing entity and funders, and between the presenter and the attendee, whether they are witnessing a free event featuring the Whirling Dervishes at the Pritzker Pavillion in Chicago's Millennium Park (which may none-the-less involve costs of parking, babysitting, dinner out, etc.) or spending

\$115 per ticket to see *War Horse* at Lincoln Center in New York. In most cases, some means and agency are necessary in order to participate. The economic concerns are shared at differing levels by the presenter, the audience and also the producing entity – the artist or company being presented – as in each case it is incumbent on the respective participants in the endeavor to engage in a financial commitment in order to achieve the shared experience of the product. This is equally true in cases where the producing organization is self-presenting rather than accepting a fee to bring their work to someone else's season.

In taking on the role of catalyst in a locale or community, the dance presenter, then, is calling on all participants to pay attention, commit financially, and bring their imaginations into a shared circle of curiosity, possibility and participation. This summons is dramaturgical in that it gives dynamic shape to the existing "text" of artistic content as created by the artist and subsequently proposed to audiences by the curator. Power dynamics are always at work in these arrangements, and when we look at the economics of the ecosystem we can see that funding and patronage are usually a necessary presence in these constructions and collaborations. In the case of the recent Cunningham residency, the scale and scope of the project would not have been possible without the generous patronage of the Schusterman Foundation (based in Tulsa, OK). Ticket sales alone, even in the three-way collaboration between the respective presenters involved, would not have come near the overall costs to bring the company to Israel and deliver the large range of activities undertaken over nearly two weeks. Further, planning the residency took nine months of negotiation regarding everything from costs to program content to ancillary social, artistic and fundraising activities to the day-to-day logistics once the entire entourage was on site. These negotiations were at times stressful, and it was only through patience and persistence that the entire project didn't implode on itself long before it was scheduled to begin.

While I am not positing that all of the practical aspects of securing and stabilizing, a residency plan are dramaturgical, what I do posit is that in the collaboration and negotiation of all of the aspects of bringing artistic works to the public, the partners involved forge what can become creative relationships that trigger good dramaturgical applications. Once the most practical concerns are resolved, the shared dramaturgy, the curation and shaping of content and learning and response between artist and presenter, and eventually audiences, can flourish in ways that are meaningful to all concerned. **That** collaboration, that partnership, offers – if you will pardon this capitalist metaphor -- the highest potential for return on the investment of artistic and cultural workers in bringing ideas into public experience and discourse, inviting interrogation of those ideas, and engaging audiences in meaningful ways that create new discovery, new knowledge and heightened awareness in our human journeys. In contemplating a future where dramaturgical practices are valued and thoughtfully applied in dancemaking and dance presentation as well as in cross and interdisciplinary projects, my questions revolve primarily around how these resources and discourses are successfully woven into The Fabric of The Necessary when it comes to art process, art presenting and art experiences. I know that in the United States we still have a long way to go with this. But the work is underway.

Thank you.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The author wishes to acknowledge the Cunningham Dance Foundation for their generous cooperation in her participation with their residency in Jerusalem, Israel, June 1-11, 2011.

Copyright 2011, Bonnie Brooks

Endnotes

1. *Woman of Heart and Mind: Joni Mitchell, A Life Story*. Film written and directed by Susan Lacy@2003, Eagle Rock Entertainment.
2. Unpublished paper on curation, by Rob Bailis.
3. *An American Dialogue: The National Task Force on Presenting and Touring the Performing Arts*. Washington DC: The Association of Performing Arts Presenters. 1989. Writers/Consultants William Keens and Naomi Rhodes.

Address for Correspondence

Bonnie Brooks, Associate Professor
The Dance Center of Columbia College Chicago
1306 S. Michigan Avenue
Chicago, IL 60605
bbrooks@colum.edu

Caravaggio, creative catalysts and choreographic dramaturgy: Reading performativity, theatricality and narrativity in Mauro Bigonzetti's *Caravaggio* (2008)

Kathrina Farrugia

Faculty of Education at the Royal Academy of Dance, London

Abstract

This paper presents readings of Mauro Bigonzetti's Caravaggio (2008), outlining transitory relationships between Mr. Bigonzetti's choreographic endeavours, Renaissance paintings by Michaelangelo Merisi (1571-1610), also known as Caravaggio, and emerging discourse on choreographic dramaturgy within this commission by Staatsballett Berlin. Set to Bruno Moretti's compositions on themes by Italian Renaissance composer Claudio Monteverdi (1567 – 1643), Caravaggio (2008) depicts a choreographic dramaturgy heavily reliant on a series of paintings including The calling of St. Matthew (1599-1600). A theory of vectorisation colours the liminality across decoding/encoding the performativity, theatricality and narrativity (Schechner in Pavis, 2004) within the emergent choreographic dramaturgy from Caravaggio (2008).

Introduction

In his publication titled *The Lives of the Artists* (1550), Italian artist and biographer Giorgio Vasari commented on the dramaturgy of Renaissance art:

...so much more grace, so much more life...a highly expressive depiction of feelings and physical gestures

(Vasari (1550) in Vasari, Bondanella & Conaway Bondanella 2008, 56, 57)

The year 2010 marked four hundred years since the death of Italian artist Michaelangelo Merisi da Caravaggio (1571-1610), also known as *il Caravaggio*. Exhibitions at the Quirinale in Rome, between February and September 2010, as well as creative endeavours, such as Italian choreographer¹ Mauro Bigonzetti's ballet titled *Caravaggio* (2008), pay homage to the life of this artist who spent most of his life journeying across what British art historian Andrew Graham-Dixon argues as 'the sacred and the profane' (Graham-Dixon 2010). Caravaggio's art and life brought him fame and misfortune; as early biographer Giovanni Bellori suggests, "the colouring he was introducing was not as sweet and delicate as before, but became boldly dark and black, which he used abundantly to give relief to the form ...a powerful contrast of light and dark" (Bellori in Langdon 2005, 63 – 64). Graham-Dixon hastily reminds his reader that "Caravaggio's hard-won solution to the challenge of the picture combined theological subtlety with dramatic immediacy and narrative plausibility" (Graham-Dixon 2010, 201). The heritage of this Baroque artist presents an opportunity to reflect on a ballet titled after Caravaggio, one that illustrates the complexity of a life in art and the art through his life.

In this paper, insights into Bigonzetti's ballet on the life of this artist shape a theoretical insight into a creative and complex dramaturgical analysis of performativity, theatricality and narrativity. These three layers displace themselves into a multiplicity of forms, ones

which reflects art scholar Helen Langdon's suggestion of a "powerful modern myth" (Langdon 2005, 24).

Choreographic dramaturgy as (dis)placement: epistemology and application

Central to this paper is the epistemological approach to dramaturgically analysing histories through performance analyses. 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, 1996, p. 108). In another vein, French theatre semiotician Patrice Pavis (2004) applies the mathematical construct of displacement through vectors; amidst the use of vectorisation, displacement specifies the change in position of a point or a particle in reference to a previous position. Pavis' applications suggest complexity and multiplicity of connection, accumulation and shifting. This paper proposes dramaturgy in the light of what Pavis describes as a "flexible determination of its units and segmentation" (Pavis, 118); through this process, vectors "mobilize all of the materials, connecting signifiers in various networks rather than translating them into signified" (118). In other words, this dramaturgical analysis of Bigonzetti's ballet does not outline a representation of the traditional signifier/signified; here, metaphor and metonymy are seen as integrated semiology, a complex form of dissemiotics, which through vectorisation become "the very object of analysis and interpretation as link between connection, accumulation, rupture and shifting" (Pavis 2003, 314). In this context, a dramaturgy of displacement offers a network of connections in the case study presented hereafter.

(dis)placing histories: Caravaggio as a source of creative catalysts

Graham-Dixon outlines the following reflection on the artist:

...Caravaggio's life is like his art, a series of lightning flashes in the darkest of nights. He is a man who can never be known in full because almost all that he did, said and thought is lost in the irrecoverable past. ...When Caravaggio emerges from the obscurity of the past he does so, like the character in his own paintings, as a man in extremis

(Graham-Dixon 2010, 3)

Named after the town where he was born, Caravaggio frequented the cities of Milan and Rome before fleeing to Malta in pursuit of a knighthood by the Christian Order of St. John. After creating masterpieces such as *The Beheading of St. John* (1608) and other portraits of the Grandmasters of the Order, Caravaggio once again fell into disrepute and made his way northbound to the city of Naples where, at the age of 35, he passed away.

Histories surrounding the heritage Caravaggio offer a catalyst of creative insights that suggest parallels between his art and episodes from his life. *Judith beheading*

Horofernes (1598 - 1599), showcased at the 2010 exhibition in Rome, offers an insight into his relationship with Siena-born courtesan Fillide Melandroni, who appears in three of Caravaggio's surviving works. Graham-Dixon's analysis of this work suggests:

... Caravaggio has imagined the whole scene as a fantastically extreme version of the kind of violent incidents in which he and his companions were often embroiled. 'I want to cut you! I want to cut you!' Fillide would yell at her rival Prudenza

(Graham-Dixon 2010, 182)

Alongside his streak of violence and an attraction to both sexes, his art work was inspired by both the irreverent and the sacred. By the end of the 1590s, Caravaggio produced a new style, *chiaroscuro*, an approach to painting that involves "working from dark to light" (Graham-Dixon 2010, 183).

***Caravaggio* (2008): From art into life through embodied histories, collaborations, and commissions**

The life and art of Caravaggio provide creative catalysts for a tapestry of dramaturgical narratives and embodied theatricalities manifested in Bigonzetti's ballet. Created for the State Ballet of Berlin and premiered in December 2008, the ballet is set to a complex musical score by Bruno Moretti, Bigonzetti's frequent musical collaborator. The music compositions are based on motifs by the 17th century composer Claudio Monteverdi, a contemporary artist of Caravaggio who led the transition from Renaissance to Baroque music styles. The empty theatrical space renders a dark canvas that brings to light the characters that shape the ballet. The lighting designs, created by Carlo Cerri (the third in the triad of Italian contemporary collaborators), reference the *chiaroscuro* techniques imparted by the hues of the Caravaggio paintings.

A selection of images of Caravaggio paintings features at the start of the second act of the ballet. Bigonzetti introduces a series of references to paintings by Caravaggio; notably *The Musicians* (1595), *Judith beheading Horofernes* and *The Deposition* (1602-1604); coincidentally brought together at the 2010 exhibition in Rome, these three works currently reside in National Gallery at the Barberini Palace in Rome, the Metropolitan Museum of Art (New York) and the Vatican Museum. In Bigonzetti's ballet, hung above the centre of the theatrical space is a large frame which poses as a screen on which these images are reflected as well as acts as a platform for the muses. The organisation of the choreography depicts a series of metaphoric and metonymic catalysts: most notably, highlighting role of music, the recurring image of 'Judith', and Caravaggio as a Christ-like figure, an oxymoronic state of flux for Caravaggio's heritage.

Bigonzetti's *Caravaggio* outlines a (dis)placement of performativity and constructs a dramaturgy of theatricality and narrativity. The ballet presents a series of complex catalysts including Caravaggio's love affairs with both men and women, the centrality of biblical narratives as well as the blurring of boundaries between episodes from his life

and art. A clear dramaturgical parallel can be constructed between Bigonzetti's mise-en-scene and Graham-Dixon's thinking: "Caravaggio's art is made from darkness and light. His pictures present spotlight moments of extreme often agonized human experience" (Graham-Dixon 2010, 3). In his review of Bigonzetti's ballet on *Tanznet*, German dance critic Horst Keogler (2008) describes the central role of Caravaggio as "a person torn by the conflicts ranging in his innermost... present in the scenes he arrange... in his encounters with people, his simultaneous existence in two worlds – the real one and the one of his fantasy" (Keogler 2008, online). In addition, three female muses create pivotal roles within the emergent dramaturgy connecting love, death and inspiration that in my mind suggest the catalysts of Fillide, Judith and biblical characters. [[Video Extract 1](#)]

Bigonzetti's ballet is structured in two acts; both parts provide what Keogler problematises as a "loose structure". Each act commences with a solo for the role of Caravaggio, followed by duets and ensembles as a series of dances which metaphorise a stream of consciousness and emerge out of the dramaturgical effect of *chiaroscuro* (light and shade) within the theatricalised performance space. The complexity and multiplicity of the structures provide avenues for dramaturgical discourse, allowing the spectator to decode/encode or construct/(dis)place their own set of choreographic catalysts. It is significantly apparent that Bigonzetti depicts an "assembly of characters, saints and prostitutes, ragazzi from the streets and cardinals, hoodlums and angelic youths, whom he has portrayed in devastating realism, his bisexuality and his always walking on a tightrope between prayer and crime, have contributed to his controversial reputation of an outcast" (Keogler 2008, online). [[Video Extract 2](#) (See 1.00 – 1.37)]

Dramaturgical analysis of *Caravaggio* (2008): duet between St. Matthew and the Angel

A detailed analysis of the duet between St. Matthew and the Angel outlines the intricacies across the dramaturgy of (dis)placement. Whilst Caravaggio's Matthew is "an ordinary, imperfect human being" (Graham-Dixon 2010, 236), the performativity that ensues through the choreographic role of Matthew is one of young man, transfixed by the presence of his female counterpart. Matthew and the Angel walk out of the darkness in silence; their introduction theatricalises a parallel between the mortal and the spirit. In unison, their arms extend across the horizontal plane and their sustained performativity blurs the boundaries between the two identities. Shifting through the vertical plane, the dancers construct a narrative through which Bigonzetti's choreography metaphorically transposes "the embodiment of Christian love" into a duet between the couple (Graham-Dixon 2010, 236). The dancers retreat backwards, their arms in a sustained carriage of the arms; as their hands briefly meet, the angel's arms glide across to tap Matthew's knee. He catches and embraces her extended arabesque (*allongée*). The image here suggests an intimacy that summaries the embrace, and one that (dis)places the heritage Caravaggio's first draft of his painting titled *St. Matthew and the Angel*. Although the first version of this painting was destroyed, the images of these two Caravaggio works suggest metaphoric overlaps between the embraces and intimacies of the art and choreography. In Bigonzetti's duet, the Angel is supported, suspended and rests on Matthew, depicting images of connections and engagement. The emerging dramaturgy

illustrates a theatrical narrativity that partly suggests the intimate aspects of the relationship as well as place a significant creativity of form. As the duet progresses, images of flight unfold across the corporeal landscape [[Video Extract 3](#) (see 3.48 – 4.28)]. As this *pas de deux* concludes, the Angel slashes her forearm across Matthew's spine, creating a dramaturgical parallel to "torture as a misbegotten act of intimacy" (Graham-Dixon 2010, Plate 72).

Conclusions: Caravaggio, creative catalysts and choreographic dramaturgy

This enquiry suggested the complexity of creative catalysts as (dis)placed dramaturgies, here seen through analyses of selected extracts of Statsballet Berlin's commission of *Caravaggio* and the heritage of Caravaggio's histories. The multiplicity and shifting of perceptions transpose the art and life of Caravaggio into a contemporary context. Bigonzetti's homage to Caravaggio presents a choreographic dramaturgical (dis)placement that blurs the boundaries between life and art in its theatricality and performativity. As Koegler suggests, "knowledge of his biography and of the iconography of his paintings to identify the actions and refer them to the subject of his paintings" aids the construction of a choreographic dramaturgy that is evidently laboured through creative catalysts (Koegler 2008, online). Bigonzetti's series of choreographic tableaux and mise-en-scene create "that uncertain realm, 'between the sacred and the profane'" (Graham-Dixon 2010, 445). The dramaturgical parallels explored through the analyses of the duet between Matthew and the Angel offer insights into the thematic catalysts that shape the dramaturgy; one that suggests a (dis)placement of histories – Caravaggio's encounters in life and art. At the hands of Bigonzetti, *Caravaggio* as a performance offers theatrical immediacy and performative plausibility that dramatises the complexity of narratives across the heritage of four centuries and an Italian artist interested in corporeal dramaturgy.

Copyright 2011, Kathrina Farrugia

Acknowledgements:

I would like to thank London Metropolitan University and the Faculty of Education at the Royal Academy of Dance for their support in sponsorship. In addition, I would like to acknowledge my supervisory team: Dr. Giannandrea Poesio and Dr. Anne Hogan at London Metropolitan University, London.

Notes

ⁱ For a contextualisation of Bigonzetti's performance and choreographic career, refer to Farrugia (2009) in the conference proceedings of the Society of Dance History Scholar's Conference Proceedings (2009).

Bibliography

- Bigonzetti, M. & Farrugia, K. (2009) Conversation held on 30th May 2009 at Aterballetto Fonderia Reggio Emilia (Italy).
- Caravaggio* (Bigonzetti, 2008) recorded performance, performed by Staatsballett Berlin. Televised on Mezzo TV (France), 24th April 2010
- Caravaggio Exhibition* (2010). Le Scuderie del Quirinale, Rome (Italy) 20th February – 13th June. <http://english.scuderiequirinale.it/MEDIACENTER/FE/CategoriaMedia.aspx?idc=77>
- Farrugia, K., 2009. (Dis)placing choreographic traditions: Tracing the legacies, traditions and export of 20th C choreographic endeavours by Mauro Bigonzetti in *Topographies: Sites, bodies and technologies*. Society for Dance History Scholars 32nd Annual Conference, June 19-22, 2009. San Francisco: Stanford University.
- Farrugia, K., 2011. **Transmodern Dance Practices: Angelin Preljocaj, Mauro Bigonzetti and revisions of *Les Noces* (1923)**. London: London Metropolitan University, Unpublished PhD Thesis.
- Gilpin, H. Tracing Displacement and disappearance, in Foster, S. L. (ed) (1996) *Corporealities: dancing knowledge, culture and power*. New York: Routledge, pp. 106 – 128.
- Graham-Dixon, A., 2010. *Caravaggio: A Life Sacre and Profane*. London: Allen Lane.
- Keogler, H. 10th December 2008. Where genius meets crime. *Tanznetz.de*. [Online] Available at: <http://www.tanznetz.de/en/kritiken.phtml?page=showthread&aid=171&tid=13867> Last accessed 29/07/2010.
- Langdon, H., 2005. *The Lives of Caravaggio (Mancini, Baglione, Bellori)*. London: Pallas Athene.
- Midgelow, V., 2007. *Reworking the ballet: counter narratives and alternative bodies*. London; New York: Routledge.
- Pavis, P., 2004. *Analzing performances: theatre, dance and film* (trans David Williams). Ann Arbor Michigan: University of Michigan Press.
- Vasari, G., 1550. *The Lives of the Artists*, translated by Julia Conway and Peter Bondanella, 2008. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Why Are They Dancing? Dramaturgical Implications of Dance in Theatre for Young Audiences

Heather Fitzsimmons Frey
University of Toronto PhD Candidate

Abstract

In Canada, each year thousands of children are taken to see Theatre for Young Audiences (TYA) productions, or the productions are brought into their schools: some of these performances incorporate dance. This paper stems from interviews with 16 TYA directors and choreographers from six different Canadian provinces. The participants commented on when and why they use dance in TYA, how they believe young people respond to dance in theatre, and what they believe are the particular issues regarding dance in TYA. Focussed on the words of the participants, the exploration is in no way an examination of the quality of dance performance in TYA, but rather, an exploration of the diversity, purposes, and multiple readings of dance in TYA in Canada. Besides contacting independent theatre directors and choreographers I spoke to artistic directors, youth and education coordinators, and producers, all of whom are listed in the acknowledgements.

Introduction

Every year, thousands of Canadian children see Theatre for Young Audiences (or TYA as I will call it now). The statistics have not been consolidated, but LKTYPⁱ, a Toronto company with its own venue, had 62,000 audience members last year, most of them children. Green Thumb theatre is a British Columbia touring company, and about 60,000 children saw their show last year. The Professional Association of Canadian Theatres (PACT) believes that attendance is similar for other 18 TYA member companies. Beyond those companies, there are numerous professional theatre companies who are not PACT members who produce TYA. When Canadian schools expose students to live performance as part of the curriculum, they almost always choose theatre. That means that theatre productions which include dance are often *the only* professional live dance that young people see, and hundreds of thousands of them see it every year.

To learn about why many TYA companies choose to include dance in their productions, I contacted artistic directors, producers, and free lance choreographers and directors who work in TYA across Canada. I interviewed 14 people from 6 different provinces. I have divided my paper into two parts. First, I'd like to share with you why all these generous artists and producers include dance in their productions or program shows that include dance as part of their seasons. In particular, I'll focus on how they define dance, and how they believe dance functions dramaturgically in their work. In the second part of my paper, I share additional observations I made that explore the way that people may talk about or think about dance in the TYA community, and hopefully these observations will generate dialogue regarding possible avenues for further research. As much as possible, this paper allows the voices of the interview participants to speak for themselves. I only saw a few of the productions they described, so this paper is in no way an evaluation of their work, but an exploration of the ideas that shape TYA when it engages with dance.

TYA encompasses a wide range of ages and styles. From babies to high school students, from school gym performances to dedicated theatres, from musical theatre to drama, from circus theatre to comedy, TYA refers to any theatrical work developed with a young audience in mind.

One of the limitations of my study is that I didn't ask artists to identify the age of their audience or style of their productions. However, this proved to be a hidden strength, because I began to see common threads, issues, and concerns across different styles and age groups.

Where I saw few commonalities was when I asked "Could you tell me about any shows that you have worked on or presented that stand out for you because of elements of dance?" Everyone I spoke to knew exactly what "elements of dance" meant – but they did not agree with one another. Several directors said their work never included dance, one going so far as to say, "Not a step, not a gesture, not a twirl in 28 years." On the opposite end of the spectrum, any directors focused on musical theatre believe dance is as important as music or story to their productions. But there were a wide variety of implicit definitions of dance in the other genres. The Artistic Director of Salamander Theatre in Ottawa, describes dances that accompanied songs used in transitions: a dance mimicking animal movements, a social folk dance, and a minuet. Meanwhile, the Artistic Director of Axis Theatre in Vancouver conceded that he had done a few shows recently where he hired a choreographer to develop a short "classical waltz type" of dance, but he also asserted that while Axis shows are "very very physical" there was essentially no dance. Théâtre DynamO in Quebec, a circus theatre company, was as reluctant as Axis to suggest that their elaborate movement sequences could be called dance, except under very special circumstances, such as in a show called *The Challenge*. Some choreographers from Toronto describe developing movement sequences which they consider choreography, but for Equity reasons, had to be called "movement coaching." Both the puppet theatre directors I interviewed (from Mermaid Theatre and Green Fools) argued that not only do their puppets dance, but that often the animators and puppeteers dance when they are fully visible on stage. Jennie Esdale even hired a choreographer once to work with a live performer who moved on stage with the puppets. Jim Morrow of Mermaid Theatre hastens to clarify that for him there is a difference between movement and dance, and *sometimes* his puppets dance and *sometimes* the puppeteers dance, but certainly not all the time. In TYA productions, the line between dance and movement is far from strictly defined. For the purposes of this paper, therefore, any and all of the nuances of what dance might be are a part of the imaginative landscape. What remains significant is that no one asked me what *I* meant by "dance." The artists and presenters all believe they *know* what dance is, but they understand it differently.

Why do artists include dance in their work for young people?

For those artists who did say that they use dance in their theatre practice, I identified 8 main reasons for why they choose to do it.

1) *It's good for children to be exposed to dance*

Several of the participants say that seeing dance is good for young people. Many talk about seeing the skill, the hard work, and the passion that goes into performing it. Choreographer Nicola Pantin says "Dance is not that prominent in our culture and it exposes them to that." Director Allen MacInnis says that seeing dance teaches kids that you can tell a story in other ways than words. Puppeteer Jennie Esdale says "dance allows kids to see that there is more to the world than they have been told- without words they can see feeling expressed through movement." Musical Theatre director Roderick Glanville of Kaleidoscope argues that "dance allows us to explore social issues that otherwise would never be seen by a young audience." Dance can also reach out to niches of a school population that might think more visually or kinaesthetically. Or, as Judith Marcuse reminded me dance is more accessible than text for students who may be English as a Second Language, or for whom the subtleties of language are inaccessible – while she believes the body can always be read. Lynda Hill believes that when Theatre Direct's work is fully interdisciplinary theatre, children experience "a kind of a

feast with each production.” She explains that the complexity educates the audience through theatre because children are learning the complete *language* of the art form. “We have an obligation in the TYA context to stretch creative boundaries.”

2) ***Structural needs of a piece***

Sometimes the directors use dance because it is practical, and responds to the structural needs of the piece. Theatre Direct’s piece *Binti’s Journey*, Salamander Theatre’s *World of Stories*, and Vancouver’s *Kaleidoscope Theatre* all used dance sequences to create effective transitions between scenes. Since dance was the primary theme of Amy Neufeld’s production of a hip hop *Twelve Dancing Princesses*, she fought the idea of “dance breaks” between scenes and seamlessly integrated the dance sequences into the dialogue and the story so that the audience never had to *wait* for the dance to be over to continue with the narrative. Sometimes, a participatory dance is included to get the audience moving a bit because little people need a “wiggle break” before they can be attentive to the next part of the story.

3) ***For musical theatre, great dance is absolutely essential***

All the choreographers and directors agreed, but Farren Timoteo of Alberta Opera Touring Company explained it most passionately. “I believe that choreography and specificity of movement in a musical is as integral to the genre as singing or acting.... I don’t subscribe to doing a diluted version of a musical for young audiences. This is our chance to give students the complete truth about theatre: That it’s exciting, invigorating, entertaining, touching, nuanced, and impressive to have a story told to you live with passion and commitment. Dance is an inseparable element of musical theatre, and often the most spectacular.”

4) ***Creating, punctuating or changing rhythm***

Several artists and choreographers argued that dance is “capable of punctuation, providing rhythm to a piece” (as Timeoteo explained). Dance can create a “change of pace,” bring the audience energy up to exuberance, or help ease young people into a state of “quiet attentiveness” as Chris McLeod put it. Jim Morrow of Mermaid Theatre believes that young people don’t need crazed, frenetic movement, and often appreciate slow, beautiful movement sequences, which he believes makes children feel the adults respect them.

5) ***Dance is used to reveal or deepen character***

Numerous directors and choreographers describe ways dance provides character information to an audience. Animal and non-human characters, of course, need to have their own movement vocabulary that makes sense for the world they inhabit. But artists recognise that dance can support more than those obvious character choices. For example, in *I Think I Can* a narrative-based show where the young people communicate exclusively by tap dancing, dance establishes relationships, characters, belonging, acceptance, rejection, and the internal monologues of characters. Similarly, Green Fools have used dance so that their puppets and the live performers they interact with can express emotions. Judith Marcuse argues that dance can say a lot very quickly. “It’s very good at illustrating relationships, presenting an emotional monologue that maybe can’t be put into words, or to help describe the emotional state of an individual or a group....There is such nuance possible in movement that you can present real detail around relationships and character.” Marcuse believes this level of specificity is possible because “the body never lies.” Allen MacInnis of LKTYP takes a different view, however. He agrees that “we can really have a dialogue without words and young people can connect to that.” But he explains that in his view “children are learning more and more complex patterns about the world and as the patterns get more complicated, they are in some cases less reliable. If a five year old looks at the body language of a person,

she reads what she can. But a twelve year old is not as certain that what the body says is true because there are so many layers. Reading the body is part of recognising the world, reading patterns, and learning whether or not to believe them.”

6) *Dance can evoke a place or time*

Allen MacInnis of LKTYP explains, “One of the advantages we have with young audiences is that they are ready to use their imaginations, and we can take advantage of that. We have to allow them to see the world in a different way. So [for example] the body can show me where I am rather than a set change.” Numerous artistic directors and choreographers described the way that a particular dance style could help to establish a whole world for the piece. Directors mentioned using kathakali, Bharatnatyum, West and South African forms, hip hop, or “medieval” dance to connect their audience visually and musically to a very specific environment. Farren Timoteo of Alberta Opera Touring described a new production of *Cinderella* they did where a choreographer helped to evoke the 18th century French Court using dance. Chris McLeod of Salamader described several dance pieces in *A World of Stories* that help to bring the audience into a new country, such as Kathakali to bring the audience to Bangladesh, or a social folk dance to uproot them to Ghana. Carousel Players co-created a piece called *Mella Mella* which made use of traditional African dances. Theatre Direct employed Bharatnatyum for *Beneath the Banyan Tree*, while Red Sky Performances productions like *Raven Stole the Sun* use a combination of traditional first nations dancing and modern contemporary dance. In *The Forbidden Phoenix* by Marty Chan, the musical employs a blend of contemporary North American musical theatre dance styles, with traditional Beijing Opera dance styles, to give a sense of dislocated space – sometimes in one space, and sometimes another. Meanwhile, the club style hip hop for *The Twelve Dancing Princesses*, the urban hip hop of Judith Marcuse’s *Ice* or the hip hop tap of LKTYP’s *I think I can* help young people feel connected to the contemporary nature of a show. Marcuse integrates contemporary dance and dance from commercial culture to hook the young people into the content of the production. She believes it works because young people recognise the bodies on stage as close to the bodies of their own culture. Dance can also define space within a single cultural landscape. In Quest Theatre’s *Big Sister, Little Brother* the choreographer developed a journey dance motif. Artistic Director Nikki Loach explains that “the children are on the run for big chunks of the story and dance was used to express a long journey over ice, up against cliffs, getting lost, changing direction.” The dance motifs were repeated through the piece so that the audience knew where the characters were, and the motif also made room for slow motion movement jokes, and physical surprises. Choreographer Clare Preuss used similar techniques when she worked on *The Monster Under the Bed* because she completely changed the movement style when the characters inhabited the “dream world” under the bed from when they were in the “real world” above the bed. Clearly dance can be a visually stunning and effective way to help the audience identify place and time.

7) *Dance is exhilarating and is experienced viscerally*

Nearly everyone I talked with suggested that some young people are inclined to learn kinaesthetically, and that dance speaks to that part of a person. Choreographer Clare Preuss argues that seeing dance actually helps kids to be more in their bodies, more aware of their own body’s potential to be active and to communicate. Judith Marcuse also muses that “young people don’t live in their bodies and feel caged physically,” so seeing movement is freeing for them. Jennie Esdale of Green Fools puppets describes a little girl, under five who “stood in the aisle and danced madly along to the live music and puppets dancing. It seemed to enrapture her and was a joy to see.” Many also suggest that young people love dance. Lynda Hill describes her audience dancing immediately following the show, trying out the

steps they've seen. Choreographer Nicola Pantin says that when a TYA show includes dance, "I see the children perk up! If they tune out during the story, they refocus when there is dance. They move forward in their seats, and you can tell they are working, excited, and awake, because we're moving to something upbeat. You can feel it in the audience." Amy Neufeld suggested that the high energy hip hop helped her audience to remain focussed, especially the nearly teenaged boys, because they could engage on a physical level. "Even if they don't realise they are doing it, they experience the show with a kind of contained energy, it's very kinaesthetic." Jackie Gosselin also agrees that when children watch movement, it is not something they understand with the head, but with the body. After shows, if her company DynamO invite children onto the mats, they often can do exactly what the acrobats have done, without even thinking. Judith Marcuse says, "there is a visceral response to movement that is not processed intellectually. It's a quicker understanding. It's instant."

8) *Dance and Narrative*

Perhaps the most complicated reason why choreographers and directors choose to use dance in their productions is because of the way that they believe dance tells the story differently than text, or because of the way that dance supports the narrative. Allen MacInnis of LKTYP asserts that in the theatre, storytelling is the most important thing, so dance supports the story. Judith Marcuse argues that dance shouldn't just "illustrate the story." It is a richer way of communicating and can do more. For example, it is a very effective and efficient way "move the narrative forward," particularly when there are changes in human relationships. She believes that audiences need text for the details, but dance can carry the large narrative, and as such, she always starts with dance and then adds text, rather than the other way around. However you collaborate, Lynda Hill of Theatre Direct believes that if dance is going to convey story it helps to have a very specific, possibly *culturally* specific vision of the piece. In her view, this is because "Theatre is storytelling but dance isn't only storytelling – it is much more."

But many directors are reluctant to trust the abstract potential of dance. Nikki Loach of Quest Theatre says "I like a story...I want to know what it means and I don't want to be confused. I think that TYA that tells stories through dance and movement is one way to nudge audiences to be more open to dance because theatre is so accessible – it always tells a story." She likes dance in theatre to be what she calls, "pedestrian." It can be gestural, and even poetic, as long as she can understand it. After seeing some pure dance for young audiences, Allen MacInnis concluded that while young people are fascinated by the process of meaning-making, and while the meaning they find in dance does not have to be literal, "if they start to suspect that their presence in this live event doesn't matter, they disengage. If making some kind of meaning out of it doesn't matter, they disengage. I could feel the audience give up." So for him, dance has to support the story. Judith Marcuse counters "A dual role is richer" where dance communicates some ideas, while text communicates others. For example, movement can fill in the emotional landscape, while text fills in the narrative details.

Why are they worried? Dance, TYA and the big issues

In my interviews with directors, producers, and choreographers, several issues were regularly repeated, and I began to think of the questions they raise as essential to understanding how the TYA-Dance relationship can function more effectively.

1) *Dance needs to support the story*

As I explained in the previous section, many artists feel theatre is a narrative-driven space. I mentioned Allen MacInnis's experience with the dance piece he didn't feel

“worked” for young people in the theatre. He explained, “It made me realize how very important, in the theatre, storytelling is for us. And this is what people come to expect, so they may not be ready to engage in a pure, abstract dance piece in this venue.” Amy Neufeld, who directed *Twelve Dancing Princesses* argued that the *story* is why children come to see theatre, so the dance elements should not ever stop the story or “get in the way.” Of course, not all theatre experiences are narrative driven. I saw some work at the ASSITEJ Congress this year that was more about experience than story. Perhaps we need to be bolder in the way we imagine theatre if TYA is to incorporate some kinds of really exciting dance work.

2) ***Abstract dance is a hard sell***

Will Brooks, from Persephone theatre told me bluntly, “if I were to program pure dance, I don’t think it would sell.” He believes he needs something transitional, between dance and theatre. He readily acknowledges that the physical world is as much connected to theatre as text is, but he wants his audience to be ready. Allen MacInnis also admitted that he thought that programming *I Think I Can*, the pure tap dancing show, was very risky. But it turned out to be accessible and very popular. Sometimes, taking those risks can be rewarding because audiences learn, and are prepared for bigger risks.

3) ***Trusting Dance to Communicate***

The level of trust professionals in TYA have for dance varies greatly. On one extreme, Judith Marcuse and Lynda Hill believe dance communicates instantly, universally, and is totally readable. Marcuse says movement can be read quickly and efficiently by anyone, while Hill says “dance is so absolutely universal. It transcends language even when it has cultural roots.” Jennie Esdale of Green Fools says, “Our experience generally is that kids respond well to the abstract forms (like dance) because through them they can interpret and explore their own feelings.” Allen MacInnis and Nikki Loach are more cautious. Loach likes to use dance if she know exactly what it means, and while MacInnis believes dance can be meaningful without being narrative, he believes he has felt an audience give up if they felt their presence wasn’t needed to create meaning at the live event. The level of abstraction needs to be appropriate for the age of the audience, and appropriately paced. “As children learn to read the cues, they gain understanding. If the rules change, they have to dig deeper. If the way things are happening change too much, then they get frustrated and disengage.”

4) ***Talk-backs***

One of the areas that a few people mentioned was talk backs. Some said the talkbacks they had after shows that included dance were wonderful. Others described interesting discussions which did not seem to respond to the dance -- they could have talked about the issues just as easily if the show hadn’t happened. This made me realise that talk backs are often a “missed opportunity” and finding the best ways to do them, to help the audience enrich their experience through debriefing is essential. A good talk back also helps people to figure out why a show matters to them personally, how the dance element was a part of that, and sometimes allows young people to verbalise or even physicalise their ideas. Judith Marcuse believes strongly in the power of extensive and effective post-show discussion. Preparation with students and teachers prior to the shows helps, but of post-show she says “I think young people are talked at a lot in school. Communication needs to be porous on both sides.”

5) *How do children and young people actually respond to dance elements in TYA?*

Robert Glanville of Kaleidoscope says “of course they love it!” and most of the directors and choreographers who use dance in their TYA say young people behave as though they are enjoying dance elements – either through quiet attentiveness, or by putting some of the physical energy into their bodies. Lynda Hill believes that young people connect to the *effort* of the performance when it includes dance. As far as they can see, talking is easy, but the physical movement is impressive. Clare Preuss, Nicola Pantin, and Nikki Loach all agreed that dance is particularly popular when it is spectacular, or better yet, funny. Jennie Esdale believe that dance allows young people to connect to an emotional space they may not find with text. Jim Morrow of Mermaid Theatre reminds us that children love watching movement, but they “want to be treated with respect. When there is screaming, colour, jumping out their seats, it’s like a fly hitting the surface of the water. It never penetrates. If there is a little more thought, a little more depth, they appreciate that. They love to watch adults work in a meaningful and playful way.”

Conclusion

When I began this research I expected the artists to focus on what dance does that theatre alone cannot do for children. Although we had some discussions along following that thread, what became clear was that in the eyes of the artists and programmers, dance speaks differently to children. The multiple issues in the ways it effectively, ineffectively, powerfully, emotionally, or viscerally speak to children seem to depend, in part, on how the artists were thinking about the idea of “dance.” In fact, the realisation that the meaning of the word “dance” was so clear to the artists, but meant so many different things to them, hopefully opens up new avenues of inquiry. I am particularly interested in why physical theatre artists are unwilling to call aspects of their work “dance,” which other artists would embrace as “elements of dance.” Future research may also explore how dance in TYA represents gender, “exotifies” the body, is presented as extraordinary or a highly skilled pursuit, or is presented as “every day normal” and social or “fun.”

I want to leave the last words to the artists, again, who have shared their experiences with me. Artists who work with dance in TYA are taking many risks. Not everyone feels ready for dance but most TYA artists believe, as Clare Preuss does, that “dance allows young people to use their imagination differently and to be more in their bodies.” They agree with Jim Morrow who says “What we do is playful, but it’s a fine balance between play and work. To arrive at something that looks elegant and simple, it takes a lot of very complex work.”

Lynda Hill of Theatre Direct explains that to engage in a truly multi-or inter-disciplinary theatre project, which includes dance, means a “willingness to risk a messy process.” But the messiness is wonderful. She declares, “Working in an interdisciplinary way with expert artists means we can be innovative storytellers and we can advance our art form. We can propose new ways of thinking of theatre – in fact, we can be the *most* innovative and experimental work out there.”

Copyright 2011, Heather Fitzsimmons Frey

Acknowledgements

I would like to acknowledge the generous artists and producers who took the time to answer my many questions about dance and TYA. They are Alberta Opera Touring’s Artistic Director (AD) Farren Timoteo, Axis Theatre’s AD Wayne Specht, Carousel Players AD Pablo Felices-Luna, Green Fools Co-AD Jennie Esdale, Kaleidoscope Theatre AD Roderick Glanville,

Lorraine Kimsa Theatre for Young People AD Allen MacInnis, Mermaid Theatre AD Jim Morrow, Persephone Theatre Youth Programming Director Will Brooks, Roseneath Theatre Past AD, David Craig, Salamander Theatre AD Chris McLeod, Theatre Direct AD Lynda Hill, Quest Theatre AD Nikki Loach, Théâtre DynamO co-AD Jacqueline Gosselin, Freelance Directors and Choreographers Amy Neufeld, Nicola Pantin, and Clare Preuss. Numerous others expressed interest in participating (thank you) but we could not connect to chat. Finally, thank you to Karen Gilodo, Education Coordinator, LKTYP; Ann Kipling-Brown, University of Regina; Seika Boye, PhD Candidate, University of Toronto; and Jennifer Nikolai, Auckland University of Technology, all of whom helped me to clarify my thinking as I was getting started.

¹ When I was researching this paper, the name of the theatre company in question was Lorraine Kimsa Theatre for Young People (LKTYP). This summer, they have changed their name back to Young People's Theatre (YPT). Since the company was called LKTYP at the time of the interviews, I use that acronym throughout this paper.

Address for Correspondence

Heather Fitzsimmons Frey can be reached at h.fitzsimmonsfrey@utoronto.ca

IN THE GARDEN OF EDEN DANCE DRAMATURGY AND THE DANCE DRAMATURG ALREADY EXISTED

A More Expansive History of the Role of Dramaturg and Dramaturgical Thinking in Dance

Cristina Goletti

University of Colorado, Boulder

Abstract

In the past three decades, we have seen a growing interest in dramaturgical thinking within dance and movement performance. Usually we refer to Pina Bausch and Raimund Hoghe's collaboration during the 80's as a starting point for this enriching dialogue. In this paper I will challenge this notion and argue for a revised and more expansive history of dramaturgy in dance.

I will look at "The Rite of Spring" to see how dramaturgy and even the role of a dramaturg were already present, although unstated, even in the early modern ballet. In order to do so I will compare the Nijinsky 1913 original choreography with the 2010 version by Xavier Le Roy.

Paper

In the past three decades, we have seen a growing interest in dramaturgy, dramaturgical thinking and the role of the dramaturg within dance and movement performance. In Europe especially, it would be very difficult nowadays to attend a contemporary dance performance and not find a dramaturg credited in the program. But is the practice of a dramaturg really a novelty in the dance making process? Or rather is the labelling of this role the real historical break? When, how and why we started to talk about dance dramaturgy and to credit a dance dramaturg?

Usually we refer to Pina Bausch and Raimund Hoghe's collaboration during the 80's as a starting point for this enriching dialogue between dance and dramaturgy. One of the main reasons we identify the beginning of dramaturgical thinking with Bausch and Hoghe's collaboration is the complex, multilayered structure, the shift towards a more political and social context, the non-narrative driven transitions and the juxtaposition of the choreographic elements of Bausch's work. It is as if the complexity embedded in the work functioned to bring into being new tools to deal with the decision-making of dance composition —tools that could be used in the creative process by choreographers, dancers and artistic collaborators as well as by the receiving audience. At the same time the historical shift towards post-modernism made more acceptable the idea of a collaborative artistic process, a clear change from the modern "genius" era, where the choreographer needed to be the sole creative power behind the act of dance making. In any case despite this moment of arrival into the spotlight, I believe dramaturgical thinking has long been present in dance. Just because it was not called dramaturgy or there wasn't a specific credit to a dramaturg in the show programme, it didn't mean choreographers were not using this important resource before.

In other words do things exist before they get named? I believe so. According to Mark Twain even in the garden of Eden dodos were there before Eve named them that way. "The new creature [Eve] names everything that comes along.... And always that same pretext is offered - it LOOKS like the thing. There is a dodo, for instance. Says the moment one looks at it one sees at a glance that it looks like a dodo" (12). Therefore even

if we didn't use the specific word 'Dramaturg' or 'Dramaturgy' before the 80s, we can't assume this function or role wasn't roaming around in the "garden of Eden" of creative processes.

To support my argument I will look at some of the most interesting works of choreography of the 20th century, **"The Rite of Spring", to trace a different history of dramaturgy and see how dramaturgy, and even the role of a dramaturg, was already present, although unstated**, even in the early modern ballet. In order to do so I will compare the Nijinsky 1913 original choreography with the 2010 version by Xavier Le Roy, a contemporary French dance artist. 'The Rite' fascinates me, because of its status as a cultural icon. Although the audience's reception of the original version in Paris resembled a scandal, the work was quickly dropped by the company's repertoire and the Nijinsky choreography was somehow forgot until very recently, nevertheless 'The Rite' became something to measure yourself against, something to conquer in the progress of a choreographic career. Possibly because of the compelling score, because of its length or just out of fashion, most of the "big" names in the dance history of the past 100 years have created their own version of the work, varying from large group pieces to solos, from highly technical and fully produced pieces to small-scale independent performances. With the only commonality of the Stravinsky's syncopated score, those numerous versions have filled theatres worldwide and resulted in a cultural phenomenon.

Through this historic re-contextualization I wish eventually **to open up a discussion about dramaturgy and its application and applicability to dance and suggest an alternative or more expansive history of dramaturgical practice** other than the well-known trajectory from Aristotle to Brecht via Lessing.

However before plunging straight into this historic case study, I believe it is important to clarify **a definition of 'Dramaturgy' and 'Dramaturg'** and how they can be applied to a dance context. According to Adam Versenyi's definition "Dramaturgy is the study of how meaning is generated in drama and performance"(1). He goes even further in describing the capacity of dramaturgy in a creative process. "Dramaturgy can be understood as an attribute [a particular playwright or play], a role [the person who is responsible for helping the director or choreographer to realize their intentions in a production] or a function... Dramaturgy as a function refers to a group of activities necessary for the process of creating theatre. These activities, frequently involving the selection and preparation of material for production, are always being carried out- by producers, directors, designers, or actors- whether or not someone carrying the title of dramaturg is involved" (1). By this definition we can see how the dramaturgical process is almost inevitable in the act of making theatre. Because dance is mainly a non-verbal form of expression, creating a clear link between the image, shape or movement presented and the idea driving the performance forward is incredibly important. Whether the narrative presented is linear or not, creating cohesion and unity of concept, even cohesion when the lack of cohesion and unity is very deliberate or thematic or when the refusal of a pre-determined meaning is insisted upon, remains one of the biggest challenges in dance-making. When Focault asks the question of "What is a work? What is this curious unity which we designate as a work?" (198) he is basically asking a dramaturgical question. Dramaturgy, at its best and in its most modern form, can help "identify the particular ways in which this curious unity is created, in specific instances"(Turner and Behrndt, 18). Heidi Gilpin, the dramaturg of Forsythe for many years, initiated the discussion about dramaturgy and dance in the USA in a topical essay published in 1997. In her essay she unpacks the reasons dramaturgy and dance started to be associated by talking about dramaturgy "as a critical process that lays bare the compositional and narrative drivers in the work; dramaturgy as a process that moves between practice and reflection" while she describes the role of dramaturg "as a facilitator of a reflective process" (84).

Associating the word dramaturgy with process and the word dramaturg with facilitator is a huge help in casting away the anxiety that revolve around this often misunderstood practice. A process can take up many different forms, the same way the creation of a piece can vary immensely from one artists to the next. As Marianne Van Kerkhoven illustrates dramaturgy can be about many different things. In some cases dramaturgy deals with the relationship between movement, light, music and space and how those elements can come together into a unified vision. In other cases dramaturgy deals with the political, contextual or dynamic frame of the performance event or with the way the event is presented to the audience. At other times dramaturgy can just be another name for the conversations that happen between the creative team while making a new piece. Most of the time particular instances of dramaturgy in dance practice are a hybrid between all of the above and sometimes the people involved aren't even aware they are engaging in dramaturgical thinking. They are seeing dodos around them but they haven't named them dodos yet or don't care to.

Looking at the role of a dramaturg as a facilitator means that the dramaturg helps us to see he/she not just as specific professional role, but as a position that someone, consciously or not, usually takes within the creative or pre/post-production process. It is the role of "sounding board" (Cools, 216) mentor, external eye, witness, "go-to" or "in-between" person that very often keeps a process going, or helps creating the "curious unity" Foucault talks about.

Historically, the roots of the word dramaturgy can be traced back to a manuscript by **G.E. Lessing** entitled "*Die Hamburgsche Dramaturgie*", dating from 1768. Lessing was a German writer, critic and philosopher who started to reflect and write about the theatre productions presented by the Hamburg Theatre. His role as a dramaturg was that of a facilitator of a reflective and critical practice, an intellectual activity that didn't have much to do with the creative process. He did, however engage the rest of the intellectual and theatre patrons' community into a discourse about theatre making, breaking the wall between what was presented on stage and what the audience received. It was only in the first half of the twentieth century that **Bertolt Brecht** brought the dramaturg into the rehearsal and conception process of a piece, taking a more involved role artistically and making the intellectual office-bound function portrayed by Lessing seem antique.

"The dramaturg became the director's most important theoretical collaborator. Dramaturgy in Brecht's sense comprises the entire conceptual preparation of a production from its inception to its realization" (Canaris, 250).

Looking at the history of dramaturgy and the role of a dramaturg inevitably brings us to a **short excursus into the history of Western theatre**. The Aristotelian "*theatre of dramas*" has shaped Western theatre history until the European and Russian avant-

garde. The three main principles of this type of theatre are: **imitation or mimesis**, **action or plot**, and **catharsis**. Mimesis, coming from the Greek *mimēsthai*, means 'to represent through dance', not 'to imitate' as many believe and it highlights the importance of movement in dramatic theatre. Then there is the plot, *diegesis*, which, for Aristotle, was the 'soul of tragedy'. The strong emphasis on the plot is arguably what mostly influenced Western theatre, dance and film- making. Even now we can see how the possibility of a narrative and textual representation of the world, a belief that was "cruelly" destroyed in Lyotard's description of post-modernism, shapes the traditional and mainstream artistic productions in several genres. The third theoretic category of theatre according to Aristotle is *catharsis*, literally transformation through a process of purification. This category refers to a social –and not an aesthetic- function of theatre that aims at the creation of a community that unites stage and audience, establishing the society as a triumphing entity over the agonizing forces of history and nature.

Those three Aristotle's categories influenced dance production as well. Starting with romantic and classic ballet, dance went through a long phase of works shaped around a

linear-narrative that followed a story or a libretto. Those types of work were dominated by text, like the dramatic theatre, only a silent form of text. In those ballets the mimesis and the plot became the driving forces behind every choreographic choice, while the influence of catharsis is clear in the meta-narratives that lie beneath the story. But things started to change at the beginning of the 20th century with the advent of The **Ballet Russes**, a company started by impresario **Sergei Diaghilev** in Russia in 1909. The conditions were right, the Russian avant-garde was starting, the synergy in continental Europe pre-WW1 was pushing towards a more radical aesthetic and, even more importantly, the audience was craving something new, exotic and powerful to shake their consciences. More specifically in Russia two main factors influenced the creation of the Ballet Russes aesthetic: the establishment of two artists' colonies in the late 1870s and 1880s near Moscow and St. Petersburg and the creation of a new art journal "The World of Art". Both the retreats and the journal served as a springboard for a new interest in "rescuing" Russian folk art and to guide and develop the intellectual vanguard. Diaghilev even wrote the artistic manifesto of this new movement that proclaimed "the great strength of art is that it is independent, disinterested and- the main thing- free.... And that beauty in art was the personality expressed in images" (Acocella, 146).

Those conditions found a structure of being in the creation of the earlier productions of this extraordinary company like "Firebird" or the "Après-Midi D'un Faun". In those works both Fokine and Nijinsky started to investigate the possibility of a non-linear narrative work. But it is with "The Rite of Spring" in its original 1913 version by Nijinsky that we can see a more decisive shift **from linear-narrative or dramaturgy of the reinforcement, to a dramaturgy of collision**, where we don't have a "forward moving story, but a cluster of parallel, intersecting, juxtaposing, colliding stories and narratives, producing new narratives from their very collision" (Turner, Behrndt, 33). Stravinsky, the composer, and Roerich, the painter and archeologist who designed the décor and costumes of the original production, subtitled the work "pictures of Pagan Russia", the pictures taking the forms of two distinct parts, the "*Adoration of the Earth*" and the "*Exalted Sacrifice*", formed by different and at times non-consequential scenes. This shift into complexity was generated by a well-documented critical discourse throughout the creative process. In Stravinsky's letters and memories we can read how all the creative parties involved, Stravinsky himself, Roerich and Nijinsky, were trying to figure out a way for their collaboration to move forward into a less predictable creative process. Without calling it dramaturgical thinking they were dealing with one of the most important aspects of dramaturgy: how we need to consider all the elements that make a performance when creating and looking at a piece. But let me push my argument even further and let's consider the role Diaghilev played in this new approach to dance making. "Diaghilev's most valuable quality was his ability to act as a creative prompt to an artist, musician, choreographer, singer or dancer. He was not a creator, but he was indispensable to those who were. He could give advice which revealed the essence of a problem, the potential of a creator image" (Pozharskaia, 53). If we paraphrase the above we can see how Diaghilev functioned as a "sounding-board" a facilitator of a reflection on the artistic process, a curator, a mentor and ultimately a dramaturg. He called himself an impresario, from the Italian tradition of Commedia dell'Arte, the person responsible for organizing and often financing the production of a show, but he was much more than that. In the words of one of his most famous dancer, Tamara Karsavina he seemed "to illuminate a clear image or a new concept in the darkness like a ray of light.... that with a simple remark he could draw aside the curtain before you and fire your imagination" (187). Of course he was a major stakeholder in the creation of a new ballet and sometimes his actions were not motivated solely by artistic reasons. At times he used the shock value to increase the curiosity in the public and ultimately his revenue. Yet he facilitated the artistic and dramaturgical process by engaging, casting even, the different parties of the creative team behind his company ballets. Therefore I believe we can describe him as a dramaturg before we started to use this word in the dance world. The

dodo was in the garden before we found a name for it!

Almost 100 years later the “Rite of Spring” by **Xavier Le Roy**, serves as the perfect example of how the dramaturgical thinking and the role of a dramaturg have just evolved in the theatre-making process. The piece is a solo, where a man, Xavier Le Roy, comes on stage and turns his back to the audience. With a gesture that seems to copy a musical conductor, he starts to move to Stravinsky’s score. After few minutes he turns towards the audience and starts to “conduct” them as if the audience was an orchestra. His dramaturg, Bojana Cvejic, helps us to understand this work in her essay “Xavier Le Roy: the dissenting choreography of one Frenchman less”. She compares the attempt of Le Roy to conduct music and the attempt of the audience to generate music to Ranciere’s concept of emancipation versus instruction. Because both the dancer and the audience are asked to perform tasks they are not familiar with, they share their ignorance, which makes them equal. Furthermore by asking the audience to generate the music, Le Roy refuses to describe or guide the audience through a personal interpretation of the score, refusing the position of power that his choreographic knowledge gives him. The sophistication behind this choreographic approach is mediated by the dramaturgical thinking and the action of the dramaturg that not only helps the choreographer through a creative process not dictated by a pre-planned concept but also guides the audience into the receiving experience, through the writing of program notes. Cvejic compares her role as a dramaturg as the “Ignorant Mentor” of Ranciere by reminding us that she is there to help “recognize and unfold the place or the moment where the work becomes hot, where it starts moving as if by itself, inviting a feeling of a world to discover there, a sense of pushing the limits of what one can perceive, imagine and articulate” (p. 69). In this contemporary case we can see how dance as an art form has evolved to the point where negation of creator’s ego is a desirable idea, concepts within dance practice are expanding and the dichotomy between dance and theatre is dissolving. Expanding the collaborator’s list is totally acceptable as the modern idea of the “lonely genius” responsible for the entire creation is diminishing in its value. Maybe this is another reason why, with the advent of post-modern dance, we felt the necessity to name dramaturgy or dramaturg those tools we were using since long ago. Maybe we can look at how a new approach to dance making is helping dramaturgy to leave the confined world of text or linear narrative as the only methods to speak about the human subject.

To conclude we could say that in its origin dramaturgy was the term used for the ensemble of texts (plays, books, librettos, music) that formed the basis for a dramatic play, an opera or a ballet. The plot held together the work and made it progress in a linear narrative way. Once Western avant-garde made text and linear narrative less important, dramaturgy and the dramaturg became more and more involved in the creative process and in the conceptualization of the unity behind the often juxtaposed and colliding stories and realities portrayed on stage. Then finally, with post-modernism, post-structuralism and the transition towards an open-end dramaturgy, where the unity of content was not so important any more, the role of dramaturgy became a “synthesizing process, a weave or weaving together of elements” (Barba, 75). Once the primacy of text or narrative over other compositional elements was over, dramaturgy wasn’t the tool to understand how things made sense, but more the acceptance that things might not make sense and subversive logic and not answered questions are valid methods of theatre and dance making. The choreographers are not expected to have straight answers anymore and, more importantly, they are not expected to come up with all the concepts alone, in a vacuum motivated by their entire ego. Sharing ideas, having a mentor or a witness playing a part in the creative process is a valid option. In post-dramatic theatre and dance then, the dramaturgic material can be anything. It can be a text, movement, music, lights, space, technological elements, an historical fact or a contemporary happening, a specific experience of one of the dancers or actors, etc...Escaping from a definition of dramaturgy set in stones and accepting the ever changing and experimental nature of contemporary dramaturgy opens the possibilities to not one but many different types of dramaturgies for

each and every creative process. It also allows us to see and think dramaturgically or identifying someone with the role of dramaturg even if those activities are happening unconsciously. Dramaturgy then, exists at different levels, in different historic contexts and genres and whether we name it or not, it doesn't stop from existing. Dramaturgy wasn't created from nothingness in the 80s just as the dodos were roaming around before being named that way. In fact in our contemporary garden of Eden we might decide to name this funny brown looking animal dodo, but we might also decide to just look at it and see what it does and how it does it without the pressure of labeling it, as a name wouldn't add anything to the bird's nature or to the way it comes to the world anyway.

Acknowledgements

I wish to thank my professor of History and Philosophy of Dance at CU Erika Randall for her precious help. I would also like to thank my family and Nii Armah Sowah for their tremendous support.

Bibliography

- Barba, Eugenio. *On Directing and Dramaturgy: Burning the House*. London; New York: Routledge, 2010. Print.
- Berg, Shelley C. *Le Sacre Du Printemps: Seven Productions from Nijinsky to Martha Graham*. 48 Vol. Ann Arbor: UMI Research Press, 1988. Print.
- Buckle, Richard. *Diaghilev*. New York: Atheneum, 1979. Print.
- Cardullo, Bert. *What is Dramaturgy?* New York: P. Lang, 1995. Print.
- Gilpin, Heidi. "Shaping Critical Spaces: Issues in the Dramaturgy of Movement Performance". *Dramaturgy in American Theatre*, Ed. By Jonas, Susan, and Proehl, Geoff, and Lupu, Michael; Orlando: Harcourt Brace College Publisher, 1997. Print.
- Heddon, Deirdre, and Jane Milling. *Devising Performance: A Critical History*. Basingstoke England; New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006. Print.
- Hodson, Millicent. *Nijinsky's Crime Against Grace: Reconstruction Score of the Original Choreography for Le Sacre Du Printemps*. 8 Vol. Stuyvesant, NY: Pendragon Press, 1996. Print.
- Ploebst, Helmut. *No Wind No Word. New choreography in the society of spectacle*. Munchen: Kieser, 2001. Print.
- Sokolova, Lydia, and Richard Buckle. *Dancing for Diaghilev: The Memoirs of Lydia Sokolova*. San Francisco: Mercury House, 1989; 1960. Print.
- Turner, Cathy, and Synne K. Behrndt. *Dramaturgy and Performance*. Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire; New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008. Print.
- Twain, Mark, Mark Twain, and Mark Twain. *The Diaries of Adam and Eve*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1996. Print.
- Synne, Behrndt K. "Dance, Dramaturgy and Dramaturgical Thinking." *Contemporary Theatre Review/ Vol. 20(2)* (2010): 185-196. Web.
- Versenyi, Adam "Dramaturgy/Dramaturg" *The Oxford Encyclopedia of Theatre and Performance*. Ed. Dennis Kennedy. Oxford University Press, 2003. Web. 5 Oct 2010.
- Cvejic, Bojana. "Xavier Le Roy: the Dissenting Choreography of one Frenchman Less". *Xavier Le Roy*. 2010. Web. 10 Oct 2010.
- The Joffrey Ballet. "The Rite of Spring" *Online Posting*. YouTube, 24 Aug 2007. Web. 25 Oct 2010.
- Le Roy, Xavier. "Le Sacre Du Printemps" *Online Posting*. YouTube, 26 Jan 2010. Web. 29 Oct 2010.

**Score as Catalyst, Memory as Creative Act:
Connecting the Work of Tatsumi Hijikata,
Kazuo Ohno and Stephanie Skura**

Amanda Hamp

Luther College

Abstract

Memory is artful, innovative, expressive. Neurologically, it is a connection between two neurons. More specifically, it's a connection that changes each time a memory is remembered. Thus, the process of remembering is itself a creative process, the act of memory is a creative act. For butoh cofounders Tatsumi Hijikata and Kazuo Ohno, and contemporary U.S. artist Stephanie Skura, it's dance. In their work, the performing body transforms continuously, and the dance itself is ever finding its form. These artists, from two distinct historical-cultural contexts, align in their influences, use of scores for performance, and access to ancestors and the subconscious.

The namesake essay in Jonah Lehrer's popular *Proust Was a Neuroscientist* demonstrates that the process of memory is itself a creative process. It traces the evolution of psychoanalysis's and neuroscience's understanding of what memory is, and how it works, and elucidates that Marcel Proust's *Remembrance of Things Past*, published incrementally between 1913 and 1927, demonstrates the exact conclusions about memory that neuroscience has only recently discovered. Lehrer encapsulates the observation: "Every memory begins as a changed connection between two neurons."¹ Change is the primary word here, and Lehrer notes "how the act of remembering might alter a memory," revealing memory to be a creative act.² The gap between two neurons is linked, and the connection made is inventive, is a form of expression. The late butoh masters Tatsumi Hijikata and Kazuo Ohno, and U.S. contemporary choreographer and teacher Stephanie Skura are artists that make the most of this, that intentionally use the gap as a space for dance-making.

This shared aspect of their work emerged for me in a workshop facilitated by Yoshito Ohno, Kazuo Ohno's son, in 2008. I was co-teaching a three-week course in Japan with a religion professor that focused on ritual and performance as interrelated parts of the country's historical and contemporary culture, and the course included the evening workshop at the Kazuo Ohno Dance Studio in Yokohama. The experiences facilitated in the workshop surprisingly and closely resembled those I'd had in my extensive study of Skinner Releasing Technique (SRT), which had its inception in the 1950s when Joan Skinner began studying her own alignment as means for recuperation from the taxes on her body from working as a dancer with Martha Graham and Merce Cunningham. SRT developed over the next few decades into a codified technique and pedagogical system. Stephanie Skura, a long-time core faculty member of SRT, formally departed from the institute in 2008 in order to develop Open Source Forms, an adjacent incarnation based on her decades of work in Skinner Releasing, as practitioner and teacher of improvisation, and as a composing and performing dance artist. My training continued with her, and I was certified last summer for teaching Open Source Forms. At the time of

Yoshito's workshop, Kazuo was still living, and was at home a few blocks away from where we were getting immersed in a few of his various worlds.

One of the many facets of Kazuo Ohno's work and of *butoh* was introduced to us before even arriving at the workshop. Japan's interculturalism and complex political history showed itself as Mina Mizohata escorted us from the train station to the studio, and as she pointed into the directions of Kazuo Ohno's house, and of the elementary school where he became Santa Claus for the students each year at Christmastime. This was a vivid signal of Japan's and *butoh*'s tie (however favorable or unfavorable) to the West. Hijikata, Kazuo Ohno's long-time compositional peer and co-founder of *butoh*, regarded his development of the form, in part at least, as a rejection of increased Western presence in post-WWII Japan, and Western dance's influence on, if not invasion of, the Japanese dancing body. Hijikata's *butoh* permitted the subversive, the sexual, and the unvarnished. Kazuo Ohno's *butoh* appears to be gentler in comparison, but due to his enduring collegueship and association with Hijikata, Ohno's embodiment of the symbol of Western religious holiday commercialism invokes a hint of the political. But more significantly for this paper, Kazuo-as-Santa is an exquisite model of the founding *butoh* artist's capacities for physical transformation.

The performer that can transform is the medium for the dances by Ohno, as well as by Hijikata and Skura, and is the locus of their practices. Softening is a shared strategy. In the *butoh* workshop, each of us was given a wad of cotton. As we felt the texture of the cotton in our hands, receiving a kinesthetic suggestion of softness, Yoshito demonstrated that if he held the cotton in his fists and attempted to tear it apart, the cotton resisted. But if he held it more delicately with his fingers, and pulled gently, the cotton fibers lengthened and separated from one another easily. "Soft body," he said, encouraging us to practice this with our own cotton and our own bodies.³ In Skinner Releasing Technique and Open Source Forms, softening is a preparation for embodying poetic imagery. Joan Skinner describes how her "image clusters," work: "The individual receives the image and the energy inside it, and then eventually one merges with an image and becomes transformed by it."⁴ In their informative and sensitive book on Ohno and Hijikata, Sondra Fraleigh and Tamah Nakamura reference their own experiences in *butoh* of "becoming an image."⁵ One of the modes Skura integrates into the Open Source Forms is "flux." In an interview I conducted with her last fall, she describes the practice of flux as "going from one physical impulse to another, which is with a broad definition of physical."⁶ Flux is also a state of being, one of continuous change. Change is fundamental in *butoh*, too, characterized by Fraleigh and Nakamura as "metamorphosis," and epitomized in the often-quoted phrase, "the body that becomes."⁷ In these three artists' work, the "body that becomes" and is in a "state of flux" corresponds with the dance that becomes and is in flux.

How does the theme of transformation, of the self as transformable, become central to each of these art forms in their distinct times, geographical locations and cultural contexts? While my larger project is working on this question, this paper focuses on Ohno's, Hijikata's and Skura's composition methods, particularly as they relate to the concept of memory as a creative act.

In Japanese, *fu* literally translates to "chronicle," "notes," and "score."⁸ Tatsumi Hijikata and Kazuo Ohno each used *butoh fu*, for which Fraleigh and Nakamura give this definition and explanation: they are "visual/poetic images used as the basis for *butoh*

movement and gestures; they are sometimes referred to as notation used to guide the dancer or inspire dance movement and choreography.”⁹ When Hijikata died in 1986, he left sixteen scrapbooks of his *butoh fu*. Kurt Wurmli’s unpublished research report on the over-500 pieces that comprise Hijikata’s collection describes that “[t]he images are partially or entirely cut out and glued-in reproductions of works of art, nature, architecture, and science in the form of photocopies, prints or hand drawings.”¹⁰ This collection of images, now digitally archived at the Research Center for the Arts and Arts Administration at Keio University, was accompanied by Hijikata’s ongoing process of speaking and writing. Fraleigh poetically explains, “Never quite finished, always in the making, words spring from Hijikata in the manner of his dances. At some point, his words distill to text, however [...] just as his *butoh fu* are finally embodied in dance.”¹¹ Hijikata’s continuous speaking, writing and collecting of images ensure that even his *butoh fu* are in a process of metamorphosis. Fraleigh and Nakamura say that Ohno’s *butoh fu*, distinct from Hijikata’s, finds itself “in essays, poems and notes that he prepares for performances and workshops.”¹² The workshop that Yoshito facilitated reflects this in its giving of poetic images and tasks, asking that the participant’s enactment of them create the form. We were instructed to grow ourselves from seedling to full-blossomed flower, and twenty-two participants gave rise to twenty-two different dances unfolding from the same *butoh fu*.

Variation on the same *butoh fu* is also demonstrated in Kazuo Ohno’s and Hijikata’s making of *Admiring La Argentina*, Kazuo’s distinguished reappearance in 1977 after a 10-year retreat from public performance. Yoshito Ohno observes that with this piece, in contrast to the early *butoh* “Dance Experiences,” “Hijikata and Kazuo molded the prototype of a *butoh* performance that could be staged over and again.”¹³ But *Admiring La Argentina*’s repeatability does not mean that the same dance is performed more than once. Like the memory process, the re-performing of a dance changes the dance. Lehrer peers into Proust’s writing process, which was one of continuous rewriting as he re-understood events from the present moment.”¹⁴ Similarly, though the parts and sections of *Admiring La Argentina* are identifiable and can be always done in the same order, Kazuo’s performance of the various figures – a prostitute, a young girl, La Argentina, and his own everyday self – requires the openness to interpret and express them as his body and mind understand them in present moment, and not how he understood them during a previous performance or rehearsal.

Rewriting, or ever-changing enactment, is the effect of Skura’s scores, as well. The scores may be made of imagistic or instructive phrases, words that suggest physical or psychological states, or “energy drawings,” which I’ll describe as most often being made of abstract lines or figures. Skura recalls that her arrival upon the term was related to musical scores, and her sense of them as going beyond notation to function as “a kind of map” for musical performance.¹⁵ The score gives the performer something to do or be, but it is not something to attain. She explains that a score is “the structure I’m giving myself so that I can be free to live that, and see where it goes. [...] [T]he score is not an endpoint, but a starting point. It’s not the thing that you’re trying to achieve, it’s a springboard for something else.”¹⁶ The scoring and dancing can go in a continuous cycle, from action to documentation to action. Memory as a creative act is intentional in Skura’s methods in that the performer uses the score, the image or the writing as a beginning point, responding to one’s memory of what’s on the paper. Further, enactment of Skura’s

scores uses each present moment as the catalyst for the next, thus the dance is created anew as it is being remembered and danced.

Scores developed out of Skura's innovation on teaching a repertory class at the Skinner Releasing Intensive in Seattle in 1994.¹⁷ She recalls that she "wanted to find a way to help people create that was integrating their analytic and intuitive selves."¹⁸ Similar to Hijikata's sense of imposition by the movements, positions and shapes required by Western dance modes, particularly ballet, Skura seems to think that movement and choreography that are too firmly shaped are an imposition on the performer as a person, and the process of making them an imposition on the choreographer's intuitive self. The repertory experiment developed into composition pedagogy she calls Finding Forms. In it, the artist discovers the content and structure of pieces through a cyclical scoring process. The forms, the pieces or dances, are always forming – consciously and intentionally they are never static or crystallized, but always, to use her principle phrase, "in a state of flux."

Another of her methods is a creative progression she calls Distillation. The steps of the process have been gradually etched out of an ongoing Surrealist-inspired moving/writing practice with a group of poets and movement artists. Skura recalls that they would "move for a fixed amount of time, then take the specific energy of our movement into our individual writing (e.g., if our moving had a punching quality, we'd write afterwards with a punching energy), then take the writing energy or image back to moving."¹⁹ The moving would often include speaking, reminiscent of Hijikata's process, which was also inspired by Surrealist art. A step now codified in the Distillation progression is the artist doing a "moving extraction from what she remembers of her own movement," recognizing the liquidity of memory.²⁰ This is illustrated in Lehrer's former lab supervisor's findings that memory is reliant on particular prions, or proteins, which possess a characteristic of indeterminacy. This, he observes, "embraces our essential randomness, because prions are by definition unpredictable and unstable, because memory obeys nothing but itself."²¹ Skura's scores and Distillation process allow for the flexibility of memory, and therefore of the dance.

A particular performer's memories, as well as other manifestations of the subconscious, emerge out of Skura's work through the process of writing while observing others moving.²² Skura explains that the writing from observation may include "descriptions, free associations, [and] perceived subtexts."²³ The performer is invited to integrate what Skura calls the "inner life" as part of the enactment or (re)creation of the score. This introduces another layer of variability and unknown. The performer's work is to allow psychological states, personalities, voices, even characters, to emerge. It isn't that the artist as a person disappears or gets erased – Skura clarifies, "I never feel like I don't know who I am" – but the individual self "softens."²⁴ The performer does not hold on to the emergences, or identify with them; the task of flux, of going readily from one physical impulse and moment to the next, is exercised here, too. The performer experiences herself as always changing, allowing such unpredictability that the very unfamiliar might arise.

While Skura's work encourages inclusion of the artist's subconscious, Hijikata's and Ohno's composition works more directly mine memory for the dances' subjects. *Admiring La Argentina*, discussed briefly earlier, may be the quintessence of memory as a stimulus for dancing. The piece was inspired by La Argentina, an Argentinean dancer

of Spanish descent whose birth name was Antonia Mercé, who Kazuo Ohno saw perform at the Imperial Theatre in Tokyo in 1929 at the age of 23. From then on, her spirit had been latently or subtly present within him, possibly revealing itself through such subconscious choices as his prevalent use of tango music as accompaniment to his dances during the 1940s and 50s, then came to the forefront of his awareness in 1977 when invoked by an abstract painting at Natsuyuki Nakanishi's gallery show.²⁵ The opening sequence of *Admiring La Argentina*, called "Divine's Death," is a recreation of Hijikata's 1960 composition for Ohno, made as a memorial of author Jean Genet's dying male prostitute, layering the reflection of memory as catalyst and as (re)creative act.

These examples of specific figures are indicative of the more general faculty, sought by the butoh artist, of receptivity to ghosts, spirits, and the realms of darkness that precede birth and follow death. In the workshop with Yoshito, we were asked to walk through the studio as though walking on the bones of our ancestors.²⁶ Walking on (imagined) former living bodies conjures a careful quality of movement, and with it a curiosity about the ancestors' lives and experiences. It intimates that the ancestors can have a kind of presence in the here and now, that something about them can be felt or known. It suggests that with a certain kind of attention, even without having had direct contact with them before that would serve as material for a memory now, we can, in a way, remember them.

The dead are a source for Hijikata, too, whose butoh is motivated by his being inhabited by an unnamed sister, and by his sense that something can be learned from the dead. Fraleigh and Nakamura excerpt a letter, titled "To My Comrade," that Hijikata wrote to his student Natsu Nakajima a couple years before his own death:

We shake hands with the dead, who send us encouragement from beyond our body; this is the unlimited power of BUTO. In our body history, something is hiding in our subconscious, collected in our unconscious body, which will appear in each detail of our expression. Here we can rediscover time with an elasticity, sent by the dead. We can find Buto, in the same way we can touch our hidden reality, something can be born, and can appear, living and dying in the moment.²⁷

This sentiment might be influenced by his exposure to German expressionism in dance, through his training with Takaya Eguchi, who had studied with Mary Wigman. It exudes a concern with transcendence of the individual self, which Susan Manning and Melissa Benson identify as an interest of Wigman's.²⁸ But Hijikata's movement is more a decomposition of the cohesive individual self, especially demonstrated through his seemingly nonsensical writing and oration. Hijikata's edges seem sharp, but they shift readily into one another – "living and dying in the moment" – from one image, event or thought into the next. Though politically and socially pointed, his butoh, like Skura's work, is also fundamentally about letting go of the concrete self in order for other voices and spirits to emerge or reveal themselves.

The investigation of the parallels between these artists' practices and compositional methods shows a certain kind of dance (one that is forming in the moment, is inclusive of the unexpected, and is continuously created anew as its recreated) and a certain kind performing self to execute such a dance (one that softens, transforms and is available to

the unpredictable and unknown). Ohno is remembered as an exceptionally arresting performer, and Skura, an early Bessie Award winner, continues to make innovative performance work and facilitate transformational training for performers in the fields of dance and theater. Perhaps these artists' work is evocative and effective because it mirrors one of our most beloved neurological processes: remembering. As a last comment, I'd like to propose that at the same time, and in the more rebellious spirit of Hijikata, dances from *butoh fu* and scores are resistances. In a Foucaultian frame, these bodies and dances are sites for resistance because, in their constant rewriting, they refuse to be known. Knowledge (and therefore control) of them must change as much, as often and as readily as the dances and performers do.

Copyright 2011, Amanda Hamp

¹ Jonah Lehrer, *Proust Was a Neuroscientist* (Boston: First Mariner Books, 2008) 83.

² Lehrer, 83.

³ Ohno, Yoshito. workshop. *Everyday Life is the Mentor to Do Butoh*, Kazuo Ohno Dance Studio, Yokohama, Japan, 17 Jan. 2008

⁴ Skinner, Joan. "The Kinaesthetic Imagination: An Interview with Joan Skinner." by Bettina Neuhaus. *Contact Quarterly Online Journal* (July 2010), 31 May 2011
<<https://community.contactquarterly.com/journal/view/skinner>>.

⁵ Sondra Fraleigh and Tamah Nakamura, *Hijikata Tatsumi and Ohno Kazuo* (New York: Routledge, 2006). 54-55.

⁶ Stephanie Skura, personal interview, 17 Nov. 2010.

⁷ Sondra Fraleigh and Tamah Nakamura, 11, 50.

⁸ Fraleigh and Nakamura, 55-56.

⁹ Fraleigh and Nakamura, 54.

¹⁰ Wurmler qtd. in Fraleigh and Nakamura, 53-54.

¹¹ Fraleigh and Nakamura, 50.

¹² Fraleigh and Nakamura, 59.

¹³ Kazuo Ohno and Yoshito Ohno, *Kazuo Ohno's World: From Without and Within*, trans. John Barrett (Middletown: Wesleyan University Press, 2004) 150.

¹⁴ Lehrer, 85-88.

¹⁵ Skura, interview.

¹⁶ Skura, interview.

¹⁷ Skura, interview.

¹⁸ Skura, interview.

¹⁹ Stephanie Skura, "Distillation: A Moving/Writing Practice," *Contact Quarterly* 35.1 (2010): 33-36.

²⁰ Skura, "Distillation" 34.

²¹ Lehrer, 91-95.

²² Skura, "Distillation" 34.

²³ Skura, "Distillation" 34.

²⁴ Skura, interview.

²⁵ Kazuo Ohno and Yoshito Ohno, 145-147.

²⁶ Yoshito Ohno, workshop.

²⁷ Hijikata qtd. in Fraleigh and Nakamura 2006: 50, 51.

²⁸ Susan Manning and Melissa Benson, "Interrupted Continuities: Modern Dance in Germany." *Moving Histories/Dancing Cultures: A Dance History Reader*, eds. Ann Dils and Ann Cooper Albright (Middletown: Wesleyan University Press, 2001) 221.

Bibliography

- Fraleigh, Sondra and Tamah Nakamura. *Hijikata Tatsumi and Ohno Kazuo*. New York: Routledge, 2006.
- Lehrer, Jonah. *Proust Was a Neuroscientist*. Boston: First Mariner Books, 2008.
- Manning, Susan and Melissa Benson. "Interrupted Continuities: Modern Dance in Germany." *Moving Histories/Dancing Cultures: A Dance History Reader*. Eds. Ann Dils and Ann Cooper Albright. Middletown: Wesleyan University Press, 2001. 218-227.
- Ohno, Kazuo and Yoshito Ohno. *Kazuo Ohno's World: From Without and Within*. Trans. John Barrett. Middletown: Wesleyan University Press, 2004.
- Ohno, Yoshito. Workshop. *Everyday Life is the Mentor to Do Butoh*. Kazuo Ohno Dance Studio, Yokahama, Japan. 17 Jan. 2008.
- Skinner, Joan. "The Kinaesthetic Imagination: An Interview with Joan Skinner." By Bettina Neuhaus. *Contact Quarterly Online Journal* (July 2010). 31 May 2011
<<https://community.contactquarterly.com/journal/view/skinner>>.
- Skura, Stephanie. Personal interview. 17 Nov. 2010.
- Skura, Stephanie. "Distillation: A Moving/Writing Practice." *Contact Quarterly* 35.1 (2010): 33-36.

Address for correspondence:

Amanda Hamp
Theatre/Dance, Luther College
700 College Drive
Decorah, IA 52101
hampam01@luther.edu

Dancing Richard Strauss's *Vier letzte Lieder* (Four Last Songs)

Wayne Heisler Jr.

The College of New Jersey

Abstract

The focus of this paper is on two ballets set to Richard Strauss's Vier letzte Lieder (1948): Maurice Béjart's Serait-ce la Mort? (Could This Be Death?, 1970) and Rudi Van Dantzig's Vier letzte Lieder (Four Last Songs, 1977). These ballets are part of a post-1945 trend Heisler terms "song-ballet," which problematizes the truism of words as anathema to dance in its twentieth-century historiography. Béjart's and Van Dantzig's engagement with Strauss's songs witness the persistence of beliefs in syntheses of the arts, particularly Richard Wagner's Gesamtkunstwerk (unified / integrated artwork). Despite vast differences, both Béjart and Van Dantzig linked music, text, voice, and movement into a kind of dance-centered music drama.

Introduction

Composed between 1946 and '48, Richard Strauss's *Vier letzte Lieder* are set to three poems by Hermann Hesse—"Frühling" (Spring), "September," "Beim Schlafengehen" (Going to Sleep)—and one by the Romantic Joseph von Eichendorff—"Im Abendrot" (At Gloaming/Twilight). The *Four Last Songs* are a sacred cow: they are among Strauss's most performed compositions, and it is truly unusual to encounter critical commentary on them.¹ Adoration for these songs stems partly from the circumstances of their creation. Music theorist Timothy Jackson interpreted what he regards as Strauss's "Last Songs" as an expression of "the *Not* of the postwar period—both [Strauss's] own personal *Not* and the larger *Not* of Europe"² given the composer's complex relationship with the Third Reich. In English there is no exact equivalent of *Not*: a "need," which can imply deprivation of spirit. Strauss died in 1949 at the age of eighty-five, eight months before the premiere of his last songs.³ No matter what one thinks of Strauss's cultural-political morass, they elicit a degree of sympathy, or empathy: who can deny mortality? Another aspect of the allure of the *Four Last Songs* is their ontological precariousness, which resonates with the trope of "songs-from-the-deathbed"—of the composer, of German culture, of ethical civilization. Were there only four songs? Were they conceived as a cycle? In what order should they be performed?⁴

In any event, Strauss never suggested that his last songs might be a ballet score. In fact, they have been set by more choreographers than have taken on any other Strauss work save the 1914 ballet-pantomime *Josephslegende*: Antony Tudor (1959), Brian MacDonald (1962), Maurice Béjart (1970), Lorca Massine (1971), and Rudi Van Dantzig (1977). Choreographies of the *Four Last Songs* fall in line with a post-1945 trend in modern dance and ballet I term "song-ballets": dancing to texted art, folk, or popular songs. In the historiography of twentieth-century dance, words are often regarded as anathema. Modernism re-staged the divide between, as Joan Acocella put it, "realists"

and “classicists”; for classicists, “the only kind of story dance could tell was a dance story, a construction of open symbols created by formal means: rhythm, shape, phrasing. . . .” Accordingly, a “literary” ballet is “a bastardization.”⁵ This tension is reflected in our conference’s Call for Papers, in which the “limited utility [of] conventional dramaturgical strategies” for dance and movement is located in the fixity, based in writing, of the stuff of dramaturgical work, as opposed to the “integrated activities . . . of creation, development and production . . . [that] become ‘events.’”⁶

The song-ballet phenomenon includes Richard Wagner, Gustav Mahler, Strauss, Benjamin Britten, African American spirituals, jazz, rock, and pop.⁷ In this paper, I explore song-ballets as a meeting of conventional and expanded dramaturgy in twentieth-century dance. My focus is on two ballets set to Strauss’s *Four Last Songs*: Béjart’s *Could This Be Death?* from 1970 and, from 1977, Van Dantzig’s *Four Last Songs*. Both, I argue, are a legacy of arch-dramaturge Richard Wagner’s *Gesamtkunstwerk*, commonly translated as a “total” but more accurately “unified” or “integrated” artwork. That Wagner was on the radar of twentieth-century dance cannot be disputed, e.g., the Ballets Russes, at least early on.⁸ The concept of a total artwork lost its avant-garde edge in the post–World War One climate.⁹ In dance, objections, as with the concept itself, predated Wagner, a central one being that music threatened to dominate dance and movement. Words, then, threatened to reduce both to “Mickey Mousing.” As characterized by Stephanie Jordan, many practitioners and theorists of modern dance and ballet turned to duality, juxtaposition, disruption, and disjunction rather than attempted unity and integration.¹⁰ As Jordan notes, however, a belief in dance-centered syntheses of the arts never disappeared entirely. Song-ballets, with their inclusion of words, are conspicuous in this regard, suggesting renewed faith in Wagner’s metaphor of the arts as “three graceful Hellenic sisters”—Dance, Music, and Poetry—first mentioned in 1849 in “Die Kunst und die Revolution” (Art and Revolution) and developed further in “Das Kunstwerk der Zukunft” (The Art-Work of the Future). Through the experience of dance, song-ballets marry the “sisters” dramaturgically with the scenic arts, in what Pamela Gay-White termed, in relation to Béjart, a “total stage form”¹¹—or, in other words, an evolution of Wagnerian music drama into dance-centered drama.

Béjart

Maurice Béjart was infamous for dance-centered spectacle—derivative and pretentious to some (particularly American critics),¹² while ultra-modern and profound to others.¹³ Both views of Béjart invite comparisons with Wagner. Béjart occasionally choreographed Wagner’s music, including *Les Vainqueurs* in 1968 to excerpts from *Tristan und Isolde* alongside Indo-Tibetan ragas. And like Wagner, Béjart’s appeal, described by Marcia Siegel, was auratic: “[Béjart] panders to [fanatical audiences] by claiming to have founded a new art form . . . that borrows successful effects from everywhere. . . . [H]e disarms [audiences] by bravado with which he reduces tremendous ideas to their least common denominator.”¹⁴ Implying phantasmagoria, which, in Theodor Adorno’s well-known view, Wagner mastered, Siegel also revealed a parallel between Béjart’s populism and the *Gesamtkunstwerk*’s communal imperative. Béjart took dance out of the theater to sports arenas and outdoor spaces as a strategy for realizing his self-stated philosophy of

“giving dance to everyone”¹⁵—an outgrowth of his neo-Wagnerian belief in redemption through love.¹⁶ Also analogous to Wagner, Béjart choreographed for specific spaces, and thereby treated architecture as an ancillary art of the theater.¹⁷

Premiered by the Ballet of the Twentieth Century in Marseilles, Béjart’s *Could This Be Death?* represents a small group of “straight ballets”—dance ballets—in his oeuvre. Still, it is legible as Béjart in its indebtedness to *Gesamtkunstwerk* dramaturgy; as summarized by Jean-Louis Rousseau, in Béjart’s works, “the various artistic disciplines blend into a single expressive whole . . . , breaking down the barriers . . . in order to arrive at one limitless spectacle. . . . [D]ance is a total means of expression, a vehicle for the whole being, for all emotions and thoughts, the rival of music and poetry.”¹⁸ For Wagner, music, in the form of opera, won out historically in the poetry-music-dance sisterhood-cum-rivalry.¹⁹ Béjart’s work is dance-centered, and comfortably so; dance is synthesis and a vehicle for all the arts strive to be.

Could This Be Death? stages a dying man’s encounters with past loves.²⁰ The curtain rises before the music begins and the man approaches center stage while four women emerge from each corner. The start of the music marks the man’s slipping into recollection and he dances a pas de deux with one of his loves to the first song, “Spring” (Figure 1).



Figure 1: Pas de deux from “Spring.” From Béjart, *Béjart by Béjart*, 65. Photo by Colette Masson.

(I have yet to confirm the musical performers for Béjart's *Could This Be Death?* It is likely that a recording was used for the first American performances at the Brooklyn Academy of Music in 1971.²¹ For this presentation I am using the 1973 recording of soprano Gundula Janowitz with the Berlin Philharmonic, which Rudi Van Dantzig used for the premiere performances of his *Four Last Songs* ballet, to be discussed later.) By investing the opening strains of Strauss's *Four Last Songs* with the power to evoke the past, Béjart connected his scenario to the composer, whose songs were a journey back, personally and culturally. In the poem, winter is exalting a memory of spring; spring returns once more and winter senses spring bodily: "es zittert durch alle meine Glieder / deine selige Gegenwart!" (your blissful presence quivers through all my limbs!). Or at least a dream of spring effects physical reverberations in the form of an impossibly lyrical song and classical pas de deux—"classical" for Béjart, that is.²² The bodily suggestiveness of "Spring" was a magnet for Béjart. Drawing inspiration from such diverse but not incompatible sources as Wagner and Baudelaire, Eastern spirituality and Antonin Artaud, Béjart explored the relationship between words, voice, and body. Béjart conceived of the body, in Pamela Gay-White's words, as "a resonator of sound, and as a locus from which is also directed a particular movement."²³ While not ambivalent to the meaning of the song's text, Béjart regarded language as but one bodily utterance; in bodies, voices, words, songs, and movements are united.²⁴

As revealed in the bottom image of Figure 1, the other lovers remain in view and dance, too, as a fragmented corps de ballet. Each of the next two songs, "September" and "Going to Sleep," is the scene of a pas de deux with other of the man's loves (Figures 2 and 3).

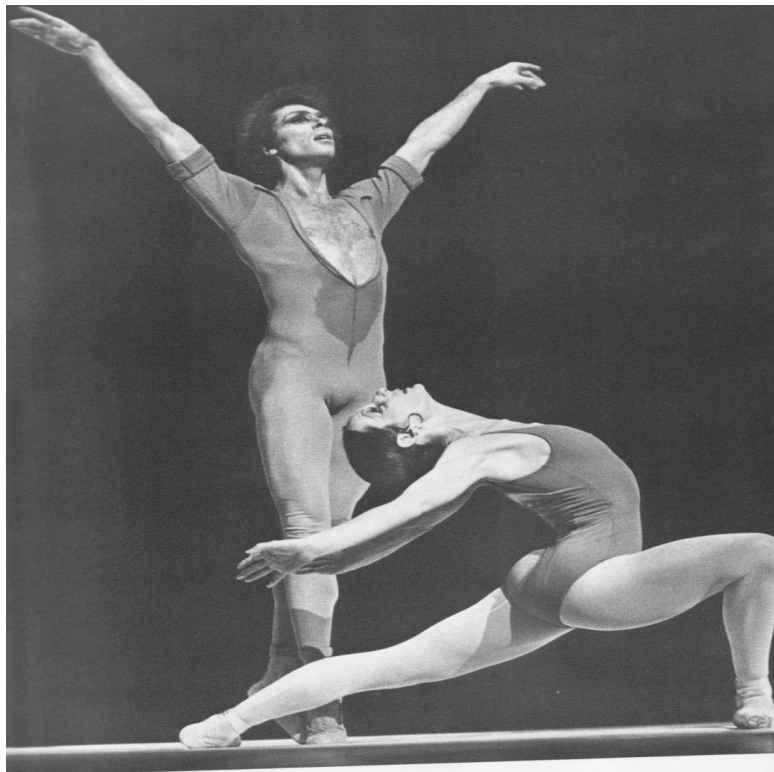


Figure 2: Pas de deux from "September." From Béjart, *Béjart by Béjart*, 66. Photo by Colette Masson.



Figure 3: Pas de deux from “Going to Sleep.” From Béjart, *Béjart by Béjart*, 67. Photo by Colette Masson.

Although known for his theatricality, Béjart sometimes dispensed with costumes; here, the dancer-lovers wear leotards and tights.²⁵ Scenery in the painterly, realist sense is also absent. As shown in Figure 4, Béjart’s stage is drowned with what he described as “pools of light whose varying color and intensity create an atmosphere that is both calm and mysterious.”²⁶ Another Wagnerian influence might be inferred, that of Richard’s grandson, opera director Wieland Wagner. Indeed, the post-war *Gesamtkunstwerk* was the one on which Béjart and his generation cut their teeth, and the staging of *Could This Be Death?* corresponds to Wieland’s declaration that “Illuminated space has replaced the lighted canvas.”²⁷

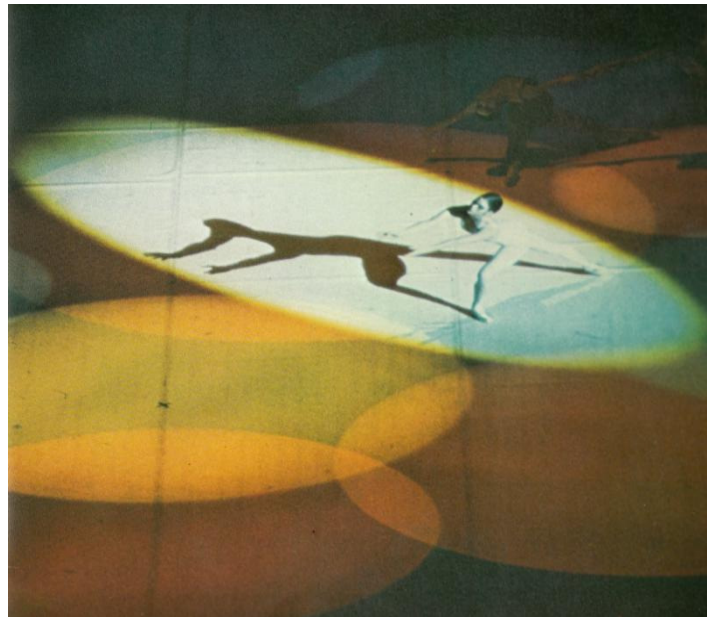


Figure 4: Béjart’s stage. From Béjart, *Béjart by Béjart*, 250–51. Photo by Colette Masson.

This staging is “mysterious” because it is symbolic of a psychic space, in accordance with Wagner’s Symbolist legacy, which Wieland and Béjart both inherited.²⁸ “Spring” is not just a season, “September” not a month, “Going to Sleep” not bedtime; they represent memories of life stages—*kinesthetic* memories of body-states.

Béjart’s dance drama merges and fuses Strauss’s songs; he treats them as one, the soundtrack of an extended memory in dance. Recall that the ballet begins before the music; moreover, the silences between the songs, during which the dancers continue to move as the man encounters memory after memory, are effectively part of the score. In *Could This Be Death?*, the coalescence of Strauss’s *Four Last Songs* as a totality is in the final one, “At Gloaming.” In the poem, an old couple reflects on their lives together. Life’s gloaming—dying—is accepted; famously, the aged Strauss recast the poem’s final line “ist das etwa der Tod” (is that perchance death?) as “ist *dies* etwa der Tod?” (is *this* perchance death?), and punctuated it with a self-quotation from his 1890 orchestral work *Tod und Verklärung* (Death and Transfiguration). In Béjart’s ballet, this final pas de deux is no memory of a love affair; the dying man only ever “glimpsed” this woman.²⁹ She functions as what Gay-White identified as Béjart’s throwback to the late nineteenth century: a “dominant symbol” in a “total staging.”³⁰ As the man gestures toward the woman in Figure 5, he gazes beyond the audience, trying to decode the symbol. This song is a moment of recognition, not just of death incarnate but of death as a process incarnate in the entire ballet. The poems, music, voice, choreography, and mise-en-scène are revealed as Béjart’s trademark “fusion of performance symbols.”³¹ Through this ballet’s syntheses and universal moral—this is death, we will all “dance” with her someday—Béjart imagines a unified, dance-centered artwork.

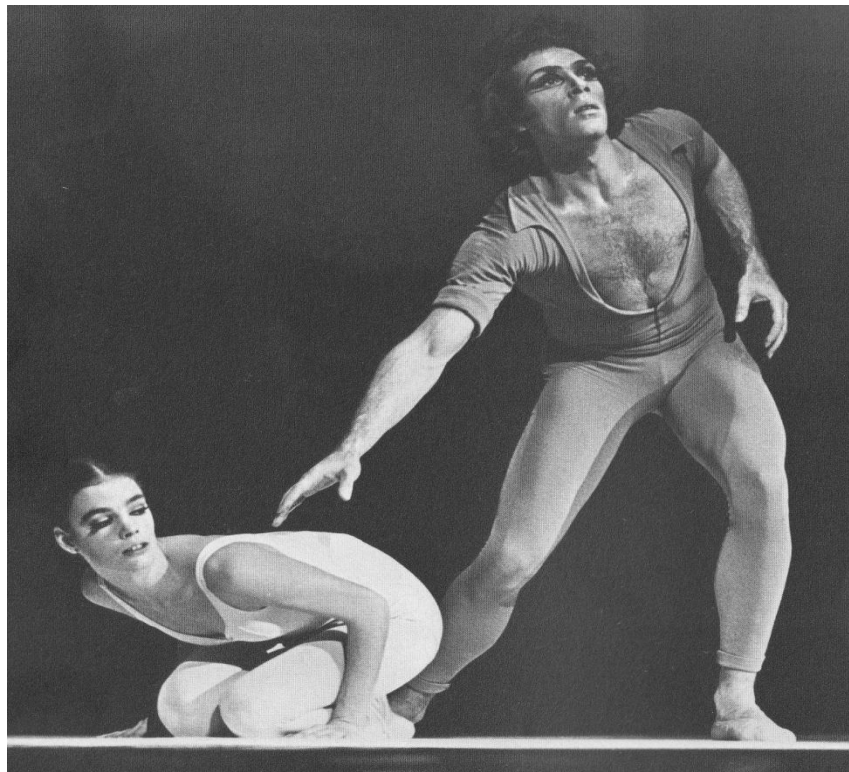


Figure 5: Béjart’s “is *this* perchance death?” From Béjart, *Béjart by Béjart*, 64. Photo by Colette Masson.

Van Dantzig

Death's inevitability is a theme that runs throughout Rudi Van Dantzig's oeuvre.³² In 1975 he set Strauss's aforementioned *Death and Transfiguration* for the ballet *Blown in a Gentle Wind*, in which a dying man, accompanied by two angels of death, experiences flashbacks from his life.³³ Van Dantzig and Béjart are worlds apart in terms of movement vocabulary: Béjart's occasional classicism is one ingredient of a choreographic-theatrical *métissage*,³⁴ whereas Van Dantzig is a classicist.³⁵ Still, Van Dantzig's *Blown in a Gentle Wind* and Béjart's *Could This Be Death?* are complementary. And, in 1977, the Dutch National Ballet premiered Van Dantzig's own setting of Strauss's last songs.

Set against the backdrop of a barren, stormy landscape, Van Dantzig's *Four Last Songs* is prefaced by a quotation from "September," the second song: "Sommer lächelt erstaunt und matt / in den sterbenden Gartentraum. / Lange noch bei den Rosen / bleibt er stehen, sehnt sich nach Ruh. / Langsam tut er die (großen) / müdgewordnen Augen zu" (Summer smiles amazed and exhausted on the dying dream that was this garden. Long by the roses [Summer] tarries, yearns for rest, slowly closes its weary eyes).³⁶ Similar to Béjart, Van Dantzig choreographs silence: the wait for the first song, "Spring," to begin is portent as four couples process slowly from stage left towards a lone figure: an angel of death.³⁷ With the metaphors of the poems and ballet foregrounded, the filling of the spaces before and in between the songs, and the lording angel, Van Dantzig also cements Strauss's songs as a cycle. Again, their considerable differences notwithstanding, the degree of consonance between Béjart's and Van Dantzig's *Four Last Songs* ballets calls to mind the conceit of an organic unity between words, music, and movement that is part of *Gesamtkunstwerk* ideology. Van Dantzig's *Four Last Songs* is a testimony to his comfort with inheriting it; as one reviewer put it, this ballet "combines text, music and choreography into a perfect unity."³⁸

Like Béjart's setting, each of the four songs in Van Dantzig's ballet is anchored by a pas de deux; in Figures 6 and 7, for example, paired dances from "Going to Sleep" and "At Gloaming." Backing up: after disappearing for the first couple's pas de deux in "Spring," the angel of death reappears at the end of song two, "September," when the second couple parts ways and a horn recalls nostalgically the melody from the words "Sommer lächelt erstaunt" (Summer smiles amazed). Or at least this melody might be experienced as nostalgic recall in a non-danced performance. In its initial, vocal rendering, the line "Summer smiles amazed" is danced tenderly, sensually by Couple No. 2. That the woman touches death at the song's end and he porters her back to her beloved, corresponding with the horn, suggests that the vocal line is not being simply "recalled"; rather, it was a premonition, a leitmotif for an eventual meeting with death that compels intimacy, whether or not the lovers fully understand why.

In a review of Van Dantzig's *Four Last Songs* ballet, one critic expressed awe at how "skintight the choreography clings to the music," particularly the vocal line.³⁹ Van Dantzig's fusion of song and movement resulted in large part from his having set Janowitz's recorded performance specifically.⁴⁰ From the very first pas in "Spring," it is striking how long and lyrical the lines of the dance are; Van Dantzig's choreography is lyrical. The phrases of voice and dance are enmeshed: movement intensifies as a response to vocal intensity—in pitch, dynamics, articulation, rhythm—rather than

miming the words. Likewise, it is as if the singing is breathed by the movement onstage, which models physicality the voice cannot resist.



Figure 6: Van Dantzig's "Going to Sleep." From *Utrecht*, Rudi Van Dantzig, 177. Photo by Jorge Fatauros.

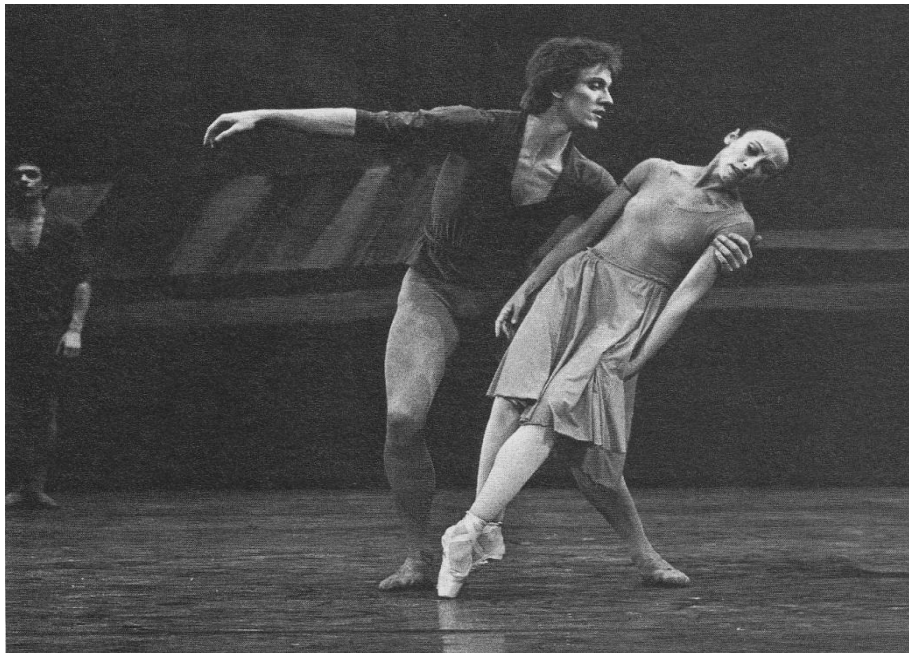


Figure 7: Van Dantzig's "At Gloaming." From *Utrecht*, Rudi Van Dantzig, 177. Photo by Jorge Fatauros.

For the first two strophes of the third song, “Going to Sleep,” only the third couple (again, in Figure 6) appears on stage. Beginning in an instrumental interlude following the second strophe, the other three couples enter and transform the scene into one for the corps. Re-enter, then, the angel of death, who temporarily takes a turn as the third woman’s porter, just as he had with the second woman at the end of “September.” The instrumental interlude in “Going to Sleep” is the heart of Van Dantzig’s ballet; it is included on the commercial video *Sylvie Guillem at Work*, as staged in 1987 by the Paris Opéra Ballet with Guillem as Woman No. 3 and soprano Michèle Lagrange.⁴¹ This interlude illustrates the inseparability of voice and choreography; the third woman’s lift when she flees the angel of death corresponds to the text “Und die Seele unbewacht / will in freien Flügen schweben” (And the soul unwatched will soar in free flight). Text painting, yes, but the lift also corresponds to the *reentry* of the voice, which climbs to a sustained high A-flat, the apex of this song thus far. Recalling Béjart’s alignment of movement with vocal song, this interlude is its own strophe—one without words but not without song in the sense of a physical resonance, with the high A-flat voicing movement, an agent of physical escape, albeit temporary.

Conclusion

Ultimately, song-ballets must adapt Wagner’s *Gesamtkunstwerk* ideal. Just two years after its formulation, Wagner’s ternary sister-symbol morphed into a binary conception of language and music based on folk song, with dance categorized as a function of music due to their rhythmic bond.⁴² Thus, in his commentary on Beethoven’s Seventh Symphony—famously, Wagner’s “Apotheosis of the Dance”—he compared dance and gesture with spoken language in terms of their relations to music: “The gesture of dance, like gesture in general is to orchestral melody what the spoken verse is to the vocal melody that conditions it.”⁴³ In the parlance of Wagner after he had become immersed in the philosophy of Arthur Schopenhauer, gesture and words are phenomenal versions of the noumenal intimated by music. For dancers and dramaturge-choreographers of songs, however, words *and* music are phenomenal, while the dancing and *singing* bodies offer glimpses—visual, aural, kinesthetic—of the noumenal. Song-ballets and music dramas alike have textual narratives that interact with music and movement; song-ballets claim the voice for the body, effectively translating the *Gesamtkunstwerk* from Wagnerian terms to those of a kind of dance drama.

Van Dantzig’s “At Gloaming,” marks the final passage from mortality to immortality. At the song’s ultimate question, “is this perchance death?”, the angel becomes ring leader (Figure 8); he pilots the willing assemblage in a movement choir. Similar to the climax of Béjart’s *Could This Be Death?*, there is gazing into the beyond; here, however, the question has already been answered. The dance continues even after the final cadence has faded, with all stretching upwards, ready.

It is difficult to imagine anyone choreographing Strauss’s songs who does not revere them; for all their differences Béjart and Van Dantzig are in this respect in solidarity, along with many before and since. Their *Four Last Song* ballets pay homage to Strauss, not the least of ways being their validation of his songs as a unified, universal experience through embodied theatrical performance. Wagner, though, did not go as gently as the

Strauss of the *Four Last Songs*, and these song-ballets also reveal the persistence of his *Gesamtkunstwerk* ideal, or at least a belief in the possibility of a dance-centered unity, in which words, like death, must be embraced.



Figure 8: Van Dantzig's "is *this* perchance death?" From Utrecht, *Rudi Van Dantzig*, 175. Photo by Jorge Fatauros.

Copyright 2011, Wayne Heisler Jr.

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank Philip Graydon and Michael Walter for stimulating email conversations regarding the *Vier letzte Lieder*. I am also grateful to Celia Applegate, Paul-Andre Bempechat, Joy Calico, Susan Cook, Michel Galante, Nicole Koepke, Sharon Mirchandani, Pamela Potter, and Laura Tunbridge for insights on my research at various stages.

Notes

All translations are my own unless otherwise specified.

¹ Strauss scholars, for example, regard these songs as his "finest in any genre" (Bryan Gilliam, *The Life of Richard Strauss* [New York: Cambridge University Press, 1999], 180), and evidence

of “a genius of the highest rank” (Norman Del Mar, *Richard Strauss: A Critical Commentary on His Life and Works*, 3 vols. [Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1986], III: 466–67). A notable exception to this reception is Hesse himself, who opined that Strauss’s settings are “virtuoso, refined, full of beautiful craftsmanship, but without deeper purpose other than themselves [*Selbstzweck*].” Letter from Hermann Hesse to Herbert Schulze dated June 23, 1957, in Hesse, *Musik. Betrachtungen, Gedichte, Rezensionen und Briefe*, ed. Volker Michels (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1986), 208, translated by Timothy L. Jackson in Jackson, “*Ruhe, meine Seele!* and the *Letzte Orchesterlieder*,” in *Richard Strauss and His World*, ed. Bryan Gilliam (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1992), 90–137, quote from p. 133n9.

² Jackson, “*Ruhe, meine Seele!* and the *Letzte Orchesterlieder*,” 95.

³ On the circumstances of the premiere of the *Vier letzte Lieder*, see Del Mar, *Richard Strauss*, III: 466; and Jackson, “*Ruhe, meine Seele!* and the *Letzte Orchesterlieder*,” 92.

⁴ For a range of commentary on the status of the *Vier letzte Lieder* as a cycle, see Alan Frank, “Strauss’s Last Songs,” *Music and Letters* 31 (1950): 172–77; Alan Jefferson, *The Life of Richard Strauss* (Newton Abbot: David and Charles, 1973), 224; and George Balanchine and Francis Mason, *Balanchine’s Complete Stories of the Great Ballets*, rev. and enlarged ed. (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1977), 268, in a discussion of Maurice Béjart’s choreography of Strauss’s songs for the ballet *Serait-ce la Mort?* (1970). Timothy Jackson’s argument that Strauss’s “*Ruhe, meine Seele*,” in an orchestrated version of his own earlier Lied to a poem by Karl Henckell, should be included in what he calls the “*Letzte Lieder*” is in many respects convincing, but it does not explain why the composer, who himself chose the singer (Kirsten Flagstad) for the premiere, did not specify the order of the songs, much less the inclusion of “*Ruhe, meine Seele*.” Jackson, “*Ruhe, meine Seele!* and the *Letzte Orchesterlieder*.”

⁵ Joan Acocella, *Mark Morris* (New York: The Noonday Press, 1993), 157.

⁶ http://www.sdhs.org/pdf/SDHS_2011_CFP_letter.pdf [last accessed June 15, 2011].

⁷ Not surprisingly, choreographers of the “realist” stripe as diverse as Helen Tamiris and Tudor, Frederick Ashton, Eliot Feld, and Robert Joffrey all set dance to song, as did, however, classically-oriented figures such as Kenneth MacMillan. Examples include: Tamiris, *How Long Brethren?* (1937) with African-American spirituals; Tudor, *Dark Elegies* (1937) with Mahler’s *Kindertotenlieder*, and *Shadow of the Wind* (1948) with Mahler’s *Das Lied von der Erde*; Ashton, *Illuminations* (1950) with Britten’s *Les Illuminations* (Rimbaud); MacMillan, *The Song of the Earth* (1965) with Mahler’s orchestral Lied of the same name; Feld, *At Midnight* (1967) with Mahler’s “Rückert” Lieder, and *Early Songs* (1970) with a selection of fourteen early Lieder by Richard Strauss; and Joffrey, *Remembrances* (1973) including Wagner’s “Wesendonck” Lieder. More recently, modern dancer and choreographer Mark Morris, whose work challenges the rigidity of a representational/classicist divide, has been prolific in the area of choreographing song. On Morris and song, see Acocella, *Mark Morris*, chapter seven (“The Story”).

⁸ This account dominates the historiography of the Ballets Russes. See, for example, Jean-Louis Rousseau, “From Wagner to Fellini,” introduction to Maurice Béjart, *Béjart by Béjart*, photographed, conceived, and designed by Colette Masson, Jean-Louis Rousseau, and Pierre Fauchaux, trans. Richard Miller (New York: Congdon & Lattès, 1980), 5–12, esp. pp. 6–7; or “Ballets Russes” in *The Concise Oxford Dictionary of Art Terms*, *Oxford Art Online*, <http://www.oxfordartonline.com/subscriber/article/opr/t4/e152> [last accessed June 29, 2010].

⁹ Bertolt Brecht’s declaration, although motivated by the particular cultural politics of Epic Theater, is representative: “So long as the expression ‘Gesamtkunstwerk’ . . . means that the integration is a muddle, so long as the arts are supposed to be ‘fused’ together, the various elements will all be equally degraded, and each will act as a mere ‘feed’ to the rest. . . . Words, music and setting music become more independent of one another.” Brecht, “Notes on the Opera [*Aufstieg und Fall der Stadt Mahagonny*],” in *Brecht on Theatre: The Development of an*

Aesthetic, ed. and trans. John Willett (New York: Hill and Wang, 1964), 33–42, quote from pp. 37–38. The emphasis is Brecht's.

¹⁰ See Stephanie Jordan, *Moving Music: Dialogues with Music in Twentieth-Century Ballet* (London: Dance Books, 2000), 7. Jordan highlights the Ballets Russes *Pulcinella* (1920) as evidence "of Diaghilev's own musical tastes, but also of his developing aesthetic view, after *Gesamtkunstwerk*. . . ."

¹¹ Pamela Gay-White, *Béjart and Modernism: Case Studies in the Archetype of Dance* (New Orleans: University Press of the South, 2006), viii.

¹² Two reviews from the time of Béjart's American residence at the Brooklyn Academy of Music from January to February 1971 sum up the controversy: Anna Kisselgoff, "Bejart and His Ballet of the 20th Century," *New York Times* (January 28, 1971); and Clive Barnes, "Dance: A Century Short. Béjart's Ballet Appears Far Behind the Times," *New York Times* (January 29, 1971).

¹³ A recent American reassessment of Béjart is Gay-White, *Béjart and Modernism*.

¹⁴ Marcia B. Siegel, "Maurice Béjart's Ballets," *Boston Herald* (February 21, 1971).

¹⁵ Béjart, quoted in Gay-White, *Béjart and Modernism*, 7.

¹⁶ See Marie-Françoise Christout, "Béjart, Maurice," in *International Encyclopedia of Dance*, ed. Selma Jeanne Cohen, et. al. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998), I: 405. In his belief in "redemption through love," Wagner was indebted to the philosopher Ludwig Feuerbach.

¹⁷ Béjart chose such diverse venues as the Forest National Auditorium in Brussels (for 1971's *Nijinsky, Clown of God*) and Florence's Boboli Gardens (in 1974, for *Il Trionfi di Petrarca*). Following the 1971 premiere in Brussels, *Nijinsky, Clown of God* landed in America at Madison Square Garden.

¹⁸ Jean-Louis Rousseau, "From Wagner to Fellini," introduction to Béjart, *Béjart by Béjart*, 7–8.

¹⁹ Wagner identified opera as the "seeming point of reunion" for the arts—*seeming* because, "Tone [music] claims for herself the supreme right of legislation therein." Wagner then recounted the attempted rebellion of Poetry and Dance, the latter staged in pantomimic ballets: "Dance . . . has only to espy some breach in the breath-taking of the tyrannizing songstress, some chilling of the lava stream of musical emotion,—and in an instant she flings her legs astride the boards; trounces sister Music off the scene, down to the solitary confinement of the orchestra; and spins and whirls and runs around, until the public can no longer see the wood for the wealth of leaves, *i.e.* the opera for the crowd of legs." Wagner, "The Art-Work of the Future," in *Richard Wagner's Prose Works*, trans. William Ashton Ellis (1892; reprint, New York: Broude Brothers, 1966), I: 67–213, quote from p. 152. For the handful of occasions Wagner envisaged dance in his operas or music dramas—act two of *Rienzi* and the Parisian *Tannhäuser*, episodes in *Meistersinger* (apprentices' dance in the final scene) and *Parsifal* (Flower Maidens, act two)—he clearly believed that dance, like music, should have narrative and symbolic relevance; dance should serve the drama. See, for example, "A Communication to My Friends," in *Richard Wagner's Prose Works*, I: 267–392, esp. p. 300. On the ballet in *Rienzi*, see also Humphrey Searle, *Ballet Music: An Introduction*, 2nd rev. ed. (New York: Dover, 1973), 49–51. The most extensive discussion of the Parisian *Tannhäuser*, for which Wagner was obligated to add a ballet (he did so for the opening Venusberg scene), is in Carolyn Abbate, "The Parisian 'Vénus' and the 'Paris' *Tannhäuser*," *Journal of the American Musicological Society* 36/1 (Spring 1983): 73–123, esp. pp. 80–83. Abbate (p. 80n11) states that, "There is evidence that the Opéra, deprived of its Act II ballet music, attempted to make the March in Act II 'balletic.'"

²⁰ In the absence of a film of Béjart's *Could This Be Death?*, my overview of this ballet draws on contemporary reviews, as well as Béjart, *Béjart by Béjart* and Balanchine and Mason, *Balanchine's Complete Stories of the Great Ballets*, 268–69.

²¹ See Clive Barnes, "Bejart Makes a Ballet Of Early Webern Suite," *New York Times* (February 12, 1971). Although not reviewing the Strauss ballet specifically, Barnes derides Béjart's use of recorded music the day after the second BAM performance of *Could This Be Death?*

²² For commentary on the relatively unusual degree of classicism in Béjart's choreography for *Could This Be Death?*, see Hugh McDonagh, "'Four Last Songs' Is Given Premiere By Bejart Troupe," *New York Times* (February 11, 1971).

²³ Gay-White, *Béjart and Modernism*, 8.

²⁴ On Béjart's Mudra Academy, indebted to Artaud, see Gay-White, *Béjart and Modernism*, 8, 68, and 74–75.

²⁵ On Béjart's view of costumes in ballet in relation to the *Messe pour le temps present* (1967), see R. Julliard, "Béjart, Maurice," *Current Biography Yearbook 1971* (New York: H. W. Wilson, 1955–), 32; and in relation to *Actus Tragicus* (1969), see Anna Kisselgoff, "Ballet by Bejart Makes U.S. Debut," *New York Times* (January 31, 1971).

²⁶ Béjart, *Béjart by Béjart*, 62.

²⁷ Wieland Wagner, quoted in Roger Savage, "The Staging of Opera," in *The Oxford Illustrated History of Opera*, ed. Roger Parker (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994), 350–420, quote from p. 400.

²⁸ Although the colors and lighting seem to serve as iconic tags for spring (green), September (orange and red), going to sleep (darkness, shadow), etc.

²⁹ Béjart, *Béjart by Béjart*, 62.

³⁰ Gay-White, *Béjart and Modernism*, 43.

³¹ Gay-White, *Béjart and Modernism*, 59.

³² See Luuk Utrecht, *Rudi Van Dantzig: A Controversial Idealist in Ballet*, trans. Nicoline Gatehouse (Zutphen: Walburg Pers, 1992), 50 and 53; and Utrecht, "Dantzig, Rudi Van," in *International Encyclopedia of Dance*, ed. Selma Jeanne Cohen, et. al. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998), II: 346–48, esp. p. 347.

³³ Helmut Scheier, "Verklärte Resignation. Ein Richard-Strauss-Ballett für Nurejew von Rudi von Dantzig," *Das Tanzarchiv* 23/12 (December 1975): 397–98. See also Luuk Utrecht, *Rudi Van Dantzig*, 172. *Blown in a Gentle Wind* is one of Van Dantzig's "death ballets," a subset of his oeuvre as categorized by Utrecht; namely, those "concerned with the spiritual struggle to accept death as the natural solution to all life's problems." Utrecht, *Rudi Van Dantzig*, 53.

³⁴ See Gay-White, *Béjart and Modernism*, viii, ix, 11, and 29. For another positive valuation of Béjart's collage techniques, see Rousseau, "From Wagner to Fellini," 10–11.

³⁵ [O.E.], "'Vier letzte Lieder,' Ein Meisterwerk van Dantzig (TV)," *Das Tanzarchiv* 4/26 (April 1978): 140–41.

³⁶ Van Dantzig's *Vier letzte Lieder* is available on several films housed at the Dance Division of the New York Public Library for the Performing Arts: a 1977 television broadcast of the Dutch National Ballet (MGZIC 9-220), a rehearsal film by the Paris Opéra Ballet for the 1987 Parisian premiere (MGZIA 4-4253 RNC), and a film of a 1989 live performance by the Dutch National Ballet (MGZIA 4-804), apparently filmed from the audience by a hand-held camera.

³⁷ This is, to revisit a term I used in relation to Béjart, Van Dantzig's "dominant symbol": "an interloper, . . . interrupt[ing] the game by removing a loved one and leaving the world colder and emptier for those behind. . . . [L]ike a spider, [he] comes to claim his prey." Utrecht, *Rudi Van Dantzig*, 50 and 173.

³⁸ Uncredited review from *De Volkskrant* [Amsterdam], quoted in Utrecht, *Rudi Van Dantzig*, 178.

³⁹ "Auf klassischer Basis hat van Dantzig hier ein Ballett choreographiert, das sich hauteng der Musik anschmiegt, erfüllt von einer geradezu überirdischen Schönheit." [O.E.], "'Vier letzte Lieder,'" 141.

⁴⁰ For the 1979 Viennese premiere, Janowitz actually sung live.

⁴¹ *Sylvie Guillem at Work*, dir. André S. Labarthe, RM Arts / La Sept Videocassette, 1987. On the (rather troubled) circumstances leading up to the Paris premiere of Van Dantzig's *Vier letzte*

Lieder, see Rudi Van Dantzig, *Remembering Nureyev: The Trail of a Comet*, trans. Katie de Haan (Gainesville, FL: University Press of Florida, 2008), 187–98.

⁴² On Wagner's turn from Greek tragedy to folk song, see Jean-Jacques Nattiez, *Wagner Androgyne: A Study in Interpretation*, trans. Stewart Spencer (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993), 16.

⁴³ From Wagner, *Oper und Drama* (1851), as translated in Nattiez, *Wagner Androgyne*, 35.

Bibliography

- Abbate, Carolyn. "The Parisian 'Vénus' and the 'Paris' *Tannhäuser*." *Journal of the American Musicological Society* 36/1 (Spring 1983): 73–123.
- Acocella, Joan. *Mark Morris*. New York: The Noonday Press, 1993.
- Balanchine, George and Francis Mason. *Balanchine's Complete Stories of the Great Ballets*. Rev. and enlarged ed. Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1977.
- "Ballets Russes." In *The Concise Oxford Dictionary of Art Terms*, *Oxford Art Online*, <http://www.oxfordartonline.com/subscriber/article/opr/t4/e152> [last accessed June 29, 2010].
- Barnes, Clive. "Béjart Makes a Ballet Of Early Webern Suite." *New York Times* (February 12, 1971).
- . "Dance: A Century Short. Béjart's Ballet Appears Far Behind the Times." *New York Times* (January 29, 1971).
- Béjart, Maurice. *Béjart by Béjart*. Photographed, conceived, and designed by Colette Masson, Jean-Louis Rousseau, and Pierre Fauchoux. Trans. Richard Miller. New York: Congdon & Lattès, 1980.
- Brecht, Bertolt. "Notes on the Opera [*Aufstieg und Fall der Stadt Mahagonny*]," in *Brecht on Theatre: The Development of an Aesthetic*, ed. and trans. John Willett, 33–42. New York: Hill and Wang, 1964.
- Christout, Marie-Françoise. "Béjart, Maurice." In *International Encyclopedia of Dance*, ed. Selma Jeanne Cohen, et. al., I: 405. New York: Oxford University Press, 1998.
- Dantzig, Rudi Van. *Remembering Nureyev: The Trail of a Comet*. Trans. Katie de Haan. Gainesville, FL: University Press of Florida, 2008.
- Del Mar, Norman. *Richard Strauss: A Critical Commentary on His Life and Works*. 3 volumes. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1986.
- [E., O.]. "'Vier letzte Lieder', Ein Meisterwerk van Dantzig's (TV)." *Das Tanzarchiv* 4/26 (April 1978): 140–41.
- Frank, Alan. "Strauss's Last Songs." *Music and Letters* 31 (1950): 172–77.
- Gay-White, Pamela. *Béjart and Modernism: Case Studies in the Archetype of Dance*. New Orleans: University Press of the South, 2006.
- Gilliam, Bryan. *The Life of Richard Strauss*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 1999.
- Hesse, Hermann. *Musik. Betrachtungen, Gedichte, Rezensionen und Briefe*, ed. Volker Michels. Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1986.
- Jackson, Timothy L. "Ruhe, meine Seele! and the *Letzte Orchesterlieder*," in *Richard Strauss and His World*, ed. Bryan Gilliam, 90–137. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1992.
- Jefferson, Alan. *The Life of Richard Strauss*. Newton Abbot: David and Charles, 1973.
- Jordan, Stephanie. *Moving Music: Dialogues with Music in Twentieth-Century Ballet*. London: Dance Books, 2000.
- Julliard, [R.]. "Béjart, Maurice," in *Current Biography Yearbook 1971*, 32. New York: H. W. Wilson, 1955–.
- Kisselgoff, Anna. "Ballet by Bejart Makes U.S. Debut." *New York Times* (January 31, 1971).
- . "Bejart and His Ballet of the 20th Century." *New York Times* (January 28, 1971).

- McDonagh, Hugh. "'Four Last Songs' Is Given Premiere By Bejart Troupe." *New York Times* (February 11, 1971).
- Nattiez, Jean-Jacques. *Wagner Androgyne: A Study in Interpretation*. Trans. Stewart Spencer. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993.
- Rousseau, Jean-Louis. "From Wagner to Fellini," introduction to Maurice Béjart, *Béjart by Béjart*, photographed, conceived, and designed by Colette Masson, Jean-Louis Rousseau, and Pierre Fauchaux, trans. Richard Miller, 5–12. New York: Congdon & Lattès, 1980.
- Savage, Roger. "The Staging of Opera," in *The Oxford Illustrated History of Opera*, ed. Roger Parker, 350–420. New York: Oxford University Press, 1994.
- Scheier, Helmut. "Verklärte Resignation. Ein Richard-Strauss-Ballett für Nurejew von Rudi von Dantzig." *Das Tanzarchiv* 23/12 (December 1975): 397–98.
- Searle, Humphrey. *Ballet Music: An Introduction*. 2nd rev. ed. New York: Dover, 1973.
- Siegel, Marcia B. "Maurice Béjart's Ballets." *Boston Herald* (February 21, 1971).
- Society for Dance History Scholars Conference 2011, Call for Papers: http://www.sdhs.org/pdf/SDHS_2011_CFP_letter.pdf [last accessed June 15, 2011].
- Strauss, Richard. *Vier letzte Lieder*. New York: Boosey & Hawkes, 1950.
- . *Vier letzte Lieder, Tod und Verklärung, Metamorphosen*. Berlin Philharmonic. Dir. Herbert von Karajan. Gundula Janowitz, soprano. Deutsche Grammophon compact disc 447 422-2.
- Utrecht, Luuk. "Dantzig, Rudi Van." In *International Encyclopedia of Dance*, ed. Selma Jeanne Cohen, et. al., II: 346–48. New York: Oxford University Press, 1998.
- . *Rudi Van Dantzig: A Controversial Idealist in Ballet*. Trans. Nicoline Gatehouse. Zutphen: Walburg Pers, 1992.
- Wagner, Richard. "The Art-Work of the Future," in *Richard Wagner's Prose Works*, trans. William Ashton Ellis, I: 67–213. 1892. Reprint, New York: Broude Brothers, 1966.
- . "A Communication to My Friends," in *Richard Wagner's Prose Works*, trans. William Ashton Ellis, I: 267–392. 1892. Reprint, New York: Broude Brothers, 1966.

Diaghilev: Ballet's Great Dramaturge

Elizabeth Kattner

University of Michigan-Flint

Abstract

Diaghilev was not an artist of any kind, yet he was intimately involved in the creation of the Ballets Russes' ballets. Can Diaghilev be considered the first dance dramaturge? This paper will examine the question of how he shaped the ballets created by three of his young choreographers, Vaslav Nijinsky, Leonide Massine, and George Balanchine, and how his involvement both benefited and interfered with the creative process. Finally, we will look at what present day dance dramaturges and choreographers can learn from his example.

Ballet history from 1869 until 1983 is dominated by the personalities of Marius Petipa, Serge Diaghilev and George Balanchine, each of whom transformed ballet into his own vision. However, Diaghilev's role was radically different than the other two. This divergence is rooted in their basic training: both Petipa and Balanchine were dancers and choreographers; Diaghilev was not an artist of any kind. The standards and institutions that developed in the Imperial Theaters in Russia in the last decades of the 20th century were a direct result of Petipa's own choreographic inventions. Similarly, Balanchine's choreographic experiments brought about neo-classicism. Petipa and Balanchine made their own music and casting choices, and costumes were an integral part of their choreography. In contrast, Diaghilev had complete control over the creative process in his company: he, not the choreographer, had the final word in casting, design, collaboration, and participated in the rehearsal process. A decade before Berthold Brecht began developing production dramaturgy in theatre, Diaghilev was intuitively practicing many similar activities. In addition to being intimately involved in production issues, he played an important role in enabling the artists who worked with him to translate ideas onto the stage and to create works that appealed to the zeitgeist of early 20th century Europe while at the same time challenging the social and artistic boundaries of his time. Can he be considered a dance dramaturge? By examining his relationship with three of his young choreographers, Vaslav Nijinsky, Leonide Massine and George Balanchine, the following paper will show Diaghilev to be a forerunner to the modern dance dramaturge.

Diaghilev hired dancers Massine and Nijinsky to perform leading roles in his company and introduced them to the art of choreography. He personally educated his novice choreographers by taking them on trips to various European capitals, visiting museums and cathedrals to develop their sense of aesthetics. By bringing them into collaborative relationships with well known artists like Pablo Picasso and composers like Igor Stravinsky, he expanded their experiences far beyond the Imperial Theaters in Russia.

Nijinsky was already an established dancer in St. Petersburg before he came to Paris to dance for Diaghilev. Diaghilev was “immersed” in educating Nijinsky during the first seasons of the Ballets Russes¹ and it was at Diaghilev’s encouragement that the dancer began to choreograph. Audiences in 1912 were stunned by many of the sexually explicit movements in *L’Après Midi d’un Faun*, and the discordant music in Stravinsky’s revolutionary score for *Sacre du Printemps* caused a legendary uproar at the premier in 1913. Nijinsky created his “anti-ballet” to this music, the turned in positions of his dancers and his anti-classical steps reflecting the composition (Fig. 1). During the preparation for *Sacre*, Diaghilev brought his protégé into his inner circle. Initially to be choreographed by Michel Fokine, Nijinsky was present at many of the meetings of the collaborators². The ballet was the brainchild of Stravinsky, who composed the music, and Nicholas Roerich, the painter and archeologist who designed the scenes of an early Slavic village³. When it became clear that Nijinsky was being groomed to replace Fokine, Fokine bowed out, and Nijinsky was prepared to step into the project.



Figure 1: *Sacre du Printemps*, 1913 production.

Accounts of the original performances of *Sacre* reveal another vitally important dramaturgical aspect of Diaghilev contribution: his ability to sense and develop trends in the first decades of the 20th century. Audiences were not merely challenged by the experimental works presented by Ballets Russes productions; they were exposed to these ideas at a point in time and in a setting in which they were receptive, creating a pathway for the transformation of both classical dance and music.

Massine’s beginnings as a choreographer were similar to Nijinsky’s: Diaghilev personally brought him from Russia and educated him by traveling throughout Europe and introducing him to the appropriate people. His initial opportunity to choreograph and the aesthetic he developed under Diaghilev’s tutelage led to a long and prolific career as a choreographer. Like with Nijinsky, Diaghilev provided Massine with vital knowledge that his new protégé was lacking. In 1917 Massine was given the opportunity to collaborate with visual artist Picasso and composer Erik Satie to create the ballet *Parade* (Fig. 2). Massine’s use of angled positions both in this and later ballets reflect the sharp



Figure 2: Picasso's sets for *Parade* brought Cubism to a wider audience. Donlan Dance Company
© Holger Badekow

angels of Picasso Cubist sets and costumes (Fig. 3). Accounts of the original production of *Parade* reveal Diaghilev's ability to sense the zeitgeist and provide his artists with a venue to present ground breaking works. By exposing Cubism to a wider audience than Picasso and Braque had up to that point, this ballet played a central role in that art movement⁴. Like a dramaturge, Diaghilev demonstrated his ability to both reflect and influence trends in the ballets his company performed.



Figure 3: Massine as the Chinese Conjurer in *Parade*.
Photograph by Lachmann, 1917. V&A Theatre & Performance Collections

In many ways Balanchine's relationship with Diaghilev is similar to Nijinsky's and Massine's, however, since Balanchine was not romantically involved with Diaghilev as were the other two and because he was hired directly as a choreographer, it better demonstrates the choreographer/dance dramaturge relationship. Although he was only twenty-years-old when Diaghilev hired him, Balanchine had already been

choreographing for several years and had built a reputation both in the dance and avant-garde arts community in Petrograd. He was well acquainted with the movements in music, visual art and theatre in the Soviet Union, but he had not yet been exposed to the great artists of Western Europe. He later credited Diaghilev with completing his education: “if it weren’t for Diaghilev, I wouldn’t be here!”⁵ His visits to museums throughout Europe inspired ballets like *La Chatte* (1927), in which he combined influences from Soviet choreographers like Kasian Goleizovsky with images from ancient Greek vases he had seen in museums in Berlin, London and Paris⁶. Like an effective dance dramaturge, Diaghilev filled in for what Balanchine was lacking, enabling him to make the next step in his development as an artist. At this early stage in his career, Balanchine showed his capacity to combine components from all forms of Soviet and Western European avant-garde art in his dances, an element vital to his transformation of classical dance.

More important than the visits to museums and cathedrals for Balanchine was his contact with western artists and composers. He recalled his first year as choreographer for the Ballets Russes: “...I had to do a ballet called *Le Chant du Rossignol*. Matisse was there. I didn’t know who the hell he was. I didn’t know the names of the people or the wonderful painters. I was absolutely stupid. I never read anything. Nothing...”⁷ In addition, *Rossignol* afforded Balanchine his first opportunity to work directly with Stravinsky, beginning a lifelong collaboration between these two artists.

Interestingly, this particular ballet not only demonstrates the success of Diaghilev’s education of his young choreographers, but also shows how a dance dramaturge can intervene unnecessarily. In visits to rehearsals, Diaghilev would give Balanchine input to the tempo of the music. As composer, Stravinsky also attended and accompanied many rehearsals, playing the music as he intended it to be. In archival film footage, Balanchine recalled those rehearsals and tells of being caught between Stravinsky and Diaghilev, both insisting on a different tempo for the dances⁸. In the end, Balanchine chose the tempo Stravinsky had determined. In this particular case, Diaghilev’s detailed involvement in the rehearsal process was a clear interference with the work of Balanchine and Stravinsky. However, despite this shortcoming, by introducing Balanchine to Matisse and Stravinsky, his impact as a dance dramaturge was much more positive than negative.

Le Chant du Rossignol can also be examined in light of Diaghilev’s involvement in casting decisions, something which can represent a needed contribution or an unnecessary intervention depending on the particular ballet and circumstances. The roles Balanchine created at the Ballets Russes demonstrate the challenge of the pivotal function the cast plays in the initial creation of a role. In *Le Chant du Rossignol* Balanchine was given thirteen-year-old Alicia Markova to create the role of the Nightingale. Markova possessed a wider range of technical ability than any other dancer in the company, and was young and as willing to experiment as Balanchine, making her the best choice for him to create the lead of this ballet. In this instance, Diaghilev effectively acted as a dance dramaturge, filling in for what Balanchine was lacking; he was new to the company and unfamiliar with the dancers.

A few years later, a more experienced Balanchine found Diaghilev's casting decisions for *La Chatte* to be more of a hindrance to the work than a help. Ballerina Olga Spessivitseva was originally cast in the lead role at Diaghilev's insistence. A purely classical dancer, Spessivitseva's unwillingness to experiment and lack of musicality certainly affected the original choreography⁹. She performed the role only once, and it was passed on to dancers Alice Nikitina and Markova, with Markova being the dancer who was able to exemplify Balanchine's ideal: "George redid the variation. He made it a very difficult one for me, with syncopations and corkscrew pirouettes. The other dancers said such things would ruin their legs, but I was young and willing to try. It didn't hurt me."¹⁰

Balanchine's ballets *La Chatte* (1927), *Apollo* (1928), and *The Prodigal Son* (1929) also reveal another twist to Diaghilev's casting decisions, demonstrating his dramaturgical influence over the choreographic process. Several of Balanchine's ballets were created around dancer Serge Lifar, an interesting choice for the man who declared that "ballet is woman." Works created both before and after his tenure as choreographer at the Ballets Russes show his preference for featuring women. It would seem that the decision to create these important male roles was not Balanchine's; many of the ballets he created were built around "the talents and personal beauty of Diaghilev's favorite...Lifar"¹¹. Similar to his decision to promote both Nijinsky and Massine, we see Diaghilev's influence over the artistic process, one rooted in personal motivation. Where these interventions good or bad? Perhaps both. It is clear that Balanchine's own artistic vision lead him in a completely different direction. However, Diaghilev's lasting legacy in Balanchine's work can be found in the roles of Apollo and the Prodigal Son, considered to be among the important principal roles for male dancers. Also noteworthy is that of the dozens of ballets Balanchine created up to 1929, these are the only two to have survived in the repertory.

On a final note, we will examine the set and costume designs of the original production of *Apollo*, which also reveal an interesting aspect in the relationship between Balanchine and Diaghilev. It is not completely accurate to say that *Apollo* survived in the repertory, rather the music and choreography survived. In line with the concept of the Gesamtkunstwerk in which the Ballets Russes excelled, the original production included elaborate sets and costumes by André Bauchant (Fig. 4). The women's costumes were



Figure 4: Lifar and Danilova in the original production of *Apollo* with elaborate sets and costumes. © Hulton-Deutsch Collection/CORBIS

universally disliked, and were changed shortly thereafter as Coco Chanel offered to make new costumes, accusing Diaghilev personally of dressing the Muses badly¹². Balanchine recalled how he later altered the ballet:

I looked at *Apollo* and decided to change it...I remembered the mountains in the second part. I thought, "Who cares about mountains? Mountains aren't interesting." So I took them away. Later, I put in a scaffolding with stairs. But I thought that looked silly, too. And I took that away. You know, in the Diaghilev production, there was a chariot that came to take Apollo to Olympus. But I never used that chariot in America.

You see, all that is unimportant. What is important is the dancing...only the dancing. Pas de deux, variation, and coda...that's important. So I changed...I know why I changed it. I took out all the garbage, that's why!¹³

It is clear from this statement that Balanchine did not create the ballet he envisioned in the original *Apollo* in 1928, rather he was working within the parameters created by Diaghilev. This ballet, however, demonstrates that the question of where involvement becomes interference can be difficult to determine. On the one hand, Balanchine created this ballet in his own vision in later productions rather than in the original one (Fig. 5). Modern versions of *Apollo* exemplify the simple beauty of neo-classicism while the original maintained many elements of other Ballets Russes productions. However, within this setting, Balanchine transformed ballet. Would this transformation have happened had Balanchine not been under the direction of Diaghilev? Balanchine himself insisted that it would not have; Diaghilev was vital in his development as a choreographer. In this regard he made one of the most important contributions a dance dramaturge can make: enabling the choreographer to develop his art beyond what he can do on his own. However, the example of *Apollo* shows us how Balanchine's talents extended beyond where Diaghilev could take him: had he remained in the situation indefinitely, his own artistry would have been stifled in favor of Diaghilev's preferences.

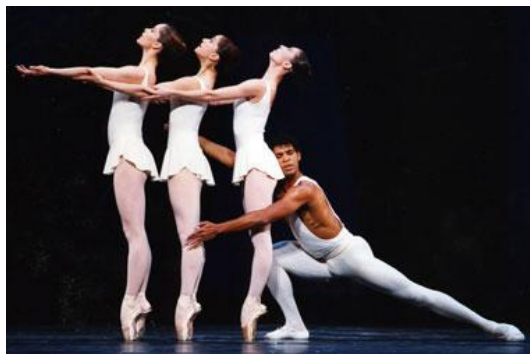


Figure 5: A modern production of *Apollo* (The Royal Ballet). The simple costumes and empty stage reflect Balanchine's own vision of this ballet.
Photo by Bill Cooper.

Similarly, Massine's long career as a choreographer and the contributions he made to the field of dance would not have happened had it not been for Diaghilev's training. After leaving the Ballets Russes, he continued working in both Europe and the

United States. Nijinsky's story is more tragic. His work began and ended with Diaghilev. His marriage to Romola Pulszky, the end of his relationship with Diaghilev, and his disintegrating mental state ended his career both as a dancer and choreographer.

This paper has demonstrated that Diaghilev can be considered as a forerunner to the modern dance dramaturge. He was instrumental in giving his choreographers background information; by introducing Nijinsky, Massine and Balanchine to accomplished visual artists and composers, he enabled them to bring their art to a level they would not have been able to reach on their own. Accounts of the ballets *Le Sacre du Printemps* and *Parade* prove that Diaghilev excelled at sensing current movements in art and music and was capable of creating the right setting at the right time for works to be presented to the public and create maximum impact, a feat that his young choreographers would have in no way been able to accomplish of their own accord. Modern dance dramaturges can use his example to learn to make valuable and even indispensable contributions in their collaboration with choreographers.

Collaboration is the key word. While the artists of the Ballets Russes truly collaborated, Diaghilev's superior role at times negatively affected casting decisions and hindered the creative process. For choreographers and dramaturges to work together for maximum effectiveness, a true collaboration between them and other participating artists must be created. This is the legacy that Diaghilev, ballet's great dramaturge, has left us.

Copyright 2011, Elizabeth Kattner

Notes

¹*Diaghilev: A Portrait*. dir. Peter Adam Perf. Tamara Geva. BBC Television Program. 1979.

²Hodson, Millicent. *Nijinsky's Crime Against Grace: Reconstruction Score of the Original Chorography for Le Sacre du Printemps*. Stuyvesant, NY: Pendragon Press, 1996: ix.

³Garafola, Lynn. *Diaghilev's Ballets Russes*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1989: 64.

⁴Elgar, Frank and Robert Maillard. *Picasso*. New York: Praeger, 1956: 94.

⁵Gruen, John, "Dance Vision" *Dance Magazine* September 1982: 104-105.

⁶McCarthy, Suzanne, "Millicent Hodson: Putting the Pieces Together: the Work of Millicent Hodson and Kenneth Archer." *Ballet.co Magazine* September 2, 2002. Web. June 20, 2011.

⁷Gruen, John. *The Private World of Ballet*. The Viking Press: New York, 1975: 280.

⁸*Four Emperors and a Nightingale*, dir. Wilhelm Bank and Eva Van Schaik. prod. Alexander van der Meer. Documentary film. 2004.

⁹Danilova, Alexandra. *Choura: the Memoirs of Alexandra Danilova*. New York: Fromm International Publishing Corporation, 1988: 8.

¹⁰Markova, Alicia. *I Remember Balanchine: Recollections of the Ballets Master by Those Who Knew Him*. Ed. Francis Mason. New York: Anchor Books, 1991: 91.

¹¹Vaughan, David, "Balanchine's Ballerina's 1925-1933," *Dance Magazine* January 1979: 63.

¹²Gruen, John, "The Ascent of Apollo: Mounting Olympus," *Dance Magazine* June 1987:158.

¹³*Ibid.* 165.

Bibliography

Danilova, Alexandra. *Choura: the Memoirs of Alexandra Danilova*. New York:

- Fromm International Publishing Corporation, 1988. Print.
- Diaghilev: A Portrait*. Dir. Peter Adam, Perf. Tamara Geva. BBC Television Program. 1979. Video.
- Elgar, Frank and Robert Maillard. *Picasso*. New York: Praeger, 1956. Print.
- Four Emperors and a Nightingale*. Dir. Wilhelm Bank and Eva Van Schaik, Prod. Alexander van der Meer. Documentary Film, 2004. Video.
- Garafola, Lynn. *Diaghilev's Ballets Russes*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1989. Print.
- Gruen, John. *The Private World of Ballet*. The Viking Press: New York, 1975. Print.
- _____. "Dance Vision," *Dance Magazine* September 1982: 104-105. Print.
- _____. "The Ascent of Apollo: Mounting Olympus." *Dance Magazine* June 1987: 156-165. Print.
- Hodson, Millicent. *Nijinsky's Crime Against Grace: Reconstruction Score of the Original Choreography for Le Sacre du Printemps*. Stuyvesant, NY: Pendragon Press, 1996. Print.
- Markova, Alicia. *I Remember Balanchine: Recollections of the Ballets Master by Those Who Knew Him*. Ed. Francis Mason. New York: Anchor Books, 1991: 89-92. Print.
- McCarthy, Suzanne. "Millicent Hodson: Putting the Pieces Together: the Work of Millicent Hodson and Kenneth Archer," *Ballet.co Magazine* September 2, 2002. Web. June 20, 2011.
- Vaughan, David. "Balanchine's Ballerina's 1925-1933." *Dance Magazine* January 1979: 63-77. Print.

Address for correspondence:

Elizabeth Kattner
Department of Theatre and Dance
University of Michigan-Flint
Flint MI, 48502
E mail: ekattner@umflint.edu

***“Ballets Russes” Works Created in Japan during the Prewar Period: A
Historical Example of Dance Transmission***

Mariko KITAHARA
Waseda University, Japan

Abstract

Ballets Russes never came to Japan, but it influenced Japanese stage dance world through visual images, individual experiences abroad and some ballet dancers from the West. Focusing on two aspects of the company, which are dynamic corps de ballet and idea of “total art,” I tried to analyze how they were adopted in prewar Japan amidst ongoing westernization and the wars. Ballet was imported in 1912, but it was rather traditional Kabuki Dance and entertainment industry such as Girls Opera that absorbed Ballets Russes in their own ways with enthusiasm.

Introduction

Ballets Russes (the Russian Ballet) was a tour ballet company sweeping around the Western World between 1909 and 1929. The company brought innovations to the western theatre culture: revolution of choreography and stage décor. Suffering from global convulsions of the early twentieth century such as the Russian Revolution and the First World War, the members of the company, especially the dancers, diffused around the world, sowing seeds of the company’s spirit. This global transmission can be called “Phenomenon of Ballets Russes”. In addition to the artistic innovations, I think that the phenomenon is also a very important aspect of the company.

I find some studies about the international transmission of Ballets Russes in western nations. However not many studies about the transmission into Japan have been done, especially from the viewpoint of the dance studies. The reasons may be attributed to the fact that Ballets Russes never came to Japan, where ballet world was not yet developed enough. The first staging of full-act classic ballet was *The Swan Lake* in 1946 that has been considered as the starting point of vogue of ballet in the country, and Komaki Masahide began to stage the works of “Ballets Russes” after returning to Japan in 1946 from China where he had been a member of Shanghai Ballets Russes¹. However, import of ballet in Japan already started in 1912 by coincidence with the heyday of Ballets Russes in the West, so that in Japan the images of “ballet” naturally involved that of Ballets Russes. In addition, influence of Ballets Russes was not limited to the ballet world, rather it extended over other dance genres such as traditional Kabuki Dance and western-styled entertainment industry such as Girls Opera, which had then larger place in the stage dance world. After the Restoration of Meiji in 1868, leaders of “New Japan” pushed forward new nation’s plan and westernization, and encouraged new industry. The dance world was not unrelated to the political situation. Traditional Kabuki Dance tried to renovate their tradition and entertainment industry produced ceaselessly new spectacles.

In that context, they sometimes adopted Ballets Russes in their own ways. Probably the indirect and cross-cutting transmission gives a difficulty of analyzing the transmission of Ballets Russes in prewar Japan. But it is too hasty to conclude that there were almost no transmission, rather we can find it in everywhere and every time.

Beginning of the phenomenon in the 1910s: visual images and dancers arrived in Japan

It was with the visual images that the “Phenomenon of Ballets Russes” started in Japan. Among the Japanese who visited the West in the 1910s, several persons who would import western art form of music and theatre were fascinated by the performances of Ballets Russes. They sent the pictures and reports of Ballets Russes to Japanese major newspapers and brought back to Japan the magazines such as *Comœdia Illusteré*, the programs and lantern slides. The book titled *The Russian Ballet* was published in 1917 by the author who had seen the Ballets Russes in London in 1914, and on its first page he wrote: “For people who admire the name of Ballets Russes”². The name of Ballets Russes was admired by many Japanese already in the 1910s. However at that time only a few people could have chance to travel to the West and see the real Ballets Russes. The book played a role in informing the people inside the country about the works and the famous dancers like Nijinsky and Karsavina. It was followed by translation of Ellen Terry’s book titled *The Russian Ballet*. The fact that the illustrations of Léon Bakst were copied in adverts of magazines shows how widely it spread in Japan.

Some ballet dancers also arrived from abroad. When Teikoku Theatre invited Giovanni Vittorio Rosi³ from London as ballet teacher of the opera section, history of ballet started in Japan. Teikoku Theatre was the first fully western-styled theatre, opened in 1911 at the heart of Tokyo, went a long way to bring on many famous musicians and grand opera companies from abroad. It included some ex-Ballets Russes dancers such as Elena Smirnova and Boris Romanov in 1916, Anna Pavlova and Alexandre Volinine in 1922. A major entertainment enterprise Shōchiku also invited Xenia Maclezowa in 1924 as teacher of the Girls Opera and performer⁴. In their programs, we can see same titles of some of the ballets choreographed by Michel Fokine, the first choreographer of Ballets Russes, such as *Chopiniana* and *Le Spectre de la Rose*. However these choreographies might be not same as Fokine’s⁵, and their performances were subjected to their limited condition of touring with little number of dancers. It was unable for them to show any idea of total spectacle or the excellent corps de ballet with which Ballets Russes fascinated the West. For example, when Xenia Maclezowa had planned to stage *The Firebird* of Stravinsky, she couldn’t find any orchestra who could play the music, so she renounced the original idea and made her original work with the same title: Maclezowa in the role of the Firebird leaving from cage and performed the 32 fouettés en tournant⁶. By reviews of that time, we can know that their performances mainly showed their ballet technique⁷. During the prewar period, some Russian immigrant dancers or some overseas-experienced Japanese dancers led the ballet world, but it was not until after the war that stagings of full-act classic ballets and comings of large ballet companies such as Bolshoi Ballet in 1957 were realized.

With their stable conditions for producing spectacles New Kabuki Dance and Girls Operas realized stage as “total art” quicker than early Japanese ballet world where concert works were dominant. Although I recognize that several numbers of concert works of ballet and modern dance were inspired by works of Ballets Russes such as *Le Carnaval* and *L’Après-midi d’un faune*, in this paper I will take up examples from these two domains. Because they absorbed important aspects of Ballets Russes: dynamic corps de ballet and idea of “total art”.

“Ballets Russes” in New Kabuki Dance Movement around 1920: dynamic and three-dimensional corps de ballet

In 1919, Ennosuke Ichikawa the Second, who was traditional Kabuki actor and dancer, was sent by Shōchiku to Europe and the United States for five months to see contemporary theatrical movements. What were most interesting for him during the travel were the stages given by Ballets Russes. Impressed by the performances in Alhambra Theatre in London, he visited the rehearsal studio and met the choreographer Léonide Massine. Seeing some Kabuki Dances that Ennosuke demonstrated there for him, Massine said: “Japanese dance moves in width, not in length. Thus Japanese dance lacks depth and it is not three-dimensional”⁸. Convinced by the comment, Ennosuke began to create innovative works of New Kabuki Dance. His work titled *The Toy Shop* in 1922 was directly inspired by *La Boutique Fantasque* choreographed by Massine in 1919, but the kind of direct adaptation was not his main interest. Rather he bravely adopted the new choreography method in his works: dynamic and three-dimensional corps de ballet.

Kabuki Dance, most popular traditional Japanese dance in theatre since the 17th century, developed in the framework of Kabuki Play, where actors and roles were primary important. In consequence, most of the works of Kabuki Dance were solo dances, or sometimes with one or two more persons, and dances of “corps de ballet” were very rare. Some dances, such as finale dance where all actors danced together, or revue where dancing girls performed in lining up, was consisted of a number of performers⁹. However they were very different from dynamic corps de ballet done by Ballets Russes. One of Ennosuke’s New Kabuki Dance titled *Yamato-Takeruno-Mikoto in Yaizu* created in 1922 included dynamic dances of male corps de ballet of the Fire and the Bandit, and a review gave them an equal praise with famous male corps de ballet of Ballets Russes¹⁰. Ennosuke is a representative of New Kabuki Dance Movement in which the other participants were also interested in corps de ballet as new choreography method¹¹.

“Polovtsian Dances” by Takarazuka Girls Opera and by Nichigeki Dancing Team in the 1930s: Mass spectacle and Orientalism as “Asia”

It was “Polovtsian Dances” with that Ballets Russes struck the audience in their appearance in Paris in 1909. It was the dances in Borodin’s opera *Prince Igor*, but it became an independent ballet work in repertory of the company staging frequently until 1929. In Japan also this ballet was considered as a representative work of Ballets Russes. An earlier adaptation of the ballet in Japanese stage was made by Takarazuka Girls Opera.

It was an earliest and most stable company, found in 1913 and still now active, where girls practiced group training of dancing and singing for spectacles of both western and Japanese styles. The company was a pioneer of the style of “Girls Opera”, that was in vogue since the late 1920s giving performances such as operetta, revue and ballet, consisting of only girls performers. The work titled *Prince Igor* was premiered in 1926, choreographed by Helena Ossowska who was a former ballet dancer of the Warsaw Ballet and invited as a ballet teacher in the previous year¹². The ballet restaged in 1928 and 1933. About the performances in 1933, a review said: “The form is new. Not like dance in front line, but the corps de ballet appeared new using the whole space, sometimes in square, sometimes in circle, or in disarray and in confusion, boisterous dancing back and forth”. The kind of dynamic corps de ballet was also demanded by westernization of theatre and stage form. The review added to say: “Seeing such a spectacle I wonder how impressions of audiences would differ depending on their place, for example, whether from second balcony like a bird’s eye view or from orchestra, an anterior view”.¹³ Japanese Kabuki theatres had wider width and lower height than western proscenium, so that it emphasized more frontal than three-dimensional effect of stage.

Second example of “Polovtsian dances” was staged by Michio Itō in 1939. Itō basing his dance activity on the West since 1912, temporarily came back to Japan from the United States. The creation was for Nichigeki Dancing Team. The company trained dancers specially for line dance like the Rockettes of Radio City Music Hall and had also a special ballet team organized by Olga Sapphire, who was a ballet dancer trained at major ballet institutions in Leningrad in the 1920s. Nine years before he already choreographed “Prince Igor” in the United States at the open-air Hollywood Bowl with 125 dancers, and in Japan he used about 50 dancers. An article about the spectacle titled “Powerful corps de ballet” said: “The choreography of Michio Itō that was free from standard technique of the Russian ballet, including newness well Americanized, showed his talent for management of corps de ballet. The impact of corps de ballet deeply struck us, in increasingly rising along with wild and oriental rhythm in harmony with chorus. His genius skill of management for appearing and disappearing of dancers, his variety of choreography and his efficient stage direction for avoiding disorder with such many dancers, all that has a lot of things, which we learn from. ...designs of costumes and arrangement of colors are also very fine”¹⁴. Michio Itō was a dancer building his dance career in the West, mainly in the United States. But his *Prince Igor* realized ideal collaboration with talented painter and corps de ballet consisted of disciplined dancers both male and female, and well to success for total effect of spectacle.

However maturity of ballet world in Japan was coincident with the period of war time regime. In 1938, for the same Nichigeki Dancing Team, Olga Sapphire staged *Egyptian Night*. The work entered into Part II of “Oriental Impression” program that declared itself “a bombshell protest against imitation of the West of modern revue world [in Japan]”¹⁵. Celebrating the national event in commemoration of the 2600th anniversary of Japanese Empire in 1940, Michio Itō’s *Prince Igor* subtitled “Oriental ballet” was restaged by the same company along with “Asian” dances such as dances of Thailand (“Japan-Thailand Friendship”) and *Ryūkyū, Yaeyama and Taiwan* (“trilogy of southing Japan”). Oriental images staged by Ballets Russes in the early 20th century were

distorted by ideology of “The Great East Asia” that was pushed despotically by Japanese government during the War. Itō’s *Prince Igor* showed an example of complex transmission of Ballets Russes: an oriental image originally presented by the “Russians”, once Americanized in the United States, and restaged in Japan representing “Asia”.

Conclusions

Besides the major companies of entertainment, young motivated Japanese ballet dancers began to give performances inspired by Ballets Russes works in the end of the 1930s. Ballet dancer Azuma Yūsaku and dance critic Asihara Eiryō tried to restage Ballets Russes works such as *L’Après-midi d’un faune* and *Les Sylphides* in 1941, although these realizations were still far from the original works. And their attempts were interrupted by the War. In 1946 Komaki Masahide came back to Japan bringing some works from “Ballets Russes” repertoire such as *L’Après-midi d’un faune* and *Petrouchka* that he had learned from the Russian immigrant dancers in Shanghai and he began to introduce them into Japan. Since then transmission of “Ballets Russes” works was done in a more integral way. In this paper, I tried to show difficulties of dance transmission over the seas and at the same time its dynamism into another cultural context.

Copyright 2011, Mariko Kitahara

Notes

1. According to Yukiyo Hoshino, Shanghai Ballets Russes found by White Russian immigrants in 1936 in the French settlement staged mainly “repertoire” of Marius Petipa and Ballets Russes such as *The Swan Lake* and *Petrouchka*. Trained in Harbin, Masahide Komaki joined in the company as a dancer since 1940 until the end of the War.
2. Ōtaguro, 1917.
3. According to Fusako Ueno, G. V. Rosi, born in Roma in 1867, was Italian ballet dancer who after his long carrier in his native country worked in Alhambra Theatre in London from 1902 and in His Majesty’s Theatre in 1912, where he choreographed several dance scenes in plays. He arrived in Japan in August 1912, and staged his works in Teikoku Theatre and in his own theatre, Akasaka Royal Theatre, which he found after resignation from Teikoku Theatre in 1916. But his attempt to transplant operetta and ballet did not success, so that he left Japan in 1918 to California, the United States.
4. Kawashima, 2011: p.32
5. Kerensky, 1974: p.87
6. According to description of the performance published in *Asahi journal*, 31st March 1925.
7. For example, a critic cautioned the Japanese audiences against confusion of art of Pavlova with that of Ballets Russes, and said that the former showed only her technique of dance but the latter showed total spectacle integrating dance, music, art and light. *New Entertainment*, February 1922: p.23
8. Ichikawa, 1964: p.190
9. Theatrical spectacle in revue style by girls became in vogue since 1872 when Miyako-Odori founded to attract tourists coming for Exposition held in Kyoto in the same year, in which dances of girls in the same traditional costumes appearing in line from both sides into stage attracted the audiences. Miyako-Odori became annual event, and the same style of local

spring dance festival spread to the other cities such as Osaka (Naniwa-Odori) and Tokyo (Azuma-Odori). Some critics distinguished dynamic corps de ballet of New Kabuki Dance from two-dimensional use of dancing girls in these spring dance festivals.

10. *New Entertainment*, October 1922: p.92-93
11. The pioneer works of New Kabuki Dance (Shin-Buyō) were created around 1920s: *Shibon* by Shizue Fujikage in 1921 and *Spring to Autumn* by Rikuhē Umemoto and *Insects* by Ennosuke Ichikawa Second in 1922. Inspired by Ballets Russes and theory of Rudolf von Laban, R. Umemoto, heir of the Umemoto family of traditional Japanese dance and teacher of Girls Operas, advocated “symphonic corps de ballet” as best form of modern dance. He also staged *L’Après-midi d’un faune* in 1929 and *Le Spectre de la rose* in 1935 for Takarazuka Girls Opera imitating the original versions of Ballets Russes.
12. *Opera*, November 1930: p.34
13. *Pictorial Magazine of Entertainment*, November 1933: p.61
14. *Asahi Journal*, 3rd November 1939.
15. *Sapphire*, 1982: p.144

Bibliography

- Auclair, Mathias and Pierre Vidal (direct. by). *les ballets russes*. Montreuil : Gourcuff Gradenigo, 2009.
- Caldwell, Helen. 伊藤道郎——人と芸術 (Michio Ito: the Dancer and His Dance). Trans. by Einosuke Nakagawa. Tokyo: Hayakawashobō, 1985.
- Hoshino, Yukiyo. “中国バレエ前史 (A Prehistory of Ballet in China).” *Studies in Language and Culture*. Vol. 29, no. .2. Nagoya: Nagoya University, 2008, pp.111-121
- Ichikawa, Ennosuke the Third. 猿翁 (En-ō). Tokyo: Tōkyōshobō, 1964.
- Kawashima, Kyōko. エリアナ・パヴロバによる日本へのバレエ移植 (Elena Pavlova's Transplantation of Ballet into Japan). Waseda University Monograph 40. Tokyo: Waseda UP, 2011.
- Nishikata, Setsuko. 日本舞踊の研究 (Study of Japanese Kabuki Dance). Tokyo: Nansōsha, 1980.
- . 近代日本舞踊史(History of Japanese Kabuki Dance in Modern Era). Tokyo: Engekishuppansha, 2006.
- Numabe, Shinichi. “Élan vital and Rhythm : The Ballets Russes in Japan in 1913,” *Dance in Japanese Modern Art*. Tochigi: Tochigi Prefectural Museum of Fine Arts, 2003: pp.79-84.
- Kerensky, Oleg. *Anna Pavlova*. New York: E.P. Dutton, 1973.
- Ōtaguro, Motō. 露西亞舞踊 (The Russian Ballet). Tokyo: Ongakutobungakusha, 1917.
- Sapphire, Oliga. わたしのバレエ遍歴 (My Journey of Ballet). Trans. by Shimizu Takehisa. Tokyo: Kasumigasekishuppan, 1982.
- Terry, Ellen. 露西亞舞踊 (The Russian Ballet). Trans. by Tatsuo Nagata. Tokyo: Keibunkan, 1921.
- Ueno, Fusako. “日本初のバレエ教師 G.V.ローシー——来日前の歩みを探る (G. V. Rosi, First Ballet Teacher in Japan: Research for his footsteps before coming to Japan),” *Buyōgaku*. No. 14, 1992, pp.1-11.
- Umemoto, Rikuhē. 舞踊への招待 (Invitation to Dance). Tokyo: Zen-ongakushuppansha, 1958.
- Usui, Kenji. 牧神——或いは東勇作 (Faun, or Azuma Yūsaku). Tokyo : Azuma Yūsaku dōmonkaī, 2010.
- Wada, Osamu. “歌舞伎舞踊——「踊り」の表現するもの (Kabuki Dance: What is

Expressed by “Odori”),” *Kokubungaku*. Feb., 2000, pp.17-26.

Magazines and Newspapers

演芸画報 (Pictorial Magazine of Entertainment). Tokyo: Engeigahōsha, since 1907.

新演芸 (New Entertainment). Tokyo: Geibunsha, since 1916.

歌劇 (Opera). Osaka: Hanshinkyūkōdentetsu, since 1918.

朝日新聞 (Asahi Journal)

読売新聞 (Yomiuri Journal)

Programs in possession of the Tsubouchi Memorial Theater Museum at Waseda University

Address for correspondence:

Mariko Kitahara

E-mail address: marikokit@hotmail.com

Contemporary Dance and the Politics of Form

Alexandra Kolb

University of Otago

Abstract

This paper investigates how dance genres and choreographic forms have become intimately associated with political parameters in Western theatre dance, following the rise of postmodernism, globalisation and late capitalism. It applies theories from dance and performance studies, the visual arts and politics to reveal and subsequently challenge the association of aesthetic form with political concepts. I argue that significant commonalities can be found in theatre dance developments across Western democracies, in terms of the interrelation between their form and political ideology. Case studies from several countries are analysed to demonstrate the link between form and politics as part of a worldwide trend.

Is political, emancipatory art still possible under the conditions of postmodernism and the hegemony of multinational capitalism? If we believe the American debate of the 1980s and '90s, there are causes for doubt. Critics such as Hal Foster, Philip Auslander, and Fredric Jameson consider the problems involved in making theatre truly political. Jameson claims we are in the midst of an “expansion of culture throughout the social realm, to the points at which everything in our social life – from economic value and state power to practices and to the very structure of the psyche itself – can be said to have become ‘cultural’ in some original and yet untheorized sense”.¹ Philip Auslander argues that experimental practices from the early 20th century or 1960s are now inappropriate political strategies because art is so enmeshed in the socio-economic conditions that performance has lost its power to transgress beyond existing parameters.²

So has political art, and in particular dance, thus become an impossibility? Arguably more performances of a political nature are now produced than in the 1970s. However, even those, such as the German Lehmann, who disagree with the conclusions drawn by American theorists (namely that art is no longer transgressive and at best only offers points of social resistance), emphasise the intricate links between culture, economics and contemporary information society and changes in the nature of political performance. Lehmann raises an intriguing point by writing that “It is not through the direct thematization of the political that theatre becomes political but through the implicit substance and critical value of its *mode of representation*”.³ I contend that it is important to consider that explicit *content* (i.e. a narrative, or theatrical subject matters such as revolution) is not the only way in which theatre – and likewise dance – can be political. It can also be political in terms of its *form*, which I understand in a very broad way, to include the structure of works, audience-performer relationships, or even the association of certain dance genres with political ideologies, such as classical ballets with the aristocracy etc.

I am not reinventing the wheel by advancing this claim with reference to dance. In the 1930s, for instance, proponents of the American workers’ dance movement lamented the

fact that the form of their works did not match their revolutionary content: the struggle for a classless society and fight against hunger and oppression. The main target of their critique was not, as one might reasonably expect from a left-wing organisation, the vocabulary of ballet but rather modern dance – a style which had hardly outgrown its infancy. As a commentator wrote in 1935:

The inseparability of form and content is forgotten by those who in their eagerness to use the dance as a revolutionary weapon seize upon forms which have been perfected for the projection of ideas totally different and sometimes completely at odds with progressive thought and material.⁴

Clearly, these 1930s dancers believed in what I shall seek to establish and discuss here, namely that dance genres and form can be expressive of political ideologies. The international, comparative study in which I am currently engaged investigates how and in what form Western theatre dance in the UK, Germany, New Zealand, and the USA has been shaped by political imperatives in the late 20th and early 21st centuries, c. 1980 – the present. It seeks to understand the ways in which the rise of postmodernism, globalisation and late capitalist society have (re)defined performance aesthetics, dramaturgies and practices.

In order to broach this topic, I would like to hark back to 1960s postmodern dance. 1960s dance is typically associated with democracy; as exemplified by Sally Banes' book title on the Judson Dance Theatre (*Democracy's Body*) and the term's common usage when discussing this period in dance history. While the historical context of the time, with the student uprisings, resistance to the Vietnam War, the gay and women's emancipation movements, the black liberation campaigns etc. indeed suggests an implication of dance in these tendencies, and while some dance artists actively participated in protest movements and produced politically-orientated pieces, some of those directly involved questioned dance's political potency. Take the following remarks by Steve Paxton:

I never bought the line that my work, in general the quotidian movement work, was ever about democratization of stage dance [...]. Arguably critics were bereft of their favorite moments of spotting the virtuosos, or appreciating how the dance and music marry. They were perhaps left to grasp for some way to provide a possible positive impression of walking bodies as dance, and I suppose I am grateful for their efforts. But it seems to me that in that period they were shocked mostly by the collapse of traditional hierarchies in dance and choreography extant for 200 years or more, and they reacted by choosing a word the opposite of hierarchical, thus displacing the issues of the works from the physiological to the political.⁵

However, while such pieces may not have been explicitly political in content, the changes in form, structure and audience-relationship in postmodern work do suggest a democratisation of the medium. These are well known: for instance, the use of mundane, everyday movement and clothes which erases kinetic and physical divides between the performer and the spectator. The deployment of alternative venues or outdoor sites – a famous example of site-specific works of this period being Trisha Brown's *Man walking down the side of a building* (1970) – disassociated dance from traditional, institutional endorsements such as theatres, which have often showcased elitist architecture. The theatrical environment, most notably the proscenium frame, had meant that the space

between the viewer and the art work was discontinuous – the choreography was removed from the spectator's world. Just as a picture frame distinguishes (visual) art from non-art, the institutional frame had marked dance as autonomous, 'high' and by implication, elitist. Moreover, illusionary art has been seen as a mechanism of bourgeois oppression⁶ and its antithetical opposite – anti-illusionary art – as democratic and liberating. In the '60s, however, audience interaction, as seen for instance in *Yellow Belly* by Yvonne Rainer, replaced fourth-wall naturalism and contemplation; providing another example of how the audience-spectator relationship was redefined. In almost all cases, the new discourse led to novel non-hierarchical interactions, acknowledging the spectator as an important interpretive force, and proposing an equal status between audience and artist. In short, it engendered a democratisation of the production and reception of dance.

Now almost fifty years later, choreographers seem to be working under similar parameters, but with the added benefit of advanced media technologies and within more multicultural, globalised societies. To give a couple of relevant examples from the countries cited earlier: In *on this rare occasion*, created in Dunedin in 2008 by American choreographer Larry Lavender, audience members were invited to join in activities in various zones onstage and in the seating area. For the work's 'finale', Lavender initiated a sounding circle, asking for "simultaneous contributions of tones, hums, squeals, yelps, chants, tunes, cries, calls, shrieks, groans, giggles, or any other offering that sprang to voice".⁷ The fact that the movement and sound were not designed in advance by the choreographer but created spontaneously in a communal fashion, together with Lavender's encouragement of widespread participation suggest a strongly democratic ethos for his piece. Similarly, in the performance installation work *House of Memories* (2010) by New Zealand dance artist Suzanne Cowan, which represented the world of people with visual impairments, visitors were led through several dedicated rooms of a Dunedin villa to experience facets of the performers' lives. Dancers and spectators were able to interact directly; for instance, in one room visitors were invited to join with the performers in a social dance.

Reflections in choreographic work of our technologised and Internet-dominated world by using new media technologies are perhaps inevitable. But do they really represent individual forays into new territory? The *2004-8 Dance Mapping Report* by the English Arts Council (published in 2009) states that a remarkable "forty-five per cent of the workforce engages with film, television, digital production, webcasting, and music video".⁸ A case in point is UK choreographer Rosemary Lee's *Remote Dancing* (2004), which is a mixture of installation art, dance and film. It displays several corridors with screens at their far ends, onto which images of solo dances are projected. These films are only activated, however, when a visitor enters the corridor, triggering a sensor. The 'virtual' dancer thereupon responds to the visitors' movements, effectively performing an interactive 'duet' with them.

Such works, again, are often typically claimed to be democratic: the official Arts Council report mentioned above states that modern media technologies are important democratising innovations when applied to dance, "with audiences, producers and creators creating work together".⁹ Indeed, in *Remote Dancing*, the spectator is not only an important interpretive but also a creative force without whom the art work would not exist or 'come to life' as it were. Moreover, new technologies, and in particular interactive art works, are seen to generate a "collective desire to create new areas of conviviality", as the curator Nicolas Bourriaud writes with reference to parallel

developments in the 1990s visual arts world.¹⁰ The idea of participation which is central to many of these works, whether interactive, collaborative or interdisciplinary, is seen as being aligned with emancipatory values, as it supports notions of “co-operation”,¹¹ equality and community. Thus, it resists seemingly aristocratic and quasi-dictatorial notions of individual authorship on the one hand, and contemplative, passive audiences on the other. The political agenda underpinning such art, as Toni Ross remarks, is “perfectly in tune with a long-standing liberal conception of democracy”.¹²

But if we think all of this suggests our arrival at a utopian state of unalloyed freedom and anti-authoritarianism, then I contend we should think again. I am not sure that we should buy into the simple idea that by avoiding ‘authoritarian’ structures (representational categories such as illusion and identity) in art, we necessarily “question authoritarian structures in ‘real life’”.¹³

Consider the German-Jewish emigre to the US and advocate of the Frankfurt school Herbert Marcuse (1898-1979), who argued that art which shatters conventional aesthetic forms, for instance in anti-art and street performance, only succeeds in integrating and reproducing the existing order. In a complete reversal of the argument that art has to disassociate itself from representational categories in order to undermine authoritarian strategies ‘in life’, Marcuse claims that artworks created in the attempt to complement the revolutionary upheaval through structure and form make “the artist superfluous without democratizing [...] creativity”.¹⁴ The real power of art – its resistance to reality – lies in its aesthetic dimension, as otherwise art just becomes like the reality it seeks to fight against. Following this line, contemporary artistic trends which have been seen as *conditio sine qua non* of non-authoritarian practices since the later 1960s, such as juxtaposition of media, collage or montage are in fact to be avoided, in favour of art promoting the transformation of reality into illusion. Marcuse’s view is seconded by Adorno, who similarly does not wish to collapse the art-life binary, claiming that art must instead rise above the social fabric if it is to avoid totalitarian integration into contemporary capitalism.

The problem with arguments in favour of art’s autonomy along Marcuse’s and Adorno’s lines is that, as Fredric Jameson has claimed, the works which have been valued by these Frankfurt School theorists, such as those by Kafka or Schoenberg, have become institutionalised and integrated into the artistic canon and thus “the younger generation of the 1960s will now confront the formerly oppositional modern movement as a set of dead classics”.¹⁵ However, even if we dismiss the relevance of Marcuse’s and Adorno’s views, there have been other critical voices. When we speak of the artistic strategies or forms of postmodernism or postdramatic theatre, we normally refer to concepts first introduced in the 1960s and ’70s. Now, however, in the 2010s, political parameters have changed dramatically. Experimental, collaborative, and cross-disciplinary work which emerged in response to the political climate of the 1960s might have been socially transgressive *then* - but is it still *now*, in the era of globalisation and its corollaries such as multiculturalism?

In the 1960s and ’70s, the breakdown of traditional artistic concepts offered points of resistance to social hegemony. For instance, Roger Copeland points out that Cunningham and Cage’s collaborations constituted choreographic parallels to the New Left’s demands for a “leaderless, decentralized” conception of community.¹⁶ Indeed, many of this period’s theatrical innovations and characteristics, such as the renunciation of narrative and representation in favour of presence, immediacy, action etc., reflected the anti-authoritarian causes and aims of the revolutionary youth, who expressed their

dissatisfaction with society through sit-ins, demonstrations and even occasionally violence.

Many of these visions and demands, such as connectivity, networking, and immediacy have however become central tenets of our globalised world. Even a cursory glance at the key trends of late-capitalist globalisation, detailed by researchers such as the sociologist Rosabeth Moss Kanter (1995), and contemporary dance trends across the globe suggests striking similarities. Mobility is a key feature of globalisation, namely the notion that money, ideas and people can move freely across traditional borders, assisted by improved means of communication. This has been reflected in the dance world with the increase in (inter)national cultural exchanges, often combining different dance styles or witnessing interactions between dance and other artistic disciplines. Pluralism is another key concept, which in cultural terms denotes the coexistence of a range of different values and practices within a given society. In dance, this is paralleled by the shift away from a restrictive canon centred on Western theatre dance towards the incorporation (for instance in the curriculum) of dance forms reflecting both non-Western traditions and popular styles previously excluded from the realm of 'high art'. This has resulted in a more varied aesthetics, which often combines elements of previously distinct techniques into fusions; take for instance the New Zealand company Black Grace, which has blended Pacific with contemporary dance.

Simultaneity and global connectedness are effects of new technologies and the revolution in electronic communication, which reflects, according to Marshall McLuhan,¹⁷ an important shift away from a time dominated by mechanisation and sequentiality. Simultaneity is not only important when co-ordinating the various art disciplines on stage. The collaboration of these disciplines also brings with it a co-operation of the senses in a kind of synaesthesia. Interdisciplinary dance works heighten the viewer's experience by integrating separate disciplines into single artistic units: often several senses are combined and overlap to form a perceptual 'whole'.

International collaborations, such as those between Moroccan-Flemish dance artist Sidi Larbi Cherkaoui, British-Bangladeshi Akram Khan, composer Nitin Sawhney and sculptor Antony Gormley in *Zero Degrees*, or between the Australian Expressions Dance and China's Beijing Dance companies not only combine artists from different provenances, ethnicities and religions, but also mingle cultures, artistic disciplines, and dance genres. In productions by the British theatre company Punchdrunk (usually site-specific works) the audience is free to roam the performance area and can choose either to follow the theatrical and dance scenes or to explore the installation-type set. For example, in *Sleep No More* which took place in one of New York City's disused warehouses in lower Manhattan in the summer of 2011, spectators were greeted with a welcome drink, given Venetian-type masks and urged to remain silent during the performance; they had the choice of following characters from room to room (which included occasionally being touched by them), or looking around the elaborately decorated set by themselves. Not unlike Suzanne Cowan's production of *House of Memories*, the Punchdrunk piece aims at providing a series of experiences for its participants: a sensory journey of kinaesthetic, aural, visual and gustatory stimulants integrated into a form of synaesthesia. This style of artwork seems fully in tune with the present-day 'experience economy', in which many businesses that previously focused on selling physical products to their customers now also seek to offer them memorable experiences, such as birthday parties at MacDonalds or tours of a Cadbury's chocolate

factory.

Clearly, the notion that dance works should reflect the world they inhabit is natural and in many respects positive, in particular if they further worthy social causes such as the greater understanding of peoples. But despite this, it is important to sound a note of caution as it is easy to slip into a convenient alignment with dominant economic-political parameters and policy trends even without noticing it (rather than offering points of resistance to the status quo). As Bishop writes with regard to similar trends in visual art, “it is arguable that in the context of today’s dominant economic model of globalization”, such art (she means relational art which is in many ways akin to collaborative dance) “does not self-reflexively question this logic, but merely reproduces it”.¹⁸ The same could be argued with reference to the tendencies of contemporary performance to mimic elements of modern business practices.

These perspectives are corroborated by the fact that a lot of dance works bow to the need to respond to policy directives and funding bodies which have undergone significant changes in many countries over the last decades. Susan Foster, for instance, has commented on post-1980s dance developments and their focus on collaborative works which are “project-driven” and de-emphasise individual authorship. She identifies parallels between current choreographic strategies and funding structures:

This new model of collaboration mirrored new structures of patronage and support for artists. Private foundations invited application for support for specific projects [...]. Artists applied to these institutions, not for support for the ongoing maintenance of their companies, but for funds for a specific event. Granting agencies also encouraged the leveraging of grants by matching money.¹⁹

This, she points out, forces artists to manage and promote their careers in previously unprecedented ways. Even a cursory glance at dance programme notes betrays the fact that funding for a production must now, as a rule, be sought from multiple sources. Australian dance artist Cheryl Stock gives a detailed account of the longwinded process of securing finance for her collaborative piece *Accented Body* from no less than thirty (!) separate organisations, whose expectations of the work included visibility and profile through media coverage, cultural partnership and cultural diversity.²⁰ Against such a backdrop, one suspects that the purely artistic intentions of the choreographer might be compromised by these other considerations, not to mention the inevitable time constraints.

Thus embedded in both funding directives and policies, boundaries between dance, economics, and politics are all too easily collapsed, perhaps confirming the argument so prevalent in American debate, and touched upon earlier, that the present scene is defined by “the breakdown of the old structural opposition of the cultural and the economic in the simultaneous commodification of the former and the symbolization of the latter”.²¹ Many of the choreographies I have drawn on in this paper do not advance explicitly political arguments and have been used only to exemplify trends. However, it is important to consider that if the choreographic perspectives of the 1960s are reiterated and further developed without questioning their relevance to the 2010s or the world’s changed political parameters, they may simply constitute a (part-voluntary, part-enforced) alignment with cultural policy directives and enmeshment in global business. Moreover, true democracy can only be achieved when there is a genuine choice of choreographic options, otherwise dance, like all art, runs the risk of losing its emancipatory function and

risks becoming co-opted by higher forces and the hegemonic system. Whether this is a conundrum or whether there is a way out of the impasse remains yet to be seen.

Copyright 2011, Alexandra Kolb

Notes

1. Jameson, 1991: 48.
2. Auslander, 1992.
3. Lehmann, 2006: 178.
4. Douglas, 1935: 141.
5. Email communication from October 2006.
6. See for instance Counsell, 1996: 212.
7. Lavender, forthcoming 2011.
8. Burns & Harrison, 2009: 16.
9. Ibid.
10. Bourriaud, 2002: 26.
11. Ibid: 27.
12. Ross, 2006: 171.
13. Frandsen, undated: 11.
14. 1979: 51-52.
15. Jameson, 1991: 4.
16. Copeland, 1983: 10.
17. 1964: 13.
18. Bishop, 2004: 58.
19. Foster, 2008: 20.
20. 2008: 29-30.
21. Foster, 1985: 145.

Bibliography

- Auslander, P. 1992. *Presence and Resistance: Postmodernism and Cultural Politics in Contemporary American Performance*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press.
- Burns, S. & Harrison, S. 2009. *Dance Mapping. A window on dance 2004-2008. Executive summary*. Published by the Arts Council England. Available: http://www.artscouncil.org.uk/media/uploads/dance_mapping_executive_summary.pdf [accessed 5 January 2011].
- Copeland, R. 1983. A Community of Originals: Models of Avant-Garde Collaboration. *New Wave programme notes*: 6-12.
- Counsell, C. 1996. *Signs of Performance: An Introduction to Twentieth Century Theatre*. London: Routledge.
- Douglas, P. 1935. Modern Dance Forms, New Theater, November: 26-27, in: Mark Franko 1995. *Dancing Modernism/Performing Politics*. Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press: 137-142.

- Foster, H. 1985. *Recordings. Art, Spectacle, Cultural Politics*. Washington: Bay Press.
- Foster, S. L. 2008. Choreographies and Choreographers: Four Definitions of the Terms. In: S. Bandopadhyay (ed.) *Modern Dance: Multifaceted Dimension*. Kolkata: Rabindra Bharati University, 5-26.
- Frandsen, Miriam. Undated. Theatre and social reality – is there a political theatre today? Fra Statens Teaterskoles Efteruddannelses hjemmeside. Available: efterudd.tilde.dk/UserFiles/File/Theatre%20and%20social%20reality.pdf [accessed 28 July 2011].
- Jameson, F. 1991. *Postmodernism, or, The Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.
- Lavender, L. 2011 (forthcoming in November). Sociography. *Brolga: An Australian Journal about Dance*. Special issue on interdisciplinarity edited by Alexandra Kolb.

The Role of the Dramaturge: The Practical Necessities

Elizabeth Langley

Professor Emeritus, Concordia University

This address has been styled to be spoken and not to lie silent on the page. I will speak of the reality of the work of the dance dramaturge in all its complexity from my point of view as a practitioner.

My dance life has spanned many dance forms—Interpretive Dance, Modern Dance, Post-Modern Dance, New Dance, Contemporary Dance and Dance for Physical Theatre. I have always tried to step up to the developing mutations as I, and the dance form, have evolved. The coming together of the defined and refined physical body and the power of self-expression—all that is what attracted me to dance in the first place and I consider myself forever contemporary.

In my professional career in Contemporary Dance and Physical Theatre, I am dedicated to the survival of my creativity and to the protection of the same privilege for all. Therefore the principle thrust, in my many years of working with students and professionals, has been to provide the necessary environment in which they can express in movement what they want to express.

My work has been mostly with dancer artists on original creations. As we all know, in the creating of an original work there is no right or wrong—it is just what is. We also know that in our society today it is difficult to find clarity, courage and a voice to develop and expose creative work. But it is a precious thing and needs honest, positive support.

Working as a dance dramaturge for the last thirty years has given me the opportunity to continually refine my knowledge, understanding and sensitivity. At the same time, I have been able to form a practical definition of the role.

The work of the dance dramaturge is to contribute by rendering aid to individuals in the community and, in doing so, assist the dance artists to produce their most personally creative, satisfying and successful work. The work is solely involved in the product not the process. The dance dramaturge's place is (but only temporarily) between the creator/performer and the future audience. The position demands immense trust. It is the work for a mature and experienced artist whose own creative life has been and continues to be personally fulfilling.

It is also important to be able to recognize, or at least sense, what makes potent theatre—dance or text driven. In my mind, the question has come down to what is enough? Not enough is not good theatre and too much is also not good—I call that mallet theatre. Although I have found the answer kind of mysterious and difficult to express in words, and differs for different people, when one is sitting in the audience, one knows when one has experienced it.

Definitions generate rules/directives—a foundation on which can be built a strong work ethic and clear responsibilities. But a foundation is of no importance until it is used as a base for some adventurous work.

I am now going to go through my list of rules of engagement/directives. There are some for the dance artist and some for the dance dramaturge—some when they are alone

and some when they are together. But please keep in mind that, at the same time, I sincerely acknowledge that, working with each individual dance artist and each work requires a unique formula. This should be shaped by the needs of the dance artist, the condition of the work, and the time line for studio meetings before the premier.

The first rule is for the dance artist and is about choosing a suitable dance dramaturge. I take for granted that they are seeking an opportunity to develop their best possible work and not just to be saved from some disaster. They should determine what aid they think would assist them and what growth and development is needed to bring their work to performance level. Therefore they should give serious thought to the choosing because it can make or damage their work. If they are seeking just to be complimented and pamper, they can leave the work to a mother or a friend—no need for a professional. But because this work needs a serious relationship, the candidate should be experienced, mature and creatively fulfilled and therefore be able to intellectually assist without jealously become possessive.

The second directive is for the dance dramaturge. There is a necessary transition to be made from thinking like a choreographer, performer or teacher into thinking like a dance dramaturge. All the knowledge gleaned, working in the other roles, is utilized but a different set of rules must be applied. The concentration has to go complete off the self onto the other.

The third important point to consider is communication. It should be fluid between the dance artist and the chosen dance dramaturge. In some cases, there is already a relationship of sorts so it only must be gauged if the relationship can move into a more serious studio one. If it involves a brand new connection, before a serious commitment is made, communication must be tested - not necessarily on a profound level but must involve giving and receiving, speaking and, most importantly, listening.

In the early days if an error in choosing has been made, one or the other or both parties should decided to honestly withdraw. Honesty is sometime difficult but not as difficult as finding oneself in the studio trying to work in a non-communicating and/or an incompatible relationship.

Let us now presume that, after consideration, the dance artist and the dance dramaturge have decided that they can work in the delicate, demanding, sensitive relationship that is required for progress if not success.

The fourth set of rules has to do with being together in the first studio meeting. It is crucial that the dance artist can run the work, even if it is still in a rough state, from beginning to end without pause and preferable without explaining content or purpose. If the content is explained, the information will color the pure act of expressive projection and, being only human, I, as a dance dramaturge, cannot forget it and will see the work expressing or not expressing the content and, while I am till mindful of the preliminary content, it may change as the refining process continues. In the beginning, I should experience the work as an audience member without program notes.

It is also important, in the early stages, for me to identify the general conventions of the work - the style, the physical vocabulary, the limitations and the possibilities - or there is no base to rest my thinking on. If the work is long and/or complicated, several runs should be offered. With alert concentration and note taking, I can then begin to know the work, read its conventions, receive what is being projected, and start to realize where and how aid can be given.

After the viewings, with a balance of ego and humility, the dance artist should be willing to let their work stand without commenting, apologizing or regretting—it was what it was—if it was perfect there would be no need for a dance dramaturge.

The next step is for the dance dramaturge to initiate the all-important level of communication. The best procedure is with questions inviting positive reflection. As was previously mentioned, the situation is sensitive and delicate and this moment marks the beginning of the real work.

This is also the time when the dance dramaturge begins to gauge the degree at which enquiries can be made and discussions can be conducted. Productivity can be achieved with many levels of directness from gentle to strong, from subtle to obvious, and all degrees in between. But eventually the discussions should not leave any moment of the work compromised by a lack of courage in the dance dramaturge or the dance artist. A tall order.

The next rules, which are the fifth, apply to the time of separation after the first studio session when both parties must do some serious thinking. There may still be time for either or both to discontinue the relationship if they cannot see good coming out of it. After the second session, it is difficult and time consuming to disengage and for the dance artist to find a replacement. It is also a time when the confidence of the dance artist needs to be at its strongest and there should be nothing, like incorrect judgment, to undermine it.

Presuming that the relationship is to continue, the dance dramaturge needs to consider how to proceed in the relationship. During the time of separation, I do seriously not think about the work. I, as a dance dramaturge, must not involve my creative ability even in imagining what I believe is even the potential of the work. I should not develop opinions, have ideas, make judgment or feel any kind of possessiveness toward the work. It is not my work—my work is to aid the artist in expressing exactly what they want to express in their work. I must leave no creative imprint.

It does take deep, disciplined concentration to not think about the work. There is a zone that I go to when I am alone and also when I am in the studio with the dance artist—I call it my ignorant/audience zone and over the years I have found it a useful and interesting place. When I am alone, it is not so difficult to disconnect, but, when I am in the studio, I must become empty, alert and open to receive whatever is presented.

But even though I do not think about the work, I do give a great deal of thought to my relationship with the dance artist. How did it feel in the studio? What created comfort and developed respect and trust? What might have created discomfort? How valuable was the discomfort? Should I back off slightly or move in and risk stronger questioning? Did we laugh or cry? How was it when we parted? How should it develop when we meet again? How to draw out the creator so that they say what they need to hear? (that being more important than me hearing it). How to bring the dancer artist closer to their goal? What are the questions that the dancer artist is not asking her/him self? There are lots and lots of questions for myself.

At this point I would like to divert for a moment. Although I realize that no artistic community, based in any discipline, is perfect, I cannot but worry sometimes about the lack of authentic communication amongst some of our members and the problems that many choreographers and dancers have when offered critical feedback. Although critical feedback is far from the work of a dance dramaturge, I cannot miss this opportunity to speak about my concern and it does deal with the subject of communication.

From dance training to auditioning, our profession encourages competitiveness beginning with many teachers who reward the students who have the widest reach and the highest jump. Images in the mirror reinforce the facts. Being sensitive creatures, the discomfort experienced by many dancers can encourage envy and jealousy. Also the body for life and the body for art making is the same body, and most members of our community are not taught to separate the work from the self. We realize that this is a very complex idea to realize. But without it, critical feedback is often taken as a personal attack.

Many a time a student came into my office requesting feedback. I always asked, “Do you want feedback or praise?” Although they insisted on getting feedback, as it was being voiced the expression on their face told me that what they really wanted was praise. We, working at all levels in the dance community, should be attentive to the emotional frailties as well as the strengths that dancers develop and be attentive in building a balanced environment for everybody. If positive criticism and feedback were an integral part of a dancer’s life from the early years, I do believe that generally they and their work would be realistically stronger. Therefore, although the dance dramaturge is not a critic or a giver of feedback, their work is another phase in ongoing and developing communication.

I will now return to the work of the dance artist and their dance dramaturge and the sixth rule. Seeing that the dance artist has been rehearsing the work and I have not been thinking about it, each following session should have newness in it for me.

What is it that I am alertly ready to register? Firstly, it is the energy coming off the work. There must not be a moment when the projected energy drops out. I call it “the erg thread” that must run from the beginning to the end. Its gradation can go from thick to thin from dense to shallow, but it must never break. At the same time, I am watchful to see that there is no lack of internal connection to the outward expression because that could invite dullness in the physicality. All this takes for granted that there is not one atom of movement “filler”.

There are other elements that are to be given some attention or just kept in my mind. There is spacing, pulse beat and over-rhythm, viewing angles, exits and entrances, general structure, duration, relationship to sound or silence, costume or nudity, mode of expression, focus, phrasing, transitions—all or some of which can be adding to or detracting from the power of the work.

I don’t work through the items one by one but I do look for moments of weakness and ask myself why are they happening? What is the cause? Then I must find a way to encourage the dance artist to re-examine all the problem moments and ask them to sense if they are all that they want them to be. If the dance artist’s perception is clouded, I may suggest ways that could be considered. Suggesting one way could be on the verge of being interference but many ways offer optional routes to problem solving. Reminding myself again to go to my disciplined mode of behavior, I remind myself that it is not my work. My work is to assist and support while the dance artist refines their product.

Early on I spoke about not wanting to know the content—wanting to be as an audience member with no program notes. But eventually the content is revealed to me through the dance artist’s deepening expression and the many repetitions of the work that I observe. I cannot stay ignorant forever. But, until then, I try to insist that no verbal description of the content is told to me.

By this time, as the work periods progress, the studio relationship should have develop

into one in which each person should be able to safely risk upping the intensity, precision and direction of the exchanges. This should be the natural development if respect and trust have deepened in the relationship. And also by this time, the overall structure, physical expressivity, space use and visuals have all been examined and integrated into a cohesive whole.

The next rule (the seventh) is about time and I will consider it in reverse beginning with the day before the premier. Under perfect circumstances, no changes should be made in the work during the last days before the first performance - let's say five days. This gives the performer/s time to run and to claim the work and integrate their total being into the projection of what is to be expressed. Solo performance carries a heavy responsibility but ensemble work has the added need of connecting and projecting a unified and balanced meaning. Just prior to the five days in studio rehearsals, it must be realized just how much more can be discussed and digested before the processing goes into overload and becomes full of impossibilities. If new considerations are discovered and there is not enough time for acknowledgement, digestion and realization, they should not even be contemplated or introduced. If time is running out, it must be decided that as much work on the piece that can be done has been done. There must be a logical point in time when development is stopped and all the attention is given to refinement.

There is also the time when the work has to be moved from the studio environment to the performance space. This demands a total re-evaluation of the energy, focus, spacing and intensity of projection. If it is moving onto a proscenium arch stage or a thrust one or into a site-specific environment, there are many factors to consider to recreate the potency of the work that has become familiar to the performer/s in an enclosed space with four walls and usually a low ceiling.

At this time, I would like to address choreographers who don't perform in their own works. It is totally understandable that they learn through the creating and rehearsing of their work but there is a point, when they should stop making changes. This, of course, relates to those five days that I have already marked for the dancer to claim, transfer the work and re-evaluate the elements.

As an interpreter, when I was given changes in the last days or, as has happened, just before a performance, my concentration was then on the changes and not on expressing the work. It also made me nervous. During those last days, the choreographer, with consideration and discipline, should resist making changes and accept the work as it is and keep the late learning private and stowed away to be used on their next project. As a dance dramaturge working with choreographers, I have introduced this notion and it has had some success but old habits die slowly.

There are equally defined rules for choreographers who perform their solo works or become one of their own ensemble members. It is of major importance that they pass through the transition from being the choreographer to being the interpreter. For soloists it is not so difficult because, as the creator, developer and performer of the work, it is all an intimate process. The dance dramaturge, in a slightly altered role, can assist them through the necessary transitions and prepare them for opening night. But the choreographer, who becomes a member of their own ensemble, has many difficulties to overcome. Firstly, they are usually under-rehearsed because they cannot give up being in the outer place of creation and control. Secondly, they resist giving up the need to observe while rehearsing.

Also when the choreographer transitions into being an interpreter, the other caste members must adjust themselves to the unfamiliar energy. Therefore, there can be a serious need to re-evaluate the energy environment of the newly formed ensemble.

If the dance dramaturge is still working on the project when the choreographer becomes an ensemble member, their role can become dramatically altered. Seeing that there must be a knowable observing-eye to bring the work to a satisfactory conclusion, they can find themselves fulfilling the role of rehearsal director.

And what, while considering “the eye” is the role of the out-side-eye, which is often confused with that of the dramaturge? I think that it came out of the realization that performance works can only be completely experienced by the performer when there is a public viewing - an audience of some kind. It is a testing and does feed the performer with information of a kind that cannot be got any other way.

So all these different kinds of work, that of dance dramaturge, rehearsal director, observing eye, out-side eye, have particular roles to fulfill and accumulatively help the dance artist’s productions.

To conclude, I would like to say that I find personal satisfaction when the dance artists feel in total ownership of their work, and feel that it has been accomplished and presented to the best of their ability and to their satisfaction. The gratifying time for me is when I am sitting in the audience, see the work and share the audience’s interest, enthusiasm and pleasure. But the most gratifying for me is the knowledge that the dance artist and I will continue to communicate and gain from our experiences.

Thank you.

Copyright 2011, Elizabeth Langley

Address for correspondence:

Elizabeth Langley
Professor Emeritus, Concordia University
Montreal, Quebec

Between Meaning and Significance, and Beyond

Jean Lee

Abstract

This paper deals with recent discussions on dramaturgy and dance, the paradigm shifts towards new dramaturgy in contemporary theatre and recent conditions of contemporary dance. The aspect that a dance dramaturge provides different perspectives to a choreographer as the first audience and the third person in the production, which is agreed with in former studies, will be reviewed first. Then the process of inner interpretative circulation to a choreographer and the role of a dance dramaturge in this process will be considered.

This paper also raises several implicit questions: Is dramaturgy a proper word for contemporary dance production and do we still need to use the same term? What are the new conditions of contemporary dance which choreographers handle and what do the phenomena reflect? Is dance understood, interpreted, or perceived or is appreciation of dance beyond analysis interpretation? What does a dramaturge do while a choreographer is in the hermeneutic circle during a production? As dance dramaturgy is understood empirically and all dance productions have their own methods and ways, this paper does not offer another example of dance dramaturgy but elicits the personal judgment of the reader upon it.

Introduction

The appearance of the job title “dance dramaturge”¹ now can be often found, given some credit for contemporary dance productions. If the phenomenon of collaborating with or hiring a dance dramaturge is more frequently found and more significantly issued in contemporary dance productions, it is necessary to consider the reasons for it more carefully. There must be a reason for the preference to use that title rather than any other. Because if a dance dramaturge only works in catalyzing the ideas of the people who are engaged in a dance production, perhaps recording and memorizing the working process and fragments of movements, storytelling the dance plots, and dealing with a choreographer’s artistic voice and the spectators’ understanding in order to fundraise the production from private sponsors, possibly to gain government subsidization, or to release advertisement for the box-office, then there are other designations for them, such as notator, photographer, videographer, playwright, producer, a PR manager, or developer. If a dance dramaturge does the same work as the other staff, there is no reason to persist with this job label.

Conversation about dance dramaturgy, which reflects the widespread acceptance of collaborations with a dance dramaturge, especially in European

dance productions, began in earnest in the late 1990's with a series of ongoing discussions about contemporary dance creation. Since "Conversation on Choreography," which has focused on European contexts, was held in Amsterdam in March 1999 and in Barcelona in November 1999, dance dramaturgy has been discussed internationally several times. There was more in "Internationales Tanzfest Berlin August 1999," "Tanzplattform 2006," "Symposium Tanzszene 2007 - Bericht Dialog 2," "ImpulsTanzWien 2007" and so on. The conversations and talks promoted also related written articles: The "Conversation on Choreography" series were published in *Performance Journal* and *Dance Theatre Journal* immediately after the events. Other articles on dance dramaturgy can be found in the journals, also in *Ballettanz*, *Theaterschrift*, *Contemporary Theatre Review*, and *Women and Performance* since the 1990's. In these vigorous discussions it has been agreed that dance dramaturgy can be explained only in empirical ways, as all dance productions have their "own method[s] of work" (van Kerkhoven, 1994: 140). For this reason, the process of learning about dance dramaturgy through phenomena found on the printed page reminds me of a story, *The Elephant and Six Blind Men*: six blind men meet an elephant for the first time and each man touches a different part of the animal and makes predictions about what the elephant is like. Henceforth, contemplating philosophical reflections seems more useful than adding yet another story about a blind man with more examples. Somehow a dramaturgical role in dance production might be neither necessarily new nor exclusive in spite of the effort to understand these new trends as "choreography ... already amounts to dramaturgy ... and the dramatic producer's function is often taken on by the choreographer" (Adolphe, 1998: 26, 27). Understanding the paradigm shifts in contemporary theater and dance may provide an idea resolving this issue first.

Paradigm Shift: New Dramaturgy and Contemporary Dance Performance

If you introduce yourself as a dance dramaturge to someone, assumptions of your work will probably include text-writing and theatrical direction when your conversation partner has a taste of theater. There might be, of course, reactions of why and how dance and dramaturge can be juxtaposed. It is never easy to separate the dramaturgy of dance from the traditional and classical image of dramaturge in terms of dealing with text, as the term "dramaturgy" contains the word "drama." Also in some places such as French-speaking and Catalanian-speaking areas, "dramaturgy" still has the meaning of "playwright" or "scriptwriter" in English that makes people more confused with the terminology of dramaturgy in post-theater ages². Furthermore, "dramatic producer remains to the theater-goers" in France, unlike in German-speaking areas (Adolphe, 1998: 26).

Although we have such difficulties with old and new terminology of dramaturgy, currently many names - e.g. Aristotle's κάθαρσις (Catharsis) from Greek drama, Gotthold Ephraim Lessing's dramaturge as a writer, and Bertolt Brecht's production dramaturge - are no longer a starting point when dramaturgy is debated, "... as the text is no longer the central and superior factor" (Lehmann

& Primavesi, 2009: 3)³. Hans-Thies Lehmann considers postmodern theater of the 1970's–1990's as “the theater of deconstruction, multimedia theater, restoratively traditionalist theater, theater of gesture and movement” (Lehman, [1999] 2006: 25). The paradigm shift to postmodern theater led to the advent of new dramaturgy, which also deals with multiple circumstances of drama productions⁴. Likewise, when dance is issued it is difficult to be free from a stereotype of dance, with well-known images of ballet dancers and their bodies, even though inter-media, inter-cultural, and inter-disciplinary dance, sometimes dance performances without dancing are shown now. For the last two decades, contemporary dance does not only indicate German Tanztheater and Flemish dance theaters but also needs to embrace whole phenomena such as non-dance trends in French-speaking areas, institutional atmosphere in central European cities⁵ and advent of new choreography education⁶, concept lead and academic driven dance practice as research in U.K. and Australia, Konzepttanz in Berlin, postmodern dance in U.S.A. and the pioneers' diasporas to Europe, etc. The changes of dance practice as such brought the changes in dance scholarship as well. Postmodernism theories were accepted as the ways of dance analysis and we started to read dance as text with all postmodernists' theories⁷. Meanwhile, as dance is a multiple combination of arts rather than objects of movements, semiotics and paired hermeneutics are applied to understanding and analyzing dance performances as well. Therefore, the syntax of a dance performance is no longer structural and systematic, and defining ‘what contemporary dance is’ seems almost impossible. But ideas on ‘what makes dance contemporary’ could possibly be discussed.

As a new paradigm in contemporary theater and dance has brought additional variations to the meaning of dramaturgy and dance, its place in contemporaneous productions may not be understood without knowing the notion of new dramaturgy and present dance trends. Marianne van Kerkhoven points out that dramaturges are concerned with “the mastering of structures; the achievement of a global view; the gaining of insight into how to deal with the material whatever its origin may be – visual, musical, textual, filmic, philosophical etc.” (van Kerkhoven, 1994: 146). One of Portugal's foremost choreographers, Rui Horta, also asserted that choreographers today are dealing with the inner and outer structures of complex arrangements that engaged with works when he talked about the experience of working with dance dramaturge (Horta, 2010). Horta emphasized that contemporary dance has more complex layers, both in the world and in the “artworld”⁸ rather than structure of movements⁹.

When the theater director and choreographer have to deal with such a variety of media and conditions, should the role of the dramaturge remain as it traditionally has been? Or is it concluded that a dance dramaturge is necessary for contemporary dance production as a simple consequence of integrative performance trends, adding theatrical effect or text to dance? Lehman's comments agree with another argument from van Kerkhoven, that there is “no essential difference between theatre and dance dramaturgy” (van Kerkhoven, 1994: 146). van Kerkhoven's equation of theater dramaturge and dance dramaturge indirectly suggests the multiple situations of both dance and drama productions which dramaturges must handle. This also implicates that dramaturgy in contemporary

theater and dance productions might be neither entirely new nor completely exclusive work.

In comparing dramaturgy traditional and contemporary, although deLahunta attempted to interpret Lessing's dramaturgy as "classical" or "textual" (deLahunta, 1999: 20) for Lessing's reference to the dramaturge as a "writer," his *Hamburgischer Dramaturgie* ([1778] 1962), written while Lessing stayed and worked in the Hamburg National Theater, reveals this interesting point to explore: to write the essay Lessing observed with "third eyes" as a first person. In other words, Lessing's privileged job was to watch before he wrote what he noticed. This can be the reason why Lehman addressed Lessing's dramaturgy and its effect as "the project of enlightenment" (Lehman, 2009: 5). Likewise, Brecht's "production dramaturgy" (deLahunta, 1999; Wesemann, 1998) was also possible as the dramaturge had the role either of witness of the production or interpreter of it from documentation without observation. This might be what we can often find in both traditional and new dramaturgy. Why then did observation become important? Is it for collecting a dramaturge's opinion? Does the opinion affect the choreographer's artistic decision? The choreographer's act of listening to the dramaturge's opinion implies that there can be two ways of interpretation to the choreographer during the dance-making process. The first one could be the relationship with the spectators first.

Between Meaning and Significance

The predominant subjects in the previous debates on dramaturgy are:

- Watching or seeing: "the outside eyes" or "eyes from outside" (van Imschoot, 2003: 142; Vejtisek, 2007: [online])
- "Look of outside" (Wesemann, 1998: 25)
- "A special sort of seeing, a new way of looking at" (Theodores in deLahunta, 2000: 25)
- "Hole anatomy" (Lepecki in deLahunta, 2000: 25)
- "External gaze" of "Embodied mind" (Stalpaert, 2009: 123)
- A kind of "police" or a "literary adviser" or "the first outside eye in rehearsal" (Lehmann and Primavesi, 2009: 4)

André Lepecki and Stalpaert, here, did not refer to "eyes"¹⁰ as a Cartesian body organ but expanded the notion of "seeing"¹¹. Therefore Lepecki's and Stalpaert's suggestions take the same line of seeing in terms of understanding the production wholly from both the choreographer's and the spectator's position. Peter Hay's comments on dramaturgy as "a process making sense both for the production and the audience" (Hay, 1983: 7) and Patrice Pavis' definition of dramaturges' work as "determining how meanings are linked and interpreting the play according to an overall social or political project" (Pavis in deLahunta, 1999: 20) imply that when a dramaturge does the watching, this includes interpreting simultaneously. If the artist's voice in the piece is an essential element of choreography in the danceworld¹², the artist's intention is the most important

factor in the interpretation of artworks, proposed by E. D. Hirsch, who offered a concept of “meaning (which is dependent on authorial intent) and significance (the personal, social, and cultural context surrounding the reader’s reaction to a written text)”¹³ between the intentionalism and anti-intentionalism debates¹⁴ (Hirsch, 1967). Hence it is known that the dramaturge’s interpretation might be passed to a choreographer during the choreographic process like spectators’ and critics’ interpretations, which will be delivered after a public showing. As contemporary dance has more chances to be shared in many different areas to its place of origin, the artist’s original intention and the meaning of the piece are laid between master meaning and significance or the surplus of meaning by national, regional and personal perspectives. Should the choreographer consider all possibilities of interpretation or simply make the audience convinced more? A dance dramaturge may be concerned with the same issue. Therefore, unlike Wesemann, who argues that a “Greek fist-fight” is started between “choreographer and dramaturgy” (Wesemann, 1998: 25), Lepecki rightly points out that dramaturges should be “ideologically, commercially, critically, and dialogically ‘choreographers’ doubles” (Lepecki, 1999: [online]). As Adolphe pointed out that “between action and meaning, dramaturg[e]’s concern is the intention of performance” (Adolphe, 1998: 27), a dramaturge can be someone who knows the artist’s intention for the artwork before and someone who predicts the possibilities of the audience’s significance.

The notions of contemporary art and the artworld where artists’ voices and artistic statements allocate great parts of artworks made as artworks, and the intentionalism and anti-intentionalism debate need to be reconsidered in the dramaturge’s involvement in choreographic processes as two different jobs for the same work. If there are two choreographers in one artwork, Wesemann’s assumption of a “Greek fist-fight” may perhaps occur between those two, unless there is no need to fight when a dramaturge is hired as the artwork belongs to one choreographer eventually. Moreover, although a dance dramaturge deals with the meaning and significance, well-made artworks do not have singular meanings but normally can have various interpretations. Also choreographic works are mainly constructed by human movements -sometimes embodied by others, dancers- and their reflections by other human beings, spectators, which cannot be interpreted in only one direction. Therefore, Hirsch’s intentionalism needs to be modified in contemporary dance context. Here a dramaturge, who is a choreographer’s double but with different identity and body, can reflect the choreographer’s meaning internally through the negotiation of artistic decision, for a choreographer begins with this self-reflection. If choreographers alone can deal with the meaning and significance, mastering all media engaged in the dance performance, the role of a dramaturge might not be considered that important in dance production. However, in spite of the budget press and the vague job roles, the need for dance dramaturges may be because of the significance of their observation, which may affect a choreographer’s artistic decision-making and the importance of their mutual relationship for the production, and may be because of the difficulty of the objectification from her/his work, even though the choreographer does not dance in the piece.

From Hermeneutic Process to Hermetic Process of Dance Dramaturgy

A French theater academic Joseph Danan proposed that the process of dance dramaturgy was a “resonance with the work of hermeneutics” in terms of two sides of interpretation - from the artwork and from the spectators (Danan, 2010: 37). In the context of contemporary dance, Danan’s proposal is a persuasive transition from interpretation to hermeneutics as artists’ intentions for their artworks identify them as artworks in contemporary arts and the intention is interpreted in multiple ways. The hermeneutic process of dramaturgy is a convincing one to be contemplated, as hermeneutics is an art of interpretation¹⁵. When the resonance with the work of hermeneutics understanding can be reflected not only in the relationship between a choreographer or a choreographer’s work and spectators but also in a choreographer and himself/herself during the process of creating dance, more opportunities of a dramaturge’s engagement to the choreographic process is possible. Apparently inviting a dance dramaturge to share the same space and time in rehearsal with the choreographer adds the vibrancy of a hermeneutics circle for the choreographer, as the dramaturge will reflect the presence of the work process. However, according to Paul Ricœur’s hermeneutical philosophy, which originates Danan’s account of the hermeneutic process of dramaturgy, Ricœur sees “an inner aporia, for an important reorientation” (Ricœur, 1981: 43). This is what a dance dramaturge can engage with the choreographic process through interacting with a choreographer’s inner intelligence. As choreographers will not entirely alter their artistic intention concerning their pieces according to the audience’s reaction, the aspect of an inner hermeneutic process of the choreographer may be more important than a relationship with the ordinary viewers.

An artist without artistic voice cannot be imagined as long as the artist of necessity creates an art piece in a certain context. While choreographers create dance pieces and make decisions, they might experience conflicts between their conviction in dealing with the initial motivations for the piece and the incarnation of the working process and its expansion and diversion. The necessity of engaging dance dramaturgy can be found here: when the choreographers experience the process of truly understanding their work, they might need time to make an objective observation of the achieved materials. If choreographers can have time for the process, they might be able to see what to do next alone. A professional production, however, normally has time limit and other limits which put the choreographer under pressure. The observation of a dance dramaturge, even if there is no opinion about artistic decision-making, can be a mirror of the choreographer’s work. In other words, a dance dramaturge can offer a shortcut for the choreographer to achieve the objectification of her or his work. The relationship between a dance dramaturge and a choreographer, therefore, is unbounded confidence and they sometimes need to be empathizing with each other immensely in order that the choreographer can trust what a dramaturge reflects. This valuable pair operates through human interrelationship.

Although Hirsch’s intentionalism and Danto’s notion of the artworld were partly agreed with in an earlier section of this essay, there has to be considered a

twofold aspect of the hermeneutic process, as postmodernists criticize it as being too structural. However, by deeming the acceptance both of destruction and hermeneutics as methods of dance analysis, to make an issue about a conflict between the two methods is unavoidable. Moreover, following the thoughts of Susanne K. Langer and Joseph Magolis—the inappropriation of linguistic analogies in the context of art in general (Langer, 1941; Magolis, 1974), including dance—dance is non-verbal art, and the application of a hermeneutical matrix composed of *author*, *text*, *context* and *reader* or hermeneutic circles are inappropriate. This is why a “hermetic”¹⁶ process, a bracketed or contained concept of herme(neu)tic(s) as a process of understanding dance, is proposed here. Dance dramaturgy is sometimes sealed and closed work with a choreographer by someone who can deal with esoteric meaning as much as exoteric ones.

Aesthetic judgment cannot be assured in this process. It can be inevitable that human senses and perception cannot be generalized, as our perceptions are imperfect. Similarly, human perception cannot be deviated or mechanically expanded as each organ works symbiotically within the one human body. Also it cannot be possible to perceive certain phenomena without the reflection of the individual’s personal experience. As long as hermeneutics belong to human beings, intuitive knowledge or perception cannot be free from personal experience. Therefore, although a dance dramaturge offers objectification of the achievement of work, this could be another form of dramaturge’s subjectivity on the work which is admitted by the choreographer. David Carr’s¹⁷ argument on McFee’s idea¹⁸ that meaning is understood, explained, and interpreted and dance is multiple media not to be restricted in movement (McFee, 1992, 1994), “meaning or significance of particular dances must remain mysterious” (Carr, 1997: 361), and Langer’s claim¹⁹ on unstable human memory and the mysterious process of understanding, therefore, can all be more comprehensible now; as an art piece, dance is both perceivable and interpretable.

Accordingly, Lehmann and Primavesi’s discussion of “intersubjectivity” and “interactivity” (Lehmann & Primavesi, 2009: 3)²⁰ and Adolphe’s stress on the importance of movement in dramaturgy (Adolphe, 1998) are all vital, not only in the relationship between dance pieces and audiences, but also between a choreographer and a dance dramaturge. This may also secure the dramaturgical role beyond description although the job title is revealed in a program note. The hermetic aspect of dance performance is now an enclosed one, and likewise dance performances may not be fully comprehended by those not in the show or anyone living in different society, but human interrelationship opens that comprehension infinitely with vast variation.

Acknowledgements

This essay was inspired by communication with persons who had faith in my ability. Particularly thanks to Dr. Anna Pakes, who enlightened my philosophical reflections, Dr. Andrée Grau, who tolerantly encourages my dance research, and

Dr. Sam Jin Kim, who invited me to her professional dance projects when I knew nothing about dance.

Notes

1. My emphasis.
2. Some might claim that this idea only reflects German theater tradition which could be the limit of this essay.
3. "In postdramatic theatre, performance art and dance, the traditional hierarchy of theatrical elements has almost vanished: as the text is no longer the central and superior factor, all the other elements like space, light, sound, music, movement and gesture tend to have an equal weight in the performance process. Therefore new dramaturgical forms and skills are needed, in terms of a practice that no longer reinforces the subordination of all elements under one (usually the word, the symbolic order of language), but rather a dynamic balance to be obtained anew in each performance." (Lehmann & Primavesi, 2009: 3)
4. Another German theater intellectual Erika Fischer-Lichte also considered theater as performance. See her book, *Ästhetik des Performativen* (2004). These ideas can be paralleled with performance studies movement in North America resulting of avant-garde theatres in early 20th century.
5. The cities are geographically closed: Amsterdam, Rotterdam, Antwerp, Brussels, Charleroi, Utrecht, Eindhoven, Düsseldorf, Cologne, Bonn and Luxembourg.
6. The schools, such as P.A.R.T.S. in Belgium and E.D.D.C., S.N.D.O., Das Arts in Netherlands, started to develop choreographic ideas through education while traditional conservatoire dance schools are more concentrated on dance technique.
7. See Janet Ashead-Lansdale's and Naomi Jackson's arguments on deconstruction and structuralism as dance analysis in 1990's Hong Kong International Dance Conference and in 1994's *Dance Research Journal*. Also compare with Susan Leigh Foster's dance analysis based on post-structuralism.
8. My emphasis. This is Arthur Danto's philosophical notion of the "artworld," which provides the theories of art in which all members of the artworld tacitly assume objects to be considered as art (1964). Danto's notion of the artworld is expanded to institutional theory by George Dickie (1974).
9. Choreographers deal with more elements than only movements to make their dance pieces. The integrative trends of performance to other art forms such as fine art, music, and theater is not a totally new tendency from the past. More recent changes are that a dance performance is performed at more places different from its origin and the social milieus where choreographers and spectators belong are changing more diversely. Nowadays, both choreographers and spectators are exposed to more expanded surroundings in terms of "ethnoscapes, technoscapes, financescapes, mediascapes and ideoscapes" (Appadurai, 1996: 33). This multiplies the possibilities of creating and understanding artworks.
10. My emphasis.
11. My emphasis.
12. It is a prolongation of Danto's notion of artworld to dance field.
13. Hirsch states "all interpretations are personal, temporal, and incommensurable," implying the imperfection of significance as valid judge, even though he did not deny criticism (Hirsch, 1967: 129).
14. Intentionalism and anti-intentionalism are conceptual terms that are linked to debates

- in English literary criticism and also to whether artists' intentions affect the critics' evaluations of the artworks or not. "The Intentional Fallacy" written by W. K. Wimsatt and Monroe Beardsley in *The Swanee Review* stresses, "in order to judge the poet's performance, we must know what he intended." ([1946] 1954: 4). Counteroffensive overall, E. D. Hirsch's *Validity in Interpretation* (1967) argues that the author's intention is a core element in interpretation.
15. The effort to understand dance as multiple arts has been started from dance philosopher Graham McFee. McFee's trial can be extended to hermeneutic turns. To understand this essay on the same idea of hermeneutic turns as dance understanding, while the previous section deals with Heideggerian hermeneutic circle between the art pieces and spectators, this section refer to Ricœurian resonance of hermeneutic process to a choreographer's inner-self.
 16. My emphasis.
 17. Carr also argued McFee's type-token distinction that is "difficult to apply to dance as dance is not in the relevant sense an interpretive art" and "the only possible art-theoretical significance of the type-token distinction is to explicate the idea of artistic interpretation." (Carr, 1997: 353).
 18. "What we experience depends on the concepts we bring to bear, and ... a battery of concepts appropriate to art works are appropriate only to them (and not to other kind of objects) ... only under those concepts can art, in this dance, genuinely be experienced. Yet we must be sure that those concepts are appropriately applied to the activity in question. That means deciding just what that activity is." (McFee 1992: 50).
 19. "But between the facts run the threads of unrecorded reality, momentarily recognized, wherever they come to the surface, in our tacit adaptation to signs; and the bright, twisted threads of symbolic envisagement, imagination, thought—memory and reconstructed memory, belief beyond experience, dream, make-believe, hypothesis, philosophy—the whole creative process of ideation, metaphor, and abstraction that makes human life an adventure in understanding." (Langer, 1941: 228).
 20. "Images of the body are a dominant feature of mass media in neoliberal Western society. Increasingly important is also the influence of technical media on the appearance of the dancer/performer on stage, and in terms of presence, 'intersubjectivity' and 'interactivity.' One of the basic questions, not only for dance dramaturgy how theatrical situation (the co-presence of performer and audience) and the role of the spectator (as voyeur, witness, and participants) are changed by the use of media technologies." (Lehmann & Primavesi, 2009: 3).

Bibliography

- Adolphe, Jean-Marc. "Dramaturgy of Movement: A Plea for a Dramaturgy of Perception," *Ballet International/Tanz Aktuell*. Berlin: Friedrich Berlin Verlag, 1998, 6, 27-29.
- Appadurai, Arjun. *Modernity at Large: Cultural Dimensions of Globalization*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1996.
- Carr, David. "Meaning in Dance," *British Journal of Aesthetics*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997, 37:4, 349-366.

- Danan, Joseph. *Qu'est-ce que la dramaturgie ?* Arles: Actes Sud-Papiers, 2010.
- Danto, Arthur C. "The Artworld," *The Journal of Philosophy*. New York: Colombia University Press, 1964, 61:19, 571-584.
- Dickie, George. *Art and the Aesthetic: An Institutional Analysis*. Ithaca: New York: Cornell University Press, 1974.
- Fischer-Lichte, Erika. *Ästhetik des Performativen*. Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp Verlag, 2004.
- Hay, Peter. "American Dramaturgy: A critical re-appraisal," *Performing Arts Journal*. Cambridge Massachusetts: The MIT Press, 1983, 7:3, 7-24.
- Hirsch, Eric Donald Jr. *Validity in Interpretation*. New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1967.
- van Imschoot, Myriam. "Anxious Dramaturgy," *Women and Performance: A Journal of Feminist Theory*. New York: Routledge, 2003, 26: 13, 57-68.
- van Kerkhoven, Marianne. "Looking Without Pencil in the Hand," *Theaterschrift*. 1994, 5-6, 140-149.
- deLahunta, Scott. "Dance Dramaturgy: Speculations and reflections", *Dance Theatre Journal*. London: Trinity Laban Press, 2000, 16:1, 20-25.
- deLahunta, Scott; Lepecki, André; Theodores, Diana; van Imschoot, Myriam; deLahunta, Scott; Rethorst, Susan; Ginot, Isabelle and William, David. "Conversations on Choreography", *Performance Research*. Wales: London: Routledge, 2003, 8:4, 61-70.
- Langer, Susanne K. *Philosophy in a New Key: A Study in the Symbolism of Reason, Rite and Art*, New York: A Metor Book, The New American Library, 1941.
- Lehmann, Hans-Thies. *Postdramatic Theatre*. London: Routledge, [1999] 2006.
- Lehmann, Hans-Thies and Primavesi, Patrick. "Dramaturgy on Shifting Grounds", *Performance Research*. Wales: London: Routledge, 2009, 14:3, 3-6.
- Lessing, Gotthold Ephraim. *Hamburg Dramaturgy*. trans. Helen Zimmern, New York: Dover Publications, [1778] 1962.
- McFee, Graham. *Understanding Dance*. London: Routledge, 1992.
- _____. *The Concept of Dance Education*. London: Routledge, 1994.
- Magolis, Joseph. "Art as Language," *The Monist*, 1974, 58:2, 175-186 in *What is Dance?* ed. Roger Copeland and Marshall Cohen. New York: Oxford University Press, 1983, 376-389.
- Ricoeur, Paul. *Hermeneutics and the Human Sciences: Essays on Language, Action, and Interpretation*. trans. John B Thompson, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981.

- Stalpaert, Christel. "A Dramaturgy of the Body," *Performance Research*. Wales: London: Routledge, 2009, 14:3, 120-124.
- Wesemann, Arnd. "Keeping the World at Arm's Length," *Ballet International/Tanz Aktuell*. Berlin: Friedrich Berlin Verlag, 1998, 6, 25 and 76.
- Wimsatt, William Kurtz and Monroe Beardsley. "Intentional Fallacy" 1954 in Wimsatt, William Kurtz. *The Verbal Icon: Studies in the Meaning of Poetry*. Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1982.

Other resources

- Brandstetter, Gabriele, Bettina Masuch, and Annemarie Matzke (2006) "Tanzplattform 2006"
<http://www.theaterhaus.com/tanzplattform2006/index.php?id=3.0.274> [accessed on 04.01.2007]
- Horta, Rui (2010) Artist's talk after the performance 'Talk Show (2010)', [artist talk, 06.10.2010, the Place, London]
- Lepecki, André (1999) "Internationales Tanzfest Berlin 2226 August 1999"
http://www.tanzwerkstatt.bkv.org/seiten/1999/engl/etia_workshop/program.htm
 [accessed on 04.01.2007 (no longer available)]
- Straub, Aurelia, Vejtisek, Marianne and Steinbrugger, Karin (2007) "Symposium Tanzszene 2007 Bericht Dialog 2"
www.assitej.at/pdf/Symposium_Tanzszene2007_Bericht_Dialog2.pdf [accessed on 08.12.2007 (no longer available)]

Address for correspondence:
 Jean Lee
 Roehampton Lane 80, SW15 5PJ, UK
wallbreaking@gmail.com

Martha Graham and Bethsabée de Rothschild – an Artistic Friendship in the Service of Modern Dance

Camelia Lenart

State University of New York at Albany

***Abstract.** My paper explores the professional and artistic relationship between Martha Graham and the Baroness Bethsabée de Rothschild. Started shortly after the end of the Second World War, their partnership brought to attention the impact one's art can have upon the non-academic audience, with outcomes which not only changed the status of modern dance, but also enriched the cultural history of mankind. The paper also analyzes the role of the individual "patron de l'arts" during modern times, when the state also started to value and use its artists in the cultural diplomacy of the Cold War. It is meaningful that the productive artistic collaboration between the two women started at least a decade before feminism, during a time when the domestic sphere was suggested to be the best place for women, when women patrons of art were not a usual thing, and artist women protégées were even less.*

Martha Graham and Bethsabée de Rothschild were two famous women dedicated to dance, but they related themselves differently to both fame and dance. Martha Graham, considered the inventor of modern dance, was born in 1894 and died in New York City in 1991, after a career of seven glorious decades in which she created more than one hundred fifty modern dances. Baroness Bethsabée de Rothschild (1914 - 1999) was born in London in a "family of fortune"¹ - the French branch of the Rothschild family, her father being the head of the Rothschild bank in Paris.² Unlike Martha Graham who loved and enjoyed her fame, Bethsabée was a very private person, who supported the development of modern dance discreetly and quietly.

The friendship and professional collaboration between the two women started when Bethsabée began to take classes with Martha in New York after she and her parents had to flee the Nazi in France, shortly before the fall of France in 1940.³ Their artistic collaboration developed over the next decades, reaching its peak during the fifties and the beginning of the sixties, weakening during the next years, but never ending totally. The artistic partnership between Bethsabée de Rothschild and Martha Graham is mentioned in the books dedicated to the dancer and her work, even if the role de Rothschild played in the development of American modern dance and the international recognition of Martha Graham remained somehow peripheral in the story of Graham, her art, and her international fame. It is an unfortunate lapse for their collaboration had a deep significance and not only from the biographical perspective of their personal lives, but for the culture of the 20th century. Their artistic partnership contributed to the flowering of Martha Graham's art in the US, but also had a major impact on the way it was internationally received during the sensitive times of the Cold War, when Martha Graham Company's tours abroad were the beginning of the transformation of the American modern dance into a world class art.

From the memoirs of Bethsabée's siblings Guy de Rothschild and Jacqueline Rothschild Piatigorsky one understands that the life of the Rothschild children unrolled from the beginning under the sign of art in the family's residence, the castle of Ferrières, nineteen miles away from Paris.⁴ Bethsabée and her sister were educated by their mother in the idea that "girls need no work,"⁵ but they received a strong musical education and were given dance classes; what is remarkable is that, "instead of waltz and tango" they learned "the more fashionable fox-trot, South American dances, and the tap-danced Charleston."⁶ One cannot say if Bethsabée's fascination with dance started then and there, but after high-school she enrolled as a biology student at the Sorbonne, studies she continued later at Columbia in her new country.⁷

However, once in the United States, she also started studying dance in Graham's Fifth Avenue School,⁸ and as she remembered, "it did not take long for me to become a supporter of Graham."⁹ It was an artistic enterprise without tremendous success, but it was the beginning of Bethsabée's genuine interest in Graham's dance theatre. She became soon a presence around the School and Company, but from her modest and discreet manners no one would have guessed that she could be the rich heiress of a financial empire; not until Erick Hawkins discovered¹⁰ that there was a full of significations "de" in front of her name. Soon Bethsabée became a friend of the artist and her dancers, helping them generously through picking up the company's deficits after each season and becoming a confidante of Martha.¹¹

Compared by Agnes de Mille to "Ludwig of Bavaria and Wagner,"¹² Bethsabée de Rothschild and Martha Graham reached their golden time during the fifties, when the Cold War had already begun. The State Department became the official sponsor and supporter of Martha Graham only on the occasion of the Asian tour, but already since 1950 the State Department observed Graham and helped Graham's first European tour logistically.¹³ Bethsabée de Rothschild was a few steps ahead of her time, as a precursor of the official cultural diplomacy, sponsoring and organizing Martha Graham's and her company's first tour to Europe in 1950. She was a precursor in another domain too, namely that of writing and publicizing modern dance, which at that point was only at its incipient phase in America, while in Europe it was nonexistent. Prior to the company's trip to Europe, de Rothschild published her book *La Danse artistique aux États-Unis*, a smart move for advertising the company, American dance, and Martha Graham before their first trip to Europe.

It is not clear whether the initiative for the first European tour of Martha Graham's company belongs to Bethsabée¹⁴ or Erick Hawkins,¹⁵ at that time still Martha's husband and still powerful in influencing her decisions. Not seldom did Martha Graham's friends, supporters, and members of the company feel that Erick went too far in the way he imposed himself,¹⁶ trying to be the informal leader of the Company. Unlike Erick, Bethsabée was known for her discretion and the fact that she was not at all intrusive in the Company's artistic decisions. Even if both envisioned a European tour as a starting point of Martha Graham's international exposure and fame, what Bethsabée had certainly more than Erick besides discretion, was the money she was ready to spend on the tour,¹⁷ but also a large network of connections because Paris was, after all, her city, where her family was powerful and influential.

But once she got out of the shadow of her incognito, announcing her readiness to sponsor the tour, de Rothschild had to face the fact that it could be more challenging than

it looked at first sight to participate in preparing the European tour and working with Martha Graham, her company, and staff. Bethsabée's relationship with the members of the company over the years was not extremely close, but she enjoyed a good reputation, which did not save her, however, from all the intrigues and dramas of the artistic world. Before the beginning of the first European tour she had to face the complicated web of the Company's internal tensions, between Graham and her husband/dancer, the rest of the dancers, the staff, and of Graham with herself.

In a letter addressed to Gertrude Macy, who was then the producer of Graham, the unknown author (but most evidently a person close to both Graham and Macy) informs Macy that "the *horror* has happened somehow from Paris", and that a very detailed release has emanated from a radio station in Dallas announcing a leave of absence for Craig Barton to act as a "personal representative on the tour" and that "there is a great confusion and everybody is a spokesman for Martha (...) and there is a great confusion in England."¹⁸ All these references are surely very confusing also for one not accustomed to Martha Graham's circle, and her new and old friends. Craig Barton was her personal secretary, who was supposed to go to Paris to arrange the tour, and what created a stir was the fact that his friend LeRoy Leatherman was chosen at the last minute to accompany Barton, which upset Graham's friends and dancers.¹⁹

Macy was positive about the tour because "it was hopeful"²⁰ for Martha Graham's fame and recognition outside the American borders, but she and Cornell also hesitated to approve the trip of Leatherman to Paris as an unnecessary expense. On the other hand, de Rothschild was supportive of both men traveling to Paris. Neither Craig Barton, nor LeRoy Leatherman were at that point very popular among all the dancers, who did not see them as very personable or professional in the way they dealt with her dancers and the company's problems. As Martha Graham's former dancer Helen McGehee put it, Graham never "entertained the idea of having a manager who was not a friend who could be dominated. She had to be surrounded by somehow lesser people. She had to retain absolute say over every aspect and for this she had to have staff of personable people around her, but people who were subject to her will. This leads to frustration and tantrums."²¹ Such a reaction was prompted by the trip to Paris of the duo Barton-Leatherman, and it also involved Bethsabée, because the letter's allusion to Paris was a euphemism for her name and persona, she being the only person around the dancer who was related directly to the city.

When Graham arrived in Paris, during the spring of 1950, she was the guest of the Rothschilds, while the rest of the company was hosted in a hotel in the center of the city. Bethsabée's family was warm and welcoming as always, but none of them besides her were swept off their feet by the American dancer; their residence had hosted numerous geniuses and famous artists over the decades, and Graham herself was not at the best of her mood. Besides the normal tension before the show, she was dealing with serious marital problems, which were making her even more edgy and restless than usual. The first days before the show were tense and difficult to bear for everyone, not anticipating the easiest opening night at the "Théâtre des Champs-Élysées" in Paris. Indeed, nothing went well and the presence of the American artist and her Company on the Parisian stage was considered a disaster.²² With very few exceptions, the public and the press were negative about the company's performance, considered to be a "crossword puzzle,"²³ and about the right of modern dance to be considered an art. Graham and her company did

not benefit at least from a “succès de scandale”, which accompanied Stravinsky’s “Le Sacre du Printemps” on the same stage in 1913.

But, if artistically Graham did not convince yet the rather difficult and pretentious Parisian public, due to Bethsabée and her mother’s efforts, Graham’s presence there was not left unnoticed. A picture taken backstage presents a tired and tense Graham while Germaine de Rothschild introduces her to people as they were waiting to be presented to the dancer. The evening gowns, the tuxedos and the jewelry show that the people interested in meeting Graham were part of the upper class of the Parisian society. The contrast between their appearances, and their relaxed and friendly attitude were in a sharp contrast with the look of the dancer, who, in a white dress, with tightly clasped hands, alone, without any of her dancers, or her husband Erick Hawkins around, looked lonely, tense and deserted.²⁴ The rest of the tour was reduced to just one more appearance before the Parisian audience, and although the company went to London, they did not dance and the tour was cancelled. The expected conquest of artistic Europe by American modern dance and its promoters was a failure. Bethsabée was the one who picked up the pieces and brought Martha back to America, while she also said to her: “Whenever you are ready, come back and try again. I will have the means to see that you do. Don’t ever worry about that.”²⁵

It took Graham four years to forget and rebound, but in 1954 she attempted the old continent again. By that time, her quality as an ambassador of the American dance to Europe was doubled by the official quality of cultural ambassador of her country. The involvement of the state in Martha Graham’s tours did not mean that the role of Bethsabée de Rothschild, as sponsor and supporter, disappeared. It diminished, but de Rothschild had a major say in the way the tour was designed financially and strategically. In an exchange of letters from Europe to the USA, prior to the tour, it was clearly specified that even if the new tour was supposed to start this time in Britain, it should not miss France, because otherwise “Miss de Rothschild would not be interested in this venture at all without Paris,”²⁶ and a year after the tour, Bennet & Pleasant who were Graham’s press representative at that time informed Bethsabée de Rothschild about bills from the tour which were expected to be paid by her.²⁷

In spite of the official involvement and Bethsabée’s efforts, the tour in 1954 was not a tremendous success again, but it could not be called a failure either. In Britain a large part of the audience was positive about Martha Graham,²⁸ while in Switzerland and Holland the Company registered a positive response. A picture shows Graham in her dressing room, backstage, greeting in a very relaxed attitude Queen Juliana of Holland, who is accompanied by her daughter, Princess Irene. The dancer seems at ease with the royal ladies, with no trace of the tension and uneasiness from four years before, when she met the “crème de la crème” of the French society on the backstage of the Théâtre des Champs-Élysées in Paris. In 1954 in Paris, the negative and loud reaction Graham received in 1950 changed into a more polite and rather indifferent one, which can be explained at least partially by the fact that, during Graham’s second trip to France, the country was facing a national crisis, marked by the fall of Dien-Bien-Phu, and its internal and external consequences. Beside and because of this, the expected visit of the Russian ballet was cancelled, and the dance lovers were desperate at not seeing the star of the Russian ballet, Galina Ulanova, “with her sweet face and humble manners.”²⁹ The moderate success of the second Graham tour to France apparently confirmed what

Simone de Beauvoir stated, namely that America was not the birthplace of art.³⁰ Another French-born woman, Bethsabée de Rothschild, thought otherwise, and she remained faithfully next to Martha Graham and her Company.

The most triumphant tour abroad during this decade was the one from late October 1955 to early March 1956, when the company went to Japan, the Philippines, Thailand, Indonesia, Burma, and Israel. This time the success was instantaneous, and Asia and the Middle East were mesmerized by the American modern dance. In Israel, which was not initially on the list and where the baroness personally arranged an extension of the tour, the success was “massive and unrestrained.”³¹ The mayor of Jerusalem Teddy Kollek, was an admirer of Graham;³² after one of her shows, the philosopher Martin Buber saluted her and made appreciative comments about her work,³³ while also Moshe Dayan insisted to meet Graham and offered her a present.³⁴ It was not forgotten that in 1936 Martha Graham did not hesitate to turn down an invitation from Hitler to dance at the opening of the Berlin Olympiad, openly speaking of her disapproval of the Nazis and their politics, an attitude which put her on Goebbels’ list of “non-grata” persons. Bethsabée also looked back at the success of the tour with a sense of content, saying that “the ground was ready for sowing,”³⁵ indeed, the national and especially the international interest and support received by Martha Graham and modern dance were at a level never experienced before.

After the tour, which pleased everyone, including the State Department and Graham, who increasingly was seeing herself as a “national treasure,”³⁶ she went with her friend to Greece for a vacation. Helen McGehee was also vacationing there with her husband and some other members of the company.³⁷ In a letter sent to Bethsabée’s mother by Craig Barton, the Baroness is mentioned as one of the most appreciated and useful persons on the tour, for the “serious and valuable things that she does” and for her “gay, witty” spirit, in spite of the fact that she functioned, as the roster of the tour showed, as a “wardrobe mistress”, who was “pressing and sewing herself.”³⁸ The letter also reveals a rarely seen joyous side of Bethsabée, who during that vacation decided to change her hairdo, enjoyed to buy clothes and to spend leisure time accompanied by her friends who were convincing Graham and de Rothschild to “pierce their ears for some (earrings) are too valuable to be worn casually.”³⁹ They also went to Corfu, where they enjoyed the wilderness of the nature, beautiful views and some adventure. As a picture shows, Martha had to cross a large stream on the back of a mule guided by a local, a task which, judging from the face of the terrified dancer, was not easy!⁴⁰ After Greece Bethsabée and Martha, and a few other members of the company went to Venice, where Martha is shown in a picture feeding the doves in San Marco Plaza.⁴¹ The Asian trip and the vacation to Greece were the peak of their professional collaboration as well as of their friendship; after the late sixties things changed.

During the sixties, Bethsabée continued to be involved in the Martha Graham Company’s life but the relationship became increasingly strained. On one hand, Bethsabée became more and more committed to the cultural life of Israel. On the other hand, in spite of the national and international fame and recognition Graham achieved during the sixties, the life of the company was plagued more than ever by inner tensions, Graham losing one after another her closest and best friends and supporters, some leaving after decades spent around and in the service of modern dance and its “goddess,”⁴² everything being aggravated by Martha Graham’s dependence on alcoholism and her health problems.

That Bethsabée was still part of the Company's life is shown by the generous donation necessary for the success of two years of engagements in New York City on Broadway between 1961 and 1963, she being one of the benefactors who gave \$30,000⁴³ for the seasons' costs. Bethsabée accompanied Graham one more time on an European tour, as shown by a picture from November 1962, of a glamorous Graham arriving in London, with a Jacqueline Kennedy type of look, with large sun glasses, white gloves and an artistically arranged scarf, followed by members of the Company and her friend Bethsabée.⁴⁴ The picture makes one reflect on the dynamic of the relationship between Graham and the hard-to-conquer Europe, proving that around that time, compared to a decade earlier, the American dancer was confident about her power to convince the European audience of the value and quality of her art. During the same tour another beautiful picture of Graham with Bethsabée de Rothschild confirms this assumption. The picture, taken in Graham's dressing room during the 1962 tour, shows Graham and Bethsabée posing for the camera in the mirror, both looking radiant and confident, the dancer getting ready for the show while the Baroness, beautifully dressed, looks like she was in the room to wish good luck to the artist.⁴⁵ Posing while facing a mirror is a taste Graham might have gotten since she, even if almost incredible, was suffering from "filming-fright" while shooting the documentary *A Dancer's World* (1957) and unable to face the camera, decided to talk in the mirror about the fascinating but complicated world of a dancer.

Still, in spite of Bethsabée's presence around Graham and her company, and her financial support, the signals were clear that the former friends and art makers, Graham and de Rothschild, were going separate ways. After years of functioning under the same roof with the Martha Graham School and Company, by December 1964 the Bethsabée de Rothschild Foundation had a new address. Bethsabée was still contributing financially to Graham's Company's budget, but the worries about the financial participation of de Rothschild in support of the company were mounting. In a letter sent to the White House by Gertrude Macy, the secretary of the Martha Graham Foundation for dance, asking for federal support for Martha Graham and her artistic projects, Macy mentions that the private, non-federal support Martha Graham had received so far was no longer a certainty: "Since 1950 a single donor has been primarily responsible for meeting much of these deficits. Now that donor is no longer able to continue her generosity."⁴⁶ Indeed, by December 1965, the first official step was made in the "separation" of the artistic paths of Graham and de Rothschild when the Rothschild Foundation issued a statement which asked that "during this phase the Graham Foundation should take over all the work now done by the Rothschild Foundation for the School."⁴⁷

Soon the exchange of letters between the School and the Rothschild Foundation would focus almost entirely on the problems and details of the future changes in the relationship between de Rothschild and her foundation on one side, and Martha Graham, her foundation, company, and school on the other. At the end of 1965, the members of the board of the Martha Graham Foundation asked "Rothschild Foundation to continue supporting the school as now and to take over the costs of the Martha Graham Foundation Office as this will only be performing some functions initially of the present Rothschild office - in full for 1966 and on a decreasing scale there-after,"⁴⁸ while also it was supposed that de Rothschild would financially help the State Department European tour in 1967.⁴⁹ The special meeting of the board of Directors of Martha Graham

Foundation in March 1966 showed that Bethsabée seemed to ponder on her decision to withdraw her support because she accepted that “the School and the Rothschild Foundation will continue as now except that certain tasks now done under the Rothschild umbrella will be taken over by Graham Foundation.”⁵⁰

But it was just a short possible hesitation, and future developments showed that Bethsabée was still willing to go ahead with her plans to loosen her ties with the Martha Graham Foundation, School and Company and support the modern dance in special and culture in general in Israel. In a letter sent later that year by Gertrude Macy to Carl Haverlin, the sender stated that “we desperately need funds to maintain the school- which is the training ground for the Company;”⁵¹ at the beginning of 1967, Robin Howard expressed his doubts that de Rothschild would continue supporting the Company, saying that “believing that Mrs. De Rothschild would continue her support at the same level as last year is an assumption for which there was no justification.”⁵² By the end of 1967 the last uncertainties (and maybe hopes) regarding the normalization of the changing relationship between de Rothschild and Martha Graham were clarified, when at the combined annual meeting of the members and board of the Martha Graham Foundation it was announced officially that de Rothschild was “tapering off her financial support of both corporations” and that her plan was to make a contribution of \$34,000 (part in services) for the current year, an unspecified lesser amount in each of the next two years, and after that no contribution other than a preferential rent.⁵³

A letter from March 1968 received by the Martha Graham Foundation marked the official departure of Bethsabée de Rothschild as well. Reviewing her past and present relationship with American modern dance and subsequently with Martha Graham, and her own future plans, the letter closed two decades of one of the most interesting and devoted patronages of dance in its history: “I am sponsoring dance in Israel on a larger and larger scale” – said de Rothschild in her letter. “At the same time interest in the dance in America and the subsequent flow of the financial help seems never to have been so great. Therefore I feel that at this stage and after so many years it is not only justified but a natural and healthy course of events for the future that Martha Graham school should obtain in America itself enough endowment to survive and grow. Over a year ago I informed the board that my contribution to the school would be cut with the purpose of stopping them entirely within a three year period. [...] I take this opportunity to resign from that office; but I am happy to remain a member of the board if so desired.”⁵⁴ Bethsabée was later elected as an officer of Martha Graham Foundation.⁵⁵ If the reason for de Rothschild’s resignation was entirely professional, or, as in the case of other people who left Graham and the Company, there were emotions involved, one cannot say for sure. What was certain though was that Bethsabée’s departure was maybe one whose consequences were the hardest to overcome by Martha Graham in the future years.

LeRoy Leatherman, who dedicated his book *Martha Graham. Portrait of the lady as an artist* to Bethsabée de Rothschild, was the last from the old team leaving in 1972, but only after facing and solving a new crisis in the Company. It was caused, as shown by a letter sent to Kit Cornell, by “Martha’s illness and Geordie’s long, continuing illness,”⁵⁶ Leatherman pointing at Graham’s sister’s alcoholism and at Graham’s health problems, aggravated by her own abuse of alcohol. When Leatherman realized that the School could not provide the income Martha and Geordie needed⁵⁷ during those difficult times, he thought of Bethsabée, who at that point was living in Israel. The fact that the Baroness

answered positively and the way she offered her help speaks one more time about de Rothschild's human qualities and generosity: "In trying to meet this crisis I have been in touch with Bethsabée and I have learned today she wants to help and will help substantially. Typical of her the sole condition she imposes is that Martha never suffers the embarrassment of knowing that anyone has asked for money to meet her personal needs."⁵⁸ It is most likely that Graham never discovered who was the mysterious benefactor, but two years later the friendship seemed at least partially restored, Gertrude Macy meeting de Rothschild in New York City at one of Graham's openings,⁵⁹ while also during the summer of the same year Graham "was currently in Israel in good spirit", planning a State Department sponsored tour of Asia.⁶⁰ The two ladies met during the following decades on various occasions, and their last picture together seems to be one from September 1983, in New York City.⁶¹

The two artistic partners and friends, who died eight years apart, Graham in 1991 and de Rothschild in 1999, never rebuilt their relationship at the magnitude which characterized it during the fifties, when Bethsabée de Rothschild preceded the state itself in sponsoring and advertising modern dance abroad. It was Bethsabée with her passion for dance and generosity who pioneered the international recognition of American modern dance and of Martha Graham overseas, and assisted the creator and her art for two decades on the sometimes difficult path of evolving from a national cultural treasure to a world class one. "Mrs. Batsheva de Rothschild was not a dancer, but she was gifted with a dance consciousness which she succeeded in passing on," was the remark of a dance critic, and it was undoubtedly true.⁶² A complete and accomplished "patron de l'arts", de Rothschild believed that sponsorship has as the ultimate beneficiary the society as a whole. Through her genuine love for art and through the friendship she shared with the inventor of modern dance, Martha Graham, Bethsabée de Rothschild also added an invaluable extra touch to her support of the art invented out of the need to tell the whole story of the human body and soul.

Copyright 2011, Camelia Lenart

Acknowledgements. The research for this paper was partially done with the generous help of a Mellon Fellowship during the summer of 2010.

Notes

¹ Virginia Cowles, *The Rothschilds. A Family of Fortune* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1973), Introduction

² Jaqueline Piatigorsky, *Jump in the Waves. A Memoir* (New York: St. Martin Press, 1988), p.5

³ Agnes de Mille, *Martha. The Life and work of Martha Graham* (New-York: First Vintage Books Edition, 1992), p.238

⁴ Cowles, *The Rothschilds. A Family of fortune*, p.249

⁵ Piatigorsky, *Jump in the Waves. A Memoir*, p.5

⁶ Rothschild, *The Whims of Fortune. The Memoirs of Guy de Rothschild*, p.53

⁷ de Mille, *Martha*, p.288

- ⁸ de Mille, *Martha*, p.289
- ⁹ Private Collection
- ¹⁰ Don McDonough, *Martha Graham: a biography*, (New-York, Paraeger, 1973), p.166
- ¹¹ Ibidem, p.206
- ¹² Ibidem
- ¹³ Private Collection
- ¹⁴ de Mille, *Martha*, p.290-291
- ¹⁵ McDonagh, *Martha Graham: a biography*, p.213
- ¹⁶ John Gruen, "Bertram Ross: acrobat of the goddess-Martha Graham dancer remembers her", *Dance Magazine*, 1996
- ¹⁷ deMille, p.290
- ¹⁸ New York, New York Public Library for Performing Arts, Martha Graham Center of Dance Records, 1944-1955, Box 1, Folder 1
- ¹⁹ de Mille, *Martha*, p.291
- ²⁰ New York, New York Public Library, Martha Graham Center of Dance Records, 1944 -1955, Box 1, Folder 1.
- ²¹ Helen McGehee, *To be a Dancer* (Lynchburg: Editions Heraclita, 1989), p.17
- ²² Camelia Lenart, "Martha Graham's Modern Dance and its Impact on France during the Fifties", *New Readings*, Cardiff, November 2008, vol.9
- ²³ de Mille, *Martha*, 297
- ²⁴ Private Collection
- ²⁵ Ibidem
- ²⁶ New York, New York Public Library for Performing Arts, Gertrude Macy Papers, 1953-1976, Box 1, Folder 1
- ²⁷ New York, New York Public Library for Performing Arts, Martha Graham Center of Dance Records, 1944-1955, Box 1, Folder 1
- ²⁸ Lenart, "Martha Graham's Modern Dance", *New Readings*, vol.9
- ²⁹ Pierre Tugal, 'Paris', *Dancing Times*, 44 (1954), 552
- ³⁰ Simone de Beauvoir, *America Day by Day* (Berkley: University of California Press, 1999), p.29
- ³¹ Ibidem, p.177
- ³² Ibidem, p.208
- ³³ de Mille, *Martha*, p.323
- ³⁴ Graham, *Blood Memory*, p.209
- ³⁵ Private Collection
- ³⁶ Ibidem
- ³⁷ McGehee, *To Be a Dancer*, p.17
- ³⁸ Washington, Library of Congress, Martha Graham Collection, Box 357
- ³⁹ Washington, Library of Congress, Martha Graham Collection, Box 357
- ⁴⁰ Private Collection
- ⁴¹ Private Collection
- ⁴² Robert Tracy, *Goddess. Martha Graham's Dancers Remembers* (New York: Limelight Editions, 1997), p.181
- ⁴³ Washington, Library of Congress Martha Graham Collection, Box 357
- ⁴⁴ Private Collection
- ⁴⁵ Private Collection
- ⁴⁶ New York, New York Public Library for Performing Arts, Gertrude Macy Papers, 1953-1976, Folder 4
- ⁴⁷ Ibidem, Folder 5
- ⁴⁸ Ibidem

- ⁴⁹ Ibidem
⁵⁰ New York, New York Public Library for Performing Arts , Gertrude Macy Papers, 1953-1976, Folder 7
⁵¹ Ibidem, Folder 8
⁵² Ibidem, Folder 19
⁵³ Ibidem, Folder 28
⁵⁴ Ibidem, Folder 29
⁵⁵ Ibidem, Folder 28
⁵⁶ Ibidem, Folder 32
⁵⁷ Ibidem
⁵⁸ Ibidem
⁵⁹ Ibidem, Folder 33
⁶⁰ Ibidem
⁶¹ Private Collection
⁶² Private Collection

Bibliography

Primary sources:

Library of Congress, Washington, USA

Martha Graham Legacy Archive

Martha Graham Collection

Erick Hawkins Collection

Lucy Kroll Papers

London, Private Collection

The British National Archives, Kew, Richmond, Surrey, Foreign Office Collection

Victoria and Albert Theatre and Performance Collections, London, Great Britain

Contemporary Dance Trust Archive, 1957-1999

National Archives, College Park, Maryland, USA

New York Public Library for Performing Arts, New York, USA

Martha Graham Center of Dance Records, 1944-1955

Gertrude Macy Papers, 1953-1976

Isadora Bennett Papers, 1945-1966

Interviews and correspondence:

Pearl Lang, October 2008, New York, tape recording

Stuart Hodes, April-May 2009, email correspondence

Secondary sources:

Agnes DeMille, *Martha. The Life and work of Martha Graham* (New-York, First Vintage Books Edition, 1992)

Ernestine Stodelle, *Deep Song: the Dance Story of Martha Graham* (New York: Schrimmer Book, 1984)

- Don McDonough, *Martha Graham. A Biography* (New York: Popular Library, 1975)
- Robert Tracy, *Martha Graham's Dancers Remember* (New York: Limelight Editions, 1997)
- Naima Prevots, *Dance for Export* (Wesleyan University Press, 1998), p.40-41
- Yale Richmond, *Cultural Exchange and the Cold War. Raising the Iron Curtain* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2003)
- David Caute, *The Dancer Defects: the Struggle for Cultural Supremacy During the Cold War* (New York: Oxford University Press Inc, 2003)
- Frances Stonor Saunders, *The Cultural Cold War* (New York: The New Press, 2000)
- Richard Pells, *Not like us: how European have loved, hated and transformed American culture since World War II* (New York: Basic Books, 1997)
- Helen McGehee, *To Be a Dancer* (Lynchburg: Editions Heraclita, 1989)
- Bethsabée de Rothschild, *La Danse artistique aux U.S.A. Tendances modernes* (Paris: Elsevier, 1949)
- Andree Grau and Stephanie Jordan, *Europe dancing-perspectives on theatre, dance and cultural identity* (London, New York: Routledge, 2000)
- Pells Richard, *Not like us: how European have loved, hated and transformed American culture since World War II* (New York: Basic Books, 1997)
- David Caute, *The Dancer Defects. The Struggle for Cultural Supremacy During the Cold War* (New-York: Oxford University Press, 2005)
- Leo Bogart, *Cool Words, Cold War, Premises of Propaganda: Reassessing the USIA's Operating Assumptions in the Cold War* (Lanham: University Press of America: 2nd Revised edition, 1995)
- Antony Haigh, *Cultural Diplomacy in Europe* (New-York: Manhattan Pub. Co, 1974)
- John W. Henderson, *The United States Information Agency* (New York: Praeger Publishers Inc, 1969)

Address for correspondence:

Camelia Lenart
 History Department
 State University of New York at Albany
 Albany, NY 12222, USA
 E-mail address: cl7109@albany.edu

Current Problems & Methods in Dance Reconstruction: Focus on Cross-Cultural and Social Dance Reconstruction

Clare Parfitt-Brown, University of Chichester

Danielle Robinson, York University

Juliet McMains, University of Washington

Abstract: *This roundtable began with presentations by the three conveners describing their own experience with reconstruction of social dance and/or dance in a cross-cultural context, including the French cancan of the 1820s and 1830s, American dances of the ragtime era, and New York mambo of the 1950s. Each presented methodological problems encountered and strategies employed in the face of those issues. The floor was then opened to all participants to dialogue about their own experiences in and questions about dance reconstruction in these varied contexts. Included here are summaries of each presenter's remarks, followed by their recollections of and reactions to the discussion.*

First Kicks: Translating Early Sources on the Cancan

Clare Parfitt-Brown

University of Chichester

I would like to talk today about my current project, *First Kicks: translating early sources on the Cancan*, which is still in progress. Therefore, I will not be focusing on conclusions, but on the issues we are currently working through. The project has involved collaborating with a translator, Dr. Anna Davies, to identify and translate from French to English the earliest sources on the cancan. The aim is not necessarily to produce a performative reconstruction of the cancan, as the timescale and resources of the project are rather short, although this could be the aim of a later phase of the project. Rather, it focuses on translating and analysing primary sources to begin to build a picture of the early cancan.

The geographical focus of the project is Paris, and the period we are looking at is the late 1820s – the end of Bourbon Restoration, just before the Revolution of 1830. At this time, dances that would eventually be grouped under the name of the cancan emerged through the movement of dancers and dance forms between various locations in the city. The first of these locations is the *guinguettes* – numerous working-class, open-air dance venues on the outskirts of Paris. Here, working-class dancers, both male and female, began to flout the rules laid down by the dancing masters on how to perform respectable couple dances, such as the quadrille. Instead they introduced improvisations, based on a range of cross-cultural dance influences that they encountered through their participation in Parisian popular culture. For example, the popular theatres on the Boulevard du Temple presented melodramas which transported the mixed class audience through historical and exotic spectacles, including dances such as the *chica* from Saint-

Domingue, which conjured images of the Haitian Revolution. Other dance practices, such as the Spanish *fandango*, were performed at the Paris Opéra, but also at popular theatres such as the Théâtre de la Porte-Saint-Martin. At the *guinguettes*, the working-class dancers drew on these influences as they experimented with the set choreographies they had inherited from the bourgeoisie. Various names were used to describe these improvisations, as I will discuss later, but for the purposes of this presentation, I will generally refer to them as the cancan. Trying to build a picture of the cancan improvisations that emerged from the interaction of these contexts has raised a number of issues that are relevant to our discussion of dance reconstruction.

The first of these issues is the lack of imagery and movement description of the cancan in the late 1820s and 1830s. There seem to be a number of reasons for this. One may be that cancan dancers were flirting with the law, and therefore kept their practice hidden from view. Certain types of cancan improvisation were deemed ‘indecent’, and therefore contravened Article 330 of the Penal Code which covered offences against Public Decency. Policemen patrolled the *guinguettes* looking for ‘indecent’ dancing, although the definition of ‘indecent’ is not articulated, either in the Penal Code or in the policeman’s guide of 1831. Therefore, performances of the cancan were fleeting, dodging the gaze of the authorities, and resistant to capture in image or text. Indeed, Georges Matoré, a lexicographer who wrote about the cancan in the mid-nineteenth century, noted that even the word ‘cancan’ was regarded as indecent. Although one of the earliest convictions for dancing the cancan was in 1826 (Barlet, 1831), the earliest definite image of the cancan I have found so far is from 1841, contained in Louis Huart’s *Physiologie de l’étudiant*. This shows a student dancing with a working-class girl, a common practice at the working-class dance halls, which attracted students whose republican or Saint-Simonian politics led them to engage in working-class culture. However, the dancers whose cancan exploits are recorded in its earliest period are the working class men and women who were arrested for it, and this suggests another reason for the lack of sources.

In France in 1831 only 53% of men and 40% of women were literate (Chu, 1994, p. 169), and these men and women were predominantly in the middle and upper classes. Although the literacy of the French working class was increasing, as shown by the writings of worker-poets and worker-autobiographers of the period, the majority of the working class performers of the cancan would have been illiterate. Therefore, for writings on the early cancan we have to look to representations of the dance by others. These can be found in the numerous legal newspapers of the time that recorded the proceedings of court cases of interest to the public. There are numerous accounts of trials of men and women accused of indecent dancing. However, these accounts contain several complex layers of interpretation. Firstly, the evidence brought against the defendant often takes the form of the policeman’s imitation of their dancing. This became a regular occurrence at cancan trials of both working-class and student cancan dancers, and Huart included an illustration of it in his *Physiologie de l’étudiant*. The movement descriptions in the newspaper accounts therefore consist of the journalist’s attempt to describe the policeman’s imitation of the defendant’s dancing. These representations of representations clearly complicate the attempt to decipher the movement, but there are nevertheless some useful, if rather brief, descriptions, such as: “He takes a step back, stands before the clerk of the court, and adopting a dancing position moves forward, swaying his torso upon his hips” (Anon., 1829, p. 3). This was enough, in this case, to

earn the defendant three months in prison. The translation of the trial accounts raises another issue: the complex and fluid system of naming related dance practices in Paris at this time.

Social dance historians often encounter the problem of inconsistency in the naming of dances, particularly in moments of transition from one nomenclature to another. This problem is exacerbated in the case of the cancan, whose mere name was regarded as indecent. The cancan improvisations were therefore sometimes referred to using the names of their predecessors, the quadrille or *contredanse*; sometimes they were identified as a French version of one of their influences, such as the *fandango* or *cachucha*; the improvisations were sometimes subsumed under the term used for a particular variation, such as the *Robert-Macaire* or the *Saint-Simonienne*; sometimes they were called the cancan, a word meaning ‘gossip’ or ‘pamphlet’; and sometimes, if the speaker wanted to emphasise the indecency and working class origins of the dance, the word *chahut*, meaning uproar, was used. These last two terms were, indeed, the source of much debate in the early trials of indecent dancers. Although the policeman’s guide of 1831 identified both the cancan and the *chahut* as indecent dances, the magistrates distinguished between the acceptable cancan and the indecent *chahut*. The trials, therefore, focused on ascertaining whether the defendant was dancing the cancan or the *chahut*. The problem of distinguishing movement that the magistrates faced is precisely the problem faced by the dance historian. In an improvised dance practice such as this, the cancan can at any moment shift into the *chahut*, and back again, all in the blink of a policeman’s eye. How does a dance historian, or a policeman, reconstruct a dance that shifted with the time of day, the composition of the crowd, and the melodrama that happened to be playing on the Boulevard du Temple that evening?

I have attempted to deal with the challenge of researching improvised dancing by focusing on the repertoire of movements from which the dancers drew in their improvisations. This repertoire is still in the process of construction, but involves dances such as the *chica*, *fandango*, *cachucha*, *tarantella* and *saltarello*. The early cancan dancers would not have been taught these movements, but observed them, remembered fragments, selected, merged and embodied them, recombining the elements in response to shifting circumstances. While the exact movements performed may be impossible to recapture, we can attempt to reconstruct the daily encounters with dance practices of other classes and nations, through social dancing, reading and theatre going, which encouraged working-class dancers to experiment with the ways their bodies could move. This is not the reconstruction of a dance, but the reconstruction of a dance landscape, shaped by shifting class politics, the policing of dancing bodies, and a growing popular culture fed by a hunger for the exotic. This landscape created the conditions for the emergence of a dance form whose elusive origins seem to compel the subsequent generations to a perpetual cycle of remembrance, revival and reconstruction, that leads to my attempt to reconstruct the dance 120 years later.

Copyright 2011, Clare Parfitt-Brown

Acknowledgements

Many thanks are due to my research assistant on this project, Dr. Anna Davies, for her detailed translations of the primary sources, stimulating discussion of our discoveries, and feedback on this paper.

Bibliography

Anon. "Bigarrures", *Le Figaro*. 19th October 1829, p. 3.

Barlet. *Le Guide des sergens de ville et autres préposés de l'administration de la police*. Paris: Chez L'Auteur, 1831.

Chu, P. T. "Pop Culture in the Making: The Romantic Craze for History" in Chu, P. T. and Weisberg, G. P. (eds.) *The Popularization of Images: Visual Culture under the July Monarchy*. Princeton and Chichester: Princeton University Press, 1994.

Huart, L. *Physiologie de l'étudiant*, Vol. 1, illustrated by Joseph-Louis Trimolet, Alophe and Maurisset. Paris: Aubert, 1841.

Address for correspondence:

Clare Parfitt-Brown
Dance Department
University of Chichester
College Lane
Chichester
West Sussex
PO19 6PE
c.parfitt-brown@chi.ac.uk

Reconstructing Ragtime

Danielle Robinson

York University

When I first began my research on early 20th century social dancing over ten years ago, I actually believed there was such a thing as ragtime dance and that if I looked hard enough, I could find it. After a year spent in New York City's numerous archives—from the Schomberg to the Dance Collection and from the Historical Society to the Municipal Archives—I now know different. What I encountered in these spaces was a dazzling array of different dance practices—all done to music that was often, but not always, called ragtime—that were deeply connected with particular dance communities. The challenge for me, then, was to find a way to preserve the differences within ragtime dance practices—as this seemed to be a more accurate representation of the evidence I found.

At first I turned to dance reconstruction as a means of embodying my primary sources, but quickly found that it was not well suited to my project without significant alteration. Owing to its traditional emphasis on performance, dance reconstruction often calls for precise choreographies and steps.¹ But, how could I choose one version of a Turkey Trot over another, for example, when I was invested in the differences within ragtime dancing? Clearly many of the conventions of reconstruction did not fit well with my approach. Nonetheless, I didn't want to let go of reconstruction's body-based methods. I wanted to understand ragtime as a bodily social practice, not a text, and I wanted to maintain its improvisational qualities in order to avoid homogenizing it into a theatrical form.

Thus, I had to approach my primary source materials in a fundamentally different way than other dance reconstructors. Rather than seeking out and privileging the most "correct" evidence in order to create a representative performance of ragtime dance, I chose to embrace the plethora of movement information I found as a way to construct the range of ragtime's movement possibilities and eventually its improvisational structures. In this way, I aimed to learn ragtime movement practice much like a social dancer of this period—developing, drawing on, and varying an arsenal of moves while dancing.

For example, with the Turkey Trot, I found several different written descriptions—many of which had little to do with each other. A 1912 newspaper article described a turkey trotting couple as taking a little step and a hop much like a turkey might be expected to do and then hopping, skipping, jumping, and half-running along, while snuggled up close, with the man behind the woman.² Another description, written by a dance professional one year later, told dancers to begin by taking the waltz side position. After four graceful Boston steps forward and backward with an outstretched rear leg, the couple is directed to take another four steps to each side, "swaying the shoulders and body."³ A final example from a 1914 dance manual simplifies the Turkey Trot into a trotting step, on the balls of the feet, that involves absolutely no hip or shoulder movements whatsoever.⁴ Combining these very different representations of the Turkey Trot together, I surmised that it was not a whole dance, but rather a cluster of steps that could be inserted into other dances as a variation. It likely involved at minimum small trotting steps, but could also include hops, sways, and especially close contact between dancers—depending on the dancers involved and the dance space.

As part of my reconstruction practices, I also took the liberty to read against and beyond the "truth" of each dance manual and article I read, which invariably told readers how and how not to dance. In fact, I often found the sections on how not to dance more interesting than the sections on how to dance—they offered me a window into communities of practice that did not adhere to the same values as the author. Otherwise, why would a dance writer tell someone not to move a certain way, unless that was exactly what many dancers were doing?

To return to the Turkey Trot example, this dance is also mentioned in several manuals as the epitome of what not to do on the dance floor. "The Castle House Suggestions for Correct Dancing" that appear on the last page of Vernon and Irene Castle's 1914 manual tell readers to not wriggle the shoulders, shake the hips, twist the body, flounce the elbows, pump the arms, or hop—and then, to drop the Turkey Trot and the other animal dances.⁵ Reading against the author's intent, the writing suggests that these exact moves were part of the ragtime repertory for some dancers and were likely connected with the

Turkey Trot itself. Looking at sources in this way, I was able to broaden even further my sense of what a Turkey Trot might have looked and felt like. Maybe dancers wriggled their shoulders while swaying or shook their hips while trotting? Flouncing the elbows and pumping the arms could easily fit with turkey-like movement, of course.

This methodology helped me see ragtime in a much more fluid and flexible way than before, one that I hope is more in keeping with its historical social practice. Social dancers do encounter genres, steps, norms, social expectations, and tacit rules on the dance floor, but they also find opportunities for choice making, playful rule breaking, and genre mixing. When reading period sources, it may seem as if discrete dances and steps simply exist and everyone does them the same way. In practice, though, social dancers recombine, adapt, appropriate and transform dance moves every moment they are on the dance floor. I believe this was especially true of ragtime dancers who, according to indignant observers at the time, valued irreverence and playfulness over “proper dancing”.

My non-traditional reconstruction strategies eventually led me to shift my focus from the dancing to the dancers themselves and their experiences—not as star performers, but as community members and culture bearers. Through my archival work, I sought to find out which groups of people were dancing to ragtime music and how were they moving differently from one another. This shift also allowed me to explore more than just movement; it facilitated my explorations into how ragtime dancing meant very different things to the people involved. Once I starting exploring the ragtime dancing practices of different people—European immigrants, dance professionals, and black migrants in one particular place (Manhattan)—my project certainly became more chaotic, but also much more interesting to me and more relevant to disciplines beyond Dance Studies.

With this shift from a more universalizing vision of ragtime to one that was intensely local, I found that some of the communities I studied were easier than others to research, in part owing to their stronger presence in archival records. In addition, I discovered my own Western dance training and biases facilitated my connection with some groups of dancers and not others. In this way, the difference I located and celebrated within ragtime also meant that I had to develop different approaches to studying each community.

For example, in order to reconstruct the ragtime dancing of black migrants in New York, I had to profoundly shift my assumptions about dance, dance history, and dance reconstruction. First and foremost, I had to stop being tied to precise terminology and quit calling what I was looking for “ragtime dancing”. Yes, there was dancing happening to what I would call ragtime music in this community, yet that same dancing accompanied drags, blues, and stomps—all important music genres that were related to ragtime but not the same. Thus, I construed it was a shared attitude towards timing that generated the dancing of this period, not just a single genre of music.

I also had to relax my temporal boundaries—the hallmark of a rigorous historical researcher. I found that I could still be focused on the period from 1900 to 1920, but in order to understand references to dancing from this time, I actually had to kinaesthetically connect with 19th century African-American dancing at ring shouts, cakewalks, jook houses, and barn dances. This case study taught me that while specific steps come and go and often come back again, African diasporic dance forms in particular had long shelf

lives during this period and that their histories remained very present within the movement practices.

Finally, to reconstruct these dance practices well, I had to let go of my implicit expectations of black authenticity and no longer be frustrated by migrant dancers' occasional interest in the modified, indeed, whitened versions of ragtime taught by dance professionals. Just because dance history is often written in black and white doesn't mean that dancers hesitated to cross social divides when there was interesting dancing to be had on the other side. Ragtime dancing, with its amalgamation of European and African dance practices, in fact, stands as a testament that at least some border crossing occurred on the dance floors of this era.

With the conceptual shifts I had to make during my research and writing, I learned, the hard way, that our terms, methods, and assumptions must emanate from our subject of study each and every time—even in dance reconstruction. Clearly, homogenization is the easier choice, but it risks the distortion and erasure of vibrant dance communities. In the case of ragtime, a universalized ballroom version has, for decades, stood in for the diversity of ragtime dancing—effectively erasing its practice among poor European immigrants and black migrants in the process.

Almost 30 years ago, at an SDHS conference in 1983, Susan Foster pointed out the dangers of universalizing “dancing” into “the dance.” She wrote, “The gerund allows for similarities and differences; the noun absorbs differences into a fundamental similarity...when dancing is something different people are doing, then there are endless histories to be written, from varying perspectives.”⁶ What I am suggesting today, with the help of Foster's wisdom, is that it is possible that our dance reconstruction practices could benefit from finding a way to embrace the differences present in each practice we study. Dance reconstruction can mean more than performance and using our bodies to process primary sources; it can also mean honouring the opportunities for creative choice making that dancers had at the time and / or acknowledging that there were different communities of practice involved. In so doing, I believe we can better access the multiple meanings, pleasures, and intrinsic power of the dancing we study.

Copyright 2011, Danielle Robinson

Notes

1. Linda Tomko, “Reconstruction: Beyond Notation,” *International Encyclopedia of Dance*, vol. 5 (New York: Oxford U P, 2003) 326–327.
2. “The Turkey Trot, Grizzly Bear and Other Naughty Diversions: Whether Objectionable or Not, They Are Neither Pretty Nor Artistic—Originated in Far Western Mining Camps and Found Their Way to the Stage,” *New Bedford Sunday Standard* (4 Feb. 1912).
3. Alfonso Josephs Sheafe, *The Fascinating Boston; How to Dance and How to Teach the Popular New Social Favorite* (Boston: The Boston Music Company, 1913) 27.
4. Albert W. Newman, *Dances of To-Day* (Philadelphia: Penn, 1914 and 1921) 70.
5. Vernon and Irene Castle, *Modern Dancing* (New York: World Syndicate Co., 1914) 177.
6. Susan Foster, “On Dancing and the Dance: Two Visions of Dance's History,” *Proceedings of the Society of Dance History Scholars* (1983) 140.

Address for correspondence:
Danielle Robinson
Dept of Dance
York University
4700 Keele Street
Toronto, Ontario
M3J 1P3 CANADA
drobin@yorku.ca

Call of the Clave: Reconstructing Palladium Era Mambo

Juliet McMains

University of Washington

The goal of the reconstruction project about which I will speak today was to embody mambo as it was danced at the Palladium in the 1950s as a tool for analyzing how mambo evolved into salsa. My project was similar to that of Clare and Danielle in several ways. First, mambo was also a social dance practice in which there was no single performance or choreography I could strive to replicate. Secondly, improvisation and variation in personal style also figured prominently in the dance. Finally, my goal was primarily to use reconstruction as a research method for doing historical analysis that would result in a written text. There were also some key points on which my project differed from theirs. Most significantly, some of the people who performed mambo were still alive when I was doing my research, so I was able to use living people as sources in my research, whereas Clare and Danielle had to rely on written documents and visual artifacts. In addition, I have staged performances based on this research.

Before I go into the specific challenges of my project, I'd like to give you some brief background on Palladium Mambo. The Palladium was a dance hall on 53rd St. and Broadway in Manhattan that was the most important center for the co-development of Latin music and dance in the 1950s. Known as "the home of the mambo," the Palladium hosted the "big three" mambo bands on a regular basis: Machito and his Afro-Cubans, Tito Puente, and Tito Rodriguez. As the musicians in these bands were laying down some intense new rhythmic combinations, the patrons at the Palladium were responding with similar innovations on the dance floor. The Palladium was not the only dance hall in New York where Latin music and dance evolved during the 1950s, but the Palladium was important because of the diversity of patrons it attracted—immigrants from Puerto Rico, Cuba, and the West Indies, second and third generation Italian, Irish, and Jewish immigrants, African Americans, rich, poor, working class and celebrities all shimmied up against one another on its dance floor, enabling unique social and cultural integration that gave birth to the mambo.¹

Sources

The sources I used in my reconstruction included:

1) Film footage: such as that you just saw which, although an invaluable source of information, invites many inaccurate assumptions. For example, it is tempting to assume that these few extant film fragments are characteristic of dancing at the Palladium, thus

inflating the importance of the steps and styles we see represented in these films and ignoring those that were not captured on film.²

2) Photographs: In some ways I found these stills helped to draw out similarities in body position that I might not have noticed when bodies were in motion, like for example the importance of the delicate position of the fingers to frame the body as illustrated in these images (see figure 1).



Figure 1: (from left to right) Unidentified dancer at the Palladium, photo by Harry A. Fine; Chino Romano studio publicity shot; Jackie Danois (aka Jackie Dee), studio publicity shot. Images courtesy of Jackie Danois.

3) Eye Witness Accounts: I also relied on descriptions from live witnesses to dancing at Palladium, like the those written by jazz historian Mura Dehn. Tucked away in boxes of her unpublished papers archived at the NYPL are 5 pages of poetic description like this:

The dance structure of Mambo is in the undulating hips from side to side and an undulating upper torso. Small subtle shocks traverse the body. At times a rapid twist of intertwining feet and knees makes the body tremble like a shred of cloth blown in the wind.³

4) Interviews: I also drew from dozens of interviews with dancers from the Palladium Era, both interviews I conducted and those conducted by other scholars

5) Fieldwork: The source I'd like to focus on today is the fieldwork I conducted with old-time Palladium dancers.

It turns out that even though the Palladium closed its doors in 1966, its patrons didn't stop dancing. I was able to find two venues where old-time Palladium dancers, now in their 70s and 80s, convene for mambo dancing—Gold Coast Ballroom in Ft. Lauderdale, FL and the Julia de Burgos Center on Lexington and 105th St. in Spanish Harlem, NY. I

began to attend the Sunday afternoon Florida dance and the Wednesday evening NY dance and the as often as I could to learn by watching and dancing with the old-timers (Figure 2).



Figure 2: On left, Judy Friend and Carl Lee dancing at Gold Coast Ballroom, 2007. On right, Carlos Arroyo dancing at Julia de Burgos Center, 2008. Photos by Juliet McMains.

I believe my methodology is difficult to categorize because I was using ethnographic fieldwork not as a means of understanding the community I was in, but as a means of understanding the 50-year-old community they were trying to recapture each week through their nostalgic gatherings. Although interviews and observation were central to my research, I believe I learned the most about how the Latin dance styles changed through my body's own experiences.

My fluency in several contemporary styles of salsa dancing proved to be both a liability and an asset in my research. I had to be careful not to allow the ease with which I could dance with the old timers using my knowledge of contemporary New York Salsa to hinder my ability to discern the substantial differences between the dance styles. Just because we could communicate didn't mean we were speaking the same dialect. More often, however, my existing knowledge of salsa proved to be tremendously helpful in enabling me to analyze how it differed from mambo. Because my body knew so well how it felt to dance salsa, I was able to compare all the foreign feelings of dancing mambo against my deep embodied knowledge of salsa to discern differences in spatial patterns, rhythm, syntax, connection, and vocabulary. For example, I could immediately feel how the more circular movement of mambo contrasted with the slotted, linear style of salsa (demo).



Figure 3: Jerry Dolinka and the author dancing mambo at Gold Coast Ballroom, 2008. Photo by Sean Wilson.

The more I hung out at these venues, my skill at Palladium Era mambo increased. I was learning the same way they had, not in classes as contemporary salsa dancers learn, but through “deep hanging out.” Because it was primarily through my body’s execution of this nearly-extinct dance style that I was able to answer historical questions about the evolution a dance, I believe I was doing reconstruction, although hearing whether or not others agree is certainly something I’d like to return to during our discussion.

Challenges

One of the challenges I faced was determining how much the age of my informants (primarily in their 70s and 80s) had compromised their dancing. They were likely a bit slower, had less stamina, and some of them could no longer dance at all. But for many, their dancing was so much more playful and witty than any I saw of dancers half their age, that it was hard to believe their age was anything but an asset on the dance floor. Even if they had modified particular moves due to the limitations of their aging bodies, I grew to believe that the essence of the dance remained, its structure and more importantly in its relationship to the music, which turned out to be one of the central defining aspects that distinguished it from modern salsa.

Another challenge I faced was earning trust of women and dancers of color. Because I danced primarily with the men, who would quickly open up to me after I had proved myself with them on the dance floor, I had to work much harder to earn interviews with the women. Early on, most of my interviews were with men, and predominantly white men. Although I did eventually gain access to several dancers of color, this also required a much greater investment of time in fostering the relationships. I think this was partly due to my own skin color that invoked a history of white appropriation of black culture. I also think continued racial inequality contributed. Most of the white dancers I

interviewed were retired and had free schedules. All of the black dancers I interviewed were still working, even in their 70s and 80s, making finding time for an interview more difficult.

The final challenge I'd like to mention is the limitations of being a woman without a male partner equally invested in the project. I could only experience the dance from the woman's role, dancing with men. I did occasionally dance with women in these settings, but generally I did not want to offend my informants by challenging the established gender roles.

Successes

Because I engaged in ongoing social dancing with multiple partners, I think I was able to avoid the danger of reducing mambo dancing to single set of steps, and I was able to reconstruct mambo as a flexible practice with considerable variation in individual style. I feel as if I learned enough about the movement style, aesthetic, techniques, and improvisational priorities to do extensive analysis and write vivid comparisons of Palladium mambo to contemporary salsa style, which was after all my goal.

Limitations

Even though I feel as if I can dance a passable rendition of Palladium Era mambo when dancing with a Palladium Era dancer, my body is still reliant on the physical and energetic cues from these old-timers, which does not bode well for my ability to pass on the knowledge when they are no longer alive. Much of this has to do with my position as a woman who reacts to the structure created by the man. Even when executing solo steps, however, I feel as if there is much lost in the generational translation. For example, I will show you an excerpt of me and a partner performing in the style of the Mambo Aces, a two-man side-by-side dance team. We were not attempting to reconstruct a particular choreography, but to create original choreography in their style. The performance included audio clips from an interview with Mike Vázquez (pictured on the left in the slide), who danced briefly as one of the Mambo Aces, and their image projected on the wall. In the corner appears a video (not part of the performance) of another one of the Mambo Aces (pictured on the right in the slide), Aníbal Vázquez, dancing with his nephew and band leader Roberto Roena.⁴

The distortion is even greater when I teach these Palladium steps to my students. Without any experience of the cultural and social context in which these steps were created, their execution of vocabulary that I learned directly from Mambo Era dancers becomes something else entirely, infused with the students' own bodily knowledge. I will show you a video excerpt from choreography I created for my students in the Palladium style. I was not attempting to replicate any specific performance from the Palladium, but to create a new work inspired by Palladium Era vocabulary and sensibilities. The clip includes a comparison video clip of Palladium Era dancing by Cuban Pete, Millie Donay and Tito Rodríguez.⁵

So far, I feel as if my writing is more successful than my performed choreography at faithfully communicating to others what my body has learned through physical dialogue with Palladium Era dancers. Thus, I wonder if writing may in fact be more useful than performance as a tool for preserving the spirit of an improvisational, personally idiosyncratic dance form.

Copyright 2011, Juliet McMains

Notes

1. Steven Loza, *Tito Puente and the Making of Latin Music* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1999); Max Salazar, *Mambo Kingdom: Latin Music in New York* (New York: Shirmer Trade Books, 2002); Robert Farris Thompson, "Teaching People to Triumph over Time: Notes from the World of Mambo," *Caribbean Dance from Abakua to Zouk: How Movement Shapes Identity*, ed. Susanna Sloat (University Press of Florida, 2002) 336–344.
2. There are two main film sources of footage that represents Palladium style dancing: *Mambo Madness* directed by Courtney Hafela (Universal International Productions, 1955); and *The Spirit Moves: A History of Black Social Dance on Film, 1900-1986*, directed by Mura Dehn (Dancetime Publications, 1987).
3. Mura Dehn, "The Spirit Moves" (Unpublished manuscript, "Papers on Afro-American social dance, ca. 1869-1987," Jerome Robbins Dance Division, New York Public Library).
4. This piece, *Fragments of a Salsa History*, choreographed by Juliet McMains and Sean Wilson, was performed at the 2007 University of Washington Faculty Dance Concert in 2007. The clip can be viewed at: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gG5imWowup4>.
5. This piece, *Ritmos de posibilidad*, choreographed by Juliet McMains, was performed at the 2009 University of Washington Faculty Dance Concert. The clip can be viewed at: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=c8WyBqZwgpw>.

Address for correspondence:

Juliet McMains
Box 351150
University of Washington
Seattle, WA 98195-1150
mcmains@uw.edu

Discussion

Since the goal of our roundtable was to generate dialogue around the issues we raised in our short presentations, we have included below the questions we asked the audience to stimulate discussion, followed by our own reactions to the discussion that followed.

Q: How do we expand the notion of reconstruction to include projects that do not result in performance?

JM: I was thrilled to see so many established dance historians in the room who have used reconstruction to inform their own historical inquiry and writing, and they seemed to think that this work had already been accomplished. I felt validated to hear them say this, as I often feel like an outlier in my use of the term reconstruction since so much of the

literature on reconstruction focuses on performance-oriented work. I felt we made great strides in expanding the definition of dance reconstruction just by having so many respected scholars in the room nod their heads in agreement that reconstruction includes the process of dancing in the archive or in your office as you pore over primary source documents in order to write a vivid description of what a cancan or a Turkey Trot might have looked like in 1820 or 1910.

CP: I agree with Juliet that it was very liberating to have non-performance-orientated reconstruction validated in such a positive way. This allows reconstruction to be a means as well as/rather than an end – a tool available to all dance historians rather than a particular kind of historical product. I like the idea that through spontaneous reconstructions in the office or archive, knowledge can flow rapidly between archival documents, the body, and the written word, perhaps traversing these media several times before emerging at a new level of understanding. I think this would be a great skill to teach in the classroom: not necessarily the mounting of a full-scale reconstruction project (although that also has pedagogical value), but reconstruction as one of an arsenal of historical tools that students can employ to dance their way into/through history.

Q: Does such a research methodology merit a different name (e.g., reinvention, embodied research, ethnographic reconstruction)?

DR: In this conversation, I advocated for retaining the term reconstruction for two important political reasons. One is that dance reconstruction is one of the very few research methodologies designed for dance. I want to validate Dance Studies by using a dance-specific research tool whenever possible. Secondly, reconstruction is a methodology recognized and respected outside of dance studies. If we want readers and listeners outside of dance to understand our methods, using this term could provide a bridge into our work. I can certainly see why the use of a new term is appealing—to signal a shift in research practice. Nonetheless, for now, I think it is more important to keep the old term and innovate within the practice.

JM: When my graduate students and I read Ann Cooper Albright's article "Tracing the Past: Writing History Through the Body" in which she illustrates how she made use of her own physicality to do historical research on Loie Fuller, we wanted her to have proposed a new term for this research method. Since her work inspired me to question the politics of naming this methodology, I was grateful that Ann was in the room. She did not, to my surprise, advocate for a sexy new term to describe this kind of research, but seemed to be in agreement with the majority of those gathered, who concluded that reconstruction was the appropriate name for the kinds of projects we described. There were, however, a few people who seemed to prefer the term reinvention, particularly for the kind of choreography I showed in which my goal was to create something new in the style of the mambo dancers I had interviewed. I think I'd probably use the term reinvention myself when describing that process if I had enough time to define and explain the word, but it really depends on who you're talking to. When you're writing a grant application and you don't know who will be reading it, I feel like it can be more useful to go with the more recognized term.

Q: How do we account for improvisational and stylistic variation when attempting to reconstruct dance forms in which these qualities are defining characteristics of the dance?

CP: In my paper I suggested that my goal was not so much to reconstruct the cancan as a dance, but as a dance landscape. This is intended to acknowledge the impossibility of reconstructing a dance that was defined by its flouting of the rules of set choreographies, and therefore by its fleeting, unique, inventive improvisations. Despite bourgeois complaints throughout the nineteenth century that these improvisations were wild and uncontrolled, I have found it important to remember that all improvisations, however apparently free from codified movement, happen within a body shaped by experience, identity and history. Therefore, my aim has been to reconstruct the movement universe within which these dancers improvised, including dances they saw being performed by the bourgeoisie, remembered performing in the provinces, read about (or heard read to them) in the newspapers, and watched in the popular theatres. This has helped me to begin to construct a movement repertoire from which movements could be selected, fragmented, distorted and recombined to form cancan improvisations. Any particular reconstruction of the cancan, including my own, is therefore only one possible permutation of possibilities within the cancan repertoire. It will draw on choices made by previous reconstructors, as well as shaping the landscape for future reconstructors.

JM: I found Clare's response to this discussion particularly useful for me to keep in mind with reference to my own work. By stressing how her reconstruction of the cancan is just one of many iterations in a continually evolving dance, she reminded me to think of my own reconstruction of mambo as only one point in the evolution of mambo rather than an endpoint in a quest to recover Palladium mambo.

Q: How does the goal of a reconstruction project shape its methodology?

CP: When reconstruction has the goal of historical understanding which is disseminated through writing rather than performance, my experience has been that the reconstruction can be more open-ended. It results in a series of impromptu experiments that inform a growing body of physical and historical knowledge that is then translated into writing, rather than a definite performance version. The gaps in this knowledge do not necessarily have to be filled in – the lacunae can be left, and perhaps acknowledged, in the writing. Looked at from another angle, however, the way that the body fills in these lacunae in our knowledge of past dances, might add to our physical and historical understanding of a dance form, regardless of whether contemporary bodies accomplish these transitions in the same way as in the past. This technique of forcing the body to come up with solutions to historical problems is a particular advantage of performance-orientated reconstructions.

DR: I have used dance reconstruction in numerous teaching situations to offer students an opportunity to learn about a historical period and practice, as well as historical research methods and issues. I don't teach students steps though, but instead give them primary

source materials to investigate in small groups. Together they animate the bodily traces found within sheet music, dance manuals, magazines, etc. and then share their findings with the class. The point is not for the class to look like ragtime dancers, but rather for them to experience the affects of ragtime within their own bodies in order to discuss its sociocultural effects on dancers and audiences. My larger goals are for them to recognize the possibility of multiple truths, respect bodily intelligence, and begin to trust themselves as dance researchers. Upon reflection, I think my approach here is connected with Mark Franko's model for reconstruction (1993), which involves focusing on the impact of the historical dancing on audiences rather than attempting to recreate a historically (in)accurate performance.

JM: I loved hearing Danielle explain how she brings in primary source materials on ragtime dancing to her undergraduate classes and had them attempt to reconstruct ragtime dancing. She pointed out that although the students' dances didn't look much like ragtime, they actually learned about some of the key qualities of ragtime dancing through the experience. It was a great reminder that a reconstruction doesn't need to visually resemble an earlier version in order to have its intended impact, especially if the goal is to experience what it might feel like to rag a dance rather than to see what it might look like.

In addition to the questions we presented to our audience, they posed some provocative questions to us, some of which we've paraphrased below.

Q: How does your own socio-cultural position affect your reconstruction practice?

CP: How can a white, female, middle-class, British (-Guyanese) academic in the early twenty-first century re-embody the improvised movement of French, male and female, working-class, recreational dancers in the late 1820s, who were in turn influenced both by bourgeois French dancing and by the Haitian, Spanish and Italian movements they had seen on the stages of the Parisian popular theatres? This question implies not just the apparent physical impossibility of such a performance, but also the difficult political issues that arise in a postcolonial context from the attempt to represent an 'other'. However, the self/other distinction becomes rather problematic in the case of the cancan. The complex improvisations of the early cancan allowed dancers to demonstrate both a desire for and rejection of bourgeois status, while simultaneously performing an affinity with and distinction from the colonial and European dance forms they drew upon. These foreign dances were often already hybridised mixtures of French and foreign movement styles, further complicated by the adjustments of the French choreographers and performers who presented them in the theatres of the Boulevard du Temple. Who are the 'others' in this convoluted web of appropriations?

DR: To take Clare's ideas one step further, aren't we always outsiders to our research topic even if it is a contemporary study and we are part of the dance community being researched? By bringing our academic research tools to bear on the project, we effectively other ourselves. In terms of historical research, the passage of time separates us as well. And, let's not forget the class difference that we seldom like to acknowledge, because it forces us to recognize our own privilege. And, given our (degrees of)

difference from our research topic, we have a responsibility to always do our homework—i.e. know deeply the social, cultural, political, and physical environments in which the dancing took place—and not rely on superficial similarities of appearance. All of us come to our research with varying degrees of inside and outside knowledge—all of which is valuable—as well as lacks of knowledge that need to be addressed in order to make our work rigorous. The challenge is to recognize our unique positioning and represent that in our work, as it is integral to our findings.

JM: I've already acknowledged some of the ways in which my gender and my race limited the ways in which I was able to interact with my informants. I think it's important to recognize such biases, but we can never escape them. I think one way to address these limitations is to collaborate with people whose backgrounds invite different kinds of interactions with the subject matter. For example, I did some of my fieldwork in conjunction with a black man, who was instrumental in helping me to gain trust of other black men in particular.

Q: How do broader historical and cultural contexts shape reconstruction practices?

CP: My reconstruction takes place in an academic context, and responds to a postmodern impulse to both re-embody and critique, connect with and reject, the modernist past. The revival of the early cancan in the 1890s, by contrast, took place in the commercial context of increasing mass production and consumption in a modernising, industrialising France, and attempted to appropriate the marginal bohemian liberalism of the 1830s for the purposes of republican nationalism in the Third Republic. As Walter Benjamin (1973) recognised, our vision of the past is continually refracted through the lens of the present. Therefore, reconstruction is always provisional, contingent upon historical and cultural contexts that are in constant flux.

DR: I feel that the changing position of Dance Studies within the academy has influenced why dance reconstruction has expanded over time. Initially dance was able to strengthen its position in universities in part through strategic linkages with “high art” and especially high art performance. This shift away from an emphasis on performance in dance reconstruction speaks to the ways in which dance researchers have been able to make important connections within the Humanities in recent decades. Theatrical performance is not the only way we validate our presence in universities today. Now, we are helping others—including scholars outside of the arts—to see the body as a valuable research site and tool in many kinds of projects. This new wave of dance reconstruction work, which includes ours, applies this notion specifically to historical research in dance.

Bibliography

- Albright, Ann Cooper. “Tracing the Past: Writing History Through the Body.” In *The Routledge Dance Studies Reader*, 2nd ed., edited by Alexandra Carter and Janet O'Shea, 101–110. London and New York: Routledge, 2010.
- Benjamin, Walter. “Theses on the Philosophy of History.” In *Illuminations*, edited by Hannah Arendt, 245–255. London: Fontana, 1973.
- Franko, Mark. *Dance as Text: Ideologies of the Baroque Body*. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1993.

Methods for a New Dramaturgy of Digital Performance

Jodie McNeilly

The University of Sydney and Southern Illinois University, Carbondale

Abstract

Since new dramaturgy has foregrounded the visual, sonic and physical elements of performance over text, dance and digital performance, makers have called upon the Dramaturg to weave their work into coherent structures. A critical question asked by dramaturgs is: how does structure shape audience perception? I ask, if phenomenology is concerned with illuminating the structure of things, what can an audience member doing phenomenology tell us about the structure of performance? In this paper, I draw out the practical implications of my Poetics of Reception Project where phenomenology is approached from within audience to understand the structural relationship between bodies and technologies.

Introduction

New dramaturgy is a development upon the rich history of dramaturgical practice established within the theatre. Rather than breaking with tradition, new dramaturgy experiments with its fundamental principles in contexts outside of theatre.¹ Marianne van Kerkhoven describes new dramaturgy as the practice of looking at the “internal structure of a production”, while Elinor Fuchs sees it as examining “the organic structures of the performance”.² The taking up of dramaturgical practice in the production of non-text based performance and art events has motivated non-theatre artists to understand the cohesion of their work in light of these fundamental principles and sensibilities. New dramaturgy *is* a movement away from prioritising the play text towards the democratic inclusion of the visual, physical, spatial, sonic, and virtual. Resistance to linear, plot driven narratives with neat character arcs is historically found in the deconstructive and reconstructive strategies of performance makers labelled as post-dramatic, and throughout twentieth century Avant-garde theatre.³ With the help of new technologies, interactions between the visual, physical, spatial, sonic and virtual in performance have taken on further structural complexity for the maker and audience. These events induce a range of hybrid experiences for the audience member that involves the body’s entire *sensorium*.⁴ Dealing with a rich layering of non-textual elements, the question of *how* to approach performance making that is hybrid in nature becomes paramount.

New dramaturgy is the *praxis* fundamental to post-dramatic contemporary performance forms. Dance, as the embodiment of gesture and movement, combined with the use of digital technologies within live performance and interactive installations can now with this expanded conception of dramaturgy benefit from a dramaturgical approach. In this paper, I suggest a model of dramaturgy for this combination of dance and digital technologies, termed *digital dance*. I begin with defining concepts and address dramaturgical method and the non-transparency of its practice in theatre more generally. Immediately following, I draw a parallel between methods of dramaturgy and phenomenology, asking: Why phenomenology? How can phenomenology as a practice be dramaturgical? My working conception of digital dramaturgy, then, leads me to ask further questions: What dramaturgical principles, sensibilities and questions relate to digital dance performances? What kind of language, ideas and themes would a digital dramaturgy require? And, who is it for? To conclude, I discuss the initial stages of a model for digital dramaturgy that has emerged from my research project *A Poetics of Reception*, a project that phenomenologically examines the interaction of bodies with technologies from an audience perspective.

Concepts, Transparency and Digital Performance

Dramaturgy considers the internal structure of a production; it is a synthesising process: a ‘weave’ or ‘weaving together’ of elements.⁵ A dramaturg will identify patterns, rhythms and structural qualities, and attempt to make sense of these layers through description. They will intuit the link, the bridge, and the inner logic between elements, and consider their transitions: what, where and how these interstitial movements occur. The dramaturgical context is a process of interpretation whereby the dramaturg looks at ways in which meaning is, and can be created.

It was as a phenomenologist working within the transcendental and practical tradition that I first realised the potential for using phenomenology as a method for identifying “the overall texture that is created by the relationships and interactions between elements in a performance”.⁶ It is my main conceit that a dramaturg working under this new and broader conception is phenomenological in their attitude and approach toward stage phenomena. They open upon material—as Norman Frisch describes—to “expose the plumbing, the wiring, the termites, the invisible world that existed inside the walls of the structure”.⁷ In the same spirit, the phenomenologist opens upon the world to reveal the essential structure of phenomena as they are given and grasped within experience.

So far in my research, I have looked for working models of dramaturgy for digital dance performance. There is next to no literature on this combinatorial practice, with only a small number of publications addressing the role of dramaturgy in dance *per se*.⁸ As Scott DeLahunta points out, dramaturgy is a relatively young phenomenon within dance production and was identified in the mid 1980s with Pina Bausch and Dramaturg Raimund Hoghe’s collaborations.⁹ Most literature, historical or otherwise, considers the role of the dramaturg in the theatre. My Department at the University of Sydney is a training ground for dramaturgs in the study and theorising of performance.¹⁰ It is staffed by professional dramaturgs working professionally in the theatre, and within contemporary performance. The Department’s founder, Professor Gay McAuley,

developed a semiotic schema for performance analysis. Gay's schema is a systematic method that has dramaturgical potential based on the interpretational work of the spectator/analyst. Teaching Professor McAuley's system to undergraduates was a leading clue (*leitmotif*) in how it might be possible for other structural methods of analysis to be taken up into dramaturgical practice. Indeed, systems that appear dramaturgical in the post-mortem of a performance, and that issue from a spectator/analyst perspective. However, in attempting to research the range of methodologies for dramaturgical work—beyond the questions a dramaturg asks, and/or what outcomes they intend and achieve—I have found little information. Beside student case studies that ethnographically record observations of a dramaturg at work, strategies to find solutions in particular performance arrangements are not readily available resources for research.¹¹ Speaking across all performance forms claiming dramaturgy processes, there is little motivation to divulge the details of how a dramaturg works. Why is this so?

Peter Eckersall opens his article “What is Dramaturgy, What is a Dramaturg?” with an excerpt from the *New York Times* that reports verbatim the answers of some high-profiled dramaturgs.¹² When asked to state the mission of their profession, one panellist admits: “I’ll probably get killed for saying this, *but I don’t know the answer*”. Indeed the dramaturg “may not know” because, first, they might be working intuitively and instinctively without method, formula or reflection; second, they may have the attitude that their approach does not require transparency. Outreach to a shared community of dramaturgs, and/or the mentoring of a younger generation of artists may not motivate making transparent their processes. Or third, if a company's success were based upon these methods or range of choices—whereby the dramaturgy is their secret weapon of success—revealing how they work would be out of the question. Unless documented for promotional, archival or academic reasons, processes will be buried safely within the production. And are, as I hope to demonstrate, available for exhumation through phenomenology.

Academic and Theatre Practitioner Tim Etchell of UK based performance group *Forced Entertainment*, realises the advantage of having his Company's work placed within the academic canon. It is clearly a marketing and dramaturgical strategy to have their work studied and discussed within an academic context. Matthew Reason points out that by generating all its documentation, Etchell controls how *Forced Entertainment* is represented. In the form of deconstructed text and straight archival video of performances, documentation processes allow Etchell to self-represent the dramaturgy of *Forced Entertainment*, and locate it within a particular idiom of post-modern performance practice. The danger, which Reason highlights through Adrian Heathfield, is that “self-representation as a ‘fragmented narration of their performance practice’ is a response that merely echoes the work's own self-definitions”.¹³ The problem being that “discourses and documentations surrounding the work... ironically enforc[e] singularity while espousing openness and multiplicity”.¹⁴ The forensic interrogation of a work's internal structure, inner logic, patterns, rhythms, textures, connections and layers by the artist, rather than an external critical eye, has its advantages, but obvious disadvantages. If the artist, or choreographer—to bring the discussion back to dance—attempts to be in control of how the performance is seen, the problem of a *one-sided perspective* comes to the fore. Understanding the world from only one-side is traditionally the criticism of the empirical sciences by early phenomenologists such as Edmund Husserl.¹⁵ It is my conceit

that in order to overcome the one-sided perspective in making dance, phenomenology as a methodological practice within dramaturgy can restore to dance the *many-sided* perceptions of phenomena—bodies, media, space, objects, costume and sound—and the perceptual possibilities for a performance’s overall reception.

Digital Dramaturgy

Leaving aside my discussion on dramaturgy within theatre and contemporary performance, I am interested in what approaches and theoretical perspectives ground dramaturgy within digital performance, and more specifically within dance. Cathy Turner notes that:

The impact of new technologies on theatre, while remaining unpredictable is likely to be of increasing significance, suggesting new dramaturgies.¹⁶

In *Dramaturgy and Performance*, Turner intimates a dearth in dramaturgy for digital performance and art making. Digital Dance Performance may be described (non-exhaustively) as fluid spaces of interactivity between performers, audience and a range of technologies both digital and analogue. They might combine interactions between live bodies in movement with digital interactive technologies that enable the visual or sonic representation of bodies or objects in two dimensions to be streamed in real-time (“at the same time”), or in play back as digital doubles. These screen presences may be televisual, projected or in holographic form. Performers may enable visual or sonic outputs through wearable technologies. Digital dance may be performed by avatars in second-life or mediated through other social networking technologies, or webcam devices for telematic distal presentations.

The relationship or ‘conjunct’ between a body and their digitally produced or emergent representation is more significant to my study than taking the two forms in isolation. I am particularly interested in encounters of digital touch, where a fleshly body makes contact with their digital double or some other projected form. Since the early 1990s there have been a number of claims from within performance studies that view this relationship as either ontologically distinct—namely proponents of the ‘live’ who value ‘presence’ and ‘disappearance’ over reproduction or representation—or the “same”, such as the position argued by Philip Auslander who claims that there exists no ontological distinction between these two forms because they participate in the same cultural economy.¹⁷ From a phenomenological examination of public performances, I have come to understand that making a hard and fast distinction, or conflating the experiences of these qualitatively different phenomena makes no impression on the debate, nor is it useful in the realm of practice. Departing now from the polemics, my research is more interested in what happens *between* live and mediated forms during performance. The role of the conjunct: the structure of the *inbetweenness*—or “in the logic of the *and*” as Deleuze and Guattari celebrate—has become a site of research significance.¹⁸ As an academic and practitioner, I am interested in what kinds of experiences an audience member is having, and how these experiences once communicated can be fed back into the making process. From this research, I now view this complex relationship as a

dramaturgical matter, and a discussion to be developed while keeping in mind the principles, sensibilities and questions found within the tradition of this practice.

Digital dance performances tend to be created from a more nebulous starting point than a text-based play. Staging a play invariably begins with a script; a dance within the contemporary idiom may be devised from a concept, theme, or question—which is not to say dance is devoid of textual starting points. The genesis of an interactive dance technology event may originate in the design and intention of the interactive system itself. A performance that is just as much about discovering what the technology can do and what it can mean in relation to dance making. Take for example Melbourne-based Company, Chunky Move's production *GLOW* (2007), choreographed by Gideon Orbazanek in collaboration with programmer Frieder Weiss. Here, we have a solo dance performance lit overhead by a single data projector, and viewed from above by the audience from a square shaped mezzanine balcony. A camera tracking system films the dancer overhead and feeds this into the computer as real-time data. Graphical representations are generated as projected output. The projections are pre-determined visualisations, but rely upon the movement and position of the dancer to trigger the system. The overall interaction between dancer and system is the symbiotic result of the dancer responding visually and spatially to the generation of graphics, while simultaneously the output of graphics is determined by these movement choices. Despite set choreographic choices, no two performances are exactly the same.

From this technical description it is possible to draw attention to the following preparatory aspects for dramaturgical focus:

- 1) Structure and internal logic
- 2) Spatio-temporal dimensions
- 3) Interactions: the relationship between elements

The performance *GLOW* was a moving concatenation of emotional states, a visual feast of tessellations, and a duet between the dancer and emergent graphic morphologies—abstract, intimate, fierce, organic, mechanic, delicate, and suffocating. Each new visualisation represented a different scene with unique movement qualities, shapes, tempos and textures. A decision was made about this order. The overall shape in sensorial terms was one that built overtime and finished with resolve. A dialogue between the choreographer and the programmer for the compositional structure would have required clear lines of communication. One can assume that the programmer would be invested in the capabilities of the technology: how things work, and the logical steps to optimising the system's performance. The choreographer might be more concerned with the overall aesthetics, telling their story, and demonstrating their choreographic voice. The performer is also part of this dialogue, knowing how to dance with the technology while having some clear notion of the choreographer's intention. My point is to suggest who within the collaboration is making decisions about the structure and internal logic of the digital performance event.

Second is the spatio-temporal dimension, digital performance makers must consider the relationship between three-dimensional bodies and two-dimensional representations, while not excluding the dimension of time. Spatially the relationship between two

dimensions and three are of vital importance to the overall dramaturgy of a digital performance. There is nothing more frustrating than seeing a dancer plonked in front of a screen when there is no understanding of the dimensional relationship in audience reception. No relation between moving body and moving image treats the screen like moving wallpaper. The choice of choreographic vocabulary; what proximities exist between the dancer, screen, audience members, other dancers and objects, and how these distances or depths are shifted; the direction of the dancer's focus, and compositional scale between image and body are all (non-exhaustively) significant aspects for dramaturgical focus.¹⁹

Interactivity is the key to most live digital performance events. Mark Coniglio, inventor of the *midi dancer* provides interactive control to the performers, he does this “as a way of imposing the chaos of the organic on to the fixed nature of the electronic, ensuring that the digital materials remain as fluid and alive as the performers themselves”.²⁰ Coniglio is interested in the live, and not the recorded; he wants the unpredictable, rather than the pre-determined. As a developer of technology for live performance, Coniglio is careful not to prioritise the technological over the human, or the human over the technological. The balance of interactivity is established at the earliest stage of software design.²¹

The relationship between humans and computers in performance contexts is considered philosophically and practically within human and computer interaction theory, mostly known in parlance by its acronym HCI. HCI is the main discursive field for the programmer or interaction designer. For a choreographer, HCI is a specialist field that may or may not assist aesthetic choices within the confines of their production cycle. Working in a traditional sense as researcher and communicator of other fields of interest, the digital dramaturg, on the one hand, might translate significant points of interest in HCI case studies to the choreographer; or, on the other, may work with a specific model of investigation that imaginatively elaborates upon instances of interaction within performance. For example: a curling body wrapping into itself as a black line wipes the curl into a sprawling motion unfolding from left to right (*GLOW*); or the cupping of a hand to close around the projected image of another's hand—such as in Paul Sermon's *Telematic Dreaming*—where two people in separate remote locations hold hands in an intimate case of digital touch. It is the latter mode of ‘imaginative elaboration’ on such instances that informs my model for a digital dramaturgy.

Phenomenology and Dramaturgy

A phenomenologist illuminates the structure of things by paying attention in a particular kind of way. A phenomenologist is invested in looking at the looking at things in individuated and intersubjective experiences. As Anthony Steinbock summarises, “phenomenology is a type of reflective attentiveness ... that occurs within experiencing itself. One describes the experience of the thing itself as it is given within the very process of experiencing the matter”.²² Such reflective attentiveness has been the self-dispossessing barb of the phenomenologist trying to get out of their own way, while rigorously relying on this self as evidence of the givenness of things in the world that we know or understand through experience. The methods for “liberating phenomena” since Husserl are many. The reasons for liberating phenomena through practical philosophy

vary greatly, and those working within the phenomenological tradition tend to deal with century old *aporias* within contemporary contexts.

My doctoral research is attempting to introduce phenomenological methods from a Husserlian basis to the disciplines of dance and performance studies. My aim is to understand the essential structure of aesthetic phenomena in a variety of complex relationships within performance through audience experience. By emphasising audience receptivity in the ontological status of an artwork, the balance is restored between: the artist; the artwork, in and by itself; and the role of receptivity.²³ Tim Etchell of *Forced Entertainment* is aware of the success that “shifting registers”, rather than straight mimesis, is as a device for making performance more believable. He knows this purely from audience experience. In fact, a lot of dramaturgs are aware of the usefulness of their devices or efficacy of solutions through audience feedback. During performance making, the dramaturg is mostly situated on the margins just outside the performer, director, and production triangle, looking in at the performance. They are a witness, an interested observer. Phenomenology practised by an observer, witness, or ‘spectator/analyst’ is in a position to describe what they experience.

Description in a phenomenological sense is not empirical description. Empirical descriptions of complex relations are ready-formed explanations that distort “certain fundamental structures which alone can furnish a guiding thread to the human maze”.²⁴ Instead, phenomenological understanding is sought through a particular kind of dispositioning of the self, “and [as Steinbock confirms] by doing so, we dispose ourselves to being struck in whichever way” by the phenomena to which we are turned.²⁵ Dramaturg Hildegard De Vuyst notes that the dramaturg becomes a mirror by reflecting the work: she “does not aim to give her opinion” but describes.²⁶ If this is the case, what kinds of reflection or mirror like activity are evident, or possible, in digital dramaturgy? Phenomenology is a particular kind of reflective practice. Considered as dramaturgy, phenomenology is a way to tackle the complex interactions between live and mediated forms.

Practical phenomenology and textual hermeneutics

To understand dance technology events, I have developed a framework that emphasises audience receptivity in the aesthetic play between the artwork, the artist and the spectator. In proposing a methodology that reinstates audience in aesthetic play, the following question arises: how can I access, document, and distil experiences? The solution so far has been to apply phenomenology within the study of performance.

I will now briefly outline an initial procedure for undertaking phenomenological practice as dramaturgical analysis. The project has been a mammoth methodological enterprise and there is no time to present or explain it entirely. I will highlight the most significant points to make sense of the textual analysis to come.

A Poetics of Reception: phenomenological writings from within audience is a series of workshops for retrieving audience experiences in written form. Commencing in 2006, I have since conducted two pilot sessions and three workshops. The workshops generally follow an eight-step procedure over four to five hours: STEP 1) Invitation and Reading Preparation; STEP 2) Pre-show Embodied Induction: preparation; STEP 3) Attending the show: doing the attentional and phenomenological reductions; STEP 4) Embodied Induction: revivification of the event STEP; 5) Generative Writing Task A—where the

reductions are continued; STEP 6) Pragmatic Attunement: reading and discussing accounts; STEP 7) Generative Writing Task B; and STEP 8) Generative Writing Task C. Each step continues to be refined with each new group as the method is an iterative, dynamic framework refined by the experience of application.

Of significance is the way that the group approaches their witnessing of performance, and the generative method for writing. Both aspects of the workshop follow the same procedure of a *phenomenological and attentional reduction*. In brief, the Husserlian reduction—or *epoché*—as I have adopted it in my method involves a double movement of opening upon phenomena and our experiencing with embodied attention, while simultaneously bracketing and suspending any presuppositions, preformed opinion, or prejudicial judgments that may close down the experience, and draw us away from the phenomena and the fullness of our experiencing. As practical strategies, the phenomenological and attentional reductions are merely an approximating task for *getting back to things themselves*. Phenomenology faces limits in arriving at an absolute pure description of immanence. Conceptualisation and language continue to render a gap between experience and its expression. However, we can accept this task of approximation as the most adequate experiential method for understanding phenomena in structural terms.

Presently, I am dealing with written data produced from these workshops through a method of textual analyses. In order to understand the given and experienced structure of live and mediatised phenomena in these complex performative relationships, the process aims toward disclosing the essential aspects of an individual's account across the writing tasks, and more universally across all group accounts. Mostly, I am concerned with the repetition of linguistic motifs, emergent themes, patterns, and points of difference in descriptions of the performance that the language illuminates in its rich poetic *variance* across the different accounts. The writings combined with transcribed discussion are further elaborated by repeated close readings, and consideration of other accounts describing dance technology events.

The method for textual analysis is intuitive and open to ongoing structural refinement. It is both rigorous and fine-grained, requiring diligence and discipline to mine the writing, make connections, and seek relevant linguistic 'attunement' of discrepant accounts of experience.²⁷ Describing phenomenological method in these terms is not unlike the script dramaturg forensically attending to the words in a playtext. The final stage in this attendance is philosophical elaboration, where interpretation may develop the essence of individual or intersubjective experiences and lead to a deepening of understanding about the relationship between select phenomena—such as a fleshly corporeal body and their digital projected double. From this, the phenomenological massage of essential aspects, with a circular hermeneutic movement, feeds back into the doing.

Textual Analysis: Érection

The following excerpts in bold are from participants of my first workshop group of the *Poetics of Reception* project. Participants attended Mikhail Baryshnikov's curated double bill *Future Tense* at the Opera House in 2007.²⁸ The texts focus on a section in the first performance *Érection* performed by Pierre Rigal. Immediately beneath this text appears a

first-stage analysis where I make: clarifications in description; comparisons and contrasts; present insights; draw distinctions; elaborate themes; draw on other academic literature; and refer to other experiences. This process is known—and conducted in a variety of ways within phenomenological method—as the *imaginative variation* process of *eidetic analysis*.

Participant One writes:

The Helix . . . The H the skeleton of technology—taking over the body of senses—sliding into the second skin pop out of the physical form

Analysis 1.1:

Participant One (P1) is referring to a moment where the digitally projected double emerges from the performer, then, after standing side by side, the performer steps back into his projection. The participant suggests a “taking over” or possession by the technology. The light creates a spiralling form: a skeleton producing a second skin. The mediated event suggests three entities that form a triadic structure. First is the spiralling technology, an acting force; and the second: the pre-recorded projected form that has “popped out of” the third: the performer’s “physical body”. The body corporeal is taken over. Possessed. It is a power ‘over’, an obsolescence of “the body of senses” by technology. The participant posits a power relationship without a specific ideological reference. The writer acknowledges that a ‘possession’ of sorts takes place as this tri-fold structure emerges. It is a paradoxical possession. The physical body enters the projected form. The projection fits like a glove, but the technology instigates the movement; the body no longer moving as a function of its own physical form. The body having-been a physical form, ruptured, prized, popped from its sensorium, is now the futural orientation of a body without sense.

Participant Two writes:

There is an unusual light on his body, making him seem [sic]. This body is real, but feels projected. Then I’m seeing double, his body and then an image of his body where it was. I’m blinking and straining and trying to understand what I’m seeing. I like this feeling.

Analysis 1.2:

What is interesting about this account is that participant two (P2) describes the moment of the initial doubling differently to P1 and my description of the same moment, where I write:

Stepping into one’s own...an empty site to be filled. Filling up—taken by surprise.

P2 affirms the realness of the performer from its ‘having-been-ness’: a body that has been thrown about the stage (“twisting, spinning his body head to toe, toe to head, his body cutting, flipping”). But the strange light on his body has P2 question the verisimilitude of this real body expressed in the now—“This body is real, but feels projected”. The futural “the not-yet-now” expands the moment with potential. Could this body be something other than a body that flips, spins, cuts and twists? The two bodies—the corporeal and

replicated digital—cause Participant Two to blink and strain. The statement “This body is real, but feels projected” demonstrates a perceptual disjuncture for the participant between what they know is possible; and based on the past pertaining to their unity of experience (a man physically moving about the stage) to an indiscernible “feeling” made possible by the technology. This feeling overcomes the participant. They can no longer rely on the visual as a mode of verifying experience while some foreign, nagging, unthematized feeling titillates them in the immediacy of the being-there-with. They “like this feeling”.

Participant One takes it further:

The other's world his to investigate . . .

Analysis 1.3:

P1 does not describe how this investigation takes place, but refers to it as a different world: a distinct world requiring investigation. Is this projected replication of skin merely a reflected self, or experienced as an independent other in a newly imagined world? The role of the imagination expressed in description is evidence of new technologies providing alternative realities, spaces and narratives.

Virtual reality theorist Michael Heim believes that the imagination is the pull away from the “limits of our physical existence”.²⁹ This pull away to be outside self, then back to self, is qualitatively different in technology events. He goes on to say that the:

Imagination allows us to take what we read or hear and reconstitute the symbolic components into a mental vision. The vision transcends the limits of our bodily reality, so that, from the viewpoint of bodily existence, imagination is an escape—even though imagination often introduces new factors into our lives . . .³⁰

Participant One writes:

Settle back into skin—relax and rest in self.

Analysis 1.4:

The dancer steps out of the projection to stand untouched in his physical skin. The replicated double dissipates. The participant suggests a move from an unsettled embodiment, whereby the dancer is now restful, back with self. I wonder what has changed for the performer? What is different for the audience watching this hybridised presentation: a physical body interacting with its physical form.

Participant One continues:

The throbbing heart, so prominent and open and essential and overworked.

Analysis 1.5:

The labour of the body corporeal is noted as “prominent”, “essential”. What does the writer mean by essential? Could this be a reference to something more real, more authentic, or more graspable in their perception? Moments of collusive interaction

between the performer and his virtual double mask the visceral human effort that is only seen in quiet relief once the mediated form drops away. Registering physical labour ‘a heart throbbing—chest rising’ draws a distinction between the body comporting to the digital: possessed and under some kind of spell, and the throbbing body in its three dimensions: “prominent” and “essential”.

Concluding Remarks for Textual Analysis

There are many diverse threads to take up and extrude from this line-by-line analysis. Interpretive elaboration can start, then, develop beyond the individuated account, across accounts and like events. Phenomenological analysis adapts to the specifics of inquiry. For example, if the inquiry for staging a digital performance was focused upon the ‘touch’ between digital and fleshly bodies, the following statements could be made:

- 1) A distinct triadic relationship between a corporeal self, digital other and the technology that enables the interaction.
- 2) The digital double experienced as other affect imaginings of another world and create curiosity
- 3) A power over the corporeal by the digital. Corporeal embodiment serving and/or created by the technology
- 4) Technology confusing the verisimilitude of a corporeal body in its three-dimensional presence for the spectator
- 5) A perceptual disjuncture between the unity and logic of visual perception in experience and ineffable feeling states, which are sensorially pleasurable, surprising and/or unbelievable.
- 6) Distinction found in physical presence between performer comporting to the digital form (human effort masked) to being settled in one’s own skin (human effort transparent).

To reduce these 6 statements further in light of a working model for digital dramaturgy. I could consider:

- 7) Instances or arrangements where the perceptual possibilities are greatest, where disbelief and/or the imagination are evinced. For example, with points (2) and (4), the spectators were imagining other worlds precisely with this juxtaposition between a physical body stepping into the digital projection and then standing by its side, which brings me to point
- 8) Where the dramaturg could consider ‘cases that could be otherwise’: other arrangements of the corporeal body in relation and interaction with its digital double. For instance, if the holographic double were flown in from the roof, or slowly formed from a point in space and positioned elsewhere on the stage, a different relation, or signification would emerge. How the choreographer

comes to this decision dramaturgically is where phenomenology from within audience can be useful.

The moment where the dancer steps into their holographic image was poetically elaborated differently within the writings of the phenomenology group. And yet in the accounts analysed, there was a common structure to the relationship between the performer and this virtual other, one of possession and of power. Was this the original intention of the makers? It is not the point of this paper to ascertain what the makers intended, but to raise the problem that if the relation was not meant to be one of possession or power, then, the intention ran contrary to the experience of five audience members and so may have failed in its dramaturgy.³¹

Conclusion

Drawing out a range of insights in this way could prevent a choreographer and/or programmer from repeatedly stressing the non-essential aspects of an interaction, or from forcing a production to express a particular meaning nonaligned or disharmonious with the rest of the production's elements due to a myopic vision. Such a method would resist a production being overcome one-sidedly by the technology and how it could and should work.

The small sample of writing I present today is only one example of many instances that participants from my research project have generated. For the moment, this method points to the possibility of a more nuanced, generative and documentary understanding of the relationship between elements in digital dance performance.

If the practices of an artist or company are understood from the outside in academic contexts as a set of meaningful assumptions, or reified into a working model from processes of documentation, how is information readily and acceptingly reticulated back to the maker? Can such a model of dramaturgy (as proposed here) mitigate the theory practice nexus in dance production? The hope is now to take this model into the cycle of production as a post-doctoral or choreographic research project.³²

By adopting a specific type of hermeneutic phenomenology as dramaturgical practice, the digital dance maker is provided the opportunity to understand at a structural level the given and potential relationships between production elements, for instance: a live, 3 dimensional corporeal body interacting with their real-time streamed screen representation. My suggestion is that the dance maker will understand these relationships from the writings of those who witness the event—spectator/analysts trained in phenomenological method. These writings are further examined to identify patterns, rhythmical structure, congruencies and variances between accounts about the same work, or with reference to earlier experiences. With this information, the performance maker can then weave the internal structure and aesthetics of the performance based on experiential suggestions that are visual, spatial, aural, kinaesthetic, emotive, temporal and imagined.

In summation, I provide three key points:

- 1) Dramaturgy as an expanded practice is equally inclusive of the visual, physical, spatial, sonic, textual and virtual. New dramaturgy is a practice supporting the increasing use of digital technologies within performance.
- 2) There are strong parallels between how a dramaturg works and how phenomenology in practice illuminates the structure of phenomena in experience. A practitioner who works with phenomenology as a method will address the dramaturgy of their work.
- 3) If, as Eugenio Barba maintains, actions are all the relationships and interactions between production elements, and “actions are what work directly on the audience’s attention, on their understanding, their emotiveness”—and their imaginations—then, it makes sense that a constructive analysis of their embodied experiences, and not their opinions, should be instrumental in the dramaturgical design of a production.³³

Acknowledgments

I would like to thank the Society of Dance History Scholars’ Student Travel Award Committee for a Graduate Student Travel Grant, which made it possible for me to attend the 2011 Conference in Toronto and present this paper. I am also grateful to The University of Sydney for funding through the Postgraduate Research Support Scheme. Special thanks goes to my phenomenology workshop participants, and to Dr Stuart Grant (Monash University) for corrections and suggestions on my initial draft of this presentation.

Copyright 2011, Jodie McNeilly

Notes

1. Dramaturg Peter Eckersall advocates: “a mode of experimental dramaturgical practice that in some senses revisits dramaturgical fundamentals while also aim[s] to substantially rethink and reinvent dramaturgical craft. See Eckersall [Peter]. “Towards an Expanded Dramaturgical Practice: A Report on ‘The Dramaturgy and Cultural Intervention Project’” in *Theatre Research International*. United Kingdom: Cambridge University Press, October 2006, 31.3:293.
2. See Turner [Cathy] and Synne [Behrndt K.]. *Dramaturgy and Performance*. Hampshire and New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008, 17.
3. See Lehmann [Han-Thies]. *Postdramatic Theatre*. Introduction by Karen Jürs-Munby. London and New York: Routledge, 2006.
4. Sensorium refers to the sum of our perceptions; the seat of our sensations; and how we sensorially interpret the environment in which we perceive. For more in relation to experiences within interactive art events, see Jones [Caroline A.]. *Sensorium: Embodied Experience, Technology and Contemporary Art*. Cambridge Massachusetts: MIT Press, 2006.
5. Barba [Eugenio]. “The Nature of Dramaturgy: Describing Actions at Work” in *New TheatreQuarterly*. Cambridge University Press, 1.1:75-8.

6. Quote from Flemish Dramaturg Marianne Van Kerkhoven in Turner [Cathy] and Synne [Behrndt K.]. *Dramaturgy and Performance*. Hampshire and New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008, 17.
7. Norman Frisch in *Ibid.*, 151.
8. Authors such as Scott Delahunta, Andre Lepecki and Phil Hansen have written on the topic of dramaturgy in contemporary dance. The recent 2011 meeting of SDHS in Toronto was the first meeting on dance dramaturgy in North America, with many new and diverse contributions to the discussion.
9. Delahunta [Scott]. "Dance Dramaturgy: Speculations and Reflections" 2000. Accessed online <http://www.sdela.dds.nl/conv3/article.html>. Professor Gabriele Klein in her Key Note address at the SDHS Dance Dramaturgy Conference *Catalyst, Perspective and Memory* at York University provides an earlier date for the identification of dance dramaturgy in the works of Pina Bausch. She historicises this moment taking place in the early 1970s.
10. Department of Performance Studies, The University of Sydney, Australia.
11. I refer here to the type of research skills the Department of Performance Studies teaches to students in their third and fourth years. Students are trained in ethnography to observe, document and analyse artist's processes.
12. See Eckersall [Peter]. "What is Dramaturgy? What is a Dramaturg?" in *Realtime: Special Dramaturgy Supplement*, December 2005–January 2006, 70:2. Available at www.realtimearts.net 'Dramaturgy Now' link.
13. Reason [Matthew]. *Documentation, Disappearance and the Representation of Live Performance*. Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan, 1996, 66.
14. *Ibid.*, 67.
15. A critique of the empirical sciences, or what are referred to as *regional ontologies* in Husserl, can be found across the corpus of his life works. Originally motivating his project for making phenomenology the foundation of the sciences, Husserl surprisingly pays greatest attention to the problem of the empirical sciences in his much later text *The Crisis of the European Sciences and Transcendental Phenomenology: An Introduction to Phenomenological Phenomenology*.
16. Turner [Cathy] and Synne [Behrndt K.]. *Dramaturgy and Performance*. Hampshire and New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008, 17.
17. Some scholars believe that the live and mediated debate is no longer a valid or valued moment in performance theory. It is my contention that the original argument between Peggy Phelan and Philip Auslander establishes a true *aporia* within the discipline of performance studies, and by extension dance studies. Just as philosophy has its centuries old *aporias* (i.e. the problem of the self; the body-mind problem), I argue that performance and dance studies benefits from generating new discourses from this debate. My PhD research is a direct and critical response to this debate, that departs from the polemic to offer a more constructive vision of the relationship between live and mediated forms in performance. See Phelan [Peggy]. *Unmarked: the politics of performance*. London & New York: Routledge, 1993; Auslander [Philip]. "Against Ontology: Making Distinctions between the Live and the Mediated" in *Performance Research*. London & New York: Routledge, 1999, 2.3:50- 55; and Auslander [Philip]. *Liveness: Performance in a Mediated Culture*. London & New York: Routledge, 1999.
18. Deleuze [Gilles] & Guattari [Félix]. *A Thousand Plateaus: capitalism and schizophrenia*. Translation and foreword by Brian Massumi. London: Athlone Press, 1988, 25.
19. The relationship between dimensions has been a focus within my Doctoral research. Working out the dimensional receptivity of technology events has uncovered a complex set of relations that I will not touch on today.
20. The midi dancer is a system of flexion sensors that are wirelessly attached to the joints of a dancer's body. This movement information is fed back to a computer for visual and/or audio

output within the same performing space. Carver [Gavin] and Beardon [Colin]. *New visions in performance: the impact of digital technologies*. Rotterdam: Swets & Zeitlinger, 2004.

21. Systems are often designed from concepts and computation alone. The human element is sometimes added much later to the system during a prototyping stage. This is not to say that humans are devoid in the design process, but the potential for interesting interactions may not be maximised.

22. Steinbock [Anthony J.]. *Phenomenology and Mysticism*. Bloomington & Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 2007, 3.

23. I develop upon the criticism and recasting of the tripartite structure of an aesthetic theory by Hans-Georg Gadamer in his text *Truth and Method*. See Gadamer [Hans-Georg]. *Truth and Method*. London & New York: Continuum, 2004.

24. Ricoeur [Paul]. *Freedom and Nature: The Voluntary and the Involuntary*. Northwestern University Press, SPEP: Evanston Illinois, 2007, 3.

25. Steinbock [Anthony J.]. *Phenomenology and Mysticism*. Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 2007, 4.

26. In Turner [Cathy] and Synne [Behrndt K.]. *Dramaturgy and Performance*. Hampshire and New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008, 157.

27. Herbert Spiegelberg in Casey [Edward S.]. "Sym-Phenomenologising: Talking Shop" in *Human Studies*. Netherlands: Kluwer Academics, 1997, 20: 176.

28. *Érection*. Company: Compagnie Dernière Minute, Théâtre National De Toulouse France. Concept, Choreographer, Interpretation, Video: Pierre Rigal. Conception/Art Production: Aurélian Bory. Sound Creation/Music: Sylvain Chaveau, Joan Cambon, Arca. Program: Future Tense. Curation: Mikhail Baryshnikov. Venue: The Playhouse, Sydney Opera House. Program: Adventures07. Season: 1-11 August 2007.

29. Heim [Michael]. "The Metaphysics of Virtual Reality" in *Virtual Reality: Theory, Practice and Promise*, edited by Helsel [Sandra K.] and Paris Roth [Judith]. Westport & London: Meckler, 1991, 31.

30. *Ibid*.

31. For brevity sake, I have only looked at two accounts in this paper. For my bigger project, I analysed all writings from participants on this particular interaction, and the invariant theme to emerge for this relational structure was possession and power.

32. I am currently preparing proposals for funding in both a choreographic research context outside of the academic institution (Critical Path NSW, Sydney, Australia), and as a post-doctoral possibility from 2012/13.

33. Barba [Eugenio]. "The Nature of Dramaturgy: Describing Actions at Work" in *New Theatre Quarterly*. Cambridge University Press, 1.1: 75-8.

References

Auslander [Philip]. "Against Ontology: Making Distinctions between the Live and the Mediatized" in *Performance Research*. London & New York: Routledge, 1999, 2.3:50-55.

Auslander [Philip]. *Liveness: Performance in a Mediatized Culture*. London & New York: Routledge, 1999.

Barba [Eugenio]. "The Nature of Dramaturgy: Describing Actions at Work" in *New Theatre Quarterly*. Cambridge University Press, 1.1:75-8.

Carver [Gavin] and Beardon [Colin]. *New visions in performance: the impact of digital technologies*. Rotterdam: Swets & Zeitlinger, 2004.

- Herbert Spiegelberg in Casey [Edward S.]. "Sym-Phenomenologising: Talking Shop" in *Human Studies*. Netherlands: Kluwer Academics, 1997, 20:169-80.
- Delahunta [Scott]. "Dance Dramaturgy: Speculations and Reflections" 2000. Accessed online <http://www.sdela.dds.nl/cony3/article.html>.
- Deleuze [Gilles] & Guattari [Félix]. *A Thousand Plateaus: capitalism and schizophrenia*. Translation and Foreword by Brian Massumi. London: Athlone Press, 1988.
- Eckersall [Peter]. "What is Dramaturgy? What is a Dramaturg?" in *Realtime: Special Dramaturgy Supplement*, December 2005–January 2006, 70:2. Available at www.realtimearts.net 'Dramaturgy Now' link.
- Eckersall [Peter]. "Towards an Expanded Dramaturgical Practice: A Report on 'The Dramaturgy and Cultural Intervention Project'" in *Theatre Research International*. United Kingdom: Cambridge University Press, October 2006, 31.3:283-97.
- Gadamer [Hans-Georg]. *Truth and Method*. London & New York: Continuum, 2004.
- Heim [Michael]. "The Metaphysics of Virtual Reality" in *Virtual Reality: Theory, Practice and Promise*. Edited by Helsel [Sandra K.] and Paris Roth [Judith]. Westport & London: Meckler, 1991.
- Husserl [Edmund]. *The Crisis of European Sciences and Transcendental Phenomenology: An Introduction to Phenomenological Philosophy*, translated by David Carr. Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1970.
- Jones [Caroline A.]. *Sensorium: Embodied Experience, Technology and Contemporary Art*. Cambridge Massachusetts: MIT Press, 2006.
- Lehmann [Han-Thies]. *Postdramatic Theatre*. Introduction by Karen Jürs-Munby. London and New York: Routledge, 2006.
- Phelan [Peggy]. *Unmarked: the politics of performance*. London & New York: Routledge, 1993.
- Reason [Matthew]. *Documentation, Disappearance and the Representation of Live Performance*. Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan, 1996.
- Ricoeur [Paul]. *Freedom and Nature: The Voluntary and the Involuntary*. Northwestern University Press, SPEP: Evanston Illinois, 2007.
- Steinbock [Anthony J.]. *Phenomenology and Mysticism*. Bloomington & Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 2007.
- Turner [Cathy] and Synne [Behrndt K.]. *Dramaturgy and Performance*. Hampshire and New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008, 17.

Jodie McNeilly
jodie.mcneilly@sydney.edu.au

Curating Dance: Dramaturgy as a multiplicity of perspectives

Dr Stefania Mylona
University of Surrey

Abstract

An alternative mode of dance dramaturgy to theatrical methods is curating dance which condenses narrative through images. Choreographing body images allows altering the aesthetic habitus through a focus on shape design, one of the four dance elements according to Laban. Showing bodies “from a particular point of view, an image shows more than what can actually be seen” (2008, p.47) as Bleeker proposes. My practice, Dancing Sculptures, suggests looking at dance dramaturgy as a perspective, presenting simultaneously a particular view of the moving body and a multiplicity of representations within its contractile design made out of sculptural bodily assemblages.

Introduction

Works suffer. Dance suffers; dancers certainly suffer; choreographers suffer, artists suffer and dramaturgs suffer with them. How else could they create dramas? (Let's not mention that the audience also suffers at times.) Drama comes from the Greek word δράμα which refers to a tragic event. In this paper, I consider dramaturgy as curation, in terms of taking care of the work, within the wider context of postmodern performance, since even Hans-Thies Lehman's post-dramatic works suffer. Within these frameworks of opening up signs and structures, I propose that closing things may allow the practice to develop. My argument is based on a visual approach in dance and by considering dramaturgy as a perspective, the perspective of the work itself, which folds within it a multiplicity of perspectives (including those of the artist/choreographer, the dramaturg as well as historical perspectives).

When other people are invited in the creative process what has been realized by the choreographer and/or artist is that the work has its own life or centre. It belongs neither to the dramaturg nor the choreographer since both become part of the work. A multiplicity of perspectives however does not mean that the work's suffering or drama ends because even through this perspective there are losses as it still remains 'a' perspective. Therefore, works suffer continuously (and choreographers, dancers and dramaturgs), in an obsession to solve the same problem again through each new work: trying to communicate what cannot be communicated.

Looking for new and different ways to communicate what cannot be communicated leads somehow closer to the thing itself, our failure to communicate it, the impossibility of communicating suffering, the repeated effort to change the world despite that the world won't listen. Why must the show go on? I don't know, perhaps because comedy is born in tragedy. However, this movement inwards and towards the work I propose, leads as I will argue towards a condensation of previous narratives into every

new work and an intensification of drama which is objective as much as it is subjective, demanding from us to simultaneously watch it and see it.

Scholar and dramaturg, Bruce Barton argues that dramaturgy is again gaining a wider definition in the broader context of contemporary performance and current discussions move away from fixities “into a consideration of its effective variety and potential” (2005, p.103). But when is dramaturgy effective? In this paper I consider the effectiveness of dramaturgy in terms of the work’s communicative potential. I will argue that the work’s communicative potential increases when the two basic characteristics of the role of dramaturgy, “1) an effort to establish and maintain a degree of critical objectivity; and 2) a deep commitment to the creator” which Barton identifies (ibid) become a two-fold process. This is particularly demonstrated in practice-based research, where the creator is also the analyst of the work and where these tentative processes become one two-fold process within his/her perspective.

In dance, dramaturgy testifies to the long history of the theatrical traditions of European practices, from classical ballets to more recent dance theatre practices. Logos meets the body in the *gestus* of Pina Bausch’s practice and her followers, such as Anna-Teresa De Keersmaecker and Alain Platel. However, as Kate Elswit argues, the founders of central Europe’s dance theatre or expressionist dance, “Schlemmer and Jooss believed in human bodies as mediums of direct artistic communication, capable of expressing that which words could not” (2008, p.397). I aim to argue that visibility is an important dramaturgical factor in dance practice both in the process and in the product. By breaking away from the logocentric lineage of dance theatre, visibility allows a wider international spectatorship, beyond the restraints of language-based performance, but lastly and more importantly, it may increase dance’s dramatic value in terms of estrangement, as it will be argued. However, it is worth noting that in my practice, logos was used during the creative process, making the product also theatrical despite lacking speech.

Visibility in dance leads to sculpture due to three-dimensionality. In my practice, *Dancing Sculptures*, shape design folded within it spatial choreographic design. This was achieved by drawing together various body images into a sculptural or spatial assemblage through bringing the performers in close proximity. *Dancing Sculptures* has been broken into 25 assemblages—moving images, which allowed various structures. By stilling movement at frequent intervals, dancing sculptures also acted as chronophotographs which captured movement in successive still images (e.g. Eadweard J. Muybridge, 1830-1904).

So, like a curator who manages or organizes a collection of visual art works, whether these are paintings or sculptures, images or constructions, I choreographed *Dancing Sculptures* by looking at various ways to combine in space various temporalities and spatialities. In this sense, dance curation refers to the process of choreographing a collection of body images, or synthesizing in space and time various dance perspectives. Similarly to visual arts curation, dance curation is seen as a contractile process which folds together various perspectives.

Seeing: Movement in perspective

The term perspective comes from the Latin *perspectus*, past particle of *perspicere* which means to look through. In the visual arts, perspective appeared as a principle in 16th

century painting which created the illusion of depth that artists created in order to give a more realistic appearance to what they were painting, by considering the third dimension. Later, perspective came to also refer figuratively to a conceptual view. Through the images of *Dancing Sculptures*, I argue for dramaturgy as, and through, the perspective of the work which involves both an outside and an 'inside eye'. When dramaturgy is seen as a perspective, theatrical narrative becomes condensed in images. When narrative contracts or closes into an image, its content expands giving the work multiple layers and thus, also increasing its communicative potential and aesthetic value.

Performance scholar Maaïke Bleeker, has written an extensive study on perspective (2008) titled *Visuality in the Theatre: The locus of looking* which looks at visuality from a performative perspective. She proposes that showing bodies "from a particular point of view, an image shows more than what can actually be seen" (2008, p.47) and thus, it could be said that visual dramaturgy in dance, strengthens the representation of the creator's perspective. The photographic perspective of the V shape, shown in Figure 1, by obscuring the performers' torsos, creates a visual continuity between the legs of the two performers, between the head of the performer on top and the forearms of the other, as well as between the legs and the head.



Figure 1: V shape in *Dr Adder*, The Place, RHDT, 2009, photographed by Richard Wotts

Distorting the body image is achieved by distorting distances. The far appears close and the close appears far. Obscuring the third dimension and the body parts within it suggests that sculpture includes moving images. Art historian Aby Warburg (1866-1929) had been interested in the image in motion he traced in early Renaissance painters and sculptors of the Quattrocento¹. He argued for the Dionysian foundations of Renaissance art by identifying a composite entity of mythological figuration and real

character “as the universal type of the figure in motion” in Sandro Botticelli’s *Birth of Venus* as Philippe-Alain Michaud verifies (2004, p.68).

Michaud states, that in Warburg’s analysis, “the movement is described as an active dissociation between the fluttering contours of the figure and its mass” (p.71). Warburg, in his attempt to examine the image in motion, became interested in how Botticelli made the *Study for a Composition of Venus Emerging from the Waves*, by copying a drawing of Antiquity, “including its deterioration, to express the phenomena of appearance and disappearance, seeking to reproduce not so much the figure depicted as the act of figuration itself, and the pulsing of presence and absence conditioning it” (Michaud, 2004, p.72). Thus, images were seen in motion, particularly by representing their duration through missing body parts.

Bleeker proposes that an illusion becomes constructed independently of the viewer and waits to be seen, but the viewer also has to relate to the work from a particular perspective for experiencing it. However, the viewer’s “specific point of view...has to remain invisible in order to produce the desired effect” (Bleeker, 2008, p.48). It was simultaneity of the work’s and the viewer’s vision which allowed the drama of real illusions in *Dancing Sculptures*. Stanton B. Garner, in his *Sensing Realism: illusionism, actuality, and the theatrical sensorium* (eds. Banes and Lepecki, 2007) argues for the drawing together of opposing 20th century realist and anti-realist sensorial practices (futurism, dada, avant-garde theatre). This aesthetic contraction can be achieved through the body, as the bearer of both a real physicality and imaginary sensory perception.



Figure 2: Tail in *Dr Adder*, The Place, RHDT, 2009, photographed by Richard Wotts

The visually constructed drama of the human existence in the Tail, shown in Figure 2, becomes a moving sculpture according to the viewer’s perspective and thus, objective ‘seeing’ of bodies on four, one after the other, becomes a kinaesthetic ‘watching’ of a monstrous yet human tail. As Burt suggests, “rather than setting visibility against temporality, as Sheets-Johnstone and others have done, there is a need to find ways of recognizing and understanding complex interactions between the different levels of ‘discourse’ on which dance performance may draw” (2009, p.41). For instance, in Optics, the illusion of movement happens through simultaneity of contraction and release in the same design however, the viewer can only see one at a time.

This method has also been adopted by the Surrealists. For example, Marcel Duchamp's 1920s 'roto-reliefs' such as the motorized sculptures *Rotary Glass Plates* (1920), *Rotary Demisphere* (1925) and *Anemic Cinema* (1926) created the illusion of images becoming three-dimensional through rotation. Simultaneity of contraction and release, within one image, may create either an inward or an outward movement, according to the spectator's perspective. The spectator's intentions then, create a multiplicity of experiences, out of this dual moving tension.

Watching: Multiple perspectives

Since spectatorship began to concern dance studies, visual perception became prominent, extending 'seeing' because of its interaction with kinaesthesia. Kinaesthesia, the perception of movement, happens through all the bodily senses and cannot be separated from them. Current interdisciplinary research such as the AHRC collaborative project *The Watching Dance Project* which uses audience research and neuroscience to examine dance perception (University of Manchester, University of Glasgow, York St John University and Imperial College London) with Dee Reynolds as its principal investigator, favors a more holistic experiential 'watching' over 'seeing' theatre in line with Rachel Fensham's book, *To Watch Theatre* (2009).

'Watching' dance, becomes further accentuated in a round viewing, reminiscent of Walter Gropius' total theatre design (1928), but even more so in an interactive viewing, where the spectators can move around and through the work. Warburg stated that figures "move on a plane parallel to the spectator, so that the spectator can believe in forward movement only when he moves his eyes" (1890, cited in Michaud, 2004, p.82). When spectators move, distances are further distorted and more perspectives of the sculptural assemblages can be seen. For example, the Tail could be looked at any distance, further accentuating the effects of perspective and also from other perspectives, as Figure 3 demonstrates.



Figure 3: Tail in *Dancing Sculptures*, Siobhan Davies Studios, 2010, photographed by Andras Kovacs

Inviting spectators to an interactive viewing of the work was a result of my creative processes and my choreographic viewing of the sculptural constructions from various distances and angles, but most of all because the work demanded it. Viewing in the round during the process, also enhanced a variation in the designs of the assemblages. For example, looking at the Tail from this perspective enhanced its vertical version which resulted in the Blocks, shown in Figures 4 and 5, where three performers stand on fours one on top of the other. The variation of design in combination with the variation of viewing, further enhanced a multiplicity of representations. Warburg stated that “to attribute motion to a figure that is not moving, it is necessary to reawaken in oneself a series of experienced images following one from the other – not a single image: a loss of calm contemplation” (cited in Michaud, p.83). Thus, perspective can be seen as including within it a multiplicity of moving images.

In vertical assemblages such as the Blocks, a kinaesthetic interpretation is further enhanced due to the weighted qualities of their design.



Figure 4: Blocks in *Monster 1,2,3*, The Place, RHDT, 2009, photographed by me



Figure 5: Blocks in *Dancing Sculptures*, Siobhan Davies studios, 2010, photographed by Andras Kovacs

Bleeker's discussion (2008, p.172-174) of John Martin's (1939) writings on the perception of weight suggests that we perceive weight by seeing it and associating it with previous experiences of weight lifting. The viewers identify even more directly when what they see is made out of human bodies. Thus, kinaesthetic drama is further accentuated in weighted images of vertical assemblages that present the body as a carrier of others. Thus, a kinaesthetic 'watching' includes 'seeing' the design in a manner similar to maintaining the tension of visual design while in movement.

For instance, in the Walking trios, shown in Figures 6 and 7, the sculpture moves through space by the two feet-performers on fours moving forward in consecutive intervals carrying another performer stepping on their backs. The movement of the sculpture accentuates the weighted dramatic design of its image by maintaining it while moving.



Figure 6: Walking trio in *Dancing Sculptures*, Siobhan Davies studios, 2010, photographed by Andras Kovacs



Figure 7: Walking trio in *Dr Adder*, The Place, RHDT, 2009, photographed by Richard Wotts

This was achieved by maintaining points of bodily contact. The distortion of movement happens by distorting bodily design, proportions or analogies. Bleeker states that in painting, to “‘get things in perspective’ is used as a metaphor to describe seeing things in their true relative proportion, which is actually an odd metaphor since getting the ‘right’ size, is precisely what perspective falsifies” (2008, p.14). When the Walking trio moved, it emphasized its false analogies through a juxtaposition of dynamic qualities. The enlarged feet-performers moved with a hyperbolic weighted quality as they had to carry the top performer who as a result of being carried attained a lighter quality. Also, the distortion of height caused a passive suspension to the torso of the top performer. Thus, both release and contraction of energy were included in this moving assemblage, similarly to Optics designs, suggesting an aesthetic intensification.

Conclusion: ‘Watching-seeing’

On the one hand, kinaesthetic vision can become ‘seeing’, since we still see only fragments, thus, always through a perspective. On the other hand, vision can be ‘watching’ as it is framed by the other senses and by the unifying force of the

interpreter's intentionality in order to make meaning. In *Dancing Sculptures*, 'watching' the illusion of many bodies as one and 'seeing' what individual bodies were doing happened simultaneously, both in the making and in performance. I thus, argue that 'watching' and 'seeing' should not be considered separately.

According to literary theorist, Ulrika Maude's *Modernist Bodies: Coming to our senses* (2009), the focus on kinaesthesia, by separating 'watching' from vision, also continues to separate subjectivity from objective knowledge (p.122). Maude proposes that quantitative seeing and qualitative watching overlap and that what they share is "an emphasis on wonder" (p.128), which, I would argue, becomes instigated by simultaneity, i.e. by both seeing separately and watching holistically at the same time.

This 'watching-seeing' I am proposing, allows looking at dramaturgy as a synchronic and subjective perspective but also as including a multiplicity of other historical perspectives which make up objective criteria. The objective criteria may also be formed by relating and/or contesting contemporary practices or the synchronic context. Similarly, subjectivity is formed by and also forms the process of diachrony. For instance, Figure 8 depicts the similarities between my practice and Martha Graham's practice and suggests that past dramas are folded in contemporary ones.



Figure 8: Martha Graham and Benjamin Garber from the Benjamin Garber Collection, Music Division, Library of Congress

Therefore, I propose that a dramaturgical perspective should allow a multiplicity of representations within its singularity. Moreover, that a multiplicity of representations may strengthen the creator's subjective perspective and vice versa; the stronger the perspective, the greater the depth of historical and objective value the work has and the greater the width of appeal.

Copyright 2011, Stefania Mylona

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank the SDHS committee for awarding me the Graduate Student Travel Award and SCUDD for awarding me the Glynne Wickham Scholarship Award and the Dance, Film and Theatre department of the University of Surrey which made my journey to Toronto possible.

Notes

¹ The artistic and cultural movement in Italy in the 15th century

Bibliography

- Banes, Sally & Lepecki, André. (2007). *The Senses in Performance*. New York: Routledge
- Barton, Bruce. (2005). Navigating Turbulence: The Dramaturg in Physical Theatre. *Theatre Topics*, Vol 15, No 1, March 2005, p.103-119
- Bleeker, Maaïke. (2008). *Visuality in the Theatre: The locus of looking*. Hampshire and New York: Palgrave Macmillan
- Burt, Ramsay. (1998). *Alien Bodies: Representations of modernity, 'race' and nation in early modern dance*. London & New York: Routledge
- Burt, Ramsay. (2009). The Specter of Interdisciplinarity. *Dance Research Journal*, Vol 41, No 1, p. 3-22
- De Mille, Agnes. (1992). *Martha: The Life and Work of Martha Graham*. New York: Random House Inc
- Elsmit, Kate. (2008). The Some of the Parts: Prosthesis and Function in Bertolt Brecht, Oskar Schlemmer, and Kurt Jooss. *Modern Drama*, Vol 51, No 3, Fall 2008, p.389-410
- Fensham, Rachel. (2009c). *To Watch Theatre: Essays on genre and corporeality*. Brussels: P.I.E. Peter Lang
- Franko, Mark. (1995). *Dancing Modernism/Performing Politics*. Bloomington & Indianapolis: Indiana University Press
- Laban, Rudolf. (1950, eds. 1971). *The Mastery of Movement*. London: Macdonald and Evans
- Mettler, Barbara. (1947). The Relation of Dance to the Visual Arts. *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism*, Vol 5, No 3, p. 195-203
- Michaud, Philippe-Alain. (1998, English translation 2004). *Aby Warburg and the Image in Motion*. New York: Zone Books
- Proehl, Geoffrey S. (2003). Dramaturgy and Silence. *Theatre Topics*, Vol 13, No 1, March 2003, p. 25-33
- Salzman-Mitchell, Patricia. (2008). A Whole Out of Pieces: Pygmalion's ivory statue in Ovid's *Metamorphoses*. *Arethusa*, Vol 41, p.291-311
- Saunders Corrine, Maude Ulrika and Macnaughton Jane. (2009). *The Body and the Arts*. UK and New York: Palgrave Macmillan
- Weiss, Gail. (1999). *Body Images: Embodiment as intercorporeality*. New York & London: Routledge

Dance Dramaturgy as the Process of Learning: koosil-ja's *mech[a]OUTPUT*

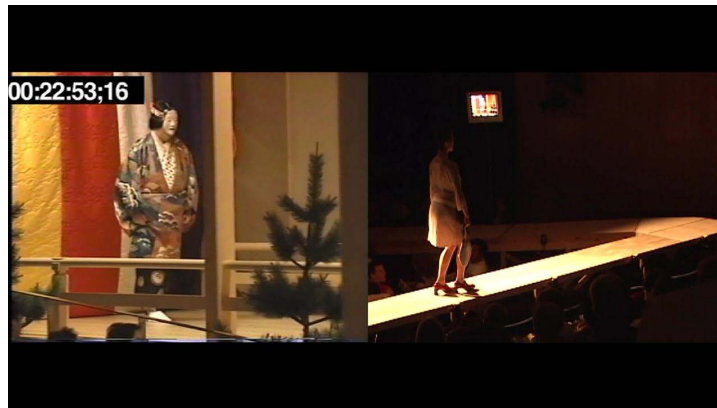
Nanako Nakajima with koosil-ja
Japan Society for the Promotion of Science (JSPS)

Abstract

Noh theater is recognized as an intangible property of Japan. However, it is difficult for the contemporary audience to appreciate classic Noh without enough background knowledge. In order to provide access/process for all people, New York-based, media-dance artist koosil-ja's mech[a]OUTPUT (2007, NY Japan Society) develops a hyperlink to our contemporary lives. In order to interpret Dojoji, a famous Noh play, the information is distributed from the various video monitors and koosil-ja copies this information, decoding it into her own movement vocabulary. This lecture-demonstration shows how the process of learning epitomizes dance dramaturgy.

Prologue

Nanako starts her texts while koosil-ja starts walking silently on the stage.



Noh theater is officially recognized as an intangible national property of Japan. However, it is very difficult for contemporary audiences to appreciate classic Noh without enough background knowledge. In order to provide access/process to traditional Noh for all people, the media performance of koosil-ja's *mech[a]OUTPUT* connects the history of Noh theater to our contemporary lives. koosil-ja, a Korean dance-media artist born in Japan and based in New York, has presented numerous works in the field of experimental theater and dance in the US.

Dance dramaturgy is the process where critical discourse is absorbed into the creative process. Thus, dance dramaturgy is articulated especially through a dramaturg's practical experience, which consists of descriptions of what dramaturgy becomes in different working processes. In this lecture-demonstration, I explore how this performance form of traditional Japanese dance was demystified through the process of learning, from the perspective of dramaturg with performer.

Synchronizing both sequences of the Noh performance and her previous performance projected on the screen, koosil-ja walks from the bridge to the main stage area, singing "I have come to Dojoji. I have come to Dojoji...I hurried, so I have come. I will go to pray to the bell."



1. Legends of Dojoji

The legends surrounding the Dojoji Temple in Wakayama, southeast of Osaka, have inspired numerous traditional Japanese writings and paintings about the vengeful spirit of a spurned woman.

Koosil-ja sings, "Oh I am happy. So, I shall dance to the bell with all my heart." Then, she goes to the back of the stage and sits down.

Noh theater has developed this story, creating a sequel to it called *Dojoji*. The play begins with a celebration for the re-construction of an iron bell at Dojoji Temple. A female protagonist enters and begs to pay homage at the temple. During the first part of the play, she is granted permission to enter the temple. When she begins to dance, she jumps into the bell, which falls to the ground. After an intermission, the *Kyogen* part (an interlude of comic relief within Noh plays) starts with the head priest being informed of this incident. He recalls the legend of the woman who had transformed herself into a serpent, wrapped herself around a temple bell, and burned the monk who hid from her inside. Alarmed, the priests offer prayers to the fallen bell. The bell is lifted revealing the serpent-woman coiled inside. The final part begins with the priests continuing their prayers to exorcise her out of Dojoji Temple. At the end of the play, the serpent dives into the Hidaka River and disappears.

In *mech[a]OUTPUT*, the dancer is a modern female with strong desires. As in the play *Dojoji* in Noh, she jumps into the bell and transforms herself into a serpent-woman. However, at the end of this *mech[a]OUTPUT* she instead turns back into her normal female form, as per the request of her friend who persuades her to come back to life. All her anger is turned into a will to live again.

2. Performance Structure of *mech[a]OUTPUT*

In terms of structure, *mech[a]OUTPUT* consists of two different dimensions: a temporal structure and a spatial structure. *mech[a]OUTPUT* carefully follows the temporal structure of the original *Dojoji* play, which includes three sections: the first half, an

intermediate *Kyogen* part, and the latter half, creating mech[a]part 1, OUTPUT, and mech[a]part 2. In terms of the spatial structure, the performance space consists of three areas: video space, diagonal stage space, and 3D space.

Koosil-ja prepares for the next sequence, while she puts on her hat at the back of the stage. Then, she stands up and moves into position for stepping “Ranbyoshi.”



In the conventions of Noh theater, when the performer makes certain movements to the music, they are signs for the audience to imagine something real that is not onstage. This time, koosil-ja uses a 3D virtual image in order to realize the world of *Dojoji*. In the mech[a]part 1, the scenery around the temple, which is described in the original Noh text, appears as a 3D image operated by the game engine, the software used to produce the sequence of 3D moving images.

Additionally, her movements also trigger the projection of the 3D image projected on the center stage. At the end of the first half of the Noh play, there are parts called *Ranbyoshi* and *Kyu-no-mai*. When the sequence gets to these parts, the audience is required to stare at detailed movements by the Noh performer in time to the beat of a drummer. When it gets to these parts of the play in *mech[a]OUTPUT*, the 3D image switches to the viewpoint of the protagonist. With koosil-ja's movements, copied from that of the Noh performer, the 3D image shows what the protagonist could see if she danced in a real Dojoji Temple. The camera moves with the electronic sound, with the timing of the music and howling voice transcribed from the original Noh drum player. All her steps are programmed and decoded to the camera movements. This 3D image starts to dance with koosil-ja, which also makes the audience virtually experience their dancing. Here, the 3D image becomes not only the visual subtitles of *Dojoji* but also an interactive game space, which is spatially distanced from but temporally connected to our actual living space.

Following the Noh performer and her previous performance on the screen, koosil-ja continues dancing “Ranbyoshi” steps onstage.



3. Learning Archival Bodily Knowledge

In order to interpret the form of Noh play *Dojoji*, koosil-ja integrates sources of elements into the corporate network: during the performance, the information is distributed to koosil-ja from 20 video monitors placed around the stage area. At the moment of distribution, koosil-ja receives this information, decoding it into her own movement vocabulary. In *mech[a]OUTPUT*, Noh actors performing *Dojoji* are shown on various video monitors onstage. Noh actors are not physically present on the stage; however, they become the original source of information. As koosil-ja watches Noh actors, she copies their gestures into her own movement. The bodily techniques of Noh actors are archived and stored in these video monitors and koosil-ja incorporates that information in order to create her own dancing body through the archival process, which she calls “live processing”.

I start understanding this system of learning by reconstructing movements that were not documented in the video through dialogue with koosil-ja. In traditional dance training, there is no inscribable information in terms of performance orally taught from a teacher to a student that is sometimes called “secret information”. Instead, koosil-ja suggested to me alternative ideas that transcend the rule of traditional Japanese theater, such as spinning herself quickly four times on the stage. My function as a dramaturg, as well as movement coach of this project, required so much thought about aesthetics and ethics of the movements, which were interpreted from Noh performer to koosil-ja’s own vocabulary. As a trained traditional dance teacher, I could feel and specify what movements, either new or adapted, would offend the original creatures of the dance. Maintaining a link to Noh movement, koosil-ja follows her system of aesthetics by wearing red shoes, a dress, and holding a handbag. From Noh performer to koosil-ja, from koosil-ja to myself, from Noh performer to myself, and from myself to koosil-ja, and also now performing koosil-ja to myself. Without being a failure or creating a knock-off of original Noh theater, koosil-ja’s movement through her female body, surrounded by all those devices, creates a field of experimentation that emancipates us from old, communal dance restrictions.

The archival process implies a separation of knowledge from the knower. Theater scholar Diana Taylor explains that the archive refers to the institution that sustains cultural, economic, and political power. Taylor argues that “archival memory exists as documents, videos, films, as well as other forms. All those items supposedly resist changing....archival memory succeeds in separating the source of ‘knowledge’ from the

knower - in time and /or space.”¹. This archival process is the act of separating the technique from the performer in order to share that information taken from the previous knower. In this process, the knowledge is shared not only by performers, but also other non-performers. Through the archival process the essential information is taken from the previous knower and equally distributed to all people. It no longer matters who acquires the knowledge.

The structure of archiving implies not only the separation of knowledge from the knower but also a disconnection/ disjointedness from the previous tradition. Now that the archived knowledge from the past is separated and disjointed from the home, the notion of “the traditional Japanese” can be critically reconsidered. Traditional Japanese form has been constructed and embodied by male bodies in Japan, the roles inherited through a hereditary Noh family system; therefore, what it means to be traditionally Japanese excludes the people in and out of Japan. Outsiders, who are not deemed authentically Japanese, can be people in Japan, who are named “female” or “non-Japanese” performers under the nation state.



When Nanako finishes her texts up to this point, koosil-ja switches her movement from “Ranbyoshi” to “Kyu-no-mai” by dancing to the beat of the drum around the stage very quickly until she finishes the end of the first half of “mech[a]OUTPUT,” in which she jumps into the bell hung from the ceiling. Then, silence. Nanako restarts her texts.



Epilogue

The secret of Noh also becomes the restriction of Noh. In order to demystify the form of Noh, koosil-ja disassembles the national past of Japan. In *mech[a]OUTPUT*, information of the traditional Japanese is equally distributed not only to koosil-ja but also to the audience as outsiders of Japan. By learning the knowledge of the traditional, the secret of Noh is demystified and it appears as an opened database of knowledge. It no longer matters who retains the knowledge. Now that the value of the traditional becomes available for a radical experiment, all of us equally depart from not-knowing when *mech[a]OUTPUT* opens up the new field of knowledge.



Copyright 2011, Nanako Nakajima

Acknowledgements

This lecture-demonstration was kindly supported by The Murata Science Foundation.

Notes

1. Diana Taylor, *The Archive and the Repertoire* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2003), 19.

Bibliography

- Derrida, Jacques. *Archive Fever*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998.
Gunji, Masakatsu and others, ed. *Dojoji*. Tokyo: Shogakukan, 1982.
Taylor, Diana. *The Archive and the Repertoire*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2003.

Address for Correspondence:

Nanako Nakajima
nananakajima@gmail.com

**(Not) dancing with capitalism:
A study of Jérôme Bel's "The Show Must Go On"**

Yuma Ochi

Waseda University

Abstract

While their political stances may be subtle, certain choreographers create their works in a way that seems to regard capitalist ideology as a kind of catalyst. From this perspective, Ochi reflects on Jérôme Bel's "The Show Must Go On" (2001). This work involves popular music, which T. W. Adorno condemned as a part of the "culture industry" based on capitalism. According to Adorno, popular music regresses and oppresses people by creating pseudo-desires. This examines whether Adorno's pessimistic opinion is justified. Bel provides an ambiguous or conditional answer to this issue, focusing on the listener-spectator at the theater.

1. Preface

Historically, dance as a component of the theater arts has received financial favor. For example, when we look at the history of ballet, we find that dance has received patronage by the Royal House and the bourgeoisie. In addition, in the modern age, dance is a product that is traded in the art market. Moreover, we, as spectators, habitually spend money to buy tickets to watch something special in the theater. Maybe, there is a relationship between commerciality and theatricality. The same may be said, without doubt, of public theaters. Because budgets and profit are considerable problems that concern public theaters as well, the capitalistic rule influences these cases. Against this background, I will discuss the French choreographer Jérôme Bel, who offers an alternative economy at the theater. Bel considers global capitalism as a catalyst in the creation of his work. Therefore, the main purpose of my presentation is to demonstrate how his work "The Show Must Go On" relates to capitalism.

2. Previous study

A great deal of effort has been invested in the relationship between theater and capitalism. Examples of this are the studies of Gerald Siegmund, Helmut Proebst, and Uno Kuniichi. Siegmund's study is especially important for me as he takes "The Show Must Go On" as the object of his study to provide a good starting point.

Siegmund's premise is Jean Baudrillard's *Symbolic Exchange and Death*. Baudrillard's point is that the body becomes symbolized through the mass media, and therefore, the insubstantial body image is traded through capitalism. Additionally, he cites Roland Barthes's essay *Mythologies*, which demonstrates the exchange of money for body images within theater. According to Barthes, the actor incarnates emotion into merchandise, and spectators pay money for that. In my opinion, several other examples can be viewed as objects of exchange: the highly skilled body (so-called virtuosity), the brilliant body of a star supported by luxurious costumes and stage sets, or the body as a desirable object. In any case, the audience historically looks at the body, or a specific body image, on the other side of the fourth wall and evaluates whether or not that is

worth the price of a ticket.

However, as Siegmund points out, contemporary dance may offer an alternative for the economy and the relationship between dance and spectators. I agree with him.

3. Approach

Before turning to analyze “The Show Must Go On,” I will explain my approach. I first analyze the structure of this work by quoting Theodor Adorno’s theory about the culture industry, including popular music. Adorno’s theory is effective to analyze “The Show Must Go On” because it concerns popular music. According to Adorno, the production and acceptance of popular music are based on a capitalist logic. He cues us to consider how the nature of popular music shifts “The Show Must Go On” from the artistic level to the social level.

Adorno’s notion of the “culture industry” details how culture and economies are intertwined and cannot be separated. The term was invented to criticize how a capitalistic economy changed culture and art into commercial products at a time when mass media, such as radio and cinema, had begun to develop. For Adorno, the culture industry is opposed to high art, and he recognized how popular music forbids humans to think on one’s own. It is noteworthy that in Adorno’s view, popular music deprives listeners of critical reason and draws them into a circuit of intoxication or automatism in order for them to indulge in kinesthetic pleasure. I shall have more to say about this argument later, but for now, I shall set it in the background of my presentation.

4. Analysis

We will begin with a simple observation. A theater’s capacity for “The Show Must Go On” is around 1,000 people, like at the Théâtre de la Ville in Paris. The performance is carried out by 10 men and 10 women, and one person performs the dual role of a disc jockey and lighting operator. Eighteen popular tunes are used in this work, for example, “Tonight” from “West Side Story,” “Come together” by The Beatles, and “Let’s Dance” by David Bowie. We can all listen to tunes from all over the world, even if we are in Asia, where English is not widely spoken. The criteria for inclusion was that a song must have sold at least one million copies and have English lyrics, with the exception of “La Vie En Rose.” The idea was to share the tunes as common references among as many people as possible. Viewed in this light, the overall structure of this piece can be regarded as an ironical representation of global capitalism. Table 1 lists the tunes used in “The Show Must Go On.”

Table 1

Order	Title	Musician	
1	<i>Tonight</i> (West Side Story)	Jim Bryant, Marni Nixon	×
2	<i>Let the Sun Shine In</i> (Hair)	Galt Mac Dermott	×
3	<i>Come Together</i>	The Beatles	×
4	<i>Let’s Dance</i>	David Bowie	○
5	<i>I Like to Move It</i>	Reel 2 Real	○
6	<i>Ballerina Girl</i>	Lionel Richie	○
7	<i>Private Dancer</i>	Tina Turner	○
8	<i>Macarena</i>	Los del Rio	○

9	<i>Into My Arms</i>	Nick Cave	○
10	<i>My Heart Will Go On</i>	Céline Dion	○
11	<i>Yellow Submarine</i>	The Beatles	×
12	<i>La Vie en Rose</i>	Edith Piaf	×
13	<i>Imagine</i>	John Lennon	×
14	<i>The Sound of Silence</i>	Simon and Garfunkel	×
15	<i>Every Breath You Take</i>	The Police	×
16	<i>I Want Your Sex</i>	George Michael	×
17	<i>Killing Me Softly with His Song</i>	Roberta Flack	○
18	<i>The Show Must Go On</i>	Queen	○

The DJ plays each song in a predetermined order from the console set between the stage and the auditorium, while the lighting or performer's actions are carried out in correspondence with the lyrics. First, the DJ plays "Tonight." No lighting is used during the performance on this song, which signifies the idea of "the night." During the performance on the second tune, the lighting is gradually turned on, reflecting the theme of "Let the Sunshine In." Third, the lyrics of "Come Together" have the performers come together onstage. Further, the performers begin to dance while "Let's Dance" is played.

Therefore, the basic and coherent rule of this performance is literally mimicking the lyrics as a task. While watching, the audience gradually becomes familiar with this rule. However, this rule is broken only once. On the seventeenth tune, the performers themselves hand one CD to the DJ and let him play it. This scene leads the audience to interpret their actions as the manifestation of their subjectivity. The performers lie as if dead for "Killing Me Softly with His Song." They choose killing themselves. Nevertheless, as the DJ plays the final tune, "The Show Must Go On," they stand up as if revived by the maxim "the show must go on." The audience finds that the performers cannot escape from the rule until the end, so that their situation seems to be both funny and ironic. From this viewpoint, one may say that "The Show Must Go On" is an allegory of Adorno's critique of popular music. To quote Adorno, "the subjects are deprived of any residues of free will with relation to popular music and tend to produce passive reaction to what is given them and to become mere centers of socially conditioned reflexes" (Adorno 1941: 45).

It seems reasonable to suppose that Adorno captures the truth of one side; nevertheless, at the same time, we should not overlook that there can be other interpretations. It is notable that Adorno's ideas about the spectator-listener are different from Bel's. Adorno regards the spectator-listener of the culture industry as an ignorant existence. However, from a view of the present, the spectator-listener may be unfairly abstracted and underestimated. On the other hand, Bel may regard the spectator-listener as an active existence for "The Show Must Go On." I would like to emphasize this point because dance and dance-studies include spectators that have physical bodies, and therefore, excessive abstractions of the recipients of culture can be avoided. In "The Show Must Go On," Bel gives privilege to spectators-as-participants in the performance. I will expand on this argument to highlight the strategies that Bel organizes to bring out the subjectivity of the spectators. There are three kinds of strategies: (1) adopting ordinary bodies and amateurs, (2) positive use of popular music, and (3) excluding visual elements from the

stage.

First, the performers do not employ high skills and they do not wear stage costumes. Movement is based on task. I borrow from the German critic Jochen Schmidt's phrase "we feel we can also do it." Actually, some amateurs are included in this piece. At the level of appearance and action, Bel designs to approximate a performer's body to a spectator's body. It evokes in us the memory of Yvonne Rainer's "No manifesto," in which she refuted spectacle, illusion, seduction, and so on.

Second, each tune has a different meaning from the ordinary because these lyrics are literally engaged, as we have seen. Each scene sometimes gives a parodic impression, and sometimes a serious one. That is to say, the songs have dual meanings. Spectators are invited to interpret these meanings. Perhaps they think, "Which rules are applied? How and what do performers do with this tune?" Using popular music that many people are familiar with facilitates participation of the spectators in interpreting these questions. To be precise, Bel firstly adopts kinesthetic pleasure carried by the popular music that Adorno criticized and uses the individual memories attached to the popular music as the material of intertextuality, and then shares the generative rule of this performance with the audiences.

Third, this is the most daring strategy about concerning visibility and invisibility. In half of the scenes in this performance, the performers' bodies and movements, which are the most visual elements in dance, are excluded from the stage. Please see the right column in Table 1. The circle (○) means that performers act out something according to the lyrics. A cross (×) means that nobody is on stage or that even if the performers do not exit the stage, they look only at the audience without performing any action. Exactly half of the 18 tracks are applicable to scenes with cross marks. Therefore, we can interpret that the void is offered for spectators to fill in with one's own interpretation. There, the lyrics impose tasks on spectators. For example, during the thirteenth tune, "Imagine," the lighting in the theater is completely turned off. In the invisible world, music instructs spectators exactly to "imagine."

During the fifteenth tune, "Every Breath You Take," the performers do not move, but they do the lyrics—"Every breath you take, every move you make, every bond you break, every step you make, I'll be watching you"—as a task. Namely, they only gaze out at the audience. At the same time, this song indicates that the task for the spectators is being watched. When I watched "The Show Must Go On" at the Théâtre de la Ville in Paris in 2010, about 50 spectators stood up and began to dance as if they themselves became the performers. It is clear that they understood their part enough to participate actively. Moreover, These scenes lead the fourth wall to semantically collapse. The relationship between the seeing-subject spectator and watched-object performer turns over.

5. Conclusion

In conclusion, (1) the body in "The Show Must Go On" is not valuable in a traditional, theatrical context. Therefore, the spectators are not the consumers of a specific body image. (2) The spectators are not simply dominated by the culture industry, because they can interpret alternative meanings of popular music. (3) The spectators are released semantically. Even if they begin to actually dance, it is within the expected range of behavior. Being a spectator does not foreclose acting.

Since the eighteenth century, the fourth wall has been enforced conceptually by Denis

Diderot and structurally by the proscenium arch. These elements have constructed the relationship between the performer and the spectators. Bel, however, deconstructs that structure and further constructs an interactive time and space of communication by sharing the generative rule of this performance with the spectators. In this respect, we may say that Bel overcomes Adorno's idea.

However, we cannot dispense with Adorno's idea. We must not forget that "The Show Must Go On" always exists inside a capitalist logic. One of the reasons supporting this assertion is that this piece still incorporates popular music. The other reason is that "The Show Must Go On" is also a product traded on the art market. That is to say, even this critical distance still risks assimilation into capitalism. Therefore, Bel's strategy can only outwit the dominant code rather than construct a completely new system, and it cannot help being ephemeral. Accordingly, "The Show Must Go On" is born into a paradoxical tension between the artist, Jérôme Bel, and capitalism. For the reason, my presentation has an ambivalent title: *(Not) dancing with capitalism*.

Perhaps a subsidy makes Bel possible to keep his critical position in culture industry. The issue about subsidy, however, remains unsettled.

Copyright 2011, Yuma OCHI

Bibliography

- Adorno, T.W. "On Popular Music: With the assistance of George Simpson," *Studies in Philosophy and Social Sciences*, Vol. 9, 1941, pp. 17-48.
- Barthes, Roland, "Mythologies, in Oeuvres Complètes." Tome 1: 1942-1965, Paris, Edition du Seuil.
- Baudrillard, Jean, *Symbolic Exchange and Death*, trans. Iain Hamilton Grant, London, Sage Publication, 1993.
- Horkheimer, Max, T.W. Adorno, "The Culture Industry: Enlightenment as Mass Deception," *Dialectic of enlightenment*, Trans. John Cumming.
- Ploebst, Helmut, *No wind no word*, Kieser Verlag, 2001.
- Rainer, Yvonne, "Some Retrospective Notes on a Dance for 10 People and Mattresses Called Parts of Some Sextets, Performed at the Wadsworth Atheneum, Hartford, Connecticut, and Judson Memorial Church, New York, in March, 1965," *Tulane Drama Review*, Vol. 10, No. 2 (Winter 1965): 168-178.
- Siegmund, Gerald, "Strategies of Avoidance—Dance in the Age of the Mass Culture of the Body," in *Performance Research*, Vol. 8, No. 2, June 2003.
- Uno, Kuniichi, "Dance—Kimyouna potlatch (Dance—Strange potlatch)," *Eureka*, Vol. 15, No. 11 (1983): 72-81. Print.
- Wallerstein, Immanuel Maurice, *Historical Capitalism: with Capitalist civilization*, London, Verso, 1995.

DVD

The Show Must Go On. Dir. Aldo Lee. R.B. Jérôme Bel, 2001. DVD.

Performance

The Show Must Go On. Chor. Jérôme Bel. Ballet de l'Opéra de Lyon. Théâtre de la ville, Paris. 19 May 2010. Performance.

Address for correspondence:

Yuma OCHI, 102 Ork Building Murata, 1-23-12 Nishiwaseda, Shinjuku-ku, Tokyo, 169-0051
yuma720@gmail.com

The Introduction of Middle Eastern Dance into the United States

Laura Osweiler

Abstract

This paper examines the introduction of Middle Eastern dance into the United States during Expositions in Philadelphia (1876) and Chicago (1893) in order to understand how the socio-political situations and performing contexts impacted the dance and dancers. These Middle Eastern dancers performed in a time and place where they were seen and not heard – where Exposition directors, journalists, and scientists spoke for and about them. Official accounts did not record the changes dancers made in adapting to new settings and audiences. Instead, they cultivated an image of Middle Eastern dance as authentic, traditional, and static.



“Scene in a Tunisian Café – The Scarf Dance”
A Facsimile of Frank Leslie’s Illustrated Historical
Register of the Centennial Exposition, 1876

This is the first known image of a Middle Eastern dancer in the United States; an Algerian woman at the Centennial International Exhibition of 1876 in Philadelphia. As the first exposition in the United States, the Centennial Exhibition became the standard. Not only were visitors encouraged to peruse the numerous museum type exhibits, but also to interact with and purchase items from the guest nations.ⁱ The Centennial exposition also established the negative treatment of Middle Eastern dancers at these events. For example, according to a New York Times article, “An immoral Coffee-House,” there was a raid at a Turkish café (near one already established), because of immodest dancing by the woman.ⁱⁱ

The Columbian Exposition of 1893 in Chicago was much larger in scope than the Centennial Exhibition. It was divided into two main areas: the White City, which

contained neo-classic architecture and a number of buildings, such as the Woman's building and foreign buildings, and the Midway Plaisance, which included the amusement portion. Middle Eastern culture was represented in both. For example, in the White City were the Ottoman Pavilion and Egyptian, Algerian, Syrian, and Tunisian exhibitsⁱⁱⁱ and in the Midway were a Street in Cairo, the Algerian and Tunisian Village, the Persian Palace, the Turkish Village, and the Moorish Palace. Due to the coverage, documentation, and sheer number of visitors at the Columbian Exposition, Middle Eastern dance became, in an unprecedented manner, fully established into dominant narratives about race, gender, class, and religion^{iv} that constructed strong stereotypes of belly dance which continue in contemporary American culture.

At both expositions, Middle Eastern dancers were invited to the United States to re-present their cultures in "living exhibits." They entered into a society which did not have many Arab immigrants,^v and therefore, a community to comment on the ways in which the Middle East was re-presented at the expositions. The Middle Eastern dancers also entered into a country where the images and knowledge most literate Americans had of the Middle East came from curiosity and variety shows, paintings, newspaper articles, guidebooks, and novels. These texts offered Americans images of Middle Eastern dancers who were sexual, vulgar, and indecent, danced for men and money, and most importantly, could not speak for themselves.^{vi}

The documentation of Middle Eastern dance at the Columbian Exposition consists of photographs,^{vii} drawings, newspaper articles, souvenir books, and published personal accounts written by white American men. The dancers' voices are not recorded in print until after the Chicago Exposition during trails for indecency. This textual silence of course makes it difficult to read beyond the dominant narratives and to find marginal ones, but not impossible.

My goals for this paper are similar to the ones Jane Desmond's explores in "Embodying Difference," in which she asserts that although studying cultural resistance, appropriation, and cultural imperialism is vital in understanding power relationships, it can also overemphasize the "lost" in a dance form, especially when looking at dominant groups' appropriation of "subordinant" groups' practices. Instead, she is interested in the creation of hybrids and syncretism and how the "adopting group" is changed by its new products. As a practitioner of Middle Eastern dance I am interested in the dancers' viewpoints. However, I am not trying to "speak" for them, but instead, I want to explore aspects that are not readily acknowledged by writers in their time and contemporary academic discourse. By not only exploring what dominant narratives constructed in terms of the dancers' images and social positions, but also, by looking for marginal narratives, I hope to open new perspectives on Middle Eastern dance in the United States then and now.

The texts which occasionally accompanied the photographs from the Columbian Exposition present inconsistent information about the dancers. They may indicate the dancer's name and where s/he comes from, offer descriptions of their costumes, makeup, movements, routine, and popularity, whether s/he was also a singer and/or musician, and record the audience's reactions. These texts not only present "factual" descriptions, but also, place the dancers within dominant racial narratives. Robert Rydell, In All the World's a Fair, asserts that the purposes of the early American expositions were to demonstrate America's progress both at home and abroad, to foster a sense of national

pride, and to boost economic growth and development. The expositions cultivated opportunities for the ruling class to popularize “evolutionary ideas about race and progress” (Rydell 5) through scientific, artistic, and political means.



“Salina”

From Oriental and Occidental



“Rahlo Jammele (Jewish Dancing Girl)”

From Oriental and Occidental



“Rosa, The Famous Dancer of Constantinople”

From Turkish Theatre Souvenir

“Rosa, The Turkish Dancer”
From Chicago Times Portfolio of the Midway Types



“Nazha Kassik (Jewish Dancing Girl)”

From Oriental and Occidental

Texts of that period present varying degrees of racist attitudes towards the female Middle Eastern dancers at the Midway, which is my focus in this paper.^{viii} For example, Algerian, Jewish, and Turkish dancers were described by Hubert Bancroft, J.W. Buel, and in The Dream City as not vulgar. This was because their costumes were modest and their dancing graceful.^{ix} These descriptions are different from those written about “Persians” and Egyptians.^x For example, Buel comments about the Egyptian dancers, “we behold them here, destitute of animation, formless as badly-stuffed animals, as homely as owls, and graceless as stall-fed bovines.” Buel also notes their dance “is extremely ungraceful and almost shockingly disgusting.”



“Three Dancing Girls from Egypt”
From J.W Buel’s Magic City
“The Dancers of Cairo Street”
“Zakia, Fahima, and Nabiweah – Cairo Theatre”
From “Snapshots”
From Jewell N Halligan’s Halligan’s Illustrated World’s Fair



“A Performance in the Egyptian Theatre”
From J.W Buel’s Magic City
“Preparing for the Danse du Ventre in the Street of Cairo Theater”
From Jewell N Halligan’s Halligan’s Illustrated World’s Fair
“A Dance in the Street of Cairo Theatre”
From The Dream City

The Columbian Exposition directors justified the amusements of the Midway as educational and containing important scientific merit. They sold the Midway exhibits as standing in for the “real” and presented the performances as being ethnographically correct and untainted by Western influence. However, the dance and dancer had been transposed from one culture to another and placed in a different context. Joseph Roach’s concept of surrogation: the process by which “culture reproduces and re-creates itself” (Roach, 2), which he discusses in Cities of the Dead is helpful with this inquiry. He contends that people and cultures are continually trying to replace, reproduce, and recreate situations but they rarely succeed in being like the original. This “failure” can be a rich source of material and knowledge.

The Middle Eastern dancers reproduced aspects of their culture in this new place, but had to adapt to the exhibits’ space. They were now on presidium stages. Based upon my experience of Middle Eastern dance of watching contemporary Middle Eastern

dancers, I observe that unless they have experience in a theater, contemporary Middle Eastern dancers perform on stage in the manner they are used to off stage. With the caveat that these are two different time periods, I would speculate that the Middle Eastern dancers at the expositions did not change their dance very much in terms of movement, use of space, facial expressions, energy, costume, and music in order to perform on stage.

The Middle Eastern theaters in the exposition^{xi} were unadorned except for some tapestries in the back. The musicians and dancers sat on divans at the back of the stage. The theater setting was different from the homes, courtyards, and/or outdoor spaces in which the Middle Eastern dancers were used to performing. At the exposition, they danced in front of large numbers of people. For example, the Algerian and Tunisian Village theater had 1000-1200 seats.^{xii} The large distance between performer and audience also differed since the Middle Eastern dances no longer performed in intimate settings where dancer and audience could have direct interactions. In fact, in the Middle East, there is a term, *tarab*, which labels this relationship and its impact on the performance. A few writers^{xiii} noticed this interaction between dancers and musicians through vocal and musical encouragement. I suspect that because the Middle Eastern dancers were skilled in adapting to the likes and dislikes of their audiences at home, they learned quickly what American audiences preferred. The dancers' purpose had also changed since they were no longer participating in a variety of capacities, such as rites of passage, art, and entertainment, but instead, for "educational" and entertainment purposes. In addition, the Middle Eastern dancers had to adjust to audiences that did not understand the cultural context of the dance, could not watch them with the dance's aesthetics or cultural values, and did not know the rules of engagement.

Since the Middle Eastern dancers were portrayed as authentic, audiences and exposition directors were either ignorant and/or able to ignore modifications that the dancers made in their performances. By not acknowledging change, the dominant narratives constructed traditional Middle Eastern dance as a static dance form. This presentation also ties into the Orientalist trope of the time that Middle Easterners focus on tradition and are "incapable" of progressive change.

The Middle Eastern dancers were also pulled into feminist debates. For example, male writers present the Board of Lady Managers, a group of upper class white women who over saw the Women's Building in the White City, as developing a unified position against the dancers.^{xiv} However, the Board was not a homogenized group in terms of feminist causes^{xv} or in their response to the morality of the Middle Eastern dancers. For example, the Chicago Tribune reports that Isabella Hooker, Helen Barker, and Mrs. Wm. Felton wanted the theaters closed.^{xvi} They along with the male writers of the day viewed Middle Eastern dance as being inappropriate for any good women to watch.^{xvii} However, other Board members supported the Middle Eastern dances. For example, Sallie Cotton writes in her journal that she "[w]ith Mesdame Bartlett and [Parthenia] Rue went to the Turkish Theatre as guests of Madame Korani. The dancing is wonderful gymnastic performance...." (Weimann, 569).^{xviii} Several men also supported the Middle Eastern dancers in an ethnological and scientific light against the moralists' outrage. For example, Frederic Putnam who ran the Department of Ethnology wrote in his "Introduction" to Oriental and Occidental, that the Egyptian *danse du ventre* was a national dance that was misunderstood by American viewers.^{xix}

At least two members of the Board of Lady Managers, Bertha Palmer, the Board's President, and Margaret Leech^{xx} and Director of Works, Daniel Burnham complained to Director-General Davis about dances. In fact, Leech labels them "vile, licentious foreign dances" (Broun, 226) and Burnham complains that they were "not in harmony with the tone of the exposition or the American code of morals" ("Trouble on the Midway" 2). The New York Times reported that a Chief Executive Order was issued to close the Persian Theatre on August 5th ("Trouble on the Midway 2), but the managers of the theater refused to comply.^{xxi} The dancing continued as the Commissioners discovered that the contracts with the Midway concessionaires only allowed them to "supervise the dress and apparel" (Trouble on the Midway 2) of the dancers.^{xxii} Since the objections were not based on the dancers' clothing, the Commissioners had no recourse.

Several writers of the time recorded an event that shows some Middle Eastern participants were not content with how their country was being represented.^{xxiii} Initially at the Persian Palace, a troupe of men performed athletic feats. Halligan notes that the men "failed to attract visitors in the numbers that were necessary to enrich the proprietors" (Halligan 308). Therefore, female dancers were brought in to perform. However, the Persian men threatened to stop working and close the Palace not because of the dancing per say, but as Moen-Ol Saltaneh in his Chicago Travel Memoir recalls, because they were French women pretending to be Persian (Akbarī and Khounani 16).^{xxiv} One of these dancers is mentioned by name. Belle Baya who had performed at the Paris Exposition of 1889 and who according to Prince Roland Bonaparte,^{xxv} attended the Paris Exposition was from Algiers. The result of the protests by the Persian men^{xxvi} led not the end of the dancing, but instead, as Halligan notes, were sent back home (Halligan 308).

Both the racial and gender narratives placed the Middle Eastern dancers into the lower and working class status, despite the fact that some of these dancers may have been members of the upper class at home.^{xxvii} This classism continued after the exposition, with *danse du ventre* along with its Americanized version, the hoochie koochie, becoming a part of the working class theater of the burlesque and vaudeville circuits. Since the elite and scientific community no longer supported and contextualized the dance as a "national" dance form, its sexualized and immoral components were sold as its primary features. The dance moved further away from its cultural contexts and developed a new identity in American popular culture.

Middle Eastern dancers at the early American expositions brought into American culture a marginal narrative of gender. Through, their movements, dances, clothing, femininity, and social behaviors they expressed in public a freedom and control over their bodies which upper class white American women did not "own" and had difficulty controlling. Since Middle Eastern dancers offered practices that were frequently out of line and offended upper class white American sensibility, 19th century dominant narratives of race, gender, class, and religion focused on the sexuality of these dancers and participated in the constructed of the stereotype – a hypersexual, low class belly dancer who performs for men and money. Some members of the upper class upheld the dance as presenting nothing socially wrong or as a national dance it should be respected or at least tolerated.^{xxviii} Yet other non-Middle Eastern Americans explored and adopted Middle Eastern dance to transform their personal identity and American society. For example, according to archive materials in the Midwest Dance Collection, Christina Olson, a twelve year old from Chicago, performed at the Turkish Theater. Today, Middle

Eastern dance's position in the United States is just as complex. Dominant narratives continue to ignore and/or put down lower and working class dance forms mainly because of the sexualized position of the dance. Some practitioners counter the lower class associated sexuality by claiming it is not an "authentic" characteristic, while others embrace the hypersexual as a way to counter dominant narratives.

Copyright 2011, Laura Osweiler

Laura Osweiler
PO Box 42016
Austin, TX 78704
Laura.Osweiler@gmail.com

End Notes

ⁱThe Egyptian, Ottoman Turkish, and Tunisian governments' exhibits in the Main Building displayed of building facades and numerous objects, such as textiles, furnishings, pottery, metalwork, and jewelry. In addition, the exhibition contained the Turkish and Tunisian cafés, an Algerian pavilion, a Moroccan villa, and Syria and Palestine bazaars.

ⁱⁱ Apparently, the directors and commissioners had no issues with the 2 male and boy dancers that also performed.

ⁱⁱⁱ In the White City, the Agriculture Building contained an exhibit from Egypt, the Women's Building exhibits from Algeria and Syria, and the Main Building exhibits from Egypt, Tunisia, and Turkey.

^{iv} There were Christians, Jews, and Muslims in the Midway. For example, James Shepp notes in Shepp's World's Fair Photographed that "A Street in Cairo" employed Coptics. Shepp, as do Hubert Howe Bancroft in The Book of the Fair and Benjamin Cummings Truman in History of the World's Fair also mention Muslims lived in Midway. Two photographs in Oriental and Occidental, Northern and Southern label dancers as Jewish (Oriental and Occidental "Rahlo Jammele (Jewish Dancing Girl)" and "Nazha Kassik (Jewish Dancing Girl)."

^v According to Eric Hooglund, in Crossing the Waters, between 1881 and 1914 there was an estimated 110,000 Arab immigrants to the United States (Hooglund, 3). Most of them were Christians from Mount Lebanon, in Syria; which at the time was a part of the Ottoman Empire.

^{vi} See "No More Midway Dancing. Three of the Egyptian Girls Fined \$50 Each" in The New York Times.

^{vii} The photographs do not show the dancers as part of the living exhibits. Instead, they pose in front of backdrops containing the pyramids and palm trees, a forest, an Orientalist room, and a plain background in a studio. In a few cases, the dancers stand in or outside the theater. The photographs offer insight into the dancers' outfits, props, and expressions.

^{viii} Male Middle Eastern dancers were presented as dangerous and violent. For example, sword and shield dances could be seen in the Persian Palace (Buel "Swordmen in a Mock Duel") and Turkish theater (Turkish Theatre Souvenir "The Swordsmen" and Chicago Times Portfolio of the Midway Types "Two Swordsmen of Damascus") and the Torture dance of the Assiaieu (Isawiyya)/Aissoire at the Algerian Theater (The Dream City "The Tall Algerian" and "The Algerian Theatre"). In the case of "Simon of Zeibek," the Turkish Theatre Souvenir notes that in Smyrna, because where they lived "there are many thieves and robbers, you will find them always prepared for battle" (Turkish Theatre Souvenir "Simon of Zeibek"). An exception to this can be read in the Turkish Theatre Souvenir's description of "The Gypsy Dancer of Syria" in

which it states, “they have great control over their muscles, and their dance must be seen to be appreciated... (Turkish Theatre Souvenir “The Gypsy Dancer of Syria”).

^{ix} Several male writers depict these dancers in positive terms. For example, The Dream City (The Dream City “The Algerian Theatre”) and Bancroft (Bancroft 877) describe the Algerian dancers’ costumes as loose and long, and therefore, added to the dancers’ decency. Buel also comments that the Algerians’ “movements were more graceful than were those of the Egyptian and Persian dancers, but there was a resemblance in the muscular exercise....” (Buel “An Algerian Girl”), while Oriental and Occidental, Northern and Southern calls Salina, an Algerian dancer, “one of the handsome women on that wonderful Street of Nations” (Oriental and Occidental “Salina, the Algerian ‘danse du ventre’”). Oriental and Occidental makes similar statements about the Jewish dancers at the Moorish Palace, “[u]nlike the Egyptian, Persian or Turkish dancers these Jewish girls moved with a willowy grace in dancing which to Western eyes, trained to the habit of admiring steps in which the feet and ankles play the prominent part, was most pleasing” (Oriental and Occidental “Rahlo Jammele (Jewish Dancing Girl).” Chicago Times Portfolio of the Midway Types and World’s Columbian both indicate that the Turkish dancer, Rosa, was “graceful” (Chicago Times Portfolio of the Midway Types “Rosa, The Turkish Dancer” and Trumbull White and W.M. Igleheart “Rosa, The Turkish Dancer). Jewell Halligan in Halligan’s Illustrated World’s Fair also saw that these Jewish dancers were “perhaps beautiful” and “modest” (Halligan 291).

^x The Portfolio of the Photographs of the World’s Fair describes the Persian dancers as presenting “flagrant vulgarity” (Portfolio of the Photographs of the World’s Fair, np). Halligan calls an Egyptian dancer in the photograph, “Preparing for the Danse du Ventre in the Street of Cairo Theater,” “fleshy and unlovely to the Caucasian eye” (Halligan 288).

^{xi} Howells notes that in A Traveller from Altruria the Turkish theater had scenery to represent “home-life and adventure in Mahomedan countries” (Howells 574). For descriptions of the theaters, see Portfolio of the Photographs of the World’s Fair, Oriental and Occidental, Bancroft, Shepp, and Truman.

^{xii} See Banks and North 688, Rand 215, and Buel np.

^{xiii} For examples see Portfolio of the Photographs of the World’s Fair and The Dream City.

^{xiv} Halligan reports that the Board of Lady Managers opposed Middle Eastern dancers’ performances and regarded them “as a public nuisance” (Halligan 288).

^{xv} See T. J. Boisseau’s “White Queens at the Chicago World’s Fair, 1893” and Jeanne Madeline Weimann’s The Fair Women for detailed discussions of the different types of turn-of-the-twentieth-century feminisms. Also see the Approved Official Minutes for primary examples.

^{xvi} Barker is quoted as saying in a Chicago Tribune’s article, “[t]hey are many, of them, not representatives of foreign nations, but women of Chicago, chosen to act those disgusting parts” (“Want Midway Dances Stopped” 1).

^{xvii} For example, The Dream City states, “[n]o ordinary Western woman looked on these performances with anything but horror, and at one time it was a matter of serious debate in the councils of the Exposition whether the customs of Cairo should be faithfully reproduced, or the morals of the public faithfully protected.” (The Dream City “A Dance in the Street of Cairo Theater”). Halligan makes a similar statement, “[b]ut it is said to the credit of American womanhood, that thousands of the well-balanced wives and mothers of the United States departed on the moment that this Oriental posture-dance began; and of those who tarried, probably all wished themselves away – so remarkable are the contrasts between Eastern and Western customs” (Halligan 289).

^{xviii} In a Chicago Tribune article, Mrs. James P. Eagle is quoted, “I have never found anything disgusting, but, on the contrary, much that was interesting and fascinating” (“Want Midway Dances Stopped” 1). In their Official Report, the only mention of this conversation was, “[a]t the

request of Mrs. Felton, the resolutions containing the action of the Board in this subject were read for information. (Mrs. Price, North Carolina, third Vice-President, in the chair.) On motion of Mrs. Felton, an informal discussion on the subject was participated in by Mesdames Barker, Felton, Shepard, [Mrs. Mary Cecil] Cantrill, [Mrs. Ralph] Trautmann, [Mrs. James P.] Eagle, [Mrs. Mary J.] Lockwood, Wise, and [Mrs. Edward L.] Barlett" (Approved Official Minutes, 3 Aug. 1893 159). Unfortunately, no more information was given about the conversation or their future actions.

^{xix} For example, Putman writes in the "Introduction" for Oriental and Occidental

Here in the playhouse of the street were gathered dancing women, and here was to be witnessed the national *dans du ventre* which not being understood was by many regarded as low and repulsive. What wonderful muscular movements did those dancers make, and how strange did this dance seem to us: but it is not probable that our waltz would seem equally strange to these dusky women of Egypt. What is a dance, is a question one was forced to ask after a trip through the Midway. Every nation had its own form. With some it was a rhythmic movement of the hands and arms; with others of the feet and legs; and with others of the body; some were ceremonial, others for amusement, according to national traditions and customs. (Putman "Introduction")

A New York Times article recorded a similar response from Secretary Edmonds of the Executive Department of the World's Fair to the National Association of Dancing Masters' objections to the dances. Edmonds writes that these dancers are "characteristic dances of Oriental nations," they are ethnological exhibits, and have been seen in several international expositions ("Cannot Stop Those Immoral Dances" 5).

^{xx} In a New York Times article, Palmer recounts, "I do remember, in a letter to the Board of Managers, saying that whatever was suggestive of immorality in dance exhibitions should be repressed" ("Mrs. Palmer Misrepresented").

^{xxi} According to a Chicago Tribune's article, Manager Debbas, Assistant Manager Bustang, and Mme. Akoun Benteny at the Persian Palace were told by Captain Morgan and Attorney Baldwin to stop the dancers' performances. Assistant Manager Bustang was outraged and is quoted to have said "[t]hey talk about the dances we have here as improper. I don't consider them half as bad as the high-kicking, the split, the serpentine, and shadow dances done by the girls in tights in the theater stages. They are the true native dances of Persia and the girls are always dressed in loose-fitting costumes instead of tights" ("Will be Like Cairo" 25).

^{xxii} In the New York Times' "Cannot Stop Those Immoral Dances," Secretary Edmonds comments that in the contract there is a clause which gives "the exposition to supervise the dress of the dance," had been added to the contracts out of a fear that the ethnological exhibits "might contain objectionable features." ("Cannot Stop Those Immoral Dances" 2).

^{xxiii} See Halligan, Mirza Mohammad Ali Moen-Ol Saltaneh, and The Dream City,

^{xxiv} Halligan and The Dream City also note that these dancers were Parisian and not Persian.

^{xxv} From Annegret Fauser's Musical Encounters at the 1889 Paris World's Fair.

^{xxvi} According to Halligan, on June 19, 1893, Abdallah Edglar tried to set a fire to the Persian palace.

^{xxvii} Karin van Nieuwkerk, 'A Trade Like any Other, Metin And, in "Dances of Anatolian Turkey," and Anthony Shay in Choreophobia, note that in Egypt, Turkey, and Persia, respectively, there were different classes of dancers.

^{xxviii} One could read them as being hired only for their profitability, and therefore, as having their "sexuality" exploited by exposition directors and Middle Eastern businessmen. The expositions could also be criticized for the fact that the dancers were only an example, and a minor at that, of women's roles in the Middle East.

Works Cited

- Akbari, Hamid and Azar Khounani. Iranians in Chicagoland. Charleston, SC: Arcadia, 2005.
- "An immoral Coffee-House. The Entertainment Furnished by a Turkish Proprietor – A Police Raid on the Establishment." New York Times. 16 Jun, 1876.
- And, Metin. "Dances of Anatolian Turkey." Dance Perspectives. 1959: 3-77.
- Approved Official Minutes of the Fifth Session of the Board of Lady Managers of the World's Columbian Commission. July 7 to August 12, 1893. Chicago: Rand, McNally & Co., 1893.
- Approved Official Minutes of the Fourth Session of the Board of Lady Managers of the World's Columbian Commission. April 26 to May 5, 1893. Chicago: Rand, McNally & Co., 1893.
- Approved Official Minutes of the Third Session of the Board of Lady Managers of the World's Columbian Commission. October, 1892. Chicago: Rand, McNally & Co., 1892.
- Bancroft, Hubert Howe. The Book of the Fair. Chicago, San Francisco: The Bancroft Company, 1893.
- Banks, Nancy Huston, Henry Davenport North, and Potter Palmer. The World's Fair as Seen in One Hundred Days. Philadelphia: Ariel Book Co., 1893.
- Broun, Heywood and Margeret Leech. Anthony Comstock, Roundsman of the Lord. New York: A.&C. Boni: 1927.
- Boisseau, T. J. "White Queens at the Chicago World's Fair, 1893: New Womanhood in the Service of Class, Race, and Nation." Gender & History. 12/1 (April 2000): 33–81.
- Buel, J.W. Magic City. St. Louis: Historical Publishing, 1894.
- "Cannot Stop Those Immoral Dances." New York Times. 2 Aug. 1893: 5.
- Chicago Times Portfolio of the Midway Types. The American Eng Co. 1895.
- Congress of Women Held in the Woman's Building, World's Columbian Exposition, Chicago, U.S.A., 1893 with Portraits, Biographies, and Addresses. Ed. Mary Kavanaugh Oldham Eagle. Official edition. Philadelphia: S. I. Bell, 1894.
- Jane Desmond. "Embodying Difference: Issues in Dance and Cultural Studies." Meaning in Motion. Ed. Jane Desmond. Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1997: 29-54.
- The Dream City: A Portfolio of Photographic Views of the World's Columbian Exposition with an Introduction by Halsey C. Ives. St. Louis, MO: Thompson Publishing Co., 1893-1894.
- "The Exhibition: Reopening of the Tunisian Café." New York Herald. 20 Jun. 1876: 2.
- Fausser, Annegret. Musical Encounters at the 1889 Paris World's Fair. Rochester, NY: University of Rochester Press, 2005.
- Halligan, Jewell N. Halligan's Illustrated World's Fair. A Portfolio of Photographic Views of the World's Columbian Exposition. Carefully Selected... The Illustrated World's Fair Publishing Co., 1894.
- Hooglund, Eric J. "Introduction." Crossing the Waters. Arabic-Speaking Immigrants to the United States Before 1940. Ed. Eric J. Hooglund Washington D.C.: Smithsonian Institute Press, 1987, 1-14.
- Howells, W. D. "A Traveller from Altruria." A World's Fair, 1893. United States?: J.B. Walker. The Cosmopolitan 15/5 (Sept., 1893): 517-640, 16/2 (Dec., 1893):133-256.
- Kraditor, Aileen S. The Ideas of the Woman Suffrage Movement, 1890-1920. New York: Columbia University Press, 1965.
- "Mrs. Palmer Misrepresented. She Did Not See the Midway Dance at the World's Fair" New York Times. 6 Dec. 1893.
- "The Midway Dance Stopped, but Only for a While." New York Times. 5 Dec. 1893.
- Nieuwkerk, Karin van. 'A Trade like any other.' Female Singers and Dancers in Egypt. Austin: University of Texas, 1995.

- "No More Midway Dancing. Three of the Egyptian Girls Fined \$50 Each" The New York Times. 7 Dec. 1893.
- Norton, Frank. A Facsimile of Frank Leslie's Illustrated Historical Register of the Centennial Exposition, 1876. New York: Paddington Press, 1974.
- Otterbein College Archives and Carol K. Cornell.
<http://www.bgsu.edu/departments/acs/1890s/chicagowfair/cario.html> Melinda Gilpin, American Culture Studies Computing for ACS Graduate Students, Spring 1997.
- "Odd Shows at the Fair: Theatrical Performances on the Midway Plaisance." New York Daily Tribune. 25 Jun. 1893: 17.
- Official Manual of the Board of Lady Managers of the World's Columbian Commission. The Minutes of the Board from the Date of its Organization, November 19, 1890, to the Close of its Second Session, September 9, 1891, Including the Act of Congress, and Information in Regard to the Action of the World's Columbian Commission and of the Chicago Directory of the Columbian Exposition. Chicago: Rand, McNally & Co., 1891.
- Olson, Christina. Papers. 1891-1918, Midwest Dance Collection, Miscellaneous, folder 3, Newberry Library.
- Oriental and Occidental, Northern and Southern: Portrait Types of the Midway Plaisance. St. Louis: N.D. Thompson, 1894.
- Portfolio of the Photographs of the World's Fair v. 4. Chicago: Werner, 1893-1894.
- Putnam, Frederic. "Introduction." Oriental and Occidental, Northern and Southern: Portrait Types of the Midway Plaisance. St. Louis: N.D. Thompson, 1894.
- Roach, Joseph. Cities of the Dead: Circum-Atlantic Performance. New York: Columbia University Press, 1996.
- Rydell, Robert W. All the World's a Fair. Visions of Empire at American International Expositions, 1876-1916. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1984.
- Shay, Anthony. Choreophobia: Solo improvised Dance in the Iranian World. Costa Mesa, CA: Mazda, 1999.
- Shepp, James W. Shepp's World's Fair Photographed. Being a Collection of Original Copyrighted Photographs Authorized and Permitted by the Management of the World's Columbian Exposition...All Described in Crisp and Beautiful Language. Chicago, Philadelphia: Globe Bible Publishing Co., 1893.
- "Snapshots" or World's Fair through a Camera. Photographs by F. Dundas Todd, Assisted by W.H. Shuey and R.C. McLean. Chicago: The Union News Company, 1893.
- Suleiman, Michael W. "Introduction: The Arab Immigrant Experience." Arabs in America. Building a New Future. Ed. Michael W. Suleiman. Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1999. 1-21
- "Trouble on the Midway. Persian Theatre Dances Interdicted - Failure of Several Concerns." Chicago Tribune. 6 Aug. 1893: 2.
- Truman, Benjamin Cummings. History of the World's Fair: Being a Complete Description of the Columbian Exposition from its Inception. Philadelphia: Mammoth Pub. Co., 1893.
- White, Trumbull and W.M. Igleheart. The World's Columbian Exposition, Chicago, 1893. World's Columbian Exposition Portfolio of Midway Types. 1893
- "Turkey's Exhibit in Order." The New York Times. 8 Jul. 1876: 2.
- Turkish Theatre Souvenir Program. Midway Plaisance. World's Fair. Pierre Antonius and Co. 1893?
- "Want Midway Dances Stopped. Lady Managers at the Fair Think They are Offensive." Chicago Tribune. 4 Aug 1893: 1.
- Weimann, Jeanne Madeline. The Fair Women. Chicago: Academy Chicago, 1981.
- "Will be Like Cairo." Chicago Tribune. 23 Apr. 1893: 25.

“Wonderful Place for Fun. What the Money Catchers Offer in the Midway Plaisance.” New York Times, 19 Jun. 1893.

“The World’s Fair. An Address Issued by the Board of Lady Managers.” The New York Times, 28 Dec. 1891.

Using a dance historian's approach as a guiding concept in stage direction

Ken Pierce

Longy School of Music

Abstract

Stage directors see in theatrical texts a basis for developing a personal or contemporary point of view that will lead to a novel production, ideally one that will appeal to today's audiences. Dance historians on the other hand seek to understand and reveal the point of view of dancers and choreographers long gone, and insofar as possible to recover the contexts of works created by others. These different approaches may be reconciled if the stage director can accept an historically informed approach as a valid point of departure, one that is true to the essence of the work in question.

Introduction

This is not so much a research paper as a polemic, written in delayed response to a stage director I once worked with, who, at our first production meeting, announced "I don't do archeology!" I offer it in the hope that it may lead to useful conversations between dance historians and stage directors.

Eilif's dance

Let's begin with a thought experiment. Bertolt Brecht's *Mother Courage and Her Children* is set during the Thirty Years' War. In scene two, there's a saber dance for Courage's son Eilif.¹ I'd like to suggest three possible approaches that we might take in choreographing Eilif's dance.

One approach would be to seek sources on dance and swordplay in Sweden and Poland ca. 1625, and base our choreography on them. If such sources prove too scarce, we might decide to look farther afield, to sources from Germany, France, Italy, England, and other regions of Europe. We might try to extrapolate from earlier or later sources; in a pinch, we could use passages from Arbeau's "Bouffons." We'd need to find suitable music, something Swedish or Polish if possible, otherwise perhaps a German galliard or secular song, or one of the many Italian pieces titled "la Battaglia," or perhaps something adapted from one of Monteverdi's madrigali guerrieri. We would of course see to it that Eilif had a proper costume for the period, and a sword of the right size, shape, and weight.

A second approach would be to forget history and focus on the present, seeking to make Brecht's epic relevant to today's audiences. Perhaps we could re-imagine Eilif as an inner-city youth swept up in a thirty-year conflict between rival gangs. He should probably have a gun instead of a sword, with his dance in hip-hop style to an aggressive rap number.

Either of these approaches is plausible, and either could lead to an engaging production, provided that the director and designers are in agreement with our concept for the piece. Audiences might enjoy either treatment: a hyper-accurate presentation of war in the

seventeenth century, or a metaphoric saga of survival in an age of gang violence and turf battles.

A third possible approach would be to attempt to make Eilif's dance as Brecht envisioned it, or as audiences saw it originally, or both; that is, to attempt a reconstruction, or at any rate a "historically informed" choreography. Such an approach is familiar from the realms of early music and early dance.²

Perhaps we would employ this approach for intellectual reasons or out of historical interest, seeking to learn how Brecht's ideas functioned in practice, or hoping to understand what his audiences valued, just as we might visit a museum to study Rubens's approach to narrative, or the effect of the Thirty Years' War on his subject matter. But we might well choose a historically informed approach for aesthetic reasons, believing in the artistic value—for us and for audiences, today—of presenting Brecht's play as he conceived it. We might even feel that this would be the way to experience it at its richest and most nuanced, and therefore at its most moving.³

Terminology—part I

I've outlined three possible approaches to Eilif's dance. The first aims for historical accuracy within the imagined timeframe of the play itself: since the play is set in the seventeenth century, the characters in it should dress, act, and dance in seventeenth-century manner. Let us call this the "archeological" approach.

The archeological approach to staging is a product of the nineteenth century. Stephen Orgel describes Charles Kemble's 1823 production of *King John* as "an originary moment for stage archeology."⁴ Kemble's designer used historical images—tomb effigies, seals, manuscript illumination—to ensure that each character would "appear in the precise habit of the period [that is, ca. 1200], the whole of the dresses and decorations being executed from indisputable authorities."⁵

The second approach avoids or displaces history, seeking to convey the essential story and meaning of the play in a staging adapted to contemporary tastes and circumstances. Let us call this the "unconstrained" approach. Of course there are always constraints: practical constraints of money, time, and energy; and less tangible constraints, for example of ego and experience. And the decisions involved in developing the piece will impose constraints—will, in fact, be decisions to choose one set of constraints over others. Still, in the initial phase this approach may offer moments when, as Peter Brook describes it, "all questions of style and convention explode."⁶

The third approach, for which I've already introduced the term "historically informed," attempts to recapture, insofar as possible, both the essence of the piece and its performance details as they might have been presented to earlier audiences. This is the approach that actor and stage director William Poel advocated and attempted to put into practice with his 1893 *Measure for Measure* and other productions.⁷ Poel criticized both the archeological approach and the unconstrained approach.⁸ He sought to "[revive] the masterpieces of the Elizabethan drama upon the stage for which they were written, so as to represent them as nearly as possible under the conditions existing at the time of their first production . . ."⁹

Notice that the historically informed approach says nothing about how history is to be represented within the piece. It is concerned with how the piece itself fits into history: how

it was presented, and where, and why. It is important to distinguish between a historically informed approach and an archeological approach.

Let me offer an example to illustrate the difference. Purcell's *Dido and Aeneas* is set in and around Carthage just after the fall of Troy. An archeological approach might involve research on clothing, sailing vessels, and hunting paraphernalia in ancient Troy and Carthage; a historically informed approach, on the other hand, would consider only how these might have been represented onstage in some earlier production, say at the end of the seventeenth century.

The three approaches I've outlined are not mutually exclusive. They deal with different aspects of a production: its internal representation of history; the concept or vision that guides choices about how it is presented; and relevant information about, and the context of, earlier productions. Thus we may find that approaches overlap: we might wish to mount a historically informed reconstruction of either an archeological production—say, Charles Kemble's *King John*—or an unconstrained production—say, Davenant's *Macbeth*, an operatic adaptation that included singing and dancing, as well as flying witches.¹⁰ An unconstrained production might employ a sort of pseudo-archeological approach, providing imaginary details about an earlier era, or a post-modern/archeological approach, mixing historical details from different eras.

On occasion, we also see productions that purport to be historically informed, but that through overactive stage direction teeter precariously toward unconstrained.

Drawbacks to an archeological approach

There are clear drawbacks to using an archeological approach, especially for a play like *King Lear* that has no fixed historical setting, or for pieces that are set in nonexistent or imagined locations like Bohemia-by-the-sea or Prospero's island. For a piece with set music (an opera or ballet, for example), an archeological approach will always be problematic if the music is from a different period than that of the work's historical setting. And there are likely to be problems that stem from the text as well: *Twelfth Night* is set in Illyria, yet Sir Andrew and Sir Toby talk boisterously of popular sixteenth-century English dances: galliards, corantos, jigs, and so on.

In some cases, an archeological approach—an attempt to show history “as it really was,” rather than as it was written in the piece—might be sufficiently problematic, or appear sufficiently arbitrary, to qualify as unconstrained.

Terminology—part II

Let me briefly mention a few other terms that are sometimes used in connection with approaches to staging or designing a production.

“Traditional” refers to performance practices that have supposedly been handed down unaltered from one generation to another; in a sense, traditional is the opposite of historically informed.

(In the fields of early music and early dance, and in the staging of baroque opera, we seem to have entered a period in which historically informed practice is increasingly treated as traditional: followers of earlier practitioners and researchers continue, and seek to maintain, practices put in place by their predecessors.¹¹)

“Authentic” is sometimes used with roughly the same meaning as “historically informed,” but it has disadvantages. On the one hand, it is readily dismissed as conceptually impossible.¹² On the other hand, “authenticity” is sometimes used in relation to an unconstrained approach, the goal of which is to uncover a work’s essentials.¹³

“Museum piece” has clear negative connotations, and might refer to an archeological, historically informed, or traditional production.¹⁴

The German term “Regietheater” refers to director-centered or concept-driven productions; that is, to a particular sort of unconstrained production. The inner-city *Mother Courage* I outlined earlier might be an example of regietheater, as would Jonathan Miller’s Mafia version of *Rigoletto* or Peter Sellars’s *Così fan Tutte* set in a roadside diner.¹⁵ “Euro-trash” is sometimes used, disparagingly, to mean approximately the same thing as regietheater.¹⁶

Brecht’s Models

Let us return to Eilif’s dance, for which I have outlined three possible approaches: archeological (applying research on early-seventeenth-century dance and swordplay); unconstrained (displacing the setting to a contemporary urban environment); and historically informed (seeking to choreograph and present the dance according to Brecht’s ideas and wishes). With the collective wisdom of SDHS at our disposal, we could certainly manage either the archeological or the unconstrained approach. Would a historically informed approach also be feasible? Would it be appropriate? The answer to both questions is yes.

Brecht provided extensive documentation about his productions of *Mother Courage* (Berlin, 1949, and Munich, 1950). In addition to the playscript (which Brecht had reworked following the 1941 Zurich production), Brecht prepared a separate volume of notes that included comments on general aspects of the production, scene-by-scene summaries of essential elements, and details or observations about specific characters or moments in the action. He also published a volume of photographs from these productions, showing stage groupings, scenic elements, and short sequences.¹⁷

The three volumes—script, notes, and photographs—comprise what Brecht refers to as a “model” for the play. The model was to be used, not as an exact blueprint, but as a starting point for a fully realized production. In his introduction to the model, Brecht explains “In studying what follows—a number of explanations and discoveries emerging from the rehearsal of a play—what matters is that seeing how certain problems are solved should lead one to see the problems themselves.”¹⁸

In his sets and costumes, Brecht paid attention to a general historical framework,¹⁹ but he did not favor an archeological approach. He writes, “The illusion created by the theatre must be a partial one, so that it can always be recognised as illusion.”²⁰ Theatrical designer Wolfgang Roth reports that Brecht at one point told him “Learn from History, but at the right moment throw it away. Don’t be hindered by historical accuracy.”²¹

Neither did Brecht favor an unconstrained approach. On the contrary, he believed that constraints such as those given in his models were an aid to creativity. Furthermore, he pointed out, “the free artists of the theatre are not in fact particularly free when you look closer. They are usually the last to be able to rid themselves of hundred-year old prejudices, conventions, complexes. Above all they are quite ignominiously dependent on

‘their’ public. They have to ‘hold its attention’; to ‘grip’ it at all costs”²²

Sources for Eilif’s dance

Eilif’s dance is performed in conjunction with a song that he sings, the “Song of the Wise Woman and the Soldiers.”²³ The song text appeared in Brecht’s first collection of poems, *Die Hauspostille* (1927);²⁴ in *Mother Courage* it was set to music by Paul Dessau.²⁵ The stage direction preceding the song reads “He sings it, dancing a war dance with his sabre.”²⁶

The *Courage* model offers this description of Eilif’s dance:

The brave son’s short sword dance must be executed with passion as well as ease. The young man is imitating a dance he has seen somewhere. It is not easy to make such things evident.²⁷

The model also includes five photographs showing the dance, one within the context of the scene and four more in closeup showing just Eilif.

Thus for Eilif’s dance we have roughly the same sort of information as we might have—or might wish we had—for dances in a play by Shakespeare or an opera by Lully: a brief description; a few images; a playscript or livret, possibly with stage directions; a cast list; and a general understanding of the dates, places, and circumstances of early performances. We have enough to be able to attempt a credible, historically informed version of Eilif’s dance.

The dance should not involve any recognizable material from Arbeau or other sixteenth- or seventeenth-century sources. It’s unlikely that either Brecht or the actor playing Eilif (Ernst Kahler in the photos, almost certainly) would have been familiar with renaissance dance or swordplay sources, so to use them would be to indulge in a sort of inverted anachronism. On the evidence of the photographs, neither should the dance be at all balletic.

What we notice especially in the photos is the energy in Eilif’s movements as he wields the sword, squats, or (apparently) runs in place, and the expression in his face. What is it: ferocity? Or maybe just desperation and fatigue? (Eilif has recently tricked and then butchered a group of peasants.)

There are two other potential sources for Eilif’s dance: eyewitnesses, and film or video. Just possibly, we might be able to find someone still alive who saw the dance in rehearsal or in performance, and who remembers it well enough to offer us a description or even show us some steps. And there is in fact a film of *Mother Courage*, released in 1961, with many of the same actors as in the original 1949 Berlin Ensemble production, and with Ekkehard Schall in the role of Eilif.²⁸ But remember that Brecht did not wish the model to be a blueprint.²⁹ This may explain why he did not include any film or audio recording as part of his models, whether for *Mother Courage* or for other productions. We might be closer to Brecht’s wishes, and to a historically informed production, if we choreographed the dance anew on the basis of Brecht’s model, rather than merely reproducing Ekkehard Schall’s dance from the film.

A suggestion for rapprochement between the unconstrained and the historically informed approaches

Brecht spoke in favor of models and the constraints they impose, but many directors today prefer an unconstrained approach. For some directors, even stage directions are too constraining.³⁰ In his book *Mis-Directing the Play*, Terry McCabe puts it succinctly: “Directors have been trained to think of a production as being about the director’s vision.”³¹

Praising Peter Brook’s 1970 production of *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*, McCabe writes, “the point is that inheritance is not as interesting as discovery.”³² Which is fine, and true; but can *rediscovery* also be interesting?

Paradoxically, an unconstrained approach imposes constraints: it obliges the audience to focus on some aspects of the work and neglect, or even forcibly deny, others. If it occurs to a director that Courage’s plight is not unlike that of some inner-city mothers today, the same thought would probably occur to audience members viewing a production based on Brecht’s model. The model allows audiences the freedom to make their own comparisons and to pass their own judgements on Mother Courage and on society. It also allows audiences to think of the play not only in relation to their own lives, but also in relation to its original audience’s lives.

In response to a question about the possible danger that a model might lead to routinization, with the resultant performance merely a copy, Brecht responded, “We must realize that copying is not so despicable as people think. It isn’t ‘the easy way out’. It is no disgrace, but an art. Or rather it needs to be developed into an art, to the point where there is no question of routine and rigidity.”³³ Elsewhere, Brecht said that models “are intended not to render thought unnecessary but to provoke it: not as a substitute for artistic creation but as its stimulus.”³⁴

I would suggest that sources for a historically informed approach—dance notations, musical scores, set designs, prompt books, cast lists, treatises, and other written and visual material—can together form a sort of model for a production, that can be used in the same manner, and for the same reasons, as Brecht’s models. Like them, the historically informed approach allows us a triple point of view: the timeframe and setting of the story itself, be it in Illyria, or Athens, or seventeenth-century Poland; the timeframe and setting of the original production, with the original audience’s own history and experience, whether in London, at Versailles, or in Berlin after a brutal and dehumanizing war; and the time, place, and background of the present performers and audience.

And I would like to propose some sleight of hand. If stage directors are reluctant to relinquish an unconstrained approach for a given piece, they have only to decide that their vision for a piece, their concept, and the idea that will most surprise and impress audiences, is to take a historically informed approach,³⁵ and to use the historically informed model to channel their creativity. Dance historians, meanwhile, can assure them that we don’t do archeology, either.

Copyright 2011, Ken Pierce

Acknowledgements

I am grateful to Darcey Callison and York University for their generous support in arranging the panel at which I presented this paper. I also wish to thank Wes Hazard and the other librarians at the O'Neill Media Center, Boston College, for their gracious help in arranging for me to view the video of *Mother Courage*.

Notes

1. This dance did not appear in the first version of the play, used for the 1941 production. The dance first appears in the 1946 revised version.
2. I'm stretching the terminology a bit for the sake of argument; "revival" might be the more usual term for a play that was first presented within living memory.
3. For an eloquent exposition of this argument, see Kelly, *Early Music*, especially Chapter 1.
4. Orgel, *Imagining Shakespeare*, 53.
5. Playbill for Kemble's 1823 *King John*, quoted in Orgel, *Imagining Shakespeare*, 53.
6. Brook, *The Open Door*, 74.
7. Poel's 1881 *Hamlet* was concerned with text reform only. The results were uneven. See Moore, "William Poel," especially 22–27.
8. Archeological: "When the poet-dramatist demanded that his actors should hold the mirror up to Nature, it was not the nature of the Greeks, nor of the Romans, nor of the early Britons that he meant. The spirit of the Italian Renaissance, with its humanism and intellectuality, had taken too strong a hold upon the imagination of Englishmen to allow of their playgoers being interested in the puppets of a bygone age. Shakespeare had no need to look beyond his own time to find his Lady Macbeth." Unconstrained: "Why should a Shakespeare, whose cunning hand divined the dramatic sequence of his story, have it improved by a modern playwright or actor-manager? The answer will be: Because the modern experts are familiar with theatrical effects of a kind Shakespeare never lived to see. But if a modern rearrangement of Shakespeare's plays is necessary to suit these theatrical effects, the question may well be discussed as to whether rearrangements with all their modern advantages are of more dramatic value than the perfect work of the master." Poel, *Shakespeare in the Theatre*, 63, 119.
9. Poel, *Shakespeare in the Theatre*, 203–204.
10. Downes, *Roscarius Anglicanus*, 33 and 209–210. For more on the songs and dances, see Stern, *Documents of performance*, 139, 149, and 151–152.
11. "[I]n earlier decades early-music performers prided themselves on discovering personally how early music worked. . . . The age of common exploration, however, is giving way to a system of teachers and students, the very system that was partly a cause of the early-music movement at its beginning." Kelly, *Early Music*, 114.
12. "Can we mount an authentic performance as Shakespeare would have seen it? No. Authenticity in the performing arts is ultimately impossible." Hall, *Shakespeare's Advice to the Players*, 10. (Hall then goes on to outline what I would consider a historically informed approach to delivering Shakespeare's texts.)
13. For example, we read of Stanislavsky's "search for theatre work with meaning and authenticity." Jones, *Great Directors*, 32.
14. Mark Bly, at the time the Dramaturg/Literary Manager of The Guthrie Theater, in an interview by David Moore, Jr.: "I would define 'archaeological production' as some naive attempt to recreate the way a play was originally staged. This leads to 'museum productions.' We do not encourage such work at the Guthrie." Note the confusion between archeological and historically informed. A bit later in the interview, Bly says "We must . . . stage classics so they're not mere museum pieces, but have meaning and immediacy for our audiences here and now." Cardullo, *What is dramaturgy?* 109 and 116.
15. These were unlike, e.g., *West Side Story*, which though based on *Romeo and Juliet* made no pretense of being a radical restaging of the work itself.
16. See, for example, "Taking Out The (Euro)Trash," in the online blog *Questa Voce*.
17. Brecht, *Couragemodell*. For a detailed inventory, see Jones, *Great Directors*, 78. Ruth Berlau took many of the photos and helped Brecht assemble the model. In a June 4, 1951 journal entry, Brecht wrote, "Working on Ruth's Model book is a grind, but it has to be done if only to show how many things have to be taken into account for a production." Willett, *Mother Courage*, 91. For a performance history, see Willett, *Mother Courage*, xxii.

18. Willett, *Brecht on theatre*, 216. "Bei dem Studium des Folgenden, einer Anzahl von Erörterungen und Erfindungen beim Proben eines Stücks, sollte man angesichts gewisser Lösungen von Problemen hauptsächlich der Probleme ansichtig werden." Brecht, *Couragemodell*, 2: 6.
19. He writes that the sets for *Mother Courage* were made of "such materials as one would expect to find in the military encampments of the seventeenth century: tenting, wooden posts lashed together with ropes, etc." Willett, *Mother Courage*, 93. "...die Materialien der Kriegslager des siebzehnten Jahrhunderts: Zeltleinwand, mit Stricken zusammengehaltene Holzbalken usw." Brecht, *Couragemodell*, 2: 7.
20. Willett, *Mother Courage*, 95. "Die Illusion des Theaters muß eine teilweise sein, so daß sie immer als Illusion erkannt werden kann." Brecht, *Couragemodell*, 2: 8.
21. Roth, "Working with Bertolt Brecht," 134.
22. Willett, *Brecht on theatre*, "Does Use of the Model Restrict the Artist's Freedom?" (a dialogue with E. A. Winds), 223.
23. "Das Lied vom Weib und dem Soldaten."
24. Willett, *Mother Courage*, 141; see also <http://www.antiwarsongs.org/>.
25. Evidently based on Hans Eissler's 1928 setting of the text. There is no score included in the *Couragemodell*.
26. "Er singt es, einem Kriegstanz mit dem Säbel tanzend."
27. Willett, *Mother Courage*, 106. "Der kleine wilde Säbeltanz des kühnen Sohns muß sowohl mit Feuer als auch mit Lässigkeit ausgeführt werden. Der junge Mensch ahmt einen Tanz nach, dem er irgendwo gesehen hat. Derlei ist nicht leicht herauszubringen." *Couragemodell*, 2: 20.
28. Atlas Forum, *Mutter Courage und ihre Kinder*. Ekkehard Schall (1930–2005) took over the role from Ernst Kahler (1914–1993) in 1952 (or possibly 1951).
29. Brecht wrote, "Such things as the cook's makeup or Mother Courage's costume should not be imitated. The model should not be used to excess." Willett, *Mother Courage*, 92. "Die Maske des Kochs, die Kleidung der Courage und derlei muß man nicht nachahmen. Man muß das Modell nicht zu sehr pressen." *Couragemodell*, 2: 5.
30. "[When S. J. Perelman and Ogden Nash] pointed out the stage directions already in their script, Kazan answered: 'That chicken shit? I never read that. What do you think my business is in being here? I'm the director; I have to think of the business. I never read that kind of thing!'" Cheryl Crawford, *One Naked Individual: My 50 Years in the Theatre* (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill, 1977), 129, cited in Jones, *Great Directors*, 183 (footnote 117).
31. McCabe, *Mis-directing the Play*, 75.
32. McCabe, *Mis-directing the Play*, 106.
33. Willett, *Brecht on theatre* (dialogue with E. A. Winds), 224.
34. Willett, *Brecht on theatre*, 216. "Sie sind auch nicht gemacht, das Denken zu ersparen, sondern es anzuregen: nicht gemacht, das künstlerische Schaffen zu ersetzen, sondern es zu erzwingen." *Couragemodell*, 2: 5.
35. Or at any rate a modified historically informed approach, since the very idea of having a stage director is counter to historically informed practice for works from before the 19th century.

References

- Antiwar Songs (AWS) – Ballade vom Weib und dem Soldaten*, online reference <http://www.antiwarsongs.org/canzone.php?lang=en&id=4691>, viewed Aug. 5, 2011.
- Atlas Forum. *Mutter Courage und ihre Kinder: die legendäre Bühnenfassung des "Berliner Ensembles."* Duisburg, West Germany: Atlas Forum 198-? [originally released Feb. 10, 1961].
- Brecht, Bertolt. *Modellbücher des Berliner Ensemble* (3 vols.: 1. Text 2. Anmerkungen 3. Szenenfotos der Aufführungen des Deutschen Theaters, des Berliner Ensemble und der Münchener Kammerspiele von Ruth Berlau, Hainer Hill und Ruth Wilhelmi). Berlin: Henschel, 1961 [cited as *Couragemodell*].
- Brook, Peter. *The Open Door: Thoughts on Acting and Theatre*. New York: Theatre Communications Group, Inc., 1995.
- Cardullo, Ben, ed. *What is Dramaturgy?* (American University Studies, Series XXVI, Theatre Arts; vol. 20). New York: Peter Lang Publishing, Inc., 1995.

- Cole, Toby and Helen Krich Chinoy, eds. *Directors and Directing: a Source Book of the Modern Theatre*. Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill Educational Publishing, 1976.
- Downes, John. *Roscius Anglicanus*, London, 1708.
- Hall, Peter. *Shakespeare's Advice to the Players*. New York: Theatre Communications Group, 2003.
- Jones, David Richard. *Great Directors at Work*. Berkeley, Los Angeles, London: University of California Press, 1986.
- Kelly, Thomas Forrest. *Early Music: A Very Short Introduction*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011.
- McCabe, Terry. *Mis-directing the Play: An argument against contemporary theatre*. Chicago: Ivan R. Dee, 2001.
- Moore, Edward M. "William Poel." *Shakespeare Quarterly* 23(1) (Winter, 1972): 21–36.
- Orgel, Stephen. *Imagining Shakespeare: A History of Texts and Visions*. Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire and New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2003.
- Poel, William. *Shakespeare in the Theatre*. New York: Benjamin Blom, 1968 (reissue of 1913 publication).
- Roth, Wolfgang. "Working with Bertolt Brecht," in *Brecht heute : Jahrbuch der Internationalen Brecht-Gesellschaft* (The Brecht Yearbook). Athenäum, 1972. [131]–135 [<http://digital.library.wisc.edu/1711.dl/German.BrechtYearbook002>, viewed Aug. 5, 2011].
- Stern, Tiffany. *Documents of performance in early modern England*. Cambridge, UK; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2009.
- The Radioactive Tenor [pseud.]. "Taking Out The (Euro)Trash," online blog *Questa Voce* (<http://questavoce.blogspot.com/>). December 1, 2009 [viewed Aug. 5, 2011].
- Willett, John, ed. and trans. *Brecht on theatre; the development of an aesthetic*. New York: Hill and Wang, [1964].
- Willett, John, trans. *Mother Courage and her children*, by Bertolt Brecht; John Willett and Ralph Manheim, (eds.). New York: Penguin Books, 2007.

Address for correspondence:

Ken Pierce
 Longy School of Music
 1 Follen Street
 Cambridge, MA 02139
kpierce@mit.edu

Music as Dramaturgy for Dance

Sophia Preston

University of Ulster

Abstract

Mark Morris doesn't use a dramaturg; he doesn't need to, because he works so closely with complete music scores with their own pre-set and sophisticated structures. He also does his own research into the origins, associations and external references brought by the music. For example, in Grand Duo (1993) Morris employs both internal structures and external associations of Harrison's Grand Duo for Violin and Piano to construct a dramaturgy that is at once intriguing (because ambiguous) and satisfyingly coherent.

Akram Khan has worked with a dramaturg for all but one of the contemporary dance pieces he has made in the last six years. However, the majority of reviews of his latest work Vertical Road (2010) were in agreement that the powerful and evocative choreography was rendered unclear by an incoherent structure. Mackrell (2010 n.p.) went so far as to say: "the credited dramaturg, hasn't been doing her job."

A comparison of Grand Duo and Vertical Road reveals certain similarities between the two works, including at times an exact matching of dance and music reminiscent of Khan's other professional dance form, Kathak. There are also a number of differences, however, including that Harrison's music was an existing concert work whereas Sawhney's score was written in collaboration with Khan and his creative team. My contention is that Sawhney's music was too accommodating, that it requires a certain independence of structure and intention, perhaps an element of counterpoint and even "counter-pull", for music to act as a support for the dramaturgy of dance.

When I saw the premiere of Akram Khan's *Vertical Road* at Sadler's Wells Theatre in 2010, I was thrilled and impressed and moved. I was thrilled to see such vibrant, complex, innovative movement, executed with an impressive combination of superb technique and absolute commitment that occasionally seemed to take the central figure, Salah El Brogy, into an almost ecstatic, trance-like state. There was something profoundly, but mysteriously, moving in El Brogy's performance in particular, but also in all the movement, costumes, lighting, setting and sound. I had only briefly looked at the programme before the dance started and read the Rumi poem printed there – about dying in order to progress to a higher state of being – and had noted that the piece was due to last approximately 70 minutes without intermission.

Somewhat to my own surprise, after about 40 minutes I was looking at my watch, thinking: "how much longer is this going on?" I immediately realised that if people could see me and/or read my mind they would think I wasn't enjoying the piece, when in fact I was, greatly. I just felt that a lot had happened already and surely therefore a good part of the hour must have passed and yet there was no sign of getting to a denouement and I wondered how long Khan had left to bring the piece to a conclusion. I was, genuinely, pleased to see that there was a good half-hour left and looked forward, intrigued, to more beautiful dancing.

There were more compelling images and movements, which were clearly meant to mean something including an inventive male-female duet which ended with a woman

being lifted on a man's shoulders and reaching up into the light. I could see that she was travelling in a vertical path and I found myself thinking: "When I get home I really must read some of these Sufi writings Khan refers to in the programme. I wonder what they have to say about the impact of earthly love and passion on the progress of the soul to a higher state." By the end of the work, I was berating myself for my lack of preparation for the piece since I was mystified (while also being moved) by what was happening. The music was telling me that something portentous was happening and I had pretty much assumed that the enormous translucent screen which had produced such wonderful expanding circles of ripples at the beginning and which now, magically, had water running down it, was representing the boundary between life and death.

Since El Brogy had started on his own behind the screen and was now left in front of it with the others apparently behind, but with hands touching either side of the screen, I couldn't work out who, if anyone, had died and who had maybe attained a higher state of being. On the bus home I wondered why I was troubled by not being able to make literal, narrative sense of the piece. After all, I came to dance from music; in the 1980s. I love abstract work. It really did feel, though, what with the title, the programme notes and the music setting very different scenes throughout the piece, that we were supposed to be getting some more or less explicit message.

When I read the reviews the next day I found that I was not alone. Like me, all the national-paper reviewers were impressed by the piece. Luke Jennings (2010 n.p.) described the choreography as being "at once exquisite and thrilling" and Bruce Marriott (2010 n.p.) talked of the "gorgeous and distinctive visual imagery." Zoe Anderson (2010 n.p.) wrote that "the dancing ranges from silky delicacy to ecstatic wrestlings" but she added that she found the piece "too long, dawdling as it moves from one sequence to the next" (Anderson 2010 n.p.). Marriott said: "My only quibble is that as a work I'm not sure it develops and takes me from a start to an end" while Jennings (2010 n.p.) wrote:

There's a loss of focus two-thirds of the way through, at which point the narrative thread begins to fray and the metaphors become unreadable. I was lost by the end.

Judith Mackrell was more specific in both her praise and her blame. She wrote (2010 n.p.) that *Vertical Road* "styled with the elemental beauty of Japanese butoh, looks spectacular" but went on:

There comes a point halfway through when we start to need clearer signposts to follow the direction of Khan's ideas ... The sense of large ideas being grappled with but never resolved becomes increasingly distracting. As the choreography evolves through a love duet and a tai chi combat dance, it's harder to hold on to the ideas around El Brogy's voyage of reconnection, or the duality between body and spirit. Ruth Little, the credited dramaturg, hasn't been doing her job.

This of course raises the question: "what is a dramaturg's job?" Turner and Behrndt introduce their 2008 book on the subject by saying: "The 'dramaturgy' of a play or performance could also be described as its 'composition', 'structure' or 'fabric'" and go on to say that the work of a dramaturg involves "an engagement with the actual practical process of structuring the work, combined with the reflective analysis that accompanies such a process." (Turner and Behrndt, 2008 p3) They also cite Adam Versényi proposing that "'dramaturgy' be defined as 'the architecture of the theatrical event, involved in the

confluence of components in a work and how they are constructed to generate meaning for the audience” (Versényi cited in Turner and Behrndt 2008, p18). It would appear that in *Vertical Road* there was neither a coherent structure nor a clear meaning for the audience. As Mackrell succinctly put it:

It matters a lot that in the final image, when ... the dancers pass back through the ... screen, leaving one man alone on stage, we have no idea whether the latter is stranded or saved. It's a frustrating way to end a piece that starts out on such magisterial form.

(Mackrell 2010 n.p.)

I would like to say here that I am not blaming Ruth Little. It is impossible to tell what power or influence she would have had in the creative process or even what type of dramaturg she was. Luckhurst (2006) in her chapter “Dramaturgy and literary management in England today” separates out the roles of development dramaturg and production dramaturg and it is becoming clear that the role that wasn’t filled here was that of a production dramaturg. Writing about production dramaturgs, Turner and Behrndt propose that

if ‘dramaturgy’ is a term that suggests a concern with making connections and linking ideas within a larger structure, the dramaturg can seem to be a connecting force, involved in the process of finding cohesion in the artistic work.

(Turner and Behrndt 2008 p170)

Turner and Behrndt are here considering specifically the role of a production dramaturg in a theatre work that has been devised. Their description of the structural implications, in particular, is reminiscent of many an act of choreography. They say: “Devising is a process in which form and content may be shaped and generated simultaneously: thus, the deviser searches for structural parameters *while at the same time* creating new material” (Turner and Behrndt 2008 p170) [their italics]. My suggestion, here, is that, while this description is strongly reminiscent of many a choreographic process, there are those choreographers who work very closely with pre-existing pieces of music (both structurally and intertextually) and are thereby provided with both structure and a wealth of contextual information to help them shape the dramaturgy of the dance.

In order to illustrate what I mean I could have chosen any work by Mark Morris (except *Behemoth* which is performed in silence) since he almost always works with pre-existing (rather than commissioned) music and always works with music that has its own complete structure, independent of the dance he “makes up” to it. I chose *Grand Duo* (1993) partly because I had recently seen it performed live in the same theatre, but mostly because there are some similarities between *Grand Duo* and *Vertical Road*. Both works seem on first viewing to be dealing with some kind of ancient or primeval group or tribe going through some sort of ritual. Also, in both cases the music was written by a composer who was by way of being a personal friend of the choreographer. In the case of *Grand Duo* this is Lou Harrison, a contemporary and friend of John Cage and, like Cage, a pupil of that grandfather of avant-garde music, Henry Cowell.

A generation younger than Harrison, Morris has always loved the older man’s music, saying: “All of Lou’s music is exquisite. I think he was a brilliant, great composer,” (cited in Khadarina, 2007 n.p.) and he cites Harrison and Handel as being the two

composers who have meant most to him and who made a big difference in his work (Morris 2007a). Morris says that Harrison's lesson for him was: "music and dancing belonging together... being part of the same thing – which was always part of the world of opera and for me always a part of dancing" (Morris 2007a n.p.). In a video made in the same year, Morris joked: "I could be accused of *Music Visualization* – like that's a crime or something!" (2007b n.p.) and it is worth noting that Lou Harrison first started to make music for dance in the time and place of the development of Denishawn's *Music Visualization* (1930s West Coast America).

Harrison even decided, in this early work with dance, that "if you work with dancers you must learn to dance" (Miller and Lieberman 2004 p83) and he became a skilled dancer himself, good enough to join in on a few performances. He learned Labanotation so that he could make a record for himself of pieces in rehearsal when he was commissioned to write music for them. Miller and Lieberman (2004 p80) learned from the dancers that he worked with, that "Harrison would watch the dance, note the "counts," then create a musical counterpoint to the visual elements." Note, though, that it is a counterpoint. Merce Cunningham, who saw the resultant work in the early 1930s, described it in the following way:

The music was there with the dance, but it didn't get in the way. It was as though the two arts existed at the same time, in the way that much oriental dance and music does. They go together as though they are one entity, neither as separate identities (as with John Cage and myself) nor as one supporting the other – just two activities taking place at the same time.

(Cunningham cited in Miller and Lieberman 2004 p82)

Cunningham's reaction is to music that Harrison wrote for dance, closely collaborating with the choreographers and dancers by attending rehearsals in much the same way as Khan tells us Sawhney has collaborated in his work. Khan says:

Nitin Sawhney's music has been integral, and more than Nitin's music I think he has been integral and that's what collaboration is for me. It's not about just their artistry it's also very much about ... the artist – so their contribution and the way they think is very important. [Nitin] created a lot of the music beforehand and during [the rehearsal process], and he's come to see a lot of the scenes and he's wanting to change stuff which is great because he needs to think about it and to be involved and I need to change stuff and often we have a conversation about what he felt that I was doing and what he got from what I showed him and you know he's very blatantly direct but at the same time with such grace, so it was wonderful to have him this week.

(Khan 2010 n.p.)

This could almost be describing Harrison's work with early C20 choreographers but a letter from Harrison to his old teacher and friend Henry Cowell (undated but clearly from Harrison's sojourn in New York in the mid-1940s) includes the passage:

[The critic] Frank Bleck imagines that the *Trojan Women Prelude* is for dance and feels it needs it. I never imagined this damned dance-curse I have would pop up in New York! The work has nothing to do with dance. This is one reason I am giving up dancers – critics and musicians are trying to make a new Delibes of me! ... [I] am going to try to give a concert this year

made of piano and percussion pieces of my own and try to force people to listen without dance!

(Harrison undated n.p.)

The music for *Grand Duo* was written as a concert piece – the *Grand Duo for violin and piano* (1988) – and is perfectly possible to listen to without dance. In fact it is unusual in Morris's oeuvre in that he originally made up a dance to just the final movement of the music, the Polka. As Miller and Lieberman record (2004 pp 98-99):

premiered on April 7 1992...the polka presented the entire company in five minutes of frenzy. The dance became one of Morris's biggest hits. The following year he uncharacteristically choreographed backward, setting the rest of the *Duo* except for the long slow fourth movement. "That made 'Polka' more desperate and exhausted" an effect he had intended but found impossible to achieve without dramatic preparation.

This removal of the penultimate movement of the music (a long, slow waltz) might seem to undermine my entire proposition, but there are three reasons why I contend that this is not the case:

- 1) It is a very unusual thing for Morris to do, and he did it with all the experience of structuring dances that he had built up over some twenty years of work;
- 2) Morris was still working with, and in counterpoint to, the detailed internal structures of each of the four movements of the music that he did use
- 3) Morris told me that while Harrison understood why Morris had made this decision "he sort of never really forgave me for that. So when I did *Rhymes with Silver* that's why he dumped the kit in my hands. He says: "Here, here's some music for you – you assemble it yourself because you changed something I did. You put it together. I'm busy." Really. It was fabulous. I was so mad at him. It was great though and so I did."

(Morris 2011 n.p.)

There are no handy reviews stating that Morris's dance to *Grand Duo* does have a cohesion and coherence. There are, however, reviews from London, Edinburgh, Tel Aviv and Washington, all calling the work a masterpiece and Jennings (2009 n.p.) goes so far as to describe it as "Morris's *Rite of Spring*" saying that

it has the same air of preordained ritual, the same sense of inexorable tribal impulse, the same circular pounding out of hallowed ground. In the place of dread, however, is a fierce collective joy and a unifying of the company's diverse strands.

Such words as "pre-ordained", "inexorable" and "unifying" all suggest that the work has a coherence and a physical, as well as a theatrical, logic. Lyndsey Winship (2001 n.p.) concurs in a way that describes a successful dramaturgy, writing:

Grand Duo is Morris at his best, and feels like everything dance should be. There is a connection and immediacy which underlines the power of live dance, and a balance – between steps, between dancers and between the choreography and the music – which seals the work complete.

In terms of how the music and dance of *Grand Duo* work together, Miller and Lieberman again bring up the term Music Visualization:

Morris, like Lou, is unafraid to violate taboos, in this case "music visualization". In the second movement of the *Duo* for instance, the troupe blatantly mimics the

irregular accents in the music with angular jabs directly correlated with the piano's dissonant tone clusters. Morris taught his dancers to memorize the score to achieve aural-visual coordination. The score contains a varied repeat: a thirty-measure passage expands to thirty-three on its return. The dancers learned to sing the score during rehearsals to precisely coordinate their timing and spacing.

(Miller and Lieberman 2004 p99)

This is common practice for Morris. His dancers can sing through entire works they are dancing such as Purcell's *Dido and Aeneas* and Handel's *L'Allegro, il moderato ed il penseroso*. As Morris says "you wouldn't want to hear it" but they are following a tradition that (from very different starting points) both he and Khan feel closely aligned to – one where the dance and the music work as one.

When asked to talk about how closely he works with music Morris has replied: I'm a big, big fan of classical...Indian dance and music – specifically South Indian Carnatic music, which I love ... It wouldn't occur to you to dance a rhythm that's against the one that you're listening to, that you're drumming ... It's like: "of course when it goes up, you go up, when it goes down, you go down." When you're addressing someone here [gestures diagonally right] on this angle, you speak, and you respond this way [diagonally left]: you're playing both characters ... It's like "Can't I dance on the beat? I love to; it's my favourite thing!"

(Morris 2007/8 n.p.)

It is particularly interesting that Morris cites South-Indian music and dance, here, since both Khan and Sawhney are British-Asian artists who draw a lot on Kathak dance, in which Khan is a gifted performer. I understand that both Khan and Sawhney were performing their work *Confluence* here in Toronto a few weeks ago. *Confluence* is by way of being a retrospective of the Akram Khan Company works involving Nitin Sawhney and it reveals the close matching of dance and music Morris is referring to.

Despite these strong links between Morris and Khan, deriving from similar experiences with South-Indian dance and music, the big difference in how they integrate dance and music is that while Morris almost always works with existing and completely, independently, structured music, Khan always works with the composer (usually Sawhney) working alongside him in close collaboration.

Sawhney is a highly eclectic composer who has not only created eight studio albums and a number of orchestral concert pieces but has also written scores for over 40 films, many TV programmes and adverts and, more recently, has provided the music for video games. Most of us are familiar with the ability of film scores to enhance and amplify the mood and qualities of any given scene – or indeed to change with fleeting emotions. Writing about what is tellingly called the "mash-up" of components of a video-game, however, Clapperton points out that:

The challenges of writing a game score are quite distinct from those of creating a movie soundtrack. In a movie...the story is linear, and the creators can structure their efforts in a particular direction. In gameplay, though, the lead character might be killed at any moment; there can be unexpected changes of scene and atmosphere... For Sawhney, writing the music was less like composing than walking through a tree diagram. "You have to create small sequences of music

for each possibility [within the game]," he says, "and you have to make sure, in terms of key and modulation and so on that they're compatible, so you can stop at any point and cross over to another scene."

(Clapperton 2008 n.p.)

It's clear from watching *Vertical Road* that the music similarly corresponds to the different episodes or scenes of the dance and in a number of cases holds an ostinato until a particular movement by one or more dancers cues a change. The music is thus far from providing any independent structure which could add coherence and cohesion to the dance.

Turner and Behrndt (2008 p170) contend that, in devised theatre many (perhaps most) companies do use some form of script, verbal text or score, sometimes as a starting point, sometimes introducing it at a point during the process. Sometimes just a few elements, such as key exchanges or speeches will be scripted. Devising is therefore not a fixed style. However, we could suggest that devising implies that the dramaturgy of the work is not defined before the work commences.

Mark Morris frequently choreographs with an actual score (a music score) in his hand. Since he also often spends many years listening to and researching widely around the music, he is able to utilise both the structure and the context of the music he is working with. Morris's works thus do have something of a dramaturgy before they start. The Akram Khan company projects, on the other hand, evolve through months of rehearsal process with input at different points from a large creative team including not only a dramaturg but also a researcher, a rehearsal director and the dancers who are credited with devising the material for *Vertical Road*. There is also a large input from the company's producer Farooq Chaudry who was himself a professional dancer and who is credited by Khan as having an important and fundamental input to both the starting points and development of each project.

It could possibly be the case that *Vertical Road* simply has the problem of being a piece "created by a committee" with perhaps too many collaborators contributing to the creative process. Whether this was the case or not, it seems that no-one fulfilled the role of the "outside eye" of a dramaturg (Turner and Behrndt 2008 p100), what Hiss (cited in Cattaneo 1997 p6) calls "someone who keeps the whole in mind" and who was thereby able to keep the creative team in touch with whether or not the piece was "holding together" or "coherent" to a first-time viewer. What I am suggesting here is that it is feasible for this role to be, in effect, taken on by the music for dance, if it has a strong enough dramaturgy of its own and if that dramaturgy is dealt with and reacted to in a way that allows it to support the dramaturgy of the dance.

Copyright 2011. Sophia Preston

Bibliography

Anderson, Zoe 'Akram Khan Dance Company Sadlers Wells' review in *The Independent* Monday October 11th 2010 at <http://www.independent.co.uk/arts-entertainment/theatre-dance/reviews/akram-khan-company-sadlers-wells-london-2103078.html> last accessed on July 26th 2011 no pagination

- Cattaneo, Anne 'Dramaturgy: An Overview' in Jonas, Proehl & Lupus (eds) *Dramaturgy in American Theatre: A source book* New York: Harcourt Brace, 1997 pp3-15
- Clapperton, Guy 'Get ready for a mash-up' in *The Guardian* Friday February 15th 2008 n.p.
- Harrison, Lou Unpublished, undated letter to Henry Cowell in the Henry Cowell collection, NYPL Music section Lincoln Centre, New York no pagination
- Jennings, Luke Mark Morris Dance Group review *The Observer* November 1st 2009 no pagination
- Jennings, Luke 'Akram Khan Company: Vertical Road' *The Observer* September 19th 2010 no pagination
- Jonas, Susan, Geoff Proehl and Michael Lupu (eds) *Dramaturgy in American Theatre: A source book* New York: Harcourt Brace, 1997
- Khadarina, Oksana 'Mark Morris Dance Group: *The Argument, Sang-Froid, Candleflowerdance, Grand Duo*' review in *Ballet magazine* March 2007
- Khan, Akram 'Vertical Road rehearsals at the Curve Week 2 - part 2' 2010 at <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Sm0wsdZS-ac&feature=related> last accessed on June 15th 2011 no pagination
- Luckhurst, Mary *Dramaturgy: a revolution in theatre* Cambridge, New York, Melbourne, Madrid, Cape Town, Singapore, Sao Paulo: Cambridge University Press 2008
- Mackrell, Judith 'Akram Khan Company' *The Guardian* 17 September 2010 no pagination
- Marriott, Bruce 'Akram Khan Company Vertical Road October 2010 Sadler's Wells' *Ballet Magazine* November 2010 no pagination
- Miller, Leta, E. & Fredric Lieberman *Composing a world: Lou Harrison, musical wayfarer* Oxford University Press, 1998, 2004
- Morris, Mark Interview with Charlie Rose and James Levine 'Charlie Rose Show' 2007a available on MMDG website <http://markmorrisdancegroup.org/resources/media/3-interviews/5-charlie-rose-show> last accessed July 21 2011 no pagination
- Morris, Mark Talking and rehearsing on 'Notes for a Dancer' Youtube video <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=S25Ud7ZWu7I&feature=related> 2007b last accessed on July 21st 2011 no pagination
- Morris, Mark Interview with Gigi Yellen for *On the Boards, Seattle* 2007/8 <http://markmorrisdancegroup.org/resources/media/3-interviews> last accessed on 4 May 2010
- Morris, Mark Interview with Sophia Preston at the Mark Morris Dance Center Brooklyn N.Y. March 14th 2011 no pagination
- Turner, Cathy and Synne K. Behrndt *dramaturgy and performance* Palgrave Macmillan London and New York: 2008
- Winship, Lyndsey Mark Morris Dance Group: *Grand Duo, I Don't Want to Love, V, Peccadillos* review October 21, 2010 - Sadler's Wells, London no pagination

Address for correspondence

University of Ulster, Magee
Northland Road
Derry / Londonderry
Northern Ireland BT48 7JL
sl.preston@ulster.ac.uk

Dancing Between The Lines: “Teaching” Interpretation In A Post-Secondary Setting

Andrea Roberts
MA York University

Abstract

This paper will examine the function of rehearsal direction / dance dramaturgy in the context of a post-secondary dance conservatory program. Over the course of a decade, the author has been involved in creation scenarios with more than twenty professional choreographers who have made or remounted pieces on high-level students. A rehearsal director facilitates the transferring of ideas between the choreographer and the dancers, acting as both aide and guide. It is a unique situation to be in a process with dancers who would not necessarily have been hired by a particular choreographer, and to be required still to find paths for the comprehension and realization of a vision. The paper will present the author’s observations, experiences and insights with regard to the “teaching” of interpretation. The paper will look at the specific challenges of doing this work in a school setting, and will focus mainly on issues of intention, negotiation and translation. Walter Benjamin’s notion of “transmitting the essential” is of particular interest in light of the failure (albeit poetic) implicit in working with dancers who are still developing their interpretive skills and aesthetic senses. The author’s interest in a variety of theoretical avenues and artistic disciplines will colour this presentation, just as those same investigations have injected themselves into her studio practice.

I am rehearsal director. I found my way into this work when I was still a student in the Professional Training Program at The School of Toronto Dance Theatre. It started because I was the one dancer who always knew the counts, could retain details in my head, and knew how to work the technical equipment in the studio. What I have just described is the most basic, banal, and common understanding of this job. However, in the rehearsal processes I have found highly satisfying, rehearsal direction organically encompasses elements of dance dramaturgy, as creative minds gather in a studio and collaborate in order to bring physical life to an idea. A rehearsal director facilitates the transferring of ideas between the choreographer and the dancers, acting as both aide and guide. Usually when people outside of dance ask me to explain my studio work, I refer to both theatre and sport, describing it as a cross between directing and coaching. The rehearsal director is in a unique position — an informed ‘other’ who is both inside and outside the dance.

For more than a decade, this kind of work has comprised the bulk of my own artistic activity, and about eighty percent of it has been in a post-secondary dance conservatory setting. As a faculty member at my alma mater, I have been involved in creation scenarios with more than twenty professional choreographers who have made or remounted pieces on aspiring performers. Here I will concentrate on the process for new,

rather than set, works. This paper will examine the pedagogical function of engaging in a complex relationship with artists on opposite ends of the spectrum of experience. Having trained in different generations, it is not uncommon for choreographers to have value systems, assumptions and working methods that conflict with those of the students. I will present my own observations, experiences, frustrations, and insights with regard to the “teaching” of interpretation, and I will focus mainly on the notions of intention, translation, and negotiation.

For the purpose of this themed conference, I looked into the definition and function of dramaturgy in the context of what I do, and more specifically, where it is that I do it. An article entitled “Dance Dramaturgy: speculations and reflections,” published in the April 2000 issue of *Dance Theatre Journal*, proved most enlightening. Hailing from the period when this term came into popular usage in “modern” concert dance, the article is compiled from transcripts of both staged and informal conversations, as well as email correspondence, between the editor and several dramaturges and academics working in Europe. The views in the dialogue include those of André Lepecki, Hildegard de Vuyst, and Heidi Gilpi, who have worked with Meg Stuart, Alain Platel and William Forsythe, respectively. Walter Benjamin’s notion of “transmitting the essential” (found in his essay “The Task of the Translator”) is also of particular interest in light of the poetic failures and astounding epiphanies that are implicit and constant when working with dancers who are still developing their interpretive skills and aesthetic senses.

In spite of my interest in reading, this is mostly a practice-based research paper. I appreciate that this conference celebrates and encourages us to struggle towards an understanding of this relatively young field of dance dramaturgy. I realized the other day that in an effort to define my role, I stumbled into a self-reflexive revelation. For me, rehearsal direction as dance dramaturgy is exactly this — a *practice-based research* towards excavation and comprehension of a work as it is brought forth into the world. Just last week choreographer Akram Khan and composer Nitin Sawhney reminded us here in Toronto (in performances of *Confluence*) about the philosophy that all works of art already exist in the world. Our job as creators, as performers, as coaches, as directors, as dramaturges, as artists, and as scholars... is to discover and recognize what passes before us, and then shape, frame, and breathe it to life.

Rehearsal directing in a training situation presents some very specific challenges (and rewards). From an artistic perspective, the rehearsal director is a resource for the choreographer, and may be asked to fulfill various roles (including notator, mirror, memory-keeper, sounding board, technical support, researcher, outside eye, and casting assistant). Depending on schedules, a choreographer at my school may work (only) every day for two weeks, or spread out over a few months. I am often called in so that I may take over until the show after a choreographer leaves town, but there are also certain people who just need another set of eyes and ears in the room.

Casting proves to be one of the most complex puzzles we face. Although there is no mandate to distribute roles evenly, the training philosophy at my School requires that all students be given a chance to perform. This is open to interpretation — pieces may be double cast, or choreographers can give varying amounts of material and highlight the dancers who are most interesting to them. Most of the time, choreographers are not given a choice of which students they will use, or they are given a pool from which to cast their work. All of these scenarios can be at odds with the desires of an established

choreographer who comes into the room with definite aesthetic preferences or overly high expectations. It is a different sort of process to work with developing dancers who may or may not have been chosen for a piece in an audition situation. Factors such as timing, pressure, and assigned dancers may be seen as imposed dramaturgical influence as they directly affect the direction and scope of the resulting choreography.

André Lepicki points out that “The dancers in most contemporary works today have to produce the material, to think about the scenes, they have to choreograph themselves. So, it ends up that the dancers are also making dramaturgical decisions in a way. They're making the choreographic decisions and they come up with ideas to solve the scenes sometimes.” This complicated concept is further confounded by the pedagogical nature and purpose of a creation process in the training situation. With the exception of some emerging choreographers, there is usually a notable difference in skill level and sensibility between the dance-maker and the student interpreters. There tends to be at least one dancer who has no aptitude for a particular style; who doesn't understand what is being asked or cannot accomplish the tasks set out by the choreographer, be they technical or dramatic. We also run into challenges with generation and cultural gaps, especially when asking dancers to incorporate certain references (ie, allusions to a television show that was popular before they were born, or before they arrived in Canada) or new styles of moving.

Student dancers tend to need a lot of coaching in order to reach a level of interpretation that is ready for the stage. At the outset of a process, material is created out of improvisations or set phrases are taught. I sometimes get up and move with the dancers if the vocabulary is quirky and I know the only way to understand it will be to get it in my body. However, the most important thing I have learned is to watch — closely and specifically. Do the choreographer's words match the movement of their bodies? Are the dancers copying what the choreographer is actually doing, or are they transforming it into something else (usually classroom material) without realizing it? In the case of older choreographers — should the dancers be doing more than is shown or has been expressed explicitly (ie, “I can't jump high but you should”). Is the choreographer dropping hints or references? If they get into storytelling, is that just fun, or ego, or is it relevant to the work? Do they wax philosophical about personal expression but then get picky about detail, and if so, what kind? Where is there freedom, or when an assumption that the dancers will make their own versions of what they are given, and when must they stick exactly to the script? Does the choreographer give one set of instructions to the dancers but then make contradictory comments to me about what they wish to see? Not all choreographers are directors. I must make decisions about what to let go, and try to anticipate what will change tomorrow when everyone forgets the counts or there is an argument about which way “that turn” went.

We must always remember that our common goal is the creation of a new work that speaks to an audience. Sometimes this can get lost in the chaos of teaching while creating. One of my greatest influences is the brilliant Montreal-based rehearsal director Ginelle Chagnon. In a workshop several years ago, she stated that “the choreographer exists for the dance, and the rehearsal director for the dancer.” While the piece is being set, I take it upon myself to monitor which dancers are being used or not and make suggestions when the choreographer is trying to decide who to bring on stage next. I keep pedagogical concerns in mind so that the choreographer can focus on shaping the form.

We end up with questions such as: Is that duet any good or are we just trying to be fair? Is it worth letting that dancer investigate challenging material, or will it be to the detriment of the piece if they never figure it out? Are we keeping under the twelve minute time limit? Are there going to be traffic issues if we have all twenty dancers trying to do that section in unison? Spacing and exits are concerns especially in this setting where groups tend to be larger than most modern dance choreographers have the opportunity to work with on a regular basis. Working with students requires a generosity of spirit and a flexible mindset, which from time to time cripples even the most brilliant choreographer. My role as sidekick to the choreographer then expands to include translation, and sometimes peacekeeping duties. I have learned that student dancers often need to be given express permission to experiment with their interpretations and extrapolate from instructions. They also need to be coached through the difference between entering a state of being and creating the illusion of being in one (chaos comes to mind as an example).

I can act as a translator between the choreographer and the student dancers, helping them figure out what to look for, how to determine what is important and how to recognize what is inessential. However, in order to do this, I must first understand the choreographer's intention. It is an exercise in observation mixed with mind reading. If the answers we need are not yet apparent, I must at least be invested in the journey, and must try to convey to the dancers the nature and importance of making and respecting this commitment themselves. In most rehearsals before the choreographer leaves, I appear inactive — sitting, watching, taking notes, sometimes sneaking off into a corner to learn movement combinations along with the dancers. The role looks passive, but it is actually a hyper-alert state of constant seeing, processing, problem solving, and choice making. It is an art unto itself.

There are times when I am the only person in the room who can see the dance, as choreographers get caught up in ego, ambition or fear when making a work that must stand with artistic merit despite being borne of an imperfect situation (not enough time, student dancers, small studios, having to use found music because of budget constraints, etc.) There are also times when I cannot see the work at all, and cannot imagine where it might be headed. Other times the choreographer is absolutely clear, but the dancers are unable to grasp what they need to do — ideas, concepts and movement styles are too easily lost in translation. We love to encourage exploration and discovery, but I have found that sometimes with students it is best for the work to just hand out answers to certain questions. If a choreographer tells a student dancer to “just make it interesting,” I usually have to spend some time at the side of the room explaining what that means and what exactly one might play with in terms of real skills in order to make that happen. I will often passive-aggressively dramaturge (if I can use that as a verb) by giving notes aloud to students that point out my observations and present questions about the work and their performances within it. I leave it to the choreographer to answer, thus forcing decision making about interpretation at points they may not have thought through. (ie, “When you three come out of that wing, the way that you’re performing the step makes me see X, and I’m not sure if the choreographer wants that. My sense is that it should be Y. Choreographer, I leave that decision to you”).

As both a former student and a longtime faculty member, I have an intimate and ongoing relationship to both the dancers and the curriculum (and now, to several choreographers who have had repeat engagements). I am able to recognize habits that are

rooted in training, as well as opportunities for coaching that might be requested from a cooperative teacher. If the dancers are not able to jump on one leg and it is happening sixteen times in a row in a phrase, I can ask that a technique teacher practice these skills, or I can point out the voice teacher that the second years will be singing a verse from a certain song in their new rep work, and request some coaching. It is a great advantage for me to be able to speak to the training as it applies to a choreographer's work, and an immense joy when it becomes obvious that a student is connecting the proverbial dots between their technique classes and their performances.

After the choreographer leaves, my real work begins. Work changes as it grows, and my job is to facilitate a rehearsal period where the dancers may attempt to maintain and improve their ability to convey the original intentions of the choreographer as accurately as possible. Simple regurgitation is not an option in a living art form, so I have to keep an invisible inner version of the choreographer's voice and eye inside my head, and encourage the dancers to do the same. We always try to go back to the source (which can be notes, video or memories called forth through conversation) when we get lost. As the work matures, I endeavour to remind dancers of the essence of the work. The training element here is to develop the stamina to hold onto a world of images while continuing to train in other styles, and to allow those other influences to inform rather than confuse a dancer's interpretation. My job is to act as keeper of the gate for the piece we have created; to retain, protect and refresh the vision of the choreographer as the piece, and the students, mature. Sometimes my authority is challenged, and negotiation is required, when a dancer thinks that a note I give conflicts with their own understand or interpretation of the work. I take this as a good sign — I am constantly reminding dancers that I really just want them to have an opinion about what they are doing, and that we can always argue about it later if necessary. With regard to failure: in the absence of the choreographer, mistakes and bad choices are inevitably made. When something does not work, it is hard to know how much is the fault of the students, how much is on the choreographer, and how much is mine. The true test comes when the choreographer sees their work on stage — either live in the final production, or on DVD. The best compliment I ever received was that the work ended up being “more than [he] imagined.” The worst feedback is silence.

Of course, it is impossible to “teach” interpretation. Instead, I can help train the eyes, ears, and instincts of these young dancers with the hope that when it comes to an actual audition scenario, they will be the ones desired because of the skills they have developed under our watch. A dancer's persona and ability in the studio is shaped by layers and layers of influence and information, and the job of learning to interpret is to discover how to filter, to train one's instincts to make good choices that will serve the work and vision of a choreographer. I believe that our job as teachers and as dramaturges is the same: to observe, guide, support and encourage experimentation and growth. Developing performers as translators is invaluable work and it is vital in training that we practice conveying our thoughts - and theirs - in languages both verbal and physical. Failure in process is inevitable and unavoidable, but if regarded with enthusiasm, can open doors and inspire creation. Working with students, and remembering what I did not understand when I was that dancer, has taught me to be humble and curious about these matters. Lepecki talks about “embodied perception” as one searches for meaning in the studio, and this is my role as a rehearsal director in a post-secondary training situation. What do I

see, what am I looking for, and how can I help the others in the room to recognize it too, so that the audience can share in what we found together? This conversation is an exercise in faith, trust, and mutual respect, as we aim to train the kind of dancers we would like to have as peers.

Copyright 2011, Andrea Roberts

Bibliography

Benjamin, Walter. "The Task of the Translator." *Illuminations: Essays and Reflections*. Hannah Arendt, Ed. Trans. Harry Zohn. New York: Schocken Books, 1968. 69-82.

deLahunta, Scott, ed. "Dance Dramaturgy: speculations and reflections." *Dance Theatre Journal*. April 2000. <http://www.sdela.dds.nl/conv3/article.html>. Web, 6 June 2011.

Address for correspondence:

Andrea Roberts

Email: andrea at schooloftdt dot org

Moving through the virtual: A dramaturgy of choreographic practice and perception

Dr. Johan Stjernholm

Faculty of Education, Royal Academy of Dance

Abstract

This paper addresses some of the dramaturgical consequences related to the fact that an increasing number of diverse technologies in recent years have become available and adopted by artists, for the purpose of creating and representing aesthetic embodied practices. As a result, traditional boundaries related to performance, subjectivity, and perception have been challenged. The aim of this paper is to outline some relatively unexplored relations between the processes of creating, performing, and perceiving aesthetic embodied practices. The discussion is based on a phenomenological perspective, and the key concepts include notions of the virtual, the performative, and the abstract.

Setting the stage: the chaos and tumble of events

This paper explores some dramaturgical relations between aesthetic embodied practices, perception, and the process of choreographic creativity. Due to the ambiguity, elusiveness, and immense complexity inherent to my subject of enquiry, it may be appropriate to keep in mind a few words by the Toronto based, Canadian author Michael Ondaatje (1988, p.152): “The chaos and tumble of events. The first sentence of every novel should be: ‘Trust me, this will take time but there is order here, very faint, very human’”. Given a greater scope of time, a more in-depth representation of the faint order of the chaotic events of this paper can be found in my PhD Thesis *Performativities, Virtualities, Abstractions, and Cunningham’s BIPED* (Stjernholm, 2009).

The context and background for this paper is the relatively recent development of choreographic and performance based practices that utilise various digital and computer related technologies. The aim of this paper is to briefly outline how the contemporary choreographic practice has posed certain ontological and conceptual challenges to existing theory on embodiment, creativity, and perception. The primary concepts that I will explore are the virtual and the performative.

A real virtuality

The idea of the virtual has come to acquire a diverse array of meaning. One of the most popular and widespread current connotations of the word is closely linked to the notion of a virtual reality, commonly understood as some kind of computer generated simulation or graphical representation of an environment, fictional or otherwise. Choreographers such as Robert Wechsler (1997) and Prof. Johannes Birringer (1999, 2008) frequently refer to the virtual in this manner.

However, the idea of the virtual is not exclusive to computer-based practices. To the contrary, the virtual arguably precedes the very existence of digital technology. For instance, in an essay on architecture, space, and the French philosopher Gilles Deleuze, the scholar Paul Harris (2005) differentiates between the idea of virtual reality as a

computer simulation of architectural buildings, versus the virtual as a philosophical concept.

Deleuze (1991, 2004), who developed his notion of the virtual already in the 1960s, derived his concept from the late 19th to early 20th century French philosopher Henri Bergson (2004). Bergson's work *Matter and Memory* (ibid.) is firmly focused on issues related to perception, a concept that he defined as the synthetic composite of a subjectively lived experience of a present moment.

Both Bergson and Deleuze (1991) emphasise that perception, as a lived-experience-of-the-present, is a problem that has to be stated in terms of time. Due to its temporality, Bergson also refers to perception as duration, which in turn implies that the lived present is not restricted to the idea of that which is absolutely immanent to the present, but it is elastic and stretches out beyond the here-and-now.

The elasticity of the lived present is a key to understanding Bergson's idea of how perception constitutes reality as a synthetic composite. There are two differences in kind: the absolute present, which corresponds to the actual; and the pure past, which corresponds to the virtual. Bergson (2004, p.162) visualised the structure of duration as illustrated in Figure 1 below, in the form of a cone turned upside down, with the top of the cone positioned on plane P at point S.

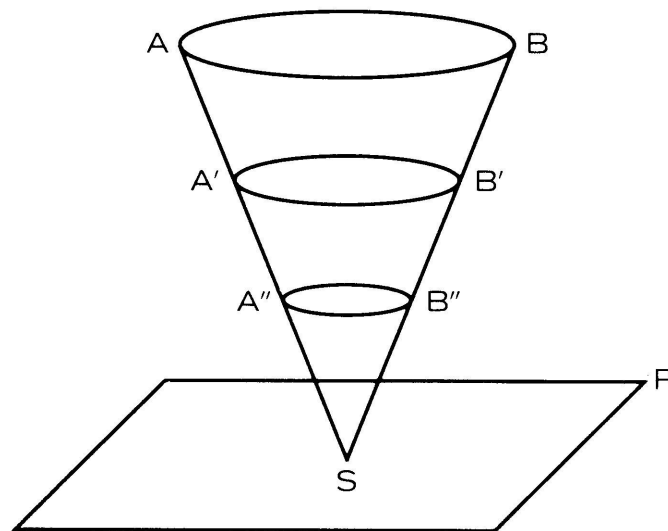


Figure 1: Bergson's (2004, p.162) model of duration.

Plane P in Figure 1 represents the actuality of the absolute present, corresponding to the entire world and everything that exists as part of that world at any given moment. Point S is the contact point between the world and the human senses. The base of the cone, AB, represents the concept of the virtual as a pure past. While P and S are always in motion and subject to change, AB is always immobile. Moreover, P, S, and AB are never part of duration, but they are ideal, utopian states that are unreachable to human perception. As utopia, S can also be understood as the idea of absolute perception, and AB as the realm of pure memory.

Duration always happens somewhere in between S and AB. In Figure 1, the levels A'B' and A''B'' signifies two different durational instances. The difference between A'B' and A''B'' could be exemplified in terms of changes of subjective states while

watching a dance performance. At one moment in time, I may feel completely absorbed by the intricacy of the movements, or emotionally engaged by the expressive presence of a performer, which would approximately correspond to duration A''B''. Somewhat later, I may find myself having a more reflective stance towards the dance, moving my duration towards A'B' as I perhaps take a moment to think of what I am seeing in relation to what I have just seen, or what I saw in the theatre last week.

The challenge inherent to Bergson and Deleuze's virtuality is that it is never apparent and tangible to our senses. Instead, as Harris (2005) points out, the virtual operates invisibly by means of folding and turning inside out of the actual, sensory realm of objects, situations and events. This hidden, yet always present aspect of the virtual is analogous to the way in which the French phenomenologist Maurice Merleau-Ponty (2002) describes the appearance and disappearance of the body.

According to Merleau-Ponty (*ibid.*), the body is constructed from two body images, one phenomenal and one objective. The phenomenal body image is characterised by a coexistence of place and knowledge as a pre-subjective, immanent state of being. The objective body image, on the other hand, is the body as an objectified, physiological, anatomical, and biological structure where, for instance, an arm is attached to a shoulder and a leg to a hip joint. While the phenomenal body image is ontologically positioned as that which lends meaning to the objective body image, the phenomenal tends to disappear, become invisible, and hide behind the objective. Thus, there is a direct analogy between Bergson's concept of the virtual and Merleau-Ponty's phenomenal body image.

The invisibility of the virtual/phenomenal gives rise to a problem: how is it possible to account for the virtual and the body in the context of watching a dance performance, if the virtual, as well as a fundamental part of that which supposedly constitutes our body, are intangible to our senses and never explicitly apparent? Moreover, from a dramaturgical point of view, why does it matter?

The method of intuition

In order to account for the presence of the virtual, Bergson (2004) and Deleuze (1991), developed a method by which the synthetic composite of duration may be divided according to its differences in kind. The method is called intuition.

Intuition could partly be explained through Bergson's statement that "I must wait until the sugar dissolves" (Bergson in Deleuze, 1991, p.32). As a piece of sugar slowly melts in a glass of water, one kind of being replaces another: the solid lump of sugar crystals changes in kind to a sweet, sugary solution. Intuition means to stretch, as far as can be done, duration to encompass the entire shift in kind: from solid to fluid, present to past, and actual to virtual.

Looking at a dance performance, the waiting for the sugar to dissolve can be replaced with the statement that "I must wait until the performance ends", or "I must wait until the movement is finished". This intuitive approaching reveals, amongst other things, the following actual/virtual differences in kind:

- At the level of plane P: purely material bodies that occupy volumes, positions, and perform movement vectors in an objective, three-dimensional space.

- At the levels A''B'' and A'B': Lived experiences that have emotional and sensory qualities, perceptions of embodied poses, movements, and sequences of movements.
- At the level of base AB: The past of having perceived a dance work, accessed as memories of movements, emotional states, and other impressions.

The problem with the above representation of duration is that it is far too simplistic. Primarily because the change in kind does not only move from the actual to the virtual, but also from the virtual to the actual. The past is always flowing towards the present, just as the present is always flowing towards the past. While watching a performance, each audience member continuously brings his/her past into the present, if nothing else in the form of a subjective viewpoint, perspective, consciousness, or at least a certain vague notion of a self. Thus, any duration would not only consist of the actuality of the work, but it would synthesise a person's sense of identity, acquired knowledge, memories, and emotional state.

From the perspective of the performer, a dance performance is usually intertwined some kind of personal or professional history. The creation of the work itself often involves collaborations, discussions of ideas, as well as many hours of practical experimentation and rehearsals when movements were reiterated, modified, and/or discarded. The entire poietic past of the work is at once contracted, synthesised, and obscurely manifest during each perceived moment of performance.

Taking into account the multiplicity of potential histories behind a dance performance, it appears that my perception of it not only involves my own personal synthesis of the actual/virtual, but an unspecified number of such composites. Hence, it is at this stage possible to expand the definition of duration: Each lived experience of a dance performance consists of a very complex meta-synthesis that spans across a multiplicity of subjective durations, every single one taking part in the whole. Borrowing the French phenomenologist Gaston Bachelard's (1992) notion of reverberation, duration could also be formulated as a coupling of many different virtual realms into one extended, reverberating, virtual multiplicity.

However, while my discussion on intuition has addressed some relations between performance, subjectivity, and perception as a virtual/actual composite, it still says very little about dramaturgy and choreographic practice. In order to understand this relation, I will make a short detour and investigate the concept of the performative.

Performativity and performance

The idea of the performative was first introduced in the 1950s by the ordinary language philosopher John L. Austin (1976). One of the core ideas of the performative is the notion that "to say something *is* to do something" (ibid. p.94) [italics in original]. In Austin's original definition, this meant that under certain circumstances, an utterance achieves and/or changes something in relation to the speaker and the world. Since a performative involves both a saying and a doing, there are two distinctive aspects, or dimensions, to the performative: one symbolic, which is the meaning of the spoken word, and one practical, corresponding to that which is achieved through the utterance of the words. This basic, two-dimensional, symbolic/practical structure of the performative is illustrated below in Figure 2.

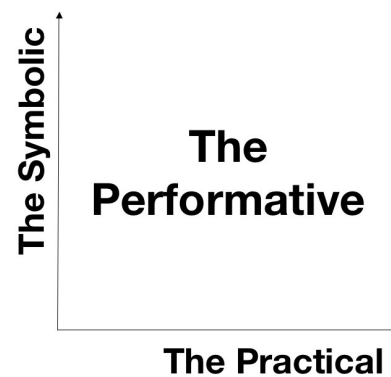


Figure 2: A two dimensional model of the performative.

In addition to the two basic dimensions of the performative, there is another, third dimension. The linguist John Searle (2005) has argued that any linguistic communication involves speech acts, as in the production of sounds. This adds a second practical dimension to the performative, as illustrated below in Figure 3. In order to distinguish between the two practical dimensions of the performative, the two practical acts of doing are labelled as the “Performance”, or the production of sounds, and the “Act”, or that which is achieved in or by saying something.

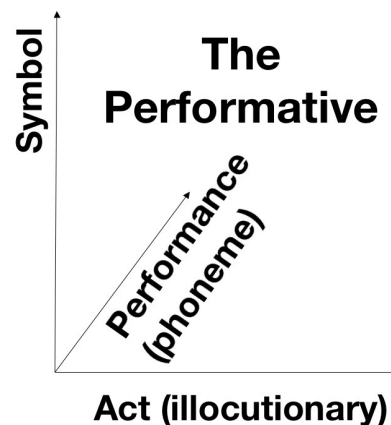


Figure 3: A three dimensional model of the performative.

Austin's performative sentences have been extensively criticised. Jacques Derrida (1977), for instance, highlighted the iterative and citational characteristics of the performative, and applied it to theatrical performance practice, something which Austin had firmly rejected. The philosopher Judith Butler (1993) extended Derrida's application of the performative even further, looking at how gender is performatively constructed in queer performance, and questioning the way in which the body has been positioned in relation to gender. Butler rejected the idea of the body as providing the basic foundation, or biological substance, to gender. Instead, she saw the body as a surface of inscription that through language had been positioned as an *a priori*. In effect, Butler proposed the body as a mimesis of language, and performative acts served either to reinforce or question that symbolic status.

The dance scholar Susan Foster (1998) has criticised both Butler and Derrida for not being able to transcend language in relation to the performative. Drawing on an example from the modernist American dance tradition, Foster has demonstrated how choreographic practice in and by itself can be seen as performative, arguing that the perception of bodily movements in a dance performance triggers semiotic connotations, which in turn serve to construct, validate, or question notions of gender. Foster's interpretation of the performative provides a clear practical example of the three-dimensional structure illustrated above in Figure 3. There, the Performance dimension corresponds to the performance of a dance movement, the Symbol dimension corresponds to semiotic connotations, triggered by the movement; and the Act dimension corresponds to the ways in which the semiotic connotations affect the notion of gender as part of an embodied identity.

The Grand Synthesis

The time has come to try to bring a faint order from the chaos and tumble of events. One of my key propositions is Bergson's idea that perception is a synthesis of the actual and the virtual, as a duration stated in terms of time. However, the virtual is always hidden, never tangible to our senses, and it eludes efforts of representation. The past that I actualise as a memory recollection never was a present, and the phenomenal body image becomes irreversibly transformed into an objective body image as soon as I recognise the presence of a dance movement. There is an elusiveness to the virtual that makes it difficult to pin down and address directly.

The challenge of addressing that which cannot be directly approached is a thoroughly rehearsed argument within the phenomenological tradition, and there are several methods proposed to solve the problem. While Husserl's (1994) method of phenomenological reduction probably stands out as one the most commonly cited, I have chosen to follow in the footsteps of the German philosopher Ernst Cassirer (1953). Cassirer argued that the immanent reality of perception can never be approached directly, but the primary focus of any enquiry has to be on the concept of the symbol.

The symbol that I will position at the centre of my discussion is the dancing and performing body. From Merleau-Ponty's (2002) perspective, such a body corresponds to the construct of an objective body image, with its apparent capacity to move around in space and to relate different body parts to each other. The immanent, phenomenal body image remains invisible as an ontological foundation.

As a performative, the body-that-moves-in-space symbol corresponds to the Performance dimension. The Performance of the moving body in turn triggers Foster's (1998) field of semiotic connotation, which generates yet another layer of abstraction as the performative Symbol. It may seem as if the body cannot escape its state as a symbol/signifier, since every possible Performance would only serve to generate yet another layer of representation. However, this is where the method of intuition comes to play. The sugar, as it were, must be allowed to melt completely, and the duration has to be stretched out to encompass both differences in kind: the realm of symbolic abstraction as well as the invisible ontological depth of the phenomenal body image.

The intuitive grasp of the ontological role of the phenomenal body image brings all the three performative dimensions into the light: The Performance corresponding to the presence of an objective body image; the Symbol corresponding to semiotic connotations and analytical readings of the moving body; and finally, the Act corresponding to the way in which the phenomenal body presents a sensory, objective body image from its invisible depths. The described performative structure of the body images is analogous to how Deleuze (1994) establishes a relation between the virtual/memory and the appearance of time as a passing present:

"The foundation concerns the soil: it shows how something is established upon this soil, how it occupies and possesses it; whereas the ground comes rather from the sky, it goes from the summit to the foundations, and measures the possessor and the soil against one another according to a title of ownership. Habit is the foundation of time, the moving soil occupied by the passing present. The claim of the present is precisely that it passes. However, it is what causes the present to pass, that to which the present and habit belong, which must be considered the ground of time. It is memory that grounds time" (Deleuze, 1994, p.79).

Deleuze's notion of time corresponds in my model to the performative Performance dimension as a sensory presence of the actual body-object; his idea of memory corresponds to the performative Symbol dimension as semiotic connotations of the body; and his habit corresponds to the performative Act dimension as a phenomenal body image that supports and lends meaning to the objective body image.

The comparison between Deleuze's habit/time/memory relation and the performative dimensions of the different body images can be summarised as follows: the phenomenal body image serves as a foundation to the objective body image that produces performative Performances. The Performances give rise to semiotic connotations, or performative Symbols, which in their turn do the performative Act of conjuring up, from its phenomenal depths, the very objective body image that served to start the entire process through its Performance. Hence, it is the process of reading the body as an actual embodied body that serves to ground the very same body that was read to start with. The result is a dynamic, reverberating, non-causative system with a positive feedback loop, as illustrated in Figure 4 below.

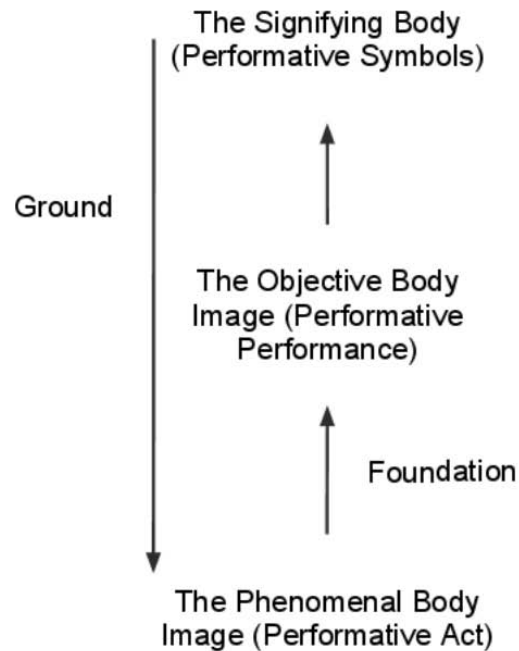


Figure 4: Mapping relations between the body, performativity, and perception.

The problem of time

In order to test my dramaturgical model of perception, I will apply it to an example gathered from the context of my enquiry: choreographic applications of digital and computer related technologies. In order to keep it simple, I will refer to a relatively widespread and easily accessible technology, namely that of watching a playback of a digital video recording of a dance performance.

Using the method of intuition to differentiate my duration according to Bergson's cone-plane model in Figure 1, plane P would arguably contain the actual, digital code of the video capture, which is unavailable to my sensory perception. At A'B' (or A''B''), I have the experience of seeing moving images on a screen, and at AB, there is an accumulation of my past experiences of seeing the images.

The problem is that a closer inspection of my intuitive division will reveal it to be flawed. First, in spite of having seen the video in the past, the digital code in P does not pass to AB, but it continuously remains on plane P as an absolute actuality in the world. Moreover, if I intuitively extend my duration to encompass the temporality of the digital code in itself, it appears that the code is in itself a form of memory of a past: once upon a time a dancer was being recorded by a video camera while he/she was dancing. Hence, in relation to the duration of the making of the video, the digital code was already situated in AB prior to my perception of the images.

Based on my above intuitive critique of my preceding intuition, it appears as if there is an overlap, or interference between different durations stated in terms of varying degrees of temporality. As a result, when I am watching a video, the video code simultaneously occupies P and AB in relation to my A'B' duration. In short: intuition does not work as a method of division in kind in relation to the perception of a playback of a video recording. The sugar, as it were, refuses to melt.

The problem becomes even more pressing if intuition is applied to other technologies of capturing and representing images of the moving body. In fact, the method not only breaks down when applied to high-tech, digital technologies such as video and Motion Capture, but also in relation to much more mundane, older, and analogue technologies. An intuitive approach to a drawing, a painting, or even a textual description of a dance performance will, if the duration is stretched enough, equally fail to generate a difference in kind between the virtual and the actual.

The reason why my intuition was unsuccessful in dividing duration into a difference in kind is that the method, under the given circumstances, proved to be inherently contradictory. According to Deleuze (1991, p.35), intuition must adhere to three principal rules, the “problematizing”, the “differentiating”, and the “temporalizing”. However, as I have demonstrated above, the rule of temporalisation produces a badly stated question to the rule of problematisation, which in turn means that the rule of differentiation cannot be fully applied.

There is a solution to the above problem, which is to make an addendum to Deleuze’s three rules of intuition: In the case that the problematising of the composite does not lead to a differentiation, the rule of temporalisation has to be complemented with a rule of abstractification. In other words, the problem of duration has to be re-stated in terms of the abstract instead of time.

Applying the addendum to my intuitive perception of a video recording does indeed serve to reveal a difference in kind, not in terms of present/past, but between different kinds of symbolic abstraction. At one end, there is the digital code, which at any given time is available to me as moving images, and then there are the interpretations, semiotic connotations, or analytical conclusions that I derive from my lived experience. The differentiation in kind between the digital code and my analysis/interpretation proves that the question is adequately stated, and validates the suggested addendum to the rule-set of the method of intuition.

Choreographic implications

The addendum to the rules of intuition has implications that go even further than discussed above. The statement of the problem in terms of the abstract, instead of time, serves to generate a second cone/plane structure. A brief comparison gives at hand that the two cones are inversed mirror images of each other, so that when there is a movement towards plane P in the temporal cone, there is a movement towards AB in the abstract cone.

The inversed relation between the cones becomes apparent when taking into account the fact that the plane P is always moving, whereas the base AB is immobile and static. In terms of the images that I see when watching a playback of a video recording, it does not cause the digital data to change, but it is my subjective analytical process of reading and interpreting of the images as symbols and signs that is set in motion.

There are choreographic implications connected to the fact that the actualisation of the temporal corresponds to the virtualisation of the abstract, and vice versa. While the virtual realm always remains intangible, it can be affected indirectly, by means of engaging with the corresponding actuality in the alternative cone. By means of pushing a temporal actuality towards the virtual, I can attract and actualise the corresponding virtuality in the abstract. The same applies to the process of virtualising the abstract, through which I can attract and actualise that which is invisible as a temporal virtuality.

The process of reversed actualisation/virtualisation can be classified as yet another example a performative, three-dimensional structure. An actual Performance in the cone of the temporal triggers the production of an actual Symbol in the cone of the abstract, which in turn causes an Act of re-actualisation of the temporal virtuality that already was actualised in the original Performance. The re-actualised Performance dynamically modifies its corresponding Symbol, which in turn affects the Act, and so the process continues as a self-sustaining, reverberating system, as already illustrated in Figure 4.

In written or spoken form, the detailed system of actualisation/virtualisation of the abstract/temporal may seem overly theoretical and complex. However, it is important to keep in mind that choreographers already have explored those principles extensively through performance practice. One example of such practice is William Forsythe, who even has labelled the process as “Iteration” (Caspersen, 2000, p.28), which was used in the production of his work *ALIE/NA(C)TION* (1992).

In the UK, the choreographer Rosemary Butcher (2007) is another example of a groundbreaking choreographer that extensively problematises and juggles between and differences in kind as part of her creative process. While rarely putting labels on her practice, Butcher’s work engages in a constant system of exchange and re-evaluation of movement as symbolic versus movement as lived experiences, the use of words as signifiers versus words as sensual textures, touch as bodily manipulation versus touch as an embodied sharing. She allows different kinds of actualities to reverberate and engage in a play of transformation of others, stimulating a constant exchange between the virtual and the actual, the past and the present, as well as between experience and analytical reflection.

The actual conclusion

To conclude, I have presented a model that gives an account of choreographic practice and perception, based on the notion of difference in kind between the virtual and the actual. Using the method of intuition, I have explored how existing theory on perception has proved partly inadequate in relation to current choreographic practice that spans across live embodiment and the digital. As a direct result of this critical practice/theory interaction, I suggest a re-interpretation of existing theory on perception and the performative. The result is a particular dramaturgical understanding of how the virtual relates to choreography and perception as part of a lived experience of a dance performance.

There are two principal benefits to the theory/practice model of interaction that I have presented in this paper. First, the model potentially enriches and complements existing dramaturgical awareness of the choreographic process and audience perception. Secondly, it gives dance artists access to a set of powerful and flexible conceptual tools for creative choreographic practice.

Copyright 2011, Johan Stjernholm

Bibliography

- Austin, J.L. (1976). *How to Do Things with Words: The William James Lectures delivered in Harvard University in 1955* 2nd ed. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Bachelard, G. (1992). *The Poetics of Space*. Boston: Beacon Press.
- Bergson, H. (2004). *Matter and Memory*. London: Dover Publications (first published in New York: Macmillan, 2012).
- Birringer, J. (1999). *migbot. time, migration, narration: a new digital dance and technology laboratory*. [online] Retrieved July 13, 2011, from <http://www.ruf.rice.edu/~orpheus/res.html>
- Birringer, J. (2008). *Performance, technology, and science*. New York: PAJ Publications.
- Butcher, R. (2007). *Rosemary Butcher*. [online] Retrieved July 20, 2011, from <http://www.rosemarybutcher.com/>
- Butler, J. (1993). *Bodies that Matter*. London: Routledge.
- Caspersen, D. (2000). It starts from any point: Bill and the Frankfurt Ballet. *Choreography & Dance Studies*, 5(3), 25-39.
- Cassirer, E. (1953). *The philosophy of symbolic forms*. New Haven: Yale University Press.
- Deleuze, G. (1991). *Bergsonism*. Cambridge: MIT Press.
- Deleuze, G. (2004). *Difference and Repetition*. London: Continuum.
- Derrida, J. (1977). Signature Event Context In *Limited Inc*. Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1-24.
- Foster, S. (1998). Choreographies of gender In E. Striff (ed.) *Performance studies*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 166-177.
- Harris, P. A. (2005). To See with the Mind and Think through the Eye: Deleuze, Folding Architecture, and Simon Rodia's Watts Towers. In I. Buchanan & G. Lambert (Eds.), *Deleuze and space*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press.
- Husserl, E. and Nakhnikian, G. (1994). *The idea of phenomenology* (W. P. Alston, G. Nakhnikian, and G. Nakhnikian, Trans.). Dordrecht: Kluwer.
- Merleau-Ponty, M. (2002). *Phenomenology of Perception* (2nd ed.). London: Routledge.
- Ondaatje, M. (1988). *In the skin of a lion*. London: Pan Macmillan.
- Searle, J.R. (2005). *Speech Acts: An essay in the philosophy of language*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Stjernholm, J. (2009). *Performativities, Virtualities, Abstractions, and Cunningham's BIPED* [PhD Thesis]. University of the Arts London, London.
- Wechsler, R. (1997). Computer in dance: Medium or tool? *Ballett International / Tanz Aktuell*, August, 30-32.

Address for correspondence:

Dr. Johan Stjernholm
Faculty of Education
Royal Academy of Dance
36 Battersea Square
London SW11 3RA
JStjernholm@rad.org.uk

Representations of Multicultural Dance in Photographic Images

Batia Stolar and Clara Sacchetti

Lakehead University, Thunder Bay, ON, Canada

Abstract

This paper explores the tensions embedded in the photographic images of multicultural dance in the city of Thunder Bay (Ontario, Canada) in the 1980s. Informed by Nicholas Mirzoeff's (2002) work on the transversal glance, Stolar and Sacchetti showcase the interrelationships between conflicting notions of ethnicity, gender, and race within the locally constituted discourse of multiculturalism. They explore these themes through an analysis of the compositional framing and subject matter of "ethnic," "folk," and "national" dance photographs appearing in Northern Mosaic, a free, widely available, and local multicultural magazine.

Multicultural dance has long been a staple of Thunder Bay's cultural make-up, though often ignored in scholarly studies that represent the small, northwestern Ontario city as a predominantly white, working-class, masculine space (Sullivan 2009; Dunk 1994). In our work on the photographic representation of multicultural dance in the city, we trace the intersections between dance and its associations with identity constructs (namely race, class, gender, nationality, and culture), and, in turn, with federal and local discourses of multiculturalism. Focusing on the subject matter and compositional elements of dance photographs, we tease out some of the unexpected meanings that surround multiculturalism (see Mirzoeff 2002). We critically look at such photographs, especially the ones that appear in *Northern Mosaic*, a local tabloid/newspaper published from 1975-1997 by the Thunder Bay Multicultural Association (TBMA), an organization started up by a group of local university students in 1972 in response to Canada's 1971 policy of multiculturalism.

The photographic images of multicultural dance in *Northern Mosaic* comprise mostly representations of local, amateur dance troupes performing at the city's annual Folklore Festival, although a few images of professional dancers, most often visiting on tour or giving lessons, occasionally grace its pages. In our paper, we concentrate on the intersections between multicultural dance, race and ethnicity as narratively constructed and visually represented in *Northern Mosaic* between 1980-1985. Although we have reviewed over 40 volumes of *Northern Mosaic* to date, our focus herein is on three cover images, which signal a departure from the 1970s when only one dance photograph appeared on the tabloid's cover (*Northern Mosaic*, 1975 1(2); see Figure 1). That cover is, however, emblematic of the then commonsensical association between ethnicity and whiteness in Thunder Bay and across Canada (see Mackay 1999; Henry et al 1995). A careful comparative look at *Northern Mosaic*'s textual renderings of multiculturalism and its photographic representations of dance in the 1970s, draws covert attention to the issues of gender, generational positioning, and visible minorities, some of which were brought into public debate. In keeping

with these nation-wide scholarly and popular discussions, *Northern Mosaic* began to give a greater voice to visible minorities. A plurality of articles featuring Chinese, Japanese, and Filipino communities emerged, accompanied by a significant number of photographic images (see *Northern Mosaic* 1981 4(6): 8-9 1983 7(4): 10; 1983 7(3): 8-9 and 5; 1985 9(2): 14). South Asian ethnicity, although represented in the tabloid in the 1970s, was increasingly brought to the fore. This is not to say that these groups did not exist in Thunder Bay in the 1970s; on the contrary, it means they were either excluded from *Northern Mosaic* or included in a way that underlined their exotic difference from the white ethnic groups in the city (see Potestio and Pucci 1987; TBMA 1982).

In contrast to the 1970s whereby we see the Lithuanian, Latvian, Hungarian, and Slovakian dance troupes featured prominently in *Northern Mosaic*, the 1980s editions include photographs of recreational Chinese Lion and Ribbon Dance, East Indian Dandia and Bhangra Dances, and many different types of Belly Dancers (which, interestingly enough, remain unspecified as to ethnic or national origin, as well as particular dances; see *Northern Mosaic* 1984, 8(1-2): 14; 1983, 7(1): 12; 1983, 7(2):8).

Paradoxically, just as *Northern Mosaic* begins to engage more seriously with visible minorities in the early 80s, attention is simultaneously drawn to the importance of preserving and celebrating ethnocultural difference – a term denoting, according to a TBMA position paper on multiculturalism, not solely immigrant culture but Aboriginal culture as well (*Northern Mosaic* 1985, 10(4): 5 and 16). Multiculturalism was to transcend its categorization as a marker of ethnic immigrant groups and expand to include a more generalized diversity of cultures and traditions regardless of whether they were home-grown or imported; in particular, French, Aboriginal, and Celtic dancers are recognized within the umbrella of the mosaic, thereby glazing over the colonial past and its discontents (e.g., see *Northern Mosaic* 1981 5(2-3): 13). As shifts within multiculturalism evolve, articles in *Northern Mosaic* take issue with the idea that multiculturalism is too focused on folklore and, as such, downplay the problems visible minorities face. Articles call for racism to be tackled separately from the social inequalities of ethnocultural recognition. From this perspective, multiculturalism has a place for visible minorities who want to engage in cultural preservation, but their issues with regard to social inequalities are directed elsewhere, to another unspecified arena of public policy. However, the problems white ethnic groups faced historically with Anglo-Celtic hegemony in the city were often dealt with within the pages of *Northern Mosaic* in the 1970s.

Highlighting the ethnocultural specificity of visible minorities in *Northern Mosaic* in the early 80s was, therefore, not so straightforward. This is evident in how multicultural dance images appear in the tabloid. For starters, European ethnicities continue to dominate, and compliment commentaries about the increasingly professionalization of white folk dance appear. For instance, there are articles with photographs about the local Hungarians dancers performing out of town, Ukrainian dancers garnering high honors at dance festivals, and Finns travelling abroad to Australia to showcase their folk dances (see *Northern Mosaic* 1983-84, 7(4): 13; 1983, 7(1): 13; 1985, 9(3): 11).

The stress on whiteness is most forcefully expressed through the overt attention paid to Scottish ethnicity in the city, even though it was previously cast as non-ethnic and largely invisible in the 1970s editions of *Northern Mosaic* (although it was documented in many, many photographic images which are housed in the TBMA archives). Photographic images of highland dancers begin to make a more noticeable appearance in the tabloid alongside articles about the long history of Scottish performing arts (such as bagpiping) in Thunder Bay (see *Northern Mosaic*, 1980, 6(3): 6; 1983 7(3): 9; see 1980, 4(2): 12 for Irish ethnicity as well). The question arises: why does Scottish highland dance, and Scottishness as an ethnic marker, become visible and more prominently featured at a time when visible minorities challenge the direction and discourses of multiculturalism?

The emphasis on white ethnic dance is, perhaps, most telling with the 1981 cover of *Northern Mosaic* (vol 5 nos. 2-3) featuring a photograph of Laura Pascolo, a professional Cecchetti-trained dancer of self-identified Italian ancestry who is also the founder of and 15-year artistic director for the currently existing Le Stelle Alpine Italian Performing Arts Association dancers (see Figure 2). Pascolo also worked with the Promysk Polish Dance Troupe, the Vesnyanka Ukrainian Dancers, and the Thunder Bay Folklore Festival, where she was the first to stage a cross-cultural dance production (see internationaldanceacademy.com). This photograph, which was also used for the cover of two *Thunder Bay Guest* magazines (email correspondence, Spring 2011), features Pascolo performing, according to page 2 of the *Northern Mosaic* edition, “a lively dance.” In actuality, she is performing a Neapolitan tarantella, a dance Pascolo delineates as different from the peasant-like, social dances currently staged by the Italian dancers in Thunder Bay. Hers is, by implication, more attentive to technique, more polished, more demanding, and requiring classical ballet training to perform properly (email correspondence, Spring 2009 and 2011).

The framing of Italian dance as “professional” iterates the emerging discourse of a “higher order” Italian culture in Thunder Bay, which signals the move away from the immigrant peasant culture of the past. In doing so, it also marks the shift between higher-order culture and peasant or folk culture. The former becomes more closely associated with white ethnic groups which, if not assimilated into the dominant Anglo culture are nevertheless distanced from their immigrant past and stereotypes as unwanted, rabble-rousing foreigners, as the latter becomes more closely associated with visible minorities which, regardless of how long they have actually been in the city and in Canada more generally, are deemed newcomers (or “New Canadians”; the term used in the 1980s to refer to visible minority immigrant groups in Canada).

Visible minorities are in turn more closely associated with Aboriginal culture by implication, as visual representations of First Nations peoples, termed “Indians” or “Natives” in *Northern Mosaic*, become more prominent, especially through representations of Aboriginal dance. The 1980 cover, for instance, provides a close-up, profile headshot of Richard Lyons, the founder and artistic director of the “renowned Lyons Dance Troupe” (*Northern Mosaic*, 4(1): 4). In this issue, we are informed that the troupe received multicultural grant money to purchase a van to enable the troupe to travel around northwestern Ontario to perform. The article also stresses: “the director, Richard Lyons manages a core group of three *professional dancers* around which an ensemble of as many as 40 dancers have been organized”

(4; emphasis ours). There is little other information provided, such as the names of the professional dancers, the dances they perform, and the significance of bodily movement.

Images of Aboriginal dancers appear several other times between 1980-1985. For instance, one Lyons dancer is described as a “colorful” dancer who “performs a dance of tracking a partridge” (*Northern Mosaic*, 1981, 5(2-3): 13. Another photograph featuring a male Aboriginal dancer appears on the 1983, 7(2) cover of the tabloid (see Figure 3). Although the position of the dancer’s body with the head and torso inclined into the circle (which is not visible in this shot) connote the movement of the dance, the emphasis appears to be more on the dress than the dance: the dancer in the foreground wears the full regalia of a feathered-headdress, fur moccasins, and sweetgrass hangs from his belt. There is an oddness or awkwardness to this photograph, which, upon closer analysis, lies in its composition, in the spatial relationship between the two dancers. The difference in size, position and light between the two dancers demands that the viewer focus on one at the expense of the other. By shifting the visual focus in this manner, the compositional elements of the photograph highlights a kind of duality at play. This duality is further emphasized when we consider that the frontal figure is male and the one obscured in the background is female. At first glance, the eye is drawn to the frontal male dancer, especially to his head, which is framed by the light-colored feathers of the headdress. The figure itself is gargantuan, making him appear distorted as he plastically takes on the rectangular shape of the frame that literally and metaphorically contains and restricts him. Following the incline of his head, the eye then focuses on the obscured figure in the background, a female dancer in the shadows whose face seems to be slightly out of focus; it is her light-colored leather moccasins which command visual attention. Unlike other photographs of other dances, the composition of this photograph does not give the viewer the illusion of picturing the dance as a whole. Instead, it seems to take the dancers out of the context of the dance.

These compositional elements visually stress the thematic representation of Aboriginal dance in *Northern Mosaic*. Most often it is the male dancers who are featured, often in close-ups that, as we argue above, emphasize their dress rather than the dance. While the inclusion of photographs of Aboriginal dance visually marks the inclusion of First Nations peoples within the tabloid, the photographs included challenge the visibility and inclusion of First Nations peoples within the mosaic of the city. The paradox of visibility-invisibility is further revealed in the textual narrative of the tabloid, as most of the articles in *Northern Mosaic* in the early 80s ignore the plight of First Nations Peoples and celebrate, instead, Aboriginal arts and crafts. The slant is thus culture-focused multiculturalism at the expense of postcolonial conditions and a history of exploitation (think here of land and treaty rights), and abuse (recall residential schools issues and ensuing problems with unemployment, alcoholism, poverty, and trauma). This erasure feeds the production of racism in Thunder Bay as it appears to promote Canadian-Aboriginal relations by marketing Aboriginality as a safe commodity for consumption to viewers who relish the image of a First Nations person donning full regalia. The image works to affirm the contested “natural” image of First Nations persons in a pre-colonial world

performing, as it were, for a non-Aboriginal audience contemporarily divorced from its settler-invader past.

As the photographs of Aboriginal dancers suggest, visible minorities are often highlighted as exotic additions to the Canadian multicultural mosaic. Such exoticization is similarly repeated in the *Northern Mosaic* 1985, 9(2) cover featuring a close-up headshot of a South Asian dancer (Figure 4). Unlike the Aboriginal dancer and dance, both of which remain unnamed, however, this performer is named and the pose she holds disclosed as part of the “Bharata Natyam, the most popular classical dance in India” (*Northern Mosaic*, 1985, 9(2): 2). The featured dancer is now the famous Anu Naimpally, the only South Asian self-identified “classical dancer” to receive the Le Mieux Prize by Canada Council in 1989. The daughter of a mathematics professor at Lakehead University, from where she also graduated prior to pursuing her MFA at York, she regularly performed at the Folklore Festival during her time in Thunder Bay (email correspondence, Spring 2011), and her performances in the late 1970s are documented in photographs found in the TBMA archives. It is not until 1983, however, that she is featured in an article in *Northern Mosaic* (7(4): 14; see Figure 5).

Returning to the cover photograph (see Figure 4) one of the most striking qualities of this photograph is the use of light: it showcases the beauty of photography, highlighting the contrast between the dark background, the white flowers and accents on the dancer’s dress and facial decorations, delineating the nuances the light carves alongside her hands and face. Unlike the images of Pascolo and the Aboriginal dancers, this dancer is still, posing for the photographer rather than dancing in the Folklore Festival. Half-exposed and half-hidden, her face commands the audience’s attention; as we look at her, she looks right at the camera, through it, and gazes right back at the viewer, a trait often remarked on in postcolonial studies.

An audience familiar with dance, and well-versed in the language of the bharata natyam, would be able to read and interpret the nuances of this photograph in a way that the presumed audience of *Northern Mosaic* would not. To the lay reader, then, this photographic image tells a different story than that which the dancer, particularly her narrating hands, manifests. Her hands appear to be framing her face, perfectly positioned to mark a straight line from her outstretched finger through her nose and down below her chin. The dividing line, as it were, further accentuates the duality we allude to earlier, and which is further implied by her closed lips, suggesting silence and passivity, in contrast to her speaking hands, which connote agency. The play between binaries here, between light and shadow, voice and silence, agency and passivity, highlight the tensions faced by visual minorities within multiculturalism, which simultaneously emphasizes racial difference as exotic, and therefore desirable, at the same time that it marks a kind of foreignness, which is tinged (at the very least) with abject fear – in here portrayed by the seductive dancer who gazes back at the audience with a bold, defiant look.

Like the cover featuring the Aboriginal dance, there is little information provided in this issue about the meaning of the bharata natyam, its relevance to multiculturalism in the 1980s, and the section of “East Indian” usually featured in the tabloid is missing in this volume. Our review of Naimpally’s website, combined with our recent email correspondence with her, however, yields additional details which

could have easily been incorporated in *Northern Mosaic*. She is a dancer who “learned her first steps with Dr. Menaka Thakkar” (see anudance.com/bio) another professional female dancer who performed and taught South Asian dance in Thunder Bay, and who was featured in an article in *Northern Mosaic* in the 1970s (1975, 3(3): 9). Naimpally recalls that the photograph was taken “by some male photographer” who said it would be specifically used for the cover of *Northern Mosaic*; and highlights the importance of hand gestures, a topic of long-time interest in her dance practice (email correspondence, Spring 2011). She recalls: “The photo is a studio shot, taken in an old building with bricks and tall windows because [the photographer] wanted the background to be dark and mysterious. I remember the people who commissioned the shot (perhaps the Northern Mosaic editors?) wanting the shot to have mystique and specifically asked for a black background” (email correspondence, Spring 2011). The pose, which was part of a public performance, “captures a moment when her character, who is separated from her beloved, is telling a confidant how much she misses him. The hand symbols are meant to express her rather tentative frame of mind” (email correspondence, Spring 2011, paraphrased). Out of context, however, what the photograph conveys is not the dance or the emotion of the character but an image of an exotic Other one might see in magazines like *National Geographic*. Comparing this image, which is, granted, a beautiful shot, with the image provided in the 1983 article (*Northern Mosaic*, 1983 7(4): 14; see Figure 5) makes this point clearer. Rather than a professional dancer holding a pose in the midst of a dance, the adherence to conventions of ethnographic portraiture represent here an exotic South Asian subject.

What, then, do these three featured cover photographs of multicultural dance tell us about the discourse of multiculturalism in Thunder Bay during the early 80s, a time when there is a tug between trying to hold on to cultural difference as multiculturalism is being torn apart for its lack of attention to matters of race? *Northern Mosaic* responds, on one level, by featuring photographs of many visible minority dancers to suggest their inclusion and visibility within the mosaic of the city. It is troubling, however, that these photographs exoticize rather than normalize visible minorities in the city, thereby repeating the very problem with multiculturalism expressed by its critiques. Missing from the pages of the newspaper is sufficient attention to the plight of visible minorities. As the photographic images remain outside of a context and lack information, visual representations of multicultural dance are thus used here to celebrate, and thus naturalize, visible minorities as members of just another ethnic group that is now absorbed into the mosaic, as questionable captions, discourse, and omissions challenge the notion of inclusion and showcase instead the very tenuous acceptance of visible minorities as part of the city, and as part of the Canadian mosaic more generally.

Copyright 2011, Batia Stolar and Clara Sacchetti

Acknowledgements

We are grateful to the TBMA for allowing us to reproduce their photographs, the aig+c, Lakehead University for research grants, and Lakehead University Senate Research Committee for monies to defray conference travel costs.

Bibliography

- n.a. T.B.M.A 1972-82: A Ten Year History of the Thunder Bay Multicultural Association* (Thunder Bay, Canada, 1982): 23.
- Dunk, Thomas. *It's A Working Man's Town: Male Working-Class Culture* (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1994).
- Henry, Frances C. Tator, W. Mattis, W., and T. Rees (eds). *The Colour of Democracy: Racism in Canadian Society* (Toronto, Canada: Harcourt Brace and Company, 1995).
- Mackey, Eva. *The House of Difference: Cultural Politics and National Identity in Canada* (London: Routledge, 1999).
- Mirzoeff, Nicholas (ed.). *The Visual Culture Reader, 2nd Edition* (New York: Routledge, 2002).
- Potestio, John and Antonio Pucci (eds). Thunder Bay's People. *Polyphony* 9(2) (1987).
- Sullivan, Rachel. "The (Mis)translation of Masculine Femininity in Rural Space: (Re)reading 'Queer' Women in Northern Ontario, Canada," *thirdspace* 8.2 (2009): np.



Figure 1: *Northern Mosaic* 1975 1(2): cover



Figure 2: *Northern Mosaic* 1981 5(2-3): cover



Figure 3: *Northern Mosaic* 1983 7(2): cover



Figure 4: *Northern Mosaic* 1985 9(2): cover



Figure 5: Photo published in *Northern Mosaic* 1983 7(4): 14.

When the Angels Danced with a Dramaturg Two case studies from the Company of Angels, London (United Kingdom)

Katalin Trencsényi
Eötvös Loránd University, Budapest

Abstract

The role of the dance dramaturg is relatively new in the UK therefore it is worth documenting its development.

The London-based Company of Angels with the Place: London Contemporary Dance School and Sadler's Wells have set up a project for young choreographers, the Choreography for Children 2010 Award, providing them with the chance to work with a dramaturg to create a high quality, new piece for young audiences.

This paper follows the journey of the two winning choreographers from the initial concept to the premiere of the new production, documenting and describing the work of the dramaturg in both projects.

Introduction

In the following I intend to trace the working processes of the development of two short dance pieces for children. My aim is to illustrate through the journey of the choreographer-dramaturg relationship how the role of the dance dramaturg is forming in the UK.

The lack of dance dramaturgs in the United Kingdom

When talking about the establishment of the profession of dramaturgy in the UK, we can date it to 1963, the appointment of Kenneth Tynan as the Literary Manager of the National Theatre under the artistic directorship of Laurence Olivier (Luckhurst, p.152). However, we can only guess when the first dance dramaturg worked in Britain: probably not earlier than this century. The use of dance dramaturgs in the United Kingdom is still sporadic, and dance dramaturgy is, to say the least, a developing field.

“From my perspective the low artistic quality of work in dance in this country is due to problems like the lack of the dramaturg; which more relates to the attitude to dance. There is not as much of a mind-frame that it's a research orientated art form, or that there is even really an art form that could relate or be dissimilar to visual art or any other contemporary art form”, says Robin Dingemans, choreographer.

Another probable reason for the lack of dramaturgs in the rehearsal room is that somehow production dramaturgy per se is the least established strand of dramaturgy in the UK, be it text based theatre or dance.

The lack of dramaturgs working in the rehearsal room has had one major consequence on the practice: this area of the work (floor dramaturgy, dance dramaturgy) has not yet

amassed enough collective experience to constitute a pool of common knowledge for professionals to turn to.

There are no handbooks (published in the UK) available for continuous professional development, and it is only recently that theoretical discourses on the subject have begun.

As a result of this lack of shared knowledge and experience, very often when dramaturgs happen to engage in floor dramaturgy (with a director or a choreographer), two processes go on at the same time. There is the actual working process of developing and staging a piece, along with a mutual learning process, where the choreographer/director and dramaturg explore the possibilities of establishing a relationship, and develop mutually acceptable ways of working.

The CfC project

The project I will consider, the *Choreography for Children Award 2010* was initiated by Emma Gladstone, producer, and it united three London organisations: Sadler's Wells, The Company of Angels (a theatre company devoted to commissioning new and experimental theatre for young audiences), and The Place (London's contemporary dance school) for a three-year long pilot project in order to create two new dance pieces for children.

The aim of this new award was to provide two experienced, professional choreographers with the chance to work alongside a dramaturg (as well as a designer, lighting designer and composer) to create a high quality, new work for young audiences (aged 8–11). The Place provided the dancers (its year three students), and the choreographers had to apply with their own vision for a piece suitable for the target audience.

"There is very little original dance work for children" explains Teresa Ariosto (joint artistic director of the CoA) of their reason for committing themselves to this project.

When forming the project, explains Ariosto, the idea arose that they should find working partners for the choreographers, just as in their previous, new writing project directors were teamed up with writers to help establish a creative dialogue. This prompted the idea to pair up the choreographers with dramaturgs. "I always think about the dramaturg as the person who can connect threads somehow", says Ariosto. They felt "the involvement of a dramaturg to work with would be a key attraction for any creator interested in making eloquent work." (CoA website) They also wanted to create interest in dance dramaturgy and to encourage choreographer-dramaturg relationships with the hope that this might be the start of longer term working relationships.

The winning choreographers were Robin Dingemans, "the young wild man of British dance" (Dance Europa Magazine), and Zoi Dimitriou, a multi-award winning, Athens and London based choreographer. Interestingly both of the choreographers chose 'playing and games' as a theme for their future production. On the other hand, neither of them had choreographed a piece for children before.

This was another aim of the project, explains Ariosto, to 'convert' professionals to creating new pieces for children; to convince them that making a new show for a younger audience can be as challenging and stimulating as creating one for adults.

Preparations

“I don’t think we had any dialogue between our initial meeting and the day before rehearsal”, says Dingemans. As a choreographer, it was his artistic decision, to enter the rehearsal room with a broad concept, and allow all the participants to respond to it creatively, and from this pool of collective contributions the piece would evolve. This has been Dingemans’ preferred way of working which he has developed over a number of years: “No way do I want to write a piece before I have met the people whom I’m working with.”

For this kind of dramaturgy, however, the selection of the dancers is crucial, as it is their individual personalities and creativity which will play a vital part in the creation process, not just their ability to learn and deliver an existing choreography.

When selecting the dancers there were several constraints on the project. Both choreographers had to choose the dancers from the year three students at the Place, young dancers at a very early stage of their careers, and they also had to negotiate with each other in terms of their selection. As a result of this both choreographers noted that only around half the dancers in their group were ones they would have chosen in the first place.

As far as the time for creating the work was concerned, both groups had five weeks in a rehearsal room to make a twenty-minute long new piece. Both choreographers found this time shorter than they ideally would have spent on this kind of work.

Still Dingemans didn’t change his plans to enter the rehearsal room with a “clear slate”, and build everything from what emerges there.

*

Although Dimitriou’s method was not dissimilar to Dingemans’ in terms of building on the dancers’ contribution, she however aimed to develop her concept prior to the rehearsals, and prepare a pool of material to work from.

Therefore Dimitriou and her dramaturg, Jenny Worton immersed themselves in three months of intensive research prior to the rehearsals. Dimitriou describes this stage of their work as theoretical, abstract and general. They began their work with conversations about the concept of cyber space and games. They read philosophical papers about human communication and identity (by Kierkegaard and Zizek, for instance), essays about how long periods of interaction over the internet changes the personality, researched computer games the target audience plays etc.

“In this period of three months we were researching and also trying to clearly identify the questions we wanted to take into the rehearsal room”, says Worton. When describing her role at this stage of the work she emphasises her job of “clarifying and challenging ideas, contributing to research and creating a robust dialogue”.

In the rehearsal room: generating material

Apart from a very broad idea of the work, Dingemans and his creative team went into the rehearsal room with no knowledge of what the piece would be about. “With Robin everything began from the moment of walking into the rehearsal room at the Place. It was terrifying!” recalls the dramaturg of this project, Ruth Little, with a smile. “He absolutely

physically embraces the experience of not knowing, and we had to look for clues. And in that sense I felt completely engaged in the process from the beginning. Also I was anxious and felt responsible, because it was an intense, short period”, says Little.

The nature of this process, where collaborative research is part of the creative process, requires that the dramaturg is almost constantly there. Dingemans’ method was to invite every collaborator into the rehearsal room, democratising the place, developing trust, encouraging people to get to know each other, and to become immediately involved in the process. They discussed the possibilities of what this piece might be about, provocatively (“What is the question?”), pragmatically (“What would and wouldn’t a group of eight year-olds like to see?”), and personally (from the point of view of their memories).

They had discussions, did improvisations and exercises. Dingemans’ aim was not to reveal his own interest and preferences too early, so that he would encourage other possibilities to grow from the work. “It was an unbelievably generous process, specifically because he was working with young dancers”, notes Little, “I don’t think they had ever been given a licence to so fully participate in a process from the beginning”; they were not only given the chance to develop material but also the possibility “to shape the question behind the piece at the same time. Robin really played on their personalities.” Ruth Little emphasises that this approach helped these young dancers develop artistically and personally: “what Robin gave the dancers was to encourage them to believe in their decisions”.

The nature of the work required such a level of involvement from the dramaturg that it was impossible for her to keep a distance. Ruth Little recalls how instead of being objective, she had to rely on intuition.

The rule for the first week was to try things out, experiment and make material, without settling anything. After the fourth day of work, Little sent Dingemans her notes on the research they had done so far, pin-pointing emerging tendencies in the material.

“Part of my relationship with him was about recognition”, says Little, “just chart what I was seeing, and what that suggested to me about the nature and capacity of individual dancers to discover in themselves and between one another, particular kinds of material, emotional energy which might then guide us towards the meaning.”

What Dingemans appreciated about Little’s involvement was her role as a “translator”, that she was able to eloquently verbalise ideas, movements and thoughts emerging in the rehearsal room. She fed in research and inspired him and the company. She contributed ideas as well as helped them to find a way into the material.

When creating the work Dingemans and Little considered the audience’s needs (he wanted to fill the show with energy, chaos, and power), theories of choreography and composition, (they both referred to Jonathan Burrow’s recent handbook on choreography), the seriousness and speciality of the task of creating work for children, but at the same time reminded themselves of a quote from Burrow: “In the end this is just a silly dance”, i.e. not to take themselves too seriously.

*

Dimitriou and Worton “went into the rehearsal room without very much knowledge of what the piece would be, but with a reservoir of material and thoughts and questions”. Dimitriou’s work was similar to Dingemans in that her process was democratic and open

- she gave everybody the opportunity (in fact expected them) to contribute to the piece individually.

“The way Zoi works is that she doesn’t go to the rehearsal room with a clear sense of choreographic material she is going to be using, she very much works with the dancers in the room. She sets tasks, they make work, then she works on with the dancers, trying to pull out and develop the choreography together so that it became more complex and more interesting to her.” This required strong focus and attention from the choreographer.

During this work, explains Dimitriou, what she asked her dramaturg to do was to watch the dancers executing the exercises, make notes, and share these comments with her. Worton describes her role at this stage of the work as: “witnessing, watching, doing a lot of free association between what’s visual and what’s conceptual and how you marry the two.”

However, Dimitriou found it hard switching from working with the dancers (and thinking physically and corporally) to listening to her dramaturg’s notes. “It was challenging to hear somebody saying something you were not ready to hear”, recalls Dimitriou. This was another issue that prompted their protocol meeting, clarifying when would be the best time for her to be able to take on board this information.

“My job was to be in the room, and to watch and to take notes”, explains Worton. “The single thing I found most challenging in the project was that for Zoi it didn’t work when I communicated individually with the dancers. My instinct was to always to say more. To tell them more about the background material, and hers was always to pull away from it. I made this mistake a few times and then we talked about it and identified what was happening.” At this crisis point Worton turned to Little to find out whether this was a general way of working for choreographers. A short talk with Little and further conversations with Dimitriou made Worton to see that the process comes with the individual choreographer. Whereas Dingemans discussed everything with the group, Dimitriou preferred working separately with the dramaturg. This realisation made her suggest that she and Dimitriou should clarify her role.

This moment was a crucial turning point for the dramaturg-choreographer relationship. Both of them recognised the problems, and were eager to resolve them. At this point they had their belated protocol meeting, where they clarified what Dimitriou expected from her dramaturg, what role would be helpful for her. Once they agreed on their way of working, Worton also asked Dimitriou whether in her absence she would explain to the company her role as dramaturg. Dimitriou did that (as well as explaining her own working method to the dancers), and this clarification helped the whole company. “She said: ‘Jenny is there for me’”, explains Worton of what Dimitriou told the dancers. “ ‘She is not there to support you to create work but for me to make a better show.’ ”

Personally she found things challenging because Dimitriou worked against things she took for granted or were used to during her work in theatre. “It was new to me, but once I understood why it made sense to work like this, it liberated me to really enjoy the work”, says Worton.

“Zoi wanted me to be alongside her all the time, and take copious notes; at the end of the day we had a debrief about the day. The reason that worked so well is that Zoi was free to work very practically and specifically in the rehearsal room, aware of that reservoir of material but not necessarily accessing it in the moment. Afterwards she sat

with me and I pulled things out of that body of material and linked them to things I'd seen in the room. The dialogue then she fed into the rehearsal room the following day", says Worton.

Finding structure – connecting the pieces

"Robin is not really fussed about ultimate meaning and interpretation, at least as far as general consensus is concerned. He's naughty in that way, which is one of the things I love about him", says Ruth Little. "It doesn't interest him to be told or to believe that his work has a unified meaning. He lives in uncertainty. The process with him remains entirely open. He's a real 'what if?' creator."

This process however could also be difficult or sometimes frustrating for the other collaborators, especially with an approaching show in mind. As a consequence of this, the dramaturg had to change her role.

It was the dramaturg who began to remind the choreographer to start setting things and to make decisions. "She was pushing me from about week three, to get a structure", recalls Dingemans.

It was time to consider the audience. For this age group, watching a piece which didn't adhere to familiar narrative structures and remained unresolved could be disturbing. The dancers were also becoming tired and needed to know what direction the piece was going in. "I had to encourage Robin to return to his role as the choreographer, as the maker. I was encouraging him also to believe in some of the choices they made, to give them full form." Structurally it meant that the choreography had to find a conceptual flow in and out of order and disorder. At this point Little describes her role as a "navigator". "I was concerned to support him to create a conceptual flow. He could follow a pathway that wasn't a linear one." She notes that there was a slight tension, but a good, creative tension between the two of them around letting meaning become visible. "Maybe there was a more traditional side of me that came out of this process", notes Little with a smile.

*

In the meantime the other creative team arrived at the next stage of their process too. "I didn't have that much to do with the material being constructed, building the pieces, but a lot to do on how they relate to each other, how they should be developed, and how they blend together with the other parts of the creative process, design, and sound, and lighting – although being a budget show, lighting came in much later", explains Worton. She says that her role was to see "the relationship between the pieces: how do you open them out, and then relate them to the production." From the material she saw two ideas developing: a computer world, with each section moving up to the next stage, like some sort of Nintendo game. As this was a very recognisable tendency, this became the structure of the piece.

However there was another tendency visible: some sort of evolution process, but not necessarily an earthly one but from another planet or system. Worton embraced this and tried to convince the choreographer that this could be the overarching idea that would connect the episodic cyber-world pieces, and would give the piece a more organic flow. For her it was an exciting thing to develop: "to move succinctly and fluidly through those

isolated stages”. Once they established this second structuring concept, they talked about it to the designer (Holly Waddington) who then helped this development with materials and ideas. “One of the great joys of the project was that Zoi wanted more input from me than any other ‘lead author’ that I’ve ever worked for”, sums it up Worton.”

Around this stage of the work the producers organised a possibility for both creative teams to workshop and test their ideas in schools. Worton thinks that this was more useful for Dimitriou than for her as she got the confirmation that the piece would work for the target audience. She as a dramaturg however had to acknowledge that by that time there wasn’t much possibility for improvement or changes. Worton discovered another big difference between dramaturgy in text-based theatre and dance dramaturgy: once the piece was set, there was less room for changing, editing and cutting. “I had to accept that within dance once something has been made, it is really difficult to undo it, it is harder than with cutting lines.”

*

The audience appreciated the two shows (*Little Creatures*, chor: Zoi Dimitriou, and *Thinginess, Thingummy, Thingumajig*, chor: Robin Dingemans and the cast), the feedback was positive - a Q&A with the dancers and choreographers was also part of the showing at Sadler’s Wells. The children in the audience understood the theme of the pieces, appreciated the energy, the humour, and noticed the inconsistencies as well.

The audience feedback was part of the project as well as a post-production debriefing with the three producing organisations. Here the creative teams had a chance to discuss openly and frankly the merits and the difficulties with the producers of this pilot project.

Conclusion

When evaluating the CfC project I would like to emphasise that this has been a very unique pilot project, for which first and foremost I should praise and congratulate the organisers and all the participants.

A positive outcome of the project is that it seems it was the beginning of long-term creative relationships between dramaturg and choreographer. Dimitriou had invited three people (including her dramaturg) from her creative team to work with her on her next production, and Dingemans would like to work with Ruth Little in the future too.

I feel it would be too hasty to draw general conclusions about how the dance dramaturg’s role is forming in the UK. It is in very early stages, and all these working experiences and negotiations contribute to that pool of knowledge we will one day call the dance dramaturg’s toolbox.

(Copyright 2011, Katalin Trencsényi)

Acknowledgement

I am very grateful to the Company of Angels, the dramaturgs: Ruth Little and Jenny Worton, and the choreographers: Zoi Dimitriou and Robin Dingemans for speaking frankly to me about their creative processes, including both the high points and the

problems they experienced during this unique pilot project, the *Choreography for Children Award*.

Bibliography

- Behrndt, Synne K (2010): 'Dance, Dramaturgy and Dramaturgical Thinking', *Contemporary Theatre Review*, 20:2, 185 – 196.
- Burrows, Jonathan: *A Choreographer's Handbook*. Routledge, 2010.
- Fuchs, Livia: Mit nevezünk fizikai színháznak? = Színház, 2011. április, p.38-41.
- Luckhurst, Mary: *Dramaturgy – a Revolution in Theatre*, Cambridge University Press, 2006
- Proehl, Geoff: *Toward a Dramaturgical Sensibility. Landscape and Journey*. Associated University Presses, Cranbury, NJ, 2008
- Traub, Susanne: *Dance Dramaturgy - a Critical and Discursive Practice*. (<http://www.goethe.de/kue/tut/tre/en7179326.htm>)

DVD

U Review, CfC Award 2010, recorded at The Place on 23 February 2011, Producer: Emma Gladstone

Web resources

Connecting Conversations – Sadlers Wells, 2008,
http://www.hollowayartsfestival.co.uk/?location_id=2&item=118
Ruth Little - body:language series talks at Sadlers Wells, 2009
<http://www.sadlerswellsdance.com/#/video/64473797001>
www.companyofangels.co.uk
www.robindingemans.com
www.zoidimitriou.com

Research interviews made by Katalin Trencsényi

Teresa Ariosto, joint artistic director, Company of Angels, London – 28. 01.2011, London
Robin Dingemans, choreographer – 23.03.2011, London
Zoi Dimitriou, choreographer – 08.06.2011, via skype
Ruth Little, dramaturg – 14.06.2011, London
Jenny Worton, dramaturg – 18.05.2011, London

Address for correspondence:

katalin@dramaturgy.co.uk

Sidi Larbi Cherkaoui's fractured postcolonial dramaturgy

Lise Uytterhoeven

University of Surrey

Abstract

When investigating dance dramaturgy, half-Flemish, half-Moroccan choreographer Sidi Larbi Cherkaoui's dance theatre is of interest in many ways. A multitude of eclectic movement, music, spoken word, visual design, and props, are woven together into complex webs of meaning. The international cast of performers integrate divergent cultural elements from their personal backgrounds into the work. However, a fracturing takes place at the level of the spectator's dramaturgical interaction with the staged work. I argue that certain choices Cherkaoui makes in the composition of his works deliberately aim to complicate signification. Deliberate non-translation and hidden messages imply that the spectator is explicitly invited to actively work towards signification by engaging with this material in a post-performance dramaturgical discourse. By including cultural elements and languages, which cannot be assumed the spectator understands, Cherkaoui exposes his/her cultural bias and limitations, encouraging him/her to bridge the gap between cultures. Ultimately, he denies the burden of translation in a postcolonial way, and the burden of signification in a postmodern way. It is no longer clear who knows, who does not know, and what is at stake in the knowing. Cherkaoui's fractured postcolonial dramaturgy works against approaches of dramaturgy as translation, embodied in the figure of the dramaturg as a facilitator between artist and audience (Turner & Behrndt 2008). Instead, it can be located in a recent Flemish discourse on new dramaturgy which problematizes the figure of the dramaturg, arguing for a shared responsibility of everyone involved through dramaturgical dialogue (De Vuyst 1999; Van Imschoot 2003).

Introduction

At the start of this paper, I would like to clarify that I will be using dramaturgy as a twofold function in line with Marianne Van Kerkhoven's use of the term in her seminal 1994 essay 'Looking Without Pencil in the Hand' in *Theaterschrift*. On the one hand, it refers to both 'the internal structure of a work' and to the dialogic and 'collaborative process of putting the work together' (Turner and Behrndt 2008:17). On the other hand, it also implies an analytical function in the interplay between the work and the spectator.

When investigating dance dramaturgy, Sidi Larbi Cherkaoui's dance theatre is of interest in many ways. A multitude of eclectic movement, music, spoken word, visual design, and props, are woven together into complex webs of meaning. The international cast of performers integrate divergent cultural elements from their personal backgrounds into the work. In this paper I will argue that Cherkaoui's postcolonial choreography implements a fracturing on many levels, that of the body, of the mise-en-scene, and of the dramaturgy. Fracture seems a useful paradigm to articulate how spectators engage and

interact dramaturgically with the staged work, whereas signification is contested and problematised.

zero degrees: the body-in-pieces and the dance-in-pieces

zero degrees (2005) was co-choreographed and performed by Cherkaoui and Akram Khan. Both dancers come from a mixed cultural background, Cherkaoui being the son of a Flemish mother and a Moroccan father, growing up in Belgium, and Khan growing up in London in a family of Bangladeshi origin. They used this sense of being in between two cultures as a starting point for the choreography. The music score for four live musicians is by Nitin Sawhney, a renowned British-Asian composer, and the sculpture, two lifesize latex dummies, casts of the dancers' bodies, is by Turner Prize winner Antony Gormley.

Towards the end of the work there are numerous images that evoke dead bodies. This is striking because it premiered only a few days after the London 07/07 bombings in 2005, which made its theme of cultural confrontation all the more relevant. Khan's latex dummy has been cut up into different body parts, yet still connected, and is hence incapable of standing up like Cherkaoui's dummy, which is fortified by an internal metal skeleton. Both Khan and the latex cast of his body are lying on the floor in a disjointed fashion. This image of *le corps morcelé*, or the body-in-bits-and-pieces or fragmented body, also occurs in the psychoanalytical theory by Lacan. *Le corps morcelé* refers to a stage in early child development. Before the mirror stage, a child is only aware of the different parts of its body separately and not as a totality, or unified self. Once the mirror stage has taken place, the child fantasises retroactively about its own body in bits and pieces. This can occur in dreams and is usually accompanied by anxiety. Encountering images of fragmented bodies, like for example that of a dismembered Barbie doll, can be unsettling for people, and it is precisely that which occurs here in *zero degrees*. In an awkward trio, Cherkaoui tests what would happen if he kicked the dummy: the result is visible in Khan's body too. He drags them around and lifts them up on his shoulders, as if he was moving corpses.

Art historian Linda Nochlin (1994) reads the occurrence of the fragmented or broken body as a metaphor of modernity. She identified that late 18th century western European visual art, around the time of the French Revolution, is characterised by a visual rhetoric of the body as fragmented, mutilated, destroyed, dismembered and, echoing the newly devised killing machine – the guillotine – decapitated. This is the result of a sense of loss that comes with modernity, a loss of a state of 'felicity and totality which must now inevitably be displaced into the past or the future: nostalgia or Utopia' (Nochlin 1994:8). She talks of 'that sense of social, psychological, even metaphysical fragmentation that so seems to mark modern experience – a loss of wholeness, a shattering of connection, a destruction or disintegration of permanent value that is so universally felt in the nineteenth century as to be often identified with modernity itself' (Nochlin 1994:23-24). As well as completely losing the coherence of the body, the representation of the fragmented carries an implicit message of castration, a disempowering of the hegemonic. This is amplified in the relegation of Khan's impotent dummy to, what Nochlin terms, 'the realm of the horizontal', which, in contrast to the vertical plane representing the

coherence of form, is ‘desublimatory, associated with “base materialism”’, or ‘the realm of the object’ (Nochlin 1994:20-22). Extending her observations to the work of postmodern artist Cindy Sherman and others, Nochlin sees the occurrence of the body-in-pieces as rendering suspect ‘the very notion of a unified, unambiguously gendered subject’, or perhaps, more broadly and in reference to Cherkaoui’s and Khan’s choreographing of the broken body, a critique of identity which can no longer be seen as singular, fixed and straightforward.

Fracturing takes place on another level as well in *zero degrees*, that of the mise-en-scene. The work is structured loosely around the narrative of Khan’s story of his trip to India. However, this narrative is fragmented and by no means the only source of meaning. The other layers of the performance text are equally part of the signifying process. A recent research project funded by the AHRC at Goldsmiths, University of London, called ‘Beyond the linear narrative’, is exploring fractured narrative as an expression of the postcolonial era, in which the imperial, unified world view is contested and destabilised, and this is reflected in theatrical practice.

Another strand developed by Nochlin is a sense of fragmentation visible in late 19th century Impressionist painting, characterised by fluidity, vaporousness and centrifugality, with its ‘divergent directions of movement and empty centre’ (1994:25). Cherkaoui’s work is rife with multiple actions happening simultaneously, often at the edges of the stage, fragmenting the space into different realities which often seem unconnected except for their juxtaposition. [Show example from Myth 1h26’00”-1h26’50”]

Temporally, as well, the works are episodic, strung together, without coherence or unity that typifies narrative work. There is a sense of arbitrariness and contingency about the way these fragments are put together in the performance work, which calls into question the identity of the artwork and the notion of deliberate intention of a single author. Any of Cherkaoui’s works are composed through collaboration, within a spirit of collectiveness, although Cherkaoui does retain final editorial responsibility. Therefore, the notion of the artist as author is undermined and replaced by a working ethics of collaboration and shared responsibility. This resonates well with the idea of de-centred dramaturgy, a term coined by Anny Mokotow at the University of Melbourne, discussing the collaboration between Cherkaoui and dramaturg Guy Cools. I will contextualise this dramaturgic practice later within the Flemish discourse on dramaturgy. However, first I will explore the implications of the fracturing of the mise-en-scene for spectators’ engagement with the work.

The fragmentation and fracturing of Khan’s latex body, the body-in-pieces, is echoed in the fragmentation of both the narrative and the mise-en-scene of the whole of *zero degrees*, the dance-in-pieces. Like Lacan’s retroactive fantasy of the body-in-pieces, spectators are also oscillating between thoughts of fragments of the theatre performance and the totality of it. This might help us think about how we engage with a performance after the event, in the act of analysis. As Patrice Pavis (2003) and Janet Lansdale (formerly Adshead 1988; Adshead-Lansdale 1999) argue, the spectator should engage in linking the fragment, or the minimal unit or component of the dance performance, to the whole and back again.

A dramaturgy of non-translation

In Cherkaoui's works, texts are spoken in many different languages, including Dutch, French, English, Swedish, Slovakian, Portuguese, Japanese, Icelandic, Afrikaans, and Arabic. These tend to be the native languages of the performers he collaborates with, selected precisely because of their diverging cultural identities. These texts are often included without translation, and as a result spectators who do not know the array of languages spoken are left to their own devices to 'make sense' of their function in the overarching dramaturgy of the works. This resolute act of non-translation problematises, and even undermines, the signification process. Some layers of meaning appear hidden to the spectator, who is incapable of accessing them. In this way, I would propose that the dramaturgy, like the *mise-en-scene*, is fractured, broken. Cherkaoui's multi-layered, polyglot works seem to require a specific kind of dramaturgical labour from the spectator. This labour takes the form of further thinking and conversations about aspects of the work which are intriguing, but perhaps not immediately clear during the performance, in what I would term a post-performance dramaturgical discourse. Engaging in a transcultural post-performance discourse confronts the spectator with the limits of his or her personal cultural make-up, and destabilises it as a basis upon which to grasp the multiple dramaturgical layers of the work. Therefore, Cherkaoui's dance theatre demonstrates postcolonial as well as poststructuralist approaches to making theatre.

In *Rien de Rien* (2000) I became fascinated by the untranslated language used on stage. For example, in this photo there is Arabic writing on the back wall, an exotic looking word or phrase which is protruding from the wall in bas-relief. When one of the performers begins to clamber on and across that writing, I begin to wonder what the writing says, what it means. Only later, when reading an interview with the choreographer, do I find out that it translates as 'There is nothing more seductive than the forbidden' (Hutera 2001:62), which adds a dramaturgical layer to the performance, but one which I could not grasp while watching it. Another example can be found in *Tempus Fugit* (2004), where Lisi Estaras and Ali Ben Lotfi Thabet have a heated argument. Estaras speaks Hebrew, while Thabet speaks Arabic. Apart from shards of the conversation which become apparent through body language, intonation and recognizable words such as 'harmonica' and 'impotent, its precise content remains obscure to many spectators. [Show example from *Myth* 1h06'15"-1h07'15"]

The non-translation of this Japanese speech was originally mystifying. After my first viewing of the work, I asked performer Satoshi Kudo what he was saying. Months later, after I had become more and more intrigued by this scene in subsequent viewings, he and I sat down to translate the Japanese text into English and worked our way through the text word for word. Kudo listened to his own speech, played on his laptop, using in-ear headphones, pausing after every half-sentence. I wrote down Kudo's translation in my notebook.

It can be assumed that the majority in the audience will not understand the language and therefore be prevented from grasping the significance of this text. Cherkaoui can thus be seen not to favour Western languages, confronting the spectators with the limits of their own knowledge. Hans-Thies Lehmann explains that in postdramatic theatre the incomprehensibility of foreign languages, the polyglossia working towards the musicalisation of language, will leave the spectators' desire to understand frustrated

(Lehmann 2006:147). The spectator then becomes part of a ‘shared space of language problems in which the actors as well as the spectators experience the blockades of linguistic communication’ (Lehmann 2006:147). This frustration and incapability, however, might lead to the neglect of pertinent issues. Only by pursuing their curiosity, for example by asking questions in a post-performance talk, can spectators gain a more complete understanding of the obscured dramaturgic content. This seems to be encouraged by Cherkaoui, who is careful not to impose any preferred readings of his material, but at the same time happy to answer questions spectators may have. The programme booklet for *Myth*, written by dramaturg Guy Cools, offers additional information and even offers avenues for the audience’s own further reading and research. Cherkaoui does not convey messages straightforwardly but encodes and encrypts them beyond simple signification.

Recent voices in translation studies have emphasised the limitations of translation and the politics of translation. Lawrence Venuti’s (1999) concept of ‘foreignising’ implies a drawing attention to the act of translation through playful and rebellious translations which cannot become invisible, and therefore cannot uphold the illusion inherent in ‘domestication’. However, for Cherkaoui, opting not to translate is a valid and powerful choice available to him, and the absence of translation precisely highlights the ethical problems inherent in translation. What does it mean for Cherkaoui to renounce the burden of responsibility of translation, which is often put on the Other, the immigrant, to translate for the benefit of the dominant culture? Ellen Welcker (2008) posits that ‘Colonial translation is a one-way exchange, a toll of the dominant culture to assimilate myths and histories of the colonized culture and altering customs, phrases and intent so that these stories fit within the recognized confines of the “new” culture.’ As a postcolonial figure, it is no wonder that Cherkaoui refuses to translate. Alternative, postcolonial voices are heard in his works, but the key to accessing their message is placed in the hands of the spectator.

Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, discussing the politics of translation, criticises the impulse of some feminists to focus on the idea that women across cultures have something in common (1993:191). She argues that this kind of women’s solidarity is only the first step, but that learning the woman’s mother-tongue is the second step. Sharing a language means sharing a world view, or how one makes sense of things, and serves as a ‘preparation for the intimacy of cultural translation’ (Spivak 1993:192). Spivak asserts that ‘if you are interested in talking about the other, and/or in making a claim to be the other, it is crucial to learn other languages’ (1993:192). Cherkaoui bypasses the function of translation, which tends to mask the fact that we cannot ever understand the other, and instead resolutely draws attention to the fact that spectator and performer (most probably) do not share the same language. Without translation, the spectator is prevented from laying claim to the other, not even in the name of solidarity.

Translation also begs the question of intended audience: for whom are we translating? What will be the target language? Even if we put aside the issue of international touring, Cherkaoui’s non-translation acknowledges the fact that there can never be a culturally homogenous audience, or a single target language. This is mirrored in the multiplicity of source languages used on stage.

Certain choices Cherkaoui makes in the composition of his works deliberately aim to complicate signification. Deliberate non-translation and hidden messages imply that the

spectator is explicitly invited to actively work towards signification by engaging with this material in a post-performance dramaturgical discourse. By including cultural elements and languages, which cannot be assumed the spectator understands, Cherkaoui exposes his/her cultural bias and limitations, encouraging him/her to bridge the gap between cultures. Paradoxically, while compromising the conventional mode of communication based on a shared language, Cherkaoui actually aims to improve the understanding between people of different cultural backgrounds through his choreography (Olaerts 2008:17). He acknowledges, however, that this is utopian. The choice of non-translation can therefore be seen as preceding the first step, in the Spivakian sense, of working towards the intimacy of cultural translation. It is perhaps interesting to note that, in April of this year, Cherkaoui was honoured by UNESCO for ‘promoting dialogue’ across cultures. Ultimately, he denies the burden of translation in a postcolonial way, and the burden of signification in a postmodern way. It is no longer clear who knows, who does not know, and what is at stake in the knowing.

Contextualising Cherkaoui’s fractured dramaturgy in the Flemish discourse on dramaturgy

Cherkaoui’s fractured postcolonial dramaturgy works against approaches of dramaturgy as translation and mediation, embodied in the figure of the dramaturg as a facilitator between artist and audience (Turner & Behrndt 2008). Instead, it can be located in a recent Flemish discourse on new dramaturgy which problematizes the figure of the dramaturg, arguing for a shared responsibility of everyone involved through dramaturgical dialogue (De Vuyst 1999; Van Imschoot 2003). I would like to take some time to examine the emergence and characteristics of this discourse.

The concept of ‘new dramaturgy’ emerged from a wave of significant collaborations between choreographers and dramaturgs within the Flemish contemporary dance scene since the 1980s (Van Imschoot 2003:58). The artistic collaborations were paralleled by theoretical discourse in theatre journals, such as *Theaterschrift*, *Etcetera*, and *Women & Performance* about the nature of this new kind of dramaturgical work. Van Kerkhoven’s (1994) seminal text, ‘Looking without a pencil in the hand’, which is published in four languages, proposes her professional experiences as a model for dramaturgical working methods and is generally regarded as the starting point of the discourse. It triggered a chain of critical responses and therefore created a fertile climate for consideration of the new developments. Van Kerkhoven deems the dramaturg to be responsible for facilitating the relationship between audiences and the work:

By means of his/ her writing about a production, the dramaturge smooths [sic] the way towards its public airing. Whatever he/ she writes must be ‘correct’, it must describe the work in an evident and organic way and lend it a guiding hand on the way to its life in society, a life which often has a destructive effect on its meaning.

Van Kerkhoven 1994:144

In the final paragraph she briefly discusses the increasing degree of ‘complexity’ of dramaturgical processes and argues for a response in managing this complexity by using ‘all the senses’ and ‘intuition’ (Van Kerkhoven 1994:146). Six years after Van Kerkhoven’s key text, the ‘Conversations on Choreography’ discussion group, including Scott deLahunta and Andre Lepecki, re-articulate and tackle some misconceptions about ‘the purpose of the dance dramaturge’: this is not to ‘help make the dance more understandable to an audience’ or ‘to provide an interpretation or explanation of the dance for the audience’ (deLahunta 2000:24). In a series of articles in a range of theatre journals, other practitioners begin to articulate an anxiety about a legitimising and didactic function embodied in the figure of the dramaturg, resisting his or her privileged position. Hildegard De Vuyst argues that in some contexts, ‘the dramaturge is the embodiment of a shortcoming’ (1999:66), compensating for a perceived lack of capability within the artist. De Vuyst and Miriam Van Imschoot agree that rather than singling out the dramaturgical function in one person, artists should be supported in a broader dramaturgical context, in which ‘an ongoing dialogue about the work’ can be held between multiple partners ‘without the mediating filter of “the” dramaturg’ (2003:63). ‘You do not need a dramaturg to achieve the dramaturgical’ (2003:65). In a type of work which is strongly based on collaboration, the performer then becomes a significant partner in sharing the dramaturgical responsibility, being key in ‘creat[ing] a bridge between choreographer and the public’ in order for ‘the dramaturgical vision of the choreographer [to] becom[e] clear’ (deLahunta 2000:23).

These reflections by dramaturgs on their professional practice raise awareness around issues such as the political implications of the division of labour within choreographer/dramaturg collaboration, developing a sort of mechanism for self-regulation and promoting good practice. Through proposing these alternative working methods, the dramaturgy discourse becomes a device through which theatrical and choreographic practice is articulated.

So, where does Cherkaoui fit in in this discourse? Initially, when he worked with Les Ballets C. de la B., he collaborated with dramaturgs including De Vuyst and Isnelle de Riviera. Certainly, Cherkaoui subscribes to the idea of a shared dramaturgy and a broad dramaturgical context. He has worked with and without dramaturgs over the past 11 years. For *zero degrees* (2005), co-choreographed with Akram Khan, and *Myth* (2007) Cherkaoui worked with Guy Cools, whose de-centred dramaturgy I mentioned earlier. Cools (2006) sees the role of the dramaturg to help the artist articulate their own performance language and then to help determine the deep and surface structure of the work, but he tends to see the role of the dramaturg in the rehearsal room as quite passive, letting things unfold and not forcing developments, instilling some kind of self-reflexivity in the artists by merely being a presence in the rehearsal room. I think that especially in *Myth*, this passive dramaturgy can be felt in the staged work, *Myth* being characterised by over two overwhelming hours of plurality, over-population and perhaps under-edited simultaneity. The absence of translation in this fractured dramaturgy then coincides here with Cools’s non-invasive approach to dramaturgy.

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank SDHS for awarding me a Graduate Student Travel Grant and the Standing Conference of University Drama Departments (SCUDD) in the UK for awarding me a Glynne Wickham Scholarship. Also, many thanks to the Department of Dance, Film and Theatre at the University of Surrey and to the Arts and Humanities Research Council (AHRC) for the additional travel bursaries I received from them. These grants and bursaries have enabled me to attend this conference, which has provided a crucial opportunity to exchange thoughts on dance dramaturgy as part of my doctoral research, across the Atlantic.

Copyright 2011, Lise Uytterhoeven

Bibliography

- Adshead, J. (ed.) (1988) *Dance Analysis: Theory and Practice*. London: Dance Books.
- Adshead-Lansdale, J. (1999) Creative Ambiguity: Dancing Intertexts in *Dancing Texts: Intertextuality in Interpretation*. London: Dance Books, 1-25.
- Adshead-Lansdale, Janet (ed.) (1999) *Dancing Texts: Intertextuality in Interpretation*. London: Dance Books.
- Cools, Guy (2006) On Dance Dramaturgy: A Dramaturgy of the Body. Montréal. [Unpublished document]
- De Vuyst, Hildegard (1999) Een Dramaturgie van het Gebrek: Paradoxen en Dubbelzinnigheden. *Etcetera* Issue 17, No.68, 65-66.
- deLahunta, Scott (ed.) (2000) Dance Dramaturgy: Speculations and Reflections. *Dance Theatre Journal* Vol.16, No.1, 20-25.
- deLahunta, Scott et al. (2003) Conversations on Choreography. *Performance Research* Vol.8, No.4, 61-70.
- Hutera, D. (2001) The Razor's Edge. *Dance Now*. Vol. 10, No. 1, Spring 2001, 62-66.
- Lehmann, Hans-Thies (2006) *Postdramatic Theatre*. London: Routledge.
- Nochlin, L. (1994) *The Body in Pieces: The Fragment as a Metaphor of Modernity*. New York: Thames & Hudson.
- Olaerts, A. (2008) Marokkaan uit Hoboken én Choreograaf van het Jaar. *Vacature*. 31 October, 14-17.
- Pavis, P. (2003) *Analyzing Performance: Theater, Dance, and Film*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press.
- Spivak, G. C. (1993) *Outside in the Teaching Machine*. London: Routledge.
- Turner, Cathy & Behrndt, Synne, K. (2008) *Dramaturgy and Performance*. Basingstoke: Palgrave MacMillan.
- Van Imschoot, Myriam (2003) Anxious Dramaturgy. *Women & Performance: A Journal of Feminist Theory* Issue 26, No.13:2, 57-68.
- Van Kerkhoven, Marianne (1994) Looking Without Pencil in the Hand. *Theaterschrift* No.5-6, 140-148.
- Venuti, Lawrence (1995) *The Translator's Invisibility: A History of Translation*. London: Routledge.
- Welcker, E. (2008) Only Poems Can Translate Poems: On the Impossibility and Necessity of Translation. *The Quarterly Conversation*. Available from: <http://quarterlyconversation.com/only-poems-can-translate-poems-on-the-impossibility-and-necessity-of-translation> [Accessed on 23 July 2010]

Address for correspondence:

Lise Uytterhoeven
13 Gunhild Court
Cambridge
CB1 8RF
United Kingdom
l.uytterhoeven@surrey.ac.uk

Staging Dance in English Renaissance Drama

Emily F. Winerock

University of Toronto

Abstract

*Although dance in the English court masque has recently received some much deserved attention, dance references in plays of the same period have remained relatively unexplored. This paper addresses this silence by examining dance staging in dramatic works by Shakespeare and his contemporaries, demonstrating how playwrights used dancing to convey a range of character traits and to further plot developments, as well as to denote love, lust, and celebration. The paper concludes with observations on staging movement in modern-day productions of early plays, drawing on the author's experience as dance consultant for the Toronto-based Shakespeare and the Queen's Men project.**

My first experience with dance dramaturgy occurred while I was an undergraduate student at Princeton University. I was taking an English seminar on *The Winter's Tale* (first performed c.1611, published 1623). The semester-long course examined the Shakespeare play in great detail, paying equal attention to text and performance. The final project was to stage our own version of the play, complete with music, costumes, and lighting. As the seminar only had nine students—eight women and one man—we all played many roles, both within the play and as the production crew. I ended up as costumer and choreographer, in addition to playing Florizel, the dashing young prince, and numerous bit parts. As costumer, I bought some fabric, cut it up, and draped or tied pieces on my fellow actors to represent sashes, capes, and skirts. My responsibilities as choreographer, however, were not so easily fulfilled.

The stage directions for *The Winter's Tale* call for two dances. However, Shakespeare does not describe them. The stage directions simply specify a dance of shepherds and shepherdesses and a dance of twelve satyrs (coincidentally the subject of Anne Daye's early dance panel presentation and workshop yesterday). What was I supposed to do? What had Shakespeare had in mind? What had other choreographers done? A research trip to the library turned up a single book, Alan Brissenden's *Shakespeare and the Dance* (1981). While Brissenden's exposition of the significance of dancing to plot and characterisation in Shakespeare plays was interesting, it was not much use choreographically. Brissenden mentions in passing that the shepherds and shepherdesses may have danced an "orderly brawl" and that the satyrs' dance was "grotesque, with wild leaps and outlandish gestures."¹ However, he offers no explanations as to how to do an "orderly brawl" or what exactly might be meant by "outlandish gestures." There was also the problem of numbers. The dance of satyrs calls for twelve men

* I do not directly address my work as a dance consultant for the Shakespeare and the Queen's Men project in this paper, but that experience informs my readings of Marston and his contemporaries' stage directions.

to enter into a scene in which over half a dozen characters are already on stage. As our cast only had nine people, this was simply not possible. In the end, I decided to cut the dance entirely.

The dance of shepherds and shepherdesses fared only somewhat better. As I was quite at a loss as to how to choreograph a “brawl,” I had to make something up. My creation was a variant on the only social dance I knew—swing dancing—slowed down a lot and dressed up with some “historical” touches inspired by Franco Zeffirelli’s film of *Romeo and Juliet* (1968), which I had seen in junior high school. This solution was successful in the sense that it allowed Perdita, the shepherdess princess, to move in such a way that the onstage spectator’s comment, “she dances featly,” did not seem wholly inappropriate. However, as an historically informed, archaeological, or unconstrained performance (to borrow Ken Pierce’s categories from yesterday) it was a dismal failure. This dance did *not* approximate the dance that would have been done in the original 1611 performances. It did *not* feature the dances of real shepherds and shepherdesses. It did not even offer a modern re-envisioning designed to convey some sort of essential message to a modern-day audience. It was simply a dance I made up; a placeholder so that there would be a dance in the performance for the place in the script that said “*Dance of Shepherds and Shepherdesses*.”

I must admit that there were moments when I blamed Shakespeare for my lackluster results. If it mattered what dance the shepherds and shepherdesses did, shouldn’t he have given some sort of choreographic description, or the name of the dance, or at least the dance type? And since Shakespeare’s plays have been performed almost continuously for over 400 years, shouldn’t there be written records of what other people had done for those dances? Eventually my curiosity won out, leading to further research, discovering the world of early dance reconstruction, learning what the mysterious “brawl” was, and eventually writing undergraduate, M.A., and Ph.D. theses on sixteenth- and seventeenth-century dance. Along the way, I also discovered a handful of English playwrights that do tell us what dances they had in mind.

There are no known English dancing manuals from this time period, but there are choreographic notes on the old measures (a series of English processional dances) and two dancing manuals written by French dancing masters in the employ of George Villiers, the Marquess and future Duke of Buckingham. Unfortunately, these sources lack clear explanations of steps, floor patterns, and music, which can make reconstructions difficult. Therefore, it is helpful to use as supplementary sources some of the more fully developed French and Italian dancing manuals—most notably Thoinot Arbeau’s *Orchésographie* (1589), Cesare Negri’s *Le Gratie d’Amore* (1602), and Fabritio Caroso’s *Il Ballarino* (1581) and *La Nobilità di Dame* (1600). These manuals give instructions on etiquette, explain each of the dance steps, and provide a variety of choreographies with accompanying music. Many of the dances named in English Renaissance plays are described in these dancing manuals, so when used cautiously, these manuals enable reasonable hypotheses about, and reconstructions of, dancing for English Renaissance plays.

Dancing in English Renaissance plays is usually indicated by infamously brief and cryptic phrases such as, “A Daunce” or “*They Daunce*,” but there are a few plays by contemporaries of Shakespeare that provide more detailed stage directions or give choreographic descriptions in the surrounding text. Among these, plays by John Marston

are notably overrepresented. Alan Dessen and Leslie Thomson's *A Dictionary of Stage Directions in English Drama, 1580-1642* (1999) collates stage directions from all known extant plays of the period. The dance entries indicate that John Marston was more likely than any other playwright to name the dances that were to be performed, rather than merely indicating that there should be a dance. Scores of playwrights called for "a dance" or "dancing," but Marston contributed twenty-five percent of the stage directions calling for a coranto, fifty percent for a galliard, thirty-three percent for a volta, thirty percent for the measures, and twenty-nine percent of the stage directions specifying a morris dance.² As there are only ten surviving Marston plays (eleven including *Eastward Ho!*), this is quite an impressive showing.

Marston's stage directions primarily refer to court dances like the galliard, the volta (or lavolta), and the coranto. The galliard, an athletic and physically demanding dance in triple time, was also known as the cinquepace or sinkapace because it consisted of five steps --- four kicks and a closing jump, preferably embellished with a capriole or caper. The caper was a high jump in which the dancer quickly moved his legs forward and back while in the air, similar to the beats in ballet jumps.³ One man or one couple generally danced the galliard, and for the latter, the typical galliard figure featured "the alternation of the gentleman and the lady, each doing a variation to show off before the other."⁴ The galliard was one of the most popular dances in the late Renaissance, and innovation and improvisation were expected. In fact Cesare Negri's *Le Gratie d'Amore* has more than seventy pages on the galliard while Livio Lupi provides two hundred galliard step variations in *Libro di Gagliarda* (1607).⁵

John Marston mentions the galliard and the caper frequently, and gives stage directions for at least two galliards. In *Jack Drum's Entertainment* (1601), Sir Edward calls for dancing on the green to celebrate thwarting Pasquill's suicide and Planet's murder:

... Come, sound Musicke there,
What Gallants have you ne're a Page can entertaine
This pleasing time with some French brawle or Song?
What shall we have a Galliard?⁶

The subsequent stage direction simply states, "A Galliard," but we can glean a bit more from the text. Sir Edward initially inquires if there is a page who could entertain them, and after the dance he says, "Good Boy Ifaith, I would thou hadst more roome" (Act V, p. 61). Clearly, one person, a boy or young man, danced this galliard, rather than a couple.

Marston's play *The Insatiate Countess* (1613, also attributed to Lewis Machin and William Barkstead) likewise contains a man's solo galliard. The dance is part of a masque performed within the play. After the masquers have danced with the ladies in Act II, the host, Roberto, invites them to sit and rest: "Sit, ladies, sit, you have had standing long."⁷ Guido, one of the masquers, in the meantime, entertains them with a dance. The stage direction says, "*Guido dances a Lavolta, or a Galliard, and / in the midst of it falleth into the bride's lap, / but straight leaps up, and danceth it out*" (II.i.154.1-3). In other words, Guido starts dancing, falls onto a spectator, gets back up, and finishes the dance.

This is a curious instruction. It narrates several actions, and is particularly long and detailed for a description of dancing. Perhaps this is because of its importance; Marston uses the fall to further the plot. Guido falls into the lap of Isabella, who promptly falls in

love with him. As Isabella is the bride being honoured by the masque, and the groom is someone else entirely, the dancing leads to a key plot twist. Moreover, that Guido picks himself up again and continues dancing also reveals a great deal about his personality; he remains focused in spite of mishaps and recovers gracefully from a fall. Finally, the scenario gives clues about blocking and choreography. Isabella must be sitting close enough to the dance floor that Guido is able to fall into her lap, while the actor playing Guido must be especially aware of his movements in space so as to fall in the right place at the right time.

What is confounding to the dance historian, however, is the first phrase: “*Guido dances a Lavolta, or a Galliard.*” The volta was the most scandalous and risqué dance in the Renaissance canon. Some dancing masters like Thoinot Arbeau questioned whether it ought to be danced at all: “I leave it to you to judge whether it is a becoming thing for a young girl to take long strides and separations of the legs, and whether in this lavolta both honour and health are not involved and at stake.”⁸ The volta’s association with licentiousness would explain why Marston suggests it as the dance that feeds Isabella’s illicit love for Guido, except for one problem. The volta, according to all known sources, was a couple dance: “the couple travels about the room then revolves on the spot, with the gentleman lifting his lady into the air and helping her up with his thigh.”⁹ It would be quite difficult for a gentleman to dance a volta by himself. It makes much more sense that Guido would have danced a galliard. Why Marston, who seems quite familiar with a variety of dances, would even suggest the volta as an option for a man’s solo remains a mystery.¹⁰

Another galliard, or rather some galliard steps, occurs in *The Malcontent* (1604). The character Guerrino describes a supposedly simple dance, “Biancha’s Brawl,” to his fellow courtiers:

Why, 'tis but singles on the left, two on the right,
three doubles forward, a traverse of six round; do this
twice, three singles side, galliard trick-of-twenty, coranto-
pace; a figure of eight, three singles broken down, come
up, meet, two doubles, fall back, and then honor.¹¹

Some of these steps such as singles and doubles are common to most dances of the period, and figures of eight, meeting, and falling back are typical movement patterns. Similarly, most courtly dances end with an honour, or bow. However, very few of these steps are associated with the branle. Rather they represent a smorgasbord of steps from different courtly and country dances.¹²

The stage directions suggest that the other courtiers dance the steps as Guarino describes. Having attempted to reconstruct this dance, I can confirm the impossibility of dancing the named steps in the time allotted. However, the spastic and abbreviated results if one tries are hilarious for the audience. Embracing the scene’s comic potential gives a very different reading from Philip Finkelpearl’s interpretation of the same passage: “Life in the palace is imaged by a symbolic dance ... a “brawle”—the pun alludes to a complex French dance—resembling in its meaningless intricacy and confusion a “maze” where “honor” is lost.”¹³ Aside from the problem of defining the branle as a complex French dance when it was known for its simplicity and rusticity, Finkelpearl’s view is theoretically defensible. However, dramatically, it does not work. Stressing “meaningless intricacy and confusion”

undermines the scene's humorousness, and implies that Finkelpearl does not realize that (a) the scene is supposed to be funny, and (b) "Biancha's Branle" is not a real branle but a fantastical collage of different dances designed to literally and figuratively trip up the courtiers who are trying to follow Guerrino's explanation. Finkelpearl's reading exemplifies the misinterpretations that can occur when scholars are ignorant of the nuances of Renaissance dance steps.

John Marston might be the playwright who most frequently specifies dances, but he was by no means the only playwright to do so. In John Day's *Law-Trickes* (1608), the playwright describes devils dancing, a not uncommon phenomenon in early modern plays, but he adds to the usual description the detail of what dance his devils perform.¹⁴ In Act IV, the courtier Julse tells Duke Ferneze about the strange doings of his son, Polymetes, who has devils as regular visitors:

I tell you my Lord, comming a bruptly as your honor or any else may do to the Princes chamber, about some ordinarie service, a found him in his study, and a company of botlnos'd Devils dauncing the Irish hay about him, which on the sudden so startled the poore boy, as a cleane lost his wittes, and ever since talkes thus idle, as your Excelence hath heard him.¹⁵

In this passage, the playwright through the character of Julse specifies that the devils dance an Irish hay. The hay was a dance figure in which dancers wove in and out of each other in the manner of modern-day maypole dancers; the hay could be danced in a circle or in a line with as few as three dancers.¹⁶ There is no known choreography for a specifically Irish hay, but it was apparently a lively and active dance with devilish connotations. In Thomas Dekker's *A Strange Horse-Race* (1613), damned souls in Hell dance "an infernall Irish-hay, full of mad and wilde changes."¹⁷ The choreography involved "skipping to and fro," and the dancing souls "did bobbe up and downe."¹⁸ This boisterous movement style would surely have suited the bottlenosed devils whose dancing so startles the Duke's son in *Law-Trickes*.¹⁹

Thanks to the survival of dancing manuals from the period, when an English playwright mentions a specific dance such as a galliard or hay in one of his plays, we have a good, general idea of what those dances looked like. At the same time, we do not know specifically how they were staged. Uncertainties include the floor pattern, whether the dance was improvised or choreographed, or sometimes even the number of dancers. We do not know the exact musical piece that accompanied the original dance although if we know the dance type, we can select music that matches it. It is also unclear whether a galliard danced on stage differed in significant ways from a galliard danced at court. Finally, as seen in the example of the volta from *The Insatiate Countess*, specifics can create confusion as well as dispel it.

Nevertheless, John Marston's plays and a handful of others offer some much appreciated details. All of Marston's plays include staged dances as well as textual references to dance. These dances vary widely; some are group dances in masques; others are solo performances by a page or courtier. Most are courtly dances, but there are also morris dances and round dances. Both men and women dance solos, and group dances can feature several couples or a mixed circle of dancers. There is even a dance in Act II of *Antonio and Mellida* (1602) where each lady dances with two gentlemen at the same

time.²⁰ The dancers sometimes sing their own accompaniment, but ordinarily they are accompanied by waits, the musicians who played in the music gallery, or by another character onstage. There are certain aspects of Marston's staging of dance that are distinctive, for example, his tendency to kill off characters during masque dances. However, for the most part, Marston employs dance in the same ways and for the same purposes as Shakespeare and many of their contemporaries. Dance is used to introduce or forward a plot point, to illuminate character or personality, and to provide entertainment to on- and off-stage audiences. Therefore, paying attention to the specific dances Marston calls for in his stage directions can help us make better, more historically informed choices about what dances to do when playwrights like Shakespeare simply write as the stage direction: "*Music. They daunce.*"

Copyright 2011, Emily F. Winerock

Acknowledgements

Earlier incarnations of this paper benefited from the suggestions of Leslie Thomson, Alan Dessen, David Kathman, Nona Monahin, and other participants in the "Theater History Seminar" of the Shakespeare Association of America conference in Philadelphia, 2006. Also, Alexandra Johnston of the Records of Early English Drama centre based at the University of Toronto provided helpful feedback.

Notes

- ¹ Alan Brissenden, *Shakespeare and the Dance* (New Jersey: Humanities Press, 1981), p. 124.
- ² Alan Dessen and Leslie Thomson, *A Dictionary of Stage Directions in English Drama, 1580-1642* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), pp. 64-5, 56, 99, 129, 142, 144.
- ³ Alan Brissenden, *Shakespeare and the Dance*, p. 113.
- ⁴ Fabritio Caroso, *Courtly Dance of the Renaissance: A New Translation and Edition of the Nobilità di Dame (1600)*, ed. and trans. Julia Sutton (New York: Dover Publications, 1986, 1995), p. 40.
- ⁵ Caroso, *Courtly Dance*, p. 41.
- ⁶ John Marston, *Jack Drum's Entertainment*, ed. John Farmer (1601; The Tudor Facsimile Texts, 1912), p. 60 (Act V). Hereafter cited by Act and page number in the text.
- ⁷ John Marston with William Barksted and Lewis Machin, *The Insatiate Countess*, ed. Giorgio Melchiori (1613; Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1984), p. 90 (II.i.154). Hereafter cited by line numbers in the text.
- ⁸ Thoinot Arbeau, *Orchesography*, ed. Julia Sutton, trans. Mary S. Evans (*Orchésographie* 1589; New York: Dover, 1967), p. 121.
- ⁹ Anne Daye, comp., *A Lively Shape of Dauncing: Dances of Shakespeare's Time* (Salisbury, Wiltshire: Dolmetsch Historical Dance Society, 1994), p. 50.
- ¹⁰ It is possible that the stage direction refers to the music rather than the dance steps, as galliards and voltas were both in triple time. But the stage direction says, "*Guido dances a Lavolta, or a Galliard,*" which would more likely indicate the type of dance than the dance music. Another possibility is that a less knowledgeable author or editor added the stage direction. However, Act II, scene 1 is one of the few scenes in *The Insatiate Countess* that is almost universally attributed to Marston, and the courtiers discuss Guido's fall later in the

scene. Yet, while Marston refers to the volta in dialogue in *Antonio's Revenge* and *The Fawn*, this is the only time the volta occurs in a stage direction. Elsewhere when Marston specifies a staged dance it is usually a galliard or a coranto.

- 11 John Marston, *The Malcontent*, ed. Martin L. Wine (1604; Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1964), pp. 77-8 (IV.ii.6-10). Hereafter cited by line numbers in the text.
- 12 Arbeau, *Orchesography*, p. 128.
- 13 Philip Finkelpearl, *John Marston of the Middle Temple* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1969), p. 180.
- 14 George Wilkins may also be an author of the play, but see M. E. Borish, "John Day's *Law Tricks* and George Wilkins" *Modern Philology*, 34, no. 3 (1937), pp. 249-266.
- 15 John Day, *Law-trickes or, Who would have thought it* (London: Printed by E. Allde for Richard More, 1608), Act IV.
- 16 See "The Hay Branle" in Arbeau, *Orchesography*, pp. 169-171, and "The Alman Hay" in Ian Payne, *The Almain in Britain, c.1549-c.1675: A Dance Manual from Manuscript Sources*, (Hampshire, UK: Ashgate Publishing Ltd., 2003), pp. 50-51.
- 17 Thomas Dekker, *A strange horse-race at the end of which, comes in the catch-poles masque. And after that the bankrouts banquet: vvhich done, the Divell, falling sicke, makes his last will and testament, this present yeare.* (London: Printed by Nicholas Okes for Joseph Hunt, 1613), "The Divels last Will and TESTAMENT."
- 18 Dekker, *A strange horse-race*, "The Divels last Will and TESTAMENT."
- 19 Unfortunately, these references do not offer enough detail to determine how or if the Irish hay was distinct from the choreography for the hay branle given in Arbeau's *Orchesography*, pp. 169-171, or the Irish trot in John Playford's *The English Dancing Master* (1651), as discussed in "Further Light on Playford" in Payne, *The Almain in Britain*, p. 36.
- 20 John Marston, *Antonio and Mellida*, ed. W. Reavley Gair (1602; Manchester, New York: Manchester University Press, 1991), Act II.643-650.

Bibliography

- Arbeau, Thoinot. *Orchesography*. Ed. Julia Sutton. Trans. Mary S. Evans. *Orchésographie* 1589. New York: Dover, 1967.
- Borish, M. E. "John Day's *Law Tricks* and George Wilkins" *Modern Philology*, 34, no. 3 (1937): 249-266.
- Brissenden, Alan. *Shakespeare and the Dance*. New Jersey: Humanities Press, 1981.
- Caroso, Fabritio. *Courtly Dance of the Renaissance: A New Translation and Edition of the Nobilità di Dame (1600)*. Ed. and trans. Julia Sutton. New York: Dover Publications, 1986, 1995.
- Day, John. *Law-trickes or, Who would have thought it*. London: Printed by E. Allde for Richard More, 1608.
- Daye, Anne, comp. *A Lively Shape of Dauncing: Dances of Shakespeare's Time*. Salisbury, Wiltshire: Dolmetsch Historical Dance Society, 1994.
- Dekker, Thomas. *A strange horse-race at the end of which, comes in the catch-poles masque. And after that the bankrouts banquet: vvhich done, the Divell, falling sicke, makes his last will and testament, this present yeare.* London: Printed by Nicholas Okes for Joseph Hunt, 1613.
- Dessen, Alan, and Leslie Thomson. *A Dictionary of Stage Directions in English Drama, 1580-1642*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999.
- Finkelpearl, Philip. *John Marston of the Middle Temple: An Elizabethan Dramatist in His Social Setting*. Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1969.

- Howard, Skiles. *The Politics of Courtly Dancing in Early Modern England*. Amherst: Amherst University of Massachusetts Press, 1998.
- Kendall, G. Yvonne. "Le Gratie d'Amore 1602 by Cesare Negri: Translation and Commentary." Ph.D. dissertation, Stanford University, 1985.
- Lupi di Caravaggio, Livio. *Libro di Gagliarda, Tordiglione, Passo è Mezzo, Canari è Passeggi*. Palermo: Giovanni Battista Maringo, 1607.
- Marston, John. *Antonio and Mellida*. 1602. Ed. W. Reavley Gair. Manchester, New York: Manchester University Press, 1991.
- _____. *Antonio's Revenge*. 1602. Ed. W. Reavley Gair. Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1978.
- _____. *Jack Drum's Entertainment*. 1601. Ed. John Farmer. The Tudor Facsimile Texts, 1912.
- _____. *The Malcontent*. 1604. Ed. Martin L. Wine. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1964.
- _____. *Parasitaster, or The Fawn*. 1606. Ed. David Blostein. Manchester; Baltimore, Maryland: Manchester University Press; The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1978.
- Marston, John, with William Barksted and Lewis Machin. *The Insatiate Countess*. 1613. Ed. Giorgio Melchiori. Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1984.
- Payne, Ian. *The Almain in Britain, c.1549-c.1675: A Dance Manual from Manuscript Sources*. Aldershot, Hampshire: Ashgate Publishing Ltd., 2003.
- Playford, John. *The English Dancing Master: or, Plaine and easie Rules for the Dancing of Country Dances, with the Tune to each Dance*. 1651. Ed. Hugh Mellor and Leslie Bridgewater. London: Dance Books Ltd., 1933, 1984.
- Ravelhofer, Barbara. *The Early Stuart Masque: Dance, Costume, and Music*. New York: Oxford University Press, USA, 2006.
- Shakespeare, William. *The Winter's Tale*. 1623. Ed. Frank Kermode. New York: The Signet Classic Shakespeare, 1988.

Address for correspondence:

Emily F. Winerock

E-mail: contact@winerock.com

Energetic lines in performance: the case of *CHANCEFORMATION of life: wind, flowers, snow and moon*

Yi-Chen Wu

University of Exeter, Centre for Intermedia

Abstract

This paper explores the improvisation dance work CHANCEFORMATION of life: wind, flowers, snow and moon, presented by Image in Motion Theatre Company, Taiwan (2008), and examines how the interpenetrative lines of yin and yang energies spatialise the interrelationships between graspable and ungraspable factors in performance. This paper employs the concept of yin and yang energies in traditional Chinese cosmology to explore the potential of dance dramaturgy. I argue that yin and yang energies flowing in contemporary performance space can be envisaged as the 'energetic lines in performance', which interweave the performer/participant with design objects and the environment and interpret the relationship of togetherness. I suggest that, within this context, the concept of the energetic lines in performance indicates that the performer/participant's materials and actions are incorporated into the dynamic configuration of the performance space.

As a variety of new media dance works demonstrate, dance dramaturgy has been influenced by altered perceptions of space and time. Unlike mainstream critiques that follow computer-related concepts, this paper employs the *yin* and *yang* energy-influenced notion of *yu* (travelling) in classical Chinese travel writing to explore the potential of dance dramaturgy in terms of the analysis of the dance work *CHANCEFORMATION of life: wind, flowers, snow and moon*. On closer inspection, there is a sense that this notion of *yu* (travelling) can be described as the navigation of blended internal and external landscapes and can be used to explore energy flows in space. Taking travelling along the flows of *yin* and *yang* energies as its starting point, this paper experiments with the idea of 'energetic lines in performance', which indicates an analogy between the flow of energies in classical Chinese travel writing and plotlines in this new media dance work. I argue that the energetic lines underlying perceptions of performance space function as guidance for artists' and audiences' journeys to biospheres wherein artists/audiences, performance objects and performance spaces reciprocally interact with one another. I will begin by briefly explaining the structure of the improvisational dance piece *CHANCEFORMATION of life: wind, flowers, snow and moon*. Subsequently, I will discuss critiques of this work in Taiwan. Then, I will use my idea of 'energetic lines in performance' to dispute these critiques and present a *yin* and *yang* energies-based way of reading space.

1. Introduction to *CHANCEFORMATION of life: wind, flowers, snow and moon*

The improvisational dance piece *CHANCEFORMATION of life: wind, flowers, snow and moon* was first presented in 2008 in Taipei and Kaohsiung, Taiwan, by the Image in Motion Theatre Company. *CHANCEFORMATION* represents a continuation of choreographer Ku Ming-shen and art director Chen Yao's interest in using technology-oriented improvisational dance to explore the meaning of chance and ask how it can represent natural phenomena in theatrical performances (Chen, 2010; Ku, 2010).

CHANCEFORMATION is a highly improvisational piece. Not only dance

movements, but props, music, lighting, projected images and repertoire construction are improvised. The subtitle, '*wind, flowers, snow and moon*', which is a phrase from classical Chinese literature, usually refers to the beauty of natural scenery and sometimes indicates love affairs. In *CHANCEFORMATION*, these meanings are developed into an interpretation of ever-renewing life. The four words, '*wind, flowers, snow and moon*', are used to present four natural phenomena and explore the vitality and dynamics of nature. According to Ku and Chen, each theme can be explained in different ways by different people, and the organisation of the themes can influence the interactions between them. For instance, the word 'wind' may, for some people, indicate an image of fast or slow speed, while, for others, it signifies tremendous or minute vitality, or a remembered colour. Hence, the dynamic re-organisation of the performance shows the implications of dynamics and evolution.

The order of the four themes is voted upon by the audience at every performance and is revealed to the artists five minutes before they begin their performances. In this very short time, the artists can only discuss the re-organisation of props and setting. Therefore, every artist has to be aware of the varying interactions between members of the company and must respond to the information that one perceives in real time. As a result, each performance is qualitatively different.

The audience appreciates the unedited expression of interwoven relationships between the artists' actions (both physical and psychological), design objects and the developing performance space. Feedback from most audience members shows that collaboration between the performers and artists in this improvisational performance is astonishingly more successful than the same in other, pre-edited performances (Chen, 2010; Ku, 2010). Moreover, *CHANCEFORMATION* audiences feel that the digital image and music design elaborately merge with the performers' movements (*ibid.*). Some audiences who have seen more than one performance of the work attest to the fact that it is improvisational and that every performance presents a totally different story.

2. Critiques of *CHANCEFORMATION* in Taiwan

Critics in Taiwan tend to agree that *CHANCEFORMATION of life: wind, flowers, snow and moon* represents, through high-tech theatre, the Buddhist concept of living in the present moment. Proponents of this view have typically focused on *CHANCEFORMATION*'s exploration of chance and impermanence. For example, Liao Jun-Cheng (2009) has suggested that 'the work *CHANCEFORMATION of life: wind, flowers, snow and moon* (2008) assembles projected images, music, dance and performers experimentally, by chance, to examine the concept of living in real moments' (*ibid.*: 40-41). Chen Yun-Ru (2009) has described the piece as 'challenging real moments [... it] is not like a theatrical performance, but rather a real, yet unreal, journey of life, full of chance and happening' (*ibid.*: 38). Although there seem to be similarities between improvisation and Buddhist practice, such as personal awareness of every moment and one's actions, I argue that these critiques of *CHANCEFORMATION of life: wind, flowers, snow and moon* confuse improvisation with chance.

My interviews with Ku and Chen (2010), the founders of Image in Motion, suggest that both are inclined to see *CHANCEFORMATION* as reflecting the developmental processes of nature. They do not believe that their argument can be adequately supported by the concept of real moments and impermanence in Buddhism (*ibid.*). Moreover, they argue that performances of *CHANCEFORMATION* cannot be accomplished without active collaboration between all artists involved (*ibid.*). Chen declared that the reciprocal relationships between artists and their designs, or performances, can be thought of as the epitome of natural evolution (Chen, 2010). In this sense, what Ku and Chen emphasise in *CHANCEFORMATION* is the importance of daily practice of improvisational skills, collaboration between artists and the interrelationship of components of works of art.

They believe that nature discloses itself as correlations between these elements as they evolve. On these grounds, I suppose that *CHANCEFORMATION* could be likened to ‘the journey of life’, as it implies a confluence of constantly developing interrelationships between diverse beings/things in the world, rather than a series of accidents happening by chance. Thus, the performance space, which is constituted by the shifting of these relationships, can be thought of as an energy-cultivating biosphere.

According to Ku and Chen, *CHANCEFORMATION* is organised into unchangeable sections (namely, an introduction, elucidation, development and summary of the work) and changeable themes (wind, flowers, snow and moon, whose order is determined by audience vote) (Chen, 2010; Ku, 2010). These changeable themes are associated with the pathways by which interrelationships between the artists, design objects and performance space develop. In this paper, I focus on exploring these themes. Applying the concept of *yu* (travelling), from classical Chinese travel writing, to the analysis of performance space in *CHANCEFORMATION*, I argue that *CHANCEFORMATION*’s changeable themes can be likened to energetic lines that communicate reciprocal interrelationships between travellers and their surroundings.

3. The notions of *yin*, *yang* and *yu* in classical Chinese travel writing

Yin and *yang* energies are conceived of as the common substrata of the environment and its components (Kohn, 2001: 21); moreover, the dynamic equilibrium of *yin* and *yang* energies is said to define the evolution and integration of components into the environment (Zhang and Rose, 2001: 26-27). In traditional Chinese arts, the flow of *yin* and *yang* energies has been regarded as the expression of the equilibrium of these energies and the rhythms of nature (ibid.: 60-62).

Based on the above-mentioned cosmological notion of complementary *yin-yang* energies, and the notion of *wu-xing* (the five phases), the Chinese have imagined pathways of *Qi*, blood and meridians (*jin lo* 經絡) as geographical patterns of the environment in order to immerse themselves in *Qi*/energies that have flowed since ancient times. For instance, bones, flesh, blood and *Qi* have been compared to calligraphy; the meridians of the human body to geographical observations and *feng shui*; the physiological cycle of the human body to climactic and seasonal rhythms; and natural features of the environment to expectations of one’s mortality.

By the same token, classical Chinese travel writing has also been influenced by the cosmological notion that *yin yang* energies underlie interrelationships between numerous beings/things and their environment, to form a way of communicating internal emotions to external landscapes. According to Richard E. Strassberg (1994), the notion of *yu* (travelling) in classical Chinese travel writing is pertinent to the harmonious interdependence of humans and the world/nature, which indicates communal evolution and reciprocal transformation, a concern not featured prominently in the odysseys, adventures and conquests of Western travel narratives (ibid.: 1, 4). In this context, the notion of *yu* (travelling) explores dynamic lines of energies that interpret interactions between emotions and landscapes and their identification with one another. Furthermore, the notion of *yu* shows how travellers’ shifting perspectives and *yin-yang* lines of energy can be recorded by travellers in the context of traditional Chinese aesthetics.

Thus, for travellers who consider themselves an integral part of their environments, the movements of *yin-yang* lines can be envisaged as evidence of the overlapping pathways of the travellers’ own psychophysical journeys. The movements of these lines are analogous to equilibrium of the internal and the external, the tangible and the intangible, the self and others. The process by which the lines are interwoven indicates the blurred distinction between travellers and their surroundings. In this sense, I argue that the flow of *yin* and *yang* energies in classical Chinese travel writing can be envisaged

as ‘energetic lines in performance’, which interweave performers/participants with design objects and the performance space, to form a type of togetherness.

4. Analysis of *CHANCEFORMATION*

In my interview with choreographer Ku Ming-shen, Ku noted that, as a stage performer in *CHANCEFORMATION*, she distinctly perceived how each artist’s actions altered the effects of the piece (Ku, 2010). Ku regarded these actions as transformations of energies, which could stimulate the development of mutual relationships between artists (ibid.). In other words, the performers in *CHANCEFORMATION* must constantly locate themselves in the dynamic pattern of energetic lines, in order to join in the configuration of the performance space.

Ku likened the collaborative process in *CHANCEFORMATION* to the accumulation of various turning points in a network of overlapping times and spaces (Ku, 2010), noting that, as a performer in this piece, she has to be aware of coming turning points ahead of time (ibid.). This indicates that Ku and other *CHANCEFORMATION* artists constantly perceive the outgoing traces of energetic lines and imagine how they will react to upcoming communal tendencies. In this respect, based on the notion of *yu* in classical Chinese travel writing, I suggest that every artist’s reactions to the tendencies of proceeding energetic lines can be envisaged as a process of spatialising the interrelationships between one’s self, as traveller, and one’s surroundings during one’s journey. We can imagine that the to-and-fro movements between the physical and the mental, the tangible and the intangible, constitute a sense of meandering space, wherein Ku, Chen and other artists cultivate their perceptions of the performance space.

Therefore, the matrix of chance and change is not associated with nothingness; instead, it is an intermediary space between opposed but interrelated energies and matters, which indicates the progression of becoming that is continuous, without beginning or end. In this sense, and in contradistinction to Taiwanese critiques of *CHANCEFORMATION*, which focus on how ridding the choreography of man-made interference presents a dialectical opposition between selflessness and subjectivity, I argue that, in this piece, the performance space can be envisaged as a biosphere that is continuously developed by the symbiosis between every element of the performance (including the artists).

5. Conclusion

To conclude, based on the notions of *yin* and *yang* energies and *yu* (travelling) found in classical Chinese travel writing, I argue that the ancient Chinese literati’s attitude toward the wholeness of humankind and nature can be envisaged as ‘energetic lines in performance’, which can be likened to psychophysical pathways of reading and perceiving networks of overlapping spaces and times. From this perspective, artists’ materials and actions are incorporated into the dynamic configuration of performance spaces resonating with the energetic lines. In light of our exploration of the energetic lines, I further argue that in the dance piece *CHANCEFORMATION* the interactions between humans and computers show not only the effects produced by improvisation, but also the networked pathways of spaces and times by virtue of which one becomes involved in the configuration of performance spaces which undergoes constant transformation in accordance with the changing relations between energies, actions and affects.

Bibliography

- Chen Y. (2010) *Interview with Yi-Chen Wu*, Taipei, 10 July 2010, unpublished manuscript.
- Chen, Y. R. (2009) 'Reviews: *CHANCEFORMATION of life: wind, flowers, snow and moon*', *Performing Arts Review*, vol. 201, no.9, pp. 38.
- Kohn, L. (2001) *Daoism and Chinese Culture*, Magdalena: Three Pines Press.
- Ku, M. S. (2010) *Interview with Yi-Chen Wu*, Taipei, 8 July 2010, unpublished manuscript.
- Liao, J. C. (2009) 'The Combination of Technology and Theatre in Contemporary Taiwanese Performing Arts', *Performing Arts Review*, vol. 194, no. 2, pp. 40-41.
- Strassberg, R. E. (1994) *Inscribed Landscapes: Travel Writing from Imperial China*, University of California Press.
- Zhang, Y. H. and Rose, K. (2001) *A Brief History of Qi*, Massachusetts: Paradigm Publications.

