

ACTING AS TOOL FOR DANCE PERFORMANCE

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ACTING AS TOOL FOR DANCE PERFORMANCE

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I certify that this thesis, and the research to which it refers, are the product of my own work, and that any ideas or quotations from the work of other people, published or otherwise, are fully acknowledged in accordance with the standard referencing practices of the discipline.

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Introduction

Very often dancers are requested to portray a character during their performance (Kusner: 2016). Certain dance styles, such as ballet, musical, physical theater and Indian classical dance styles, demand that dancers are actors, also. Herein, it is suggested that acting is an important tool for dance performance, although it is not broadly acknowledged (Noice & Noice: 2006). As dance evolves, a good acting toolkit becomes a prerequisite for more dance styles (George-Graves: 2015). This practice-led research is focused on the disciplinary connections between acting and dance through a brief historical background and the conclusions that currently artists and academics have reached for acting expression in dance performances (Bennett: 2013, Nagrin: 1997, Noice & Noice: 2006). The practice culminates with the final conclusions of the dissertation, through the view of the volunteering dancers/actors during 5 sessions of commercial jazz style dance training, along with acting training exercises that aim to test and complement the inferences of academics and choreographers, such as Pina Bausch, Noël Carroll, Daniel Nagrin, Ramsey Burt, Yvonne Rainer and Mary Lynn Smith.

1. Chapter 1

Dance and acting: Definitions

The purpose of the Research the readers are holding in their hands is to answer the question if Acting training is helpful, necessary or not to Dance training and consequently Dance performance. Before answering to this question blindly, we ought to have definitions of what Acting can be, what Dance can be and how we mean it in reference to this specific Research. Although not easy to reach a simple undeniable definition for both of them, the dictionaries and the literature serve in approaching closer to the best description possible.

To remain congruent with the body as subject orientation I write in the form of first-person description. The first-person perspective shifts liberally between what Fraleigh (1987) describes, “the rhetorical and inclusive *we* and the experiential but also inclusive *I*”. Thus, my descriptions of dance and theater depend in part upon my own experience and practice as they are shared with others; this form of data gathering utilizes “self-evidence”¹ to describe what is basic to the phenomena being considered.

1.1 Dance

Dance have a mixed perception of definition. Dance, though, is referred to for a wide variety of activities. According to Roger Copeland², “dance is sometimes defined as any patterned, rhythmic movement in space and time” (Copeland, 1983:1) . However, this definition does not clarify if the motion is human or non-human. So, for instance, the biologist Karl von Frisch, defines the movement of bees, in *Dancing Bees*, as dances. As Roger Copeland continues, there are more examples of human motion based on this definition of dance, like parades. Parades, though, cannot be a dance. (Copeland, 1983:3).

According to Murray & Keefe³, perhaps dance can be understood as a set of codified movement patterns or sequences of a fixed duration for particular purposes (with or without music), a form of expression through either narrative or abstract movement which may engage the full range of human emotions and psychologies without using words, or a participatory entertainment based on folk traditions and social mores.

Valerie Preston-Dunlop argued that Dance is a Language, in her short book “Dance is a language, isn’t it?”⁴. As she suggests, “if dance is a language, then it must communicate through its medium. Its medium is not words. It does not communicate feelings and ideas which can be told in words. Its medium is dancers dancing in spaces. It does communicate feelings and ideas which can be seen and heard in dancers dancing. Words are organized to give meaning. Dancing is structured to give meaning” (Preston-Dunlop, 2013:6).

She, also, gives her definition on what is non-dancing and that is a performance. It is dancing “without magic, commitment or meaning”. Performance is “diminishing dancing to body parts displacing the space on counts, moves without intention”. As language, then, dance loses its semantic content, that is the meaning, and consequently it cannot hold the structure, that is the syntactic organization, and the dance, that is the utterance of the language. To have a meaning in dance is to retain the magic, and if this can happen, “the quality is present, the dynamics is captured, the spatial forms comprehended, the whole synthesis projected, danced” (Preston-Dunlop, 2013:7-14) .

Henrietta Bannerman expresses similar thoughts in her Research “Is dance a language? Movement, meaning and communication”⁵. She suggests that western theater dance is meaningful and explains that meanings are given through codes both in language and movement. Based on Hockett, “One can extend this situation to certain dance movements because choreographers and their audiences become accustomed to the correlation between movement and meaning and also to codes that operate within choreographic practices. We can

surely agree, for example, that the Graham contraction is visually and conventionally linked to the expression of emotional states” (Hockett, 1977:143)⁶. Indeed, in the case of communicating past events, Martha Graham is one of the first choreographers to convey a narrative (Criterion Collection 2007).

Bannerman adds that “dance genres such as classical ballet or styles of South Asian dance feature sophisticated codes of mime which convey ideas on a similar basis to the words of a language in that they obey their own intralinguistic rules” (Bannerman, 2014:70). Carroll and Banes⁷ follow this thought by creating the definition of two categories of comprehension of dance coding and language. “When the elements of a communicative system have associative ties with things or situations (...) in the environment of its users and when the functioning of the system rests on such ties, we say that the system is semantic or is characterized by semanticity” as Hockett suggested (1977:141). This semanticity is linked with the theory of *Conditional generic representation* (1999:23) introduced by Carroll and Banes, that rests on the spectator who has the ability to detect and recognize the meaning out of movements represented.

Undoubtedly, dance teachers, choreographers and dancers very often use the word “vocabulary” to suggest the variety of movements and dance techniques they have already learnt, or, as Preston-Dunlop suggested, “the set of artistic or stylistic forms or techniques” (1995:224)⁸. Susan Foster used the same word when saying that “each [type of dance] have a lexicon of moves from which the vocabulary of a given dance is drawn” (1986:90)⁹.

However, Bannerman concludes that “the meaning-bearing capacity of dance does not justify the view that dance is a language, but that nevertheless dance is structured like a language”.

In this Research, I refer to dance as patterned, rhythmic technique-based movement in space and time aiming to imitate and to represent. I consider important the meaning-bearing identity

of every movement. With that in mind, I try to prove that acting training is necessary for dancers at their early stages of dance training in order to learn to represent and perform each meaning of each movement.

1.2 Acting

“Acting” and “action” are common-used words with an even more difficult definition. Their broad meaning from ordinary life to physics confuses actors and performers to define exactly what their “acting” means.

Searching in an online dictionary, one can find easily the definition of acting as “the art or practice of representing a character on stage or before cameras”¹⁰ or “the art, profession or activity of those who perform in stage plays, motion pictures etc” (Merriam-Webster Dictionary). Following more dictionaries online we find more similar words as “art”, “practice”, “profession” or “activity” without being able to find a definite status of what “acting” is. Literally, it means “doing” and “taking action”. However, actors are not just people taking action on stage. “Acting” as a profession includes more than just “acting”.

The best and equally unclear definition of “acting” is given by Sanford Meisner. He found that the American way of acting is very different from the British ways, so he excluded the latter from the definition he gave that “acting is living truthfully under imaginary circumstances”. He suggests that acting is “an emotional creation. It has an inner content” (Meisner & Longwell, 1987:147)¹¹. He contradicts it to knowing intellectually what the character should be feeling and to indicating this through the way of handling verbally the text, as the British did.

The Method of Sanford Meisner, as it is now called, is an advanced American version of Stanislavsky’s System. Stanislavsky’s system commanded that the actor was playing the role in its absolute state. It demanded study, transformation and commitment to the script¹². On the

other hand, Meisner suggested to his students “to approach their work with absolute emotional truth and genuine psychological depth” (Meisner & Longwell, 1987:147). The feelings must be felt and experienced, not just demonstrated and indicated. In that way, he was encouraging the actors to become spontaneous and responsive, to communicate with their co-actors and to get rid of superficiality in their acting.

Meisner developed the Method in order to increase the powers of observation, communication, responsiveness and spontaneity on stage, being less interested in the notion of “character” than in the need to establish credible and dynamic scenic “relationships” and the ability to “live truthfully in the imaginary circumstances”. According to Meisner, “acting” is “living” and it is something more than performing. Stanislavsky would agree that “in every physical action there is something psychological and in the psychological, something physical” (Carnicke, 2000:16-17)¹³.

This is the definition I use in this Research aiming to force “a fuller investigation of what it means for a performer to remain vulnerable, observant, receptive, emotionally engaged and fully committed to the spontaneity of live relationships” (Meisner & Longwell, 1987:147).

As David Shirley¹⁴ suggests, “in the face of a rapidly changing profession where the demand for authenticity and realism is constantly increasing and always evolving it is perhaps hardly surprising that performance practitioners should begin to look at new ways of thinking about and approaching their work” (2010:212). Through research it is obvious that this opinion for performance practitioners concerns not only actors, but also dancers, especially nowadays that the latter are asked to be multi-talented and multi-tasking.

2. Chapter 2

Acting in dance: historical background

Acting expression was connected to dance movement from the early ages of what was used to be called as dance art. We have to note that this research does not refer to just musicals production. From the ancient times, the middle ages and then until now, acting expression or storytelling have been inevitably attached to dance. Indeed, the importance of the background study is meaningful to the research as it shows that the connection between theater and dance is not something new and innovative, but that its origins lie in the ancient times and it has excelled through time.

2.1 Ancient Greece (500-300 BC)

Starting from Ancient Greece, 2,500 years ago, the Greek dramas used dialogue, song and dance as integrated storytelling tools. Aeschylus, Sophocles and Aristophanes were not only playwrights; they were also composers and lyricists. The writings of Aristotle provide our only information of Thespis of Icaria, who may have been a writer-composer as well as a performer. Since Thespis was the first soloist to step out of a dithyramb (musical retellings of mythological tales) chorus and enact specific roles by singing and speaking lines, he invented two things: the art of acting (which is why actors are sometimes referred to as “thespians”), and a new form of dithyramb that we call tragedy.

Over time, tragedy became just one of three distinct types of drama, all of which involved music and dance: tragedy, comedy and satyr plays. The chorus handled all the musical chores by singing, dancing and providing their own accompaniment using the harp, flute and other instruments. The chorus used to comment and participate directly in the dramatic action with these songs. The conclusion is that, in Greece, there was not dance without acting, as acting was integrated in dance.

For Aristotle, tragedy, at its heart, was “an imitation, not of men, but of actions”. This idea placed the plot over character as the primary essence of successful tragic plays. His idea was that plays were not so much character driven as they were “personified passions” determined by plot construction. Choreographers and dance dramaturgs certainly understand this as it relates to the creation and construction of dances.

In the late 450s BCE, the city enjoyed fifteen years of peace and prosperity under the leadership of Pericles. During that time, Athenians developed an unhealthy sense of superiority that helped bring on the Peloponnesian War, a devastating series of conflicts between Athens and a coalition of other Greek states led by Sparta, which lasted for 27 years. Athens was ultimately defeated in 404 BCE, and its fortunes never recovered. The city was ruled by a series of dictators, and fear of reprisals by these oppressive regimes soon terrorized the life out of the theater. By the time Philipp II of Macedon conquered the city 66 years later, Athenian drama, was essentially a thing of the past.

2.2 The Roman Empire (27 BC – 1453 AD)

The ancient Romans were not above borrowing good ideas, especially from Greece. In particular, they co-opted various theatrical conventions, adjusting them to fit Roman tastes. The mixture of dialogue, song and dance was retained. Like the Greeks, Romans produced plays as part of festivals to honor the gods, but there was no governmental involvement. In fact, for several centuries, the Roman establishment saw theater, with its suspension of reality and reversals of social norms, as a potentially dangerous influence.

Plautus (b. 254 BCE) is the best remembered Roman playwright. His comedies included song, dance and instrumental accompaniment.

By the time the empire collapsed, Roman theater had become so tawdry that the Catholic Church condemned it as a corrupt and sinful influence. The Church's influence was such that professional theater ceased to exist in Europe for several centuries.

Until now we see that dance and acting form together the theater. Theater did not separate them. There was not theater without them.

2.3 The Middle Ages (12th-13th centuries)

In the 12th and 13th centuries, the Catholic Church saw new possibilities in theatrical performances, and actively encouraged the development and presentation of liturgical music-dramas. However, the connection between dance and theater disappeared for several decades.

Originally performed in church to augment the mass or evening prayer, these plays eventually moved to outdoor stages where more vernacular content was acceptable. During the Renaissance, Italians rediscovered Ancient Greek drama and seeing the extensive use of choral verse, assumed that these plays were originally all sung-through. Based on this well-meaning error, Monteverdi and Camarata Fiorentina made Greek drama the model for what we now know as opera. So, contrary to the widely held belief that musical theater is a descendant of opera, it turns out that opera is actually an accidental descendant of musical theater.

2.4 Comic and ballad opera (1620-1789)

During the Age of Enlightenment, the first stirrings of popular musical theater occurred in England, Germany, Austria-Hungary and France. Most notably to the history of dance theater, John Gay (1686-1732) invented a new kind of musical theater.

Four years after the premiere of his *Beggar's Opera*, he died at 47. As in ancient Greece, political repression had squelched creativity, and the ballad operas that followed in Gay's wake avoided political content. The *Beggar's Opera* was a precedent for the English-speaking

musical theater. John Gay became the artistic forefather of many writers and composers, from Gilbert and Sullivan to Mel Brooks.

Such are the earliest roots of musical theater. While some of these works are occasionally performed today, the modern musical's family tree reaches no further back than the 1840s, when a new strain of lyric drama appeared in Paris.

2.5 Continental Operetta (19th century)

Paris was the birthplace of modern musical. It was Jacques Offenbach who created a new kind of musical entertainment that would offer more fun than grand opera while retaining a high degree of musical sophistication.

Others were already attempting this feat, with limited degrees of success. Adolphe Adam (1803-1856) is best remembered for composing the ballet *Giselle*, but he also wrote music for several early comic light operas, including *Pierre and Catherine* (1829). He opened his own Opera National in 1847, when he offered a series of such works written by himself and others. In *Don Quichotte et Sancho Pança* (1847), which has been performed as ballet production as well, the role of Quixote was played by the multitalented composer of the piece, church organist Florimonde Ronger, who became director of the tiny Folies-Concertantes, which he soon renamed the Folies-Nouvelles. There, he presented more than thirty of his own musicals, and also showcased several early pieces by Offenbach.

Operetta, although called a “bouffonnerie musicale”, it was an example of the new tuneful genre Offenbach was developing. Offenbach may not have invented the “up” tunes, but he was the first to bring them to the musical stage.

Vienna's theaters included musical productions, with genres of grand operas, farces and burlesques. Mozart's *Abduction from the Seraglio* (1782) and *The Magic Flute* (1791) are among the best known examples of the grand operas of the era.

By the end of the 19th century, many assumed that the golden age of Viennese operetta had passed, but it would return in the early 20th century with the sensation surrounding Lehar's *The Merry Widow* (1905).

By that time, a new city had become a creative epicenter for the musical theater. In fact, the world would eventually identify this city and one of its avenues as the primary home of the genre. New York didn't introduce any professional stage work in its first century until the 1750's, when Broadway street only started to develop as the biggest American theater industry venue.

2.6 Modern dance theater (18th century)

In 1962, the American experimentalists of Judson Church started to invent a new approach in postmodern dance based on the expressivity of movement for movement's sake and solidified and carried forward by Merce Cunningham as the seminal influence of American Dance of the latter part of the 20th century.

Postmodern dance worked hard to bracket out other unnecessary elements, leaving the dancer's body in motion as the sole expressive element on the dance stage. But if we consider the body in motion more broadly as an engagement of performative action – the involvement of our bodies in experience and the subsequent subjectification of that event (in that our subjectivity is derived from the relation of our bodies to the world and expressed experience) – then we arrive at a very different idea of dance, one that can account for the “other elements” of the production as part and parcel of our bodies' relationship to experience. There is no external

referent that the body's movement refers to; it is not expressing more than it is or, rather, more than it is doing.

David Vaughan, Cunningham's archivist, who has defined Cunningham's project in terms that resonate in this context, gives an example of the expression as an important component in dance performances: "It goes without saying that Cunningham has not been interested in telling stories or exploring psychological relationships: the subject matter of his dances is the dance itself. This does not mean that drama is absent, but it is not drama in the sense of narrative – rather, it arises from the intensity of the kinetic and theatrical experience, and the human situation on stage" (1997,7)¹⁵.

To be more specific with an example, he based his *Sixteen Dances* (1951) on the *Natyasastra*, the sourcebook of Hindu/Sanskrit classical theater. In this work, Cunningham depicts the nine emotions: Sorrow, Humor, Anger, Wonder, Fear, Tranquility (peace), the Erotic and the Odious (disgust).

Furthermore, in his *Suite for Five* (1956), he fully realizes that the human body is doubly expressive: it can be expressive transitively, in an easily legible, culturally codified way, and it can be expressive intransitively, simply by exposing its dynamic, arc-engendering force.

The representation of this aspect of experience is the goal of Tanztheater. It engages a human subject as present in her body rather than as a means to achieve an illusive quality of beauty through a developed technique. Tanztheater seeks a form of representation that embodies contradictions and frustrations of life and presents them in living form.

The term "dance theater" goes back to the '20s in Germany, when Rudolf Laban was a prominent figure. In the early '20s, Laban distanced himself from dancing as an expression of subjective feelings. Kurt Jooss, one of Laban's pupils, represented another version of dance theater. He saw dance theater as a dramatic group action. In 1927, Kurt Jooss became co-

founder and director of dance at the Folkwang Schule in Essen, Germany. The school followed Laban's ideals to combine music, dance and speech education, a more integrated performative art.

Jooss built up a training program on the basis of Laban's spatial and qualitative theories which consciously combined elements of classical ballet with the expressive dynamic range of the new dance. Jooss also considered drama in its relation to words. He argued that, if speech is eliminated in dance, then the art of gesture has to be intensified to a universally understandable language. He combined the intensified language of gesture with an integrated classical modern technique. In 1959, Kurt Jooss received some funding for the establishment of an institute of advanced studies in choreography and performing skills, which led to the Folkwang-Ballet Ensemble (where Pina Bausch studied).

While she didn't invent Tanztheater, Pina Bausch's work most fully redefined it for a new age and spread her particular developmental process and articulation around the globe.

Bausch's roots in German Expressionist Dance (Ausdruckstanz) have been well documented and her connection to historical theatrical practice speculated upon, but what is less well appreciated is the impact of her work on contemporary dance and theater.

Through repetition, the presentation or "showing" of these actions to her audience, and their assembly through the principles of montage, alteration and decentring, Bausch is quite consciously engaging with Brechtian doctrines of "gestus" and "epic theater". The choreographed movements and gestures performed by the Wuppertal ensemble are frequently emotionally charged and/or aesthetically pleasing, but these qualities or effects are not what impel Bausch's choreography¹⁶.

Like Brecht, and so much of contemporary performance which is only in the loosest sense "Brechtian", Bausch's work does not seek to offer consolation, or an Aristotelian catharsis

through recognition. For Bausch, pain is the corollary of living, loving and desire. It is also an existential condition born out of the monstrosities of fascism and the Holocaust.

She rewrote the rules for how new work could be created in theater and dance and left it to others to discover their own pathway through the newly aligned performative universe. Her early work drew from her dance roots and incorporated the legacy of experimental theater, both from the pioneering work of Bertolt Brecht (especially as it was connected to and derived out of a cabaret tradition), as well as the tradition of avant-garde theater in Europe and America. Without any direct influence, she draws from a similar investigative experience to connect to a theatrical avant-garde tradition that passes from Antonin Artaud and Stanley Witkiewicz to post-war practitioners like Jerzy Grotowski, Tadeusz Kantor and Peter Brook, and is later picked up by Arianne Mnouchkine and Robert Wilson.

Without any direct influence, she also echoes the essentialist influence of later Samuel Beckett, emphasizing the necessity of the stage and the primacy and impact of presence, supplanting Beckett's attention to the world as a marker for essential existence with a thorough investigation of the body as the primary expression of being.

It is almost as if Bausch has defined the benchmark or template against which late 20th-century Western dance and physical theaters can be considered, but it is noteworthy that a younger generation of European performance dance makers such as Les Ballets C de la B, Jerome Bel, Xavier le Roy, La Ribot and Jonathan Burrows are proposing something significantly different or additional in their work from that which we are accustomed to expect from Bausch and her immediate contemporaries. Since Pina Bausch, there have been a growing number of choreographers who have chosen to work with dance dramaturgs. Among them are Meg Stuart with Andre Lepecki, Anne Teresa de Keersmaecker with Marianne van Kerkhoven, William Forsythe with Heidi Gilpin and Freya Vass-Rhee, Alain Platel with Hildegard de Vuyst and many others.

“Dance theater”, “movement theater”, “physical theater” or “choreographic theater” reflect the groping terminology of a practice that does not seek to represent, but rather serves to use movement, gesture, rhythm and space in order to come to terms with present-day forms of living – while simultaneously questioning the conventional hierarchy of the senses.

In Britain, the term “physical theater” first came to public attention through the emergence of DV8 Physical Theater in 1986. However, the genealogy is more complex and convoluted than this, as the term “physical theater” seems to appear in various places throughout the 1970s. Certainly the term is invoked as a shorthand to identify a range of practices associated with Grotowski’s laboratory. We remember that Pina Bausch had, also, studied Grotowski’s theory.

However, notwithstanding sporadic sightings of the term in the 1970s, it is not until the mid-1980s that the phrase begins to gain some momentum and becomes a fashionable designation for a range of emerging practices. Lloyd Newson doesn’t find the term “physical theater” useful because “of its current overuse in describing almost anything that isn’t traditional dance or theater”. Since DV8’s launch 20 years ago, Newson has talked of the company’s work as “breaking down the barriers between dance, theater and personal politics” and of “taking risks, aesthetically and physically”, saying that this mode of description is not untypical of how other companies begin to identify their practice.

This inclination to employ any one of a raft of similar phrases – for example, visual theater / performance, movement theater, body-based theater, gestural theater, dance dramas, dance theater and (even) modern mime – so as to signpost the shape and direction of contemporary work outside the mainstream, discloses significant information about late 20th century Western cultural preoccupations and interests.

Newson acknowledges Pina Bausch as his principal influence, but goes on also to cite Anne Teresa de Keersmaeker, Pete Brooks/Impact Theater and Tim Etchells. In terms of physical

language, Newson explores both the choreographic potential of daily corporeal behaviors, actions and gestures. However, unlike much modern and contemporary dance from the 1970s and 1980s, this inventory of highly skilled and energetic routines was always in the service of the socio-cultural contexts Newson was exploring at the time.

For Jerome Bel, a French choreographer, this kind of (re)alignment has moved dance theater not so much *away* from theatrical pre-occupations as simultaneously towards the landscape of live and performance art. In this “performance-dance” the only foundation is the *non*-foundational proposition that demands the porosity of boundaries between art forms, and a default position which embraces both the visceral delights and philosophical opportunities of cross-arts practices.

In *The Show must go on* (2000) Bel returns again to matters of representation, and this time particularly around theater/dance histories, asking questions about acting as possible representation of the “natural” and the intersection of this paradigm with avant-garde formations which mark attempts to depart and escape from “character”. In its unfolding *The Show* shifts from occasional dances, quoted as if to raise them slightly from the minimal movement vocabulary which frames and surrounds them, to small gestures that physicalize the words of a song, to looks and gazes between each other and towards the audience.

2.7 The integrated musical

The American musical theater (1940) was already thriving (before *The Black Crook*), with companies offering a wide assortment of imported and homegrown entertainments. The United States had even evolved a genre that had no European antecedents: minstrelsy, which helped established the commercial theater nationwide. With that, we are coming to the current state of the ancient dance theater that proves that acting and dance’s connection have remained the same or yet excelled to a modern spectacle experience, the integrated musical.

The idea of ‘integration’¹⁷ dominates historiographies of the musical, with Richard Rogers and Oscar Hammerstein II credited as the most consistent writers of integrated shows. This type of musical tells a story using song and scene in a way that makes dramatic sense, with musical numbers appearing as apparently naturalistic extensions of spoken scenes. The first show they wrote together was *Oklahoma!* (1943). Many shows from the 1940s to the early 1960s - the period most associated with integration – form a “canon” of classic work.

Most interestingly, in *Oklahoma!*, seeing dance as an essential element in this show, they chose ballet choreographer Agnes DeMille (1905-1993), who had minimal theatrical credentials but a progressive attitude towards dance as a storytelling tool.¹⁸ Every word, musical number and dance step continued each other without interrupting them, functioning as an integrated storytelling process. For the first time, everything flowed in an unbroken narrative line from overture to curtain call. As Rodgers later said: “The orchestrations sounded the way the costumes look”.

Modern day dance has been affected by its historical background and even more by scholars and academics who have fought for the expression, the emotion and the minimalism of its representations. Before we move on to their debate, it is essential that we parallel their connection through time. Eventually, they give us clues on how to approach dance, how to teach it and how to develop it.

3. Chapter3

Expressionism: the debate that changed the way we experience dance and theater

And it is not [the dancer's] real mission, [the dancers'] joyous instinct, to convey to the spectator, as a kind of revelation, [the dancer's] very own impressions of things as [the dancer] sees and feels them? Yet how can [the dancer] do that if [the dancer's] body is chained and limited in its expressiveness?
(Chekhov 1953:3)

In order to understand better the importance of acting training in dance training, it is essential to look for theatrical and dance connection in its primal form; movement and expression. The modern and post-modern dance, as we currently know it, with all the forms of theater that it is being called (“physical”, “mime”, “performance art”, “live art”, “new dance”, “experimental”, “conceptual art”, “postcolonial dance performance”)¹⁹, has been established on the basis of academic and dance debates concerning its status, its form and its components. I find important to include most of the arguments that have shaped the dance art as we currently know it, as also those that support my research question, if acting training is important to dance training, with the given that acting training is an essential learning tool of expression.

According to Mary Lynn Smith, Associate Professor in the Department of Dance and Theater Arts in the University of North Texas, “dance and theater arts students demonstrate body-mind disconnections. These disconnections range from lack of breath support in their moving to increased tension that comes with the unfamiliarity of moving improvisationally, creating new movement patterns from their own inner voice”. For this reason, she researched the importance of movement in dancers’ bodies. She defined movement as expressive: “In the expression of a movement, an action is experienced or felt by both the performer and the audience”²⁰. From the Laban Movement Analysis²¹ framework, emotion is resonated with effort, which is one’s inner intent to move. Every move we create comes from an inner source of intent. This is the expressive component of movement, the dynamic range. Movement takes a state of

“becoming” in choreography (Totton, 2012:21)²². Totton’s notion comes from Maurice Merleau-Ponty’s theory that “we have a body, we are a body and we become a body”, emphasizing that we tell stories with our bodies and we have them as the only keys to engaging the world and our experience in it. Not surprisingly then, the meaning of a particular scene or dance is conceived because of the actions, the script or the choreography in relation to experience and perception of both audience and performer.

For Merce Cunningham, expression had a major role in his choreographies, one that was closer to movement and music. “In order for Cunningham dancers to be “musical”, they must discover, in the movement, out of their own inner resources and innate musicality, what I call, for want of a better word, the “song”. There is a meaning in every Cunningham dance, but the meaning cannot be translated into words; it must be experienced kinaesthetically through the language of movement”²³. Cunningham himself has defined expression in dance as an intrinsic and inevitable quality of movement. For him, dancers should keep time without musical cues, sense the presence of other dancers on stage, know blindly, proprioceptively, what these other dancers are doing and adjust the timing and the scope of their movement accordingly. All this work is “expressive”, as it “expresses” the human situation at hand. We must, also, borrow a note from the previous chapter, that Stanford Meisner’s work was focused on the connection among actors on stage in the same way Cunningham wanted his dancers to collaborate.

Throughout history, dance has been present both in spiritual and religious practices, as well as in recreational and social ones²⁴. It is an instrument of expression and communication that can transmit emotions, feelings, thoughts and experiences.²⁵ Inherited from Plato and Aristotle, dance had to become a species of theatrical imitation. Noverre agreed with Charles Batteaux²⁶, that every art shares the same essential function, namely, that of imitation, specifically of the beautiful. Thus, in order for dance to be considered eligible for membership in the system of the fine arts, it too had to become an art of mimesis. Applied to dance, this predisposes

choreographers toward a willingness to make work that has subjects, such as sexuality, gender, ethnic identity, alienation, power, emotion and even politics. Moreover, this concern with content naturally sends choreographers with renewed interest to the resources of theater for the requisite means of expression.

And though we pick up the conversation at a contemporary moment with a focus mainly on Western stage performance, opening the lens and stepping back allows us to recognize that dance and theater have met in many important ways historically and globally. Expression of thoughts, ideas and emotions through dance has become a major medium of educational and therapeutic experiences as well as an artistic function²⁷. As the psychologist William James remarked²⁸, if “action and feeling go together, they both warrant careful consideration for optimal functioning, just as both ends and means require our attention”.

Indeed, the most technically proficient dancers tend to be the least free to act or dance; movement of all kinds seem to be “inner”getically underpowered. The dancer, like the actor, must systematically undertake the task of feeding his body with other impulses²⁹. The mandating of acting courses in dance training is a recent development for which there is little scholarly reportage. With that in mind, I was interested to see if there could be a potential crossover of acting training in dance training.

However, there are aesthetics that not only resist the separation between dance and theater but also never accepted it. For example, Yvonne Rainer said a very large NO to many of the facts of the theater today:

No to spectacle – no to virtuosity – no to transformation and magic and make-believe – no to the glamour and transcendency of the star image – no to the heroic – no to the anti-heroic – no to trash imagery – no to involvement of performer or spectator – no to style – no to camp – no to seduction of spectator by the wiles of the performer – no to eccentricity – no to moving or being moved

Yvonne Rainer introduced with that an era of minimalist tendencies in postmodern dance, in the context of antitheatricalism. Because of this manifestation the current intersection of theater and dance assumes importance and defines “indubitably, that that moment in dance history is closed”³⁰. Banes made the (same kind of) claim for Yvonne Rainer’s *Trio A*: “The history of dance theory”, she wrote, “has been the repeated conflict of those who value dance technique and those who value expression. With *Trio A* this cycle is at last broken. It is not simply a new style of dance, but a new meaning and function, a new definition” (Banes 1980:49)³¹.

Rudolf Laban, in his book, *Mastery of Movement* (1960), discusses dance and acting non-correlatively: “Dance, in which the movements are often coordinated with the rhythm of music is, of course, different [from acting] because dance does not require dramatic content”³². However, he did not know he would become one of the precursors of dance-theater. However, in that aspect, Lloyd Newson of DV8 Dance-theater was, also, hesitant towards dance expression: “[Movement] can present only the most generalised of facts, the most obvious of symbols, the most stereotypical of narratives. It can’t analyse, it can’t argue, it can’t contextualise”³³.

As for the facial expressions, Andre Lepecki³⁴ suggests that dance proves inherently antifacial as it privileges the body. Erin Brannigan³⁵ comments that the face plays no central role within contemporary dance, while Victoria Anderson Davies³⁶ argues that dance can resist facialization as it negates the division between face and body.

On the one hand, formalism was one response to the decline in the prestige of the mimetic conception of art. For this reason contemporary dance was and is still thought of as nonemotive or antiemotive. Susan Sontag has observed: “The view that dance should not express emotion does not, of course, mean to be against emotion. Valéry defined the poem as a machine whose function is to create a distinctively poetic feeling: it does not “express” emotion, it is a method for creating it”. (Sontag 1983:103).

On the other hand, expressionism was also an alternative theory of art. The attack on theatrical imitation for the sake of the formal movement values can be read quite easily as an attempt to bring dance aesthetics in line with what was emerging as a central perspective on the nature of fine arts. Dance art in the modern period reveals something like a cyclical structure, in which episodes of theatricalism are followed by episodes of antitheatricalism, which, then, are followed by renewed claims for theatricalism.

Dance must become theater – rather than a collection of charming steps – if it is to be taken seriously. Dance is a theater art. Aristotle in *Poetics* argues that the purpose of dance is “to imitate character, emotion and action by rhythmical movement”. He thus conceives of dance as a mimetic medium, one obligated to represent the world beyond the immediate limits of the dancer’s own body. According to Wigman, “the dance form is not determined by dance only. On the contrary, it is more of a compromise which has its origins in theater, where the main accent is no longer on the dance itself, but on the total stage event” (Wigman, tran. Sorrell, 1966)³⁷. Significantly, the etymology of the word “theater” is derived from the Greek word “theatron” which means “seeing place”. That might mean either that every art space can be a theater, as we become audience every time we see something like a performance, a film or an art presentation (re)presented or that every performance that is designed for an audience is an example of theatrical presentation.

Dance has proven to be a code-based representation, as it shares commonalities with language, which communicates according to cultural codes. We can surely agree, for instance, that the Graham contraction is visually and conventionally linked to the expression of emotional states. Actions like this serve as connoting or suggesting states of emotion that the dancer expresses³⁸. Shapiro, also, argued that “all art is representational. There is no “pure art” unconditioned by experience” (Shapiro 1978:196). The notion “pure art” means an art naked of expression. In any case, though, in more conventional ideas of dance, the dancer’s body acts as the carrier of

a message, metaphorically addressing ideas or feelings by standing as a marker for them and explicating them through movement.

With that in mind, Cunningham explained that the expressive movement is not trying to illustrate anything, making an artistic act antinarrative, apsychological and yet fully expressive. Petit observed that “the shape of the energy within us is the same shape as the body” (2010)³⁹ and that “we send ourselves towards an object or an image. Once we become one with the image [or object] we can feel its quality, sense its personality, receive impressions and impulses”. Maybe this is the “affective significance” in which Susan Foster Leigh finds expression, as opposed to the emotional experience of movement⁴⁰.

More generally, our appreciation of art’s sensuous beauties has an important somatic dimension, not simply because they are grasped through our bodily senses, but, in addition, because art’s emotional values, like all emotion, must be experienced somatically to be experienced at all. This requirement to make each performance uniquely real lies at the heart of professional acting.

A dance performance is far more than a display of technique, yet there appears to be little consensus on methods of training for the expressive components. Dance can be performative in the way that its fictional scenarios deliver dramatic impact. Concerning, though, theater and dance, is there interdisciplinarity or disciplinarity? Dance and theater are both embodied performing arts, natural bedfellows, with many genres that straddle the lines between the two forms. There are many departments of theater and dance, though the scholarly fields too seldom communicate.

4. Chapter 4

Practice as Research:

Acting is necessary to dance training and dance performance

4.1 Introduction

Watching a dance performance is more enjoyable when the whole dancer's presence is committed to the dance. By the word "whole", we refer to the technique, the stamina and the confidence of the dancer's experience on stage. According to Julie Diana⁴¹, the principal dancer with the Pennsylvania Ballet, "inauthentic stage presence – whether it involves a bunch of awkward faces or a single stiff, pasted-on smile – is one of the most common problems plaguing young dancers". Stephanie Wolf Spasoff, director of the Rock School in Pennsylvania, agrees: "phony performances turn people off".

Artistic expression is a universal aim, although opinions on how to achieve this goal vary radically. Total presence, a complete experience of one's movement in the whole body, constitutes the basis of artistic expression in motion. Presence can be defined as the full experience in every part of the body of the moment-to-moment changes in position, time and space. The clarity of mind necessitated by presence allows dancers to express an interior or story line suggested by a choreographer. A mind filled with the worries of mastering a step minimizes experiencing movement or theatrical presence. A significant part of a dancer's job is to show the audience how it feels to move through inspired choreography⁴².

In dance, the face needs to be part of the whole feeling of the motion. Many dancers find it difficult to experience their face in motion. Other try to keep their faces still with the very best of intentions not to overact or falsify expression. It seems that the habit of putting on a face is another ancient tradition. The dancer needs to learn to experience motion in the face and allow the face to participate in the whole body's transitions from one step to another.

Many choreographers appreciate dancers who can identify with their vision of a dance. Maija Plisetskaja, the former prima ballerina of the Bolshoi, said her peak career experiences were dancing for Roland Petit and Maurice Bejart. They did not demand plies and arabesques but scintillating

characterizations (Kunckel 1994)⁴³. To be able to do this efficiently, the dancer needs to be trained in self-transformation. Martha Graham said in a 1989 interview that her works require the emotional challenge of experiencing extremes – madness to sanity, roughness to tenderness, lust to love, ecstasy to contrition, sin to rejoicing, spirituality to intense sensuality. “The dancer has to be able to respond to the imagery that shapes a movement, to the logic of why a move is from here to there, and must understand the underlying motives and feelings of a character at a given moment” (Horosko 1991)⁴⁴.

The research suggests that there is a training method for learning how to express feelings while dancing. Indeed, acting training can be proven necessary to dance training and even to a dance performance. According to Gross & Crane, actors are typically believed to be experts in displaying emotional information corporeally. They are, also, experts in paralleling acted emotions to emotions experienced in real life.⁴⁵

In the current study, we examine whether acting training exercises during dance training sessions have an impact on dancers’ training attitude and performing confidence. We expect that dancers are capable of acknowledging the progress that they make during the sessions. We also presume that dancers perform better when they feel active parts of the team. In addition, as the dancers have participated already in dance training classes when they were younger, we expect them to have a more complete opinion on their experience during the research sessions. Thus, we also presume that the dancers will try something out of their general dance or acting background in order to express their opinion objectively. As in the previous chapter, expression in performance has been proved necessary to dance art in general, we expect the dancers to agree with the research question that acting training, as a method of direct expression for the dancer, is a necessary tool to dance and dance training.

4.2 Methods

The foundation of this qualitative study was phenomenological. Phenomenological research aims “to understand several individuals’ common or shared experiences of a phenomenon”⁴⁶. This approach appeared the best to foster development of a beginning understanding and description of the participants’ experiences as communicated through their diary log-ins and reflections.

4.3 Ethics Statement

The study was approved by the University of Lincoln Research Ethics Committee. All participants signed a form to declare that they participated voluntarily, that they had received sufficient information concerning the procedures, the tasks and the technologies used. In addition, they declared that they were aware they had the opportunity to ask questions and that recordings of body movements were made for scientific and educational purposes only.

4.4 Participants

The sample of participants concerned a non-random selection. The selection criterion was based on the condition of having a dance or acting background, as the participants would already have experienced dance training and from that point they would add expressive acting training to their basic dance level. In addition, the participants were both males and females and they had dance or acting experience in amateur or professional level. Eight adult participants (the volunteers were both sexes: seven females, one male) took part in the study. This small, yet adequate, number of people is ideal for the researcher to build and maintain a close relationship and improve the open and frank exchange of information (Crouch & McKenzie: 2006)⁴⁷. The average age of the participants was 23.75. 75% had received dance training, and of those, the average time spent in dance training was 7.6 years. 62.5% of them had, also, trained in acting and spent, on average 5.2 years in acting training. Furthermore, all participants considered that their experience in acting is little, while only three participants considered their experience in dance bigger. As participants were recruited from different areas in Athens, Greece, a heterogenous mix of people experienced in dance was obtained. The participants received no compensation for participating in the study.

4.5 Procedure

The participants took part in five sessions that lasted 1 hour and 30 minutes, which included: warming up (15 minutes), acting training exercises (30 minutes), dance training (35 minutes) and cool down (10 minutes). The sessions were only five, as, according to the needs of the research, they reached the

saturation point, that is until I saw no new answers coming from the participants. (Strauss & Corbin, 1998:61-62)⁴⁸. After the session, the participants were asked to answer to some questions relevant to the acting training in connection to the dance training. In that particular study, participants were asked to notice if and how acting exercises could change the way they perceive their dance technique, their dance performance and general dance training. Each participant took part in the acting exercises and they all, as a team, participated in the choreography choreographed by the researcher in a medium difficulty level jazz style. The exercises are included in the appendix, along with the questions asked after every session. The dance training resulted in a two-minute choreography that was filmed in the end for the team's pleasure.

4.6 Data availability

Data will be made freely available upon request.

4.7 Results

Based on the answers of the participants, acting is considered a necessary and essential tool in dance training. Starting from the beginning of the sessions, most of the participants considered acting as complementary method of teaching expression in dance. They considered rhythm, synchronicity, dare for exposure and even joy the most important qualities in a dance training.

In the second session, they were asked to imagine a landscape and to fully describe it. As they said, this helped them to connect with the space of the studio, to connect with the team, to free their imagination and to get in the position of a director or even choreographer. It, also, helped them individually in isolating everything beyond the team, to criticise themselves, to feel secure when they were exposed and to learn how to respond to the spectators/observers. This time, they were asked about the session's qualities and they added confidence and style.

In the third session, they were asked to move in space playing a character. According to them, they found a connection with the choreography while they were improvising and using their senses, body and space simultaneously. It, also, helped them to feel free and "open" to their teammates, although uncomfortable and nervous.

In the fourth session, they were given a dance improvisation task based on different songs. In the end, they were asked in an open-ended question what they considered as basic elements of a choreography and of dance training. They are all included in the following table:

Choreography	Dance training
Theatricality / emotion (6/8)	Musicality (2/8)
Rhythm (3/8)	Emotion (7/8)
Space changes	Muscle strength
Moves (based on dancers' strengths) (2/8)	Imagination
Knowledge of each other's space	Team building
Improvisation	Rhythm exercises (3/8)
Body freedom	Acting (4/8)
Joy (2/8)	Technique (3/8)
Synchronicity	Exposure
Musicality (2/8)	Joy
Technique	Confidence
Flow (beginning-middle-end) (2/8)	Synchronicity
Methodology	
Specificity in movement (2/8)	

With these answers, we noticed that the participants started to use words as “joy”, “love”, “soul” and “feeling” more than before. Also, we noticed that almost half of the participants started to embrace more the expressive side of dance and the role that acting performs in it.

Parenthetically, Chekhov had talked about the joy in the discovery of using the body for expression as opposed to more familiar forms of communication: “You radiate very vividly in life. Try to find out how to capture that power in your art. The joy you feel in doing the exercises is the sign that you have reached something”⁴⁹.

In the final session, they developed the dance improvisation exercise. They were given a certain song, on which they improvised one by one. They finished it all together. In the final discussion they had, they all agreed that they had created a story, even though their dance styles were completely different. The most “interesting”, as they called it, was the facial expression and the body intensity that everyone used during their improvisation. Lastly, they were asked to answer the research question: Is acting necessary, useful or optional? It is essential that we read the participants' full answers, to better understand the impact that the acting exercises had on their dance training.

Part.1: “Acting is a part of our life. Acting and dance complete each other. If they are apart, they are totally incomplete!”

Part.2: “Acting is a way, an art, to express ourselves, to get to know ourselves, to move on, to use body and face as tools. It is essential for every artist”.

Part. 4: “Acting is necessary because it is the one that makes the most impression”.

Part.5: “Acting is necessary. Without it dance is empty and boring”.

Part.6: “Dance wants emotion, soul, feeling. Acting is the mother of dance, as it gives it personality”.

Part.7: “It is necessary, because the dancer is always performing a character and always showing his/her emotions”.

Part. 8: “It is necessary for some dance styles...”

Two of the participants considered acting training as useful, but not necessary in dance training:

Part.3: “Acting is useful, because it helps:

- *in acknowledging emotions*
- *in understanding others*
- *in self-confidence*
- *the audience to better understand”*

Part.7: “Acting can be useful because it teaches us how to express our feelings”

Part.8: “Acting is in general useful, because it helps the observer to see and find something that he/she hasn’t felt, something different”.

We should note that none of the participants used the word “optional” when referring to acting training in dance training.

5. Chapter 5

Conclusion

We consider the practice research effective, as there was progress noted in all of the participants. The progress was based on the mentality of what they considered important in dance. In addition, the way the “opened” themselves to the team during the acting exercises and felt less exposed and freer, even in only five sessions, can be characterized as progress. They enjoyed the dance practice more in the end, when they felt more confident and they added their personality in the dance. One could argue that with every discussion, the participants may have influenced each other. Possibly, the participants became a team and acquired similar dance training qualities, but their answers differed, as also their progress. However, a future study could investigate further the expressions during the acting training in dance classes and research a method for their development and implications.

The study reached the conclusion that acting training is necessary for dance training, as it enriches the expressive tools of a dancer’s body, it enhances the dancer’s confidence and team spirit and it, also, helps the spectators to comprehend better and even actively participate in the spectacle that is the dance performance.

Appendix No. 1⁵⁰

Paul Harvard's book *Acting through song techniques and exercises for musical-theater actors*⁵¹ includes "exercises based of [his] own experience of acting, and of training actors, and are inspired by the work of some of the greatest practitioners of the last century", such as "Konstantin Stanislavsky, Bertolt Brecht, Stella Adler, Uta Hagen, Sanford Meisner, Rudolf Laban, Katie Mitchell, Jo Estill, Declan Donnellan and many others in its pages". The exercises below were used during the acting-training sessions of the rehearsals with the group of participants.

Session 1

Limitless attention with a partner

This exercise helps you learn to find communion with the other actors. It has parallels with the famous repetition exercises of Meisner.

- Work with a partner. Stand about a metre apart facing each other. Label yourselves "A" and "B".
- Person A should begin by saying something they notice about person B. To begin with, this might be a simple, physical observation: "You have long dark hair" or "You just scratched your nose". Person B then responds by saying something they see about person A.
- This process should continue back and forth for 2 or 3 minutes. Slowly you should attempt to find communion with the thoughts and feelings of your partner, such as: "You were uncertain about what to say next" or even "You just flirted with me".
- The third stage, which may or may not be reached at the first attempt, is more metaphysical: "I see that you are loyal to your friends" or "We just connected for the first time as human beings".
- It is useful to repeat the exercise with several different people – with those you know well, and less well, and with members of your own and the opposite sex.

The exercise is about openness. It is amazing how many actors try to find the inspiration for the next comment in their own heads. If you relax, breathe and pay attention to your partner, then you will know exactly what to say. Remember, what your partners is actually thinking or feeling is irrelevant, it is only what you observe that counts. Don't censure yourself; just say what you see.

It is very common when people first tackle this exercise to find they want to laugh. If the dialogue between you is genuinely funny, that is fine. But don't seek to entertain or please your partner; the exercise shouldn't be a social interaction. Frequently the laughter – a nervous laughter – comes from the self-consciousness of being observed so closely. It is a defense mechanism. By allowing the exercise to dissolve into a funny social interaction, you are finding ways of masking your discomfort. If you feel this is happening, seek to refocus your attention, as this only serves to break the atmosphere and stops you from really seeing the other person. Although this exercise need to be handled with sensitivity, do not feel you need to be experienced. I often introduce this work near the beginning of a professional training, as it is vital to all that is to follow.

Note: In the exercise, it is essential that every pair has an audience. In the end of the exercise, we discuss what we observed.

Question of the session: "What would you like to remember for next time?"

Session 2

Views from a Hillside

This is an exercise to help develop your ability to form mental pictures. In my opinion, some people are overly mystical about the imagination. They view it like a temperamental cat: something that is liable to come and go of its own choosing. Nothing could be further from the truth. The imagination is a sweaty muscle that can be worked and developed. The more you exercise it, the more it will grow. This work will help you improve it.

- You will need to work with a partner who will observe.
- Stand in the space and pretend you are stood on top of a hillside, from where you have a panoramic view.
- Decide upon what type of landscape is in front of you; for example, you might be looking out over a farmland or a campsite, a coastline or a city. This should be an invented landscape, rather than an actual place you know.
- Imagine what is in front of you, letting your eyes move in the direction of what you are looking at. So, if the oak tree is off to your right, let your gaze shift towards it. If the country lane leads far off into the distance, let your eyes follow its path.
- Your partner should observe you and ask questions about what you are imagining. Describe it to them. Don't look at your partner as they ask you questions; keep seeing the landscape. Making eye contact with them will only serve to break the flow of imagination.
- Repeat the exercise with different landscapes.

When you first attempt this exercise, you may find it hard to see much at all. If this is the case, start by focusing on one particular detail. Instead of trying to see the whole sea, look at a single rock. Describe its color, its jagged edges, the way the water breaks around its base. Once you have imagined one part of the landscape, you will usually find the rest of the image starts to come. When your partner asks you a question, ensure you are not giving them an intellectual response. "I see a farm on a beautiful summer's day" probably indicates you are seeing very little. "I am looking at a child. They are about nine and have short brown hair with a side parting. They are running through a hay field and are smiling and turning constantly behind them because their friend is chasing them" is more promising.

It is useful to think of the images being more like a movie than a photography, constantly changing, shifting and evolving. When this starts to happen, you are really imagining something and you won't run out of things to say. If you always have something to describe then your partner doesn't need to interrupt you. This is a good sign. Remember, when you are truly seeing an image, there can be no right or wrong answers – you just say what you see.

Note: It is good to interrupt the audience, in case they ask irrelevant questions, in order to give them focus. In the end, we discussed their experience during the exercise.

Questions in the session:

1. "Do you believe there is a connection between the acting exercise and the choreography? If yes, to what level?"
2. "Did the acting exercise help you learn something new about yourself and yourself on stage?"
3. "What would you like to remember for our next session?"

Session 3

The Garden of Eden

This exercise helps you respond to imaginary surroundings. It shows that the more you interact, the better you imagine, which leads to further possibilities for interaction.

- The exercise can be done alone, or simultaneously with a group of colleagues.
- Everything in the exercise should be imagined. It is therefore best if the room is bare, but if there are physical objects in the space, just ignore them. The work is done without an audience or even a division of stage and auditorium. There should be no sense of needing to perform whatsoever.
- Lay down on the floor on your back, with your eyes closed. Imagine you are either Adam or Eve when they wake for the first time in the Garden of Eden.
- When you open your eyes, begin to imagine what you see. The first thing you notice might be the sky or, if you are laid in an orchard, the canopy of the trees.
- Slowly begin to explore the garden: discover the plants, the trees, the animals. You must see them all in your imagination.
- Allow yourself to respond to whatever you see, touch, smell, taste and hear. You could find yourself running your hands through the grass, eating a plum, or chasing a butterfly. The work can, and should, involve a mime.
- If you are doing the exercise at the same time as colleagues, don't interact with them. It should be as if you are alone in the garden. You are working on interacting with your imagination here, not with other actors.
- Let the exercise continue for about five minutes.

When this exercise works, you will find that the time goes very quickly and you never run out of things to interest you. You will discover yourself engaging in a wide variety of physical activities – like running, crawling, rolling, stroking and throwing – and all by simply interacting with your imagination. The aim is to genuinely respond to the sights, smells and surroundings that you imagine; try not to demonstrate what you think Adam and Eve would do. Notice how what you imagine changes you (your reaction), and how what you do (your action) alters what you imagine. Upon completion of the exercise it is common to notice that you felt no self-consciousness at all.

Note: We did the exercise twice, because it is a quick one and we wanted them to engage more. In the end, the participants discussed what they felt.

Questions in this session:

1. “Do you believe there is a connection between the acting exercise and the choreography? If yes, to what level?”
2. “How do you believe that your part in this choreography can accept a character?”

Session 4

Tandem Solo⁵²

Pick some strong music with powerful momentum and start off with a good improviser.

One of you will go to the center of a circle of dancers. As you listen to the opening strains of the music, catch and idea out of what you hear and then take off. After a while, I will call out the name of another dancer who will replace the first one in the center of the circle.

Note: This is the first version of the exercise. It was an introduction for the last session's exercise. Each one was given a different song to improvise on. It was about listening to the music and improvising the way they felt. In the end of the exercise, we had a discussion about how they felt and what they observed.

Questions in this session:

1. “In our dance/acting exercise, I felt...”
2. “What do you consider the basic elements that a choreography must have?”
3. “What do you consider the basic elements of a dancer’s training to perform a choreography?”

Session five

Tandem Solo

Pick some strong music with powerful momentum and start off with a good improviser.

One of you will go to the center of a circle of dancers. As you listen to the opening strains of the music, catch and idea out of what you hear and then take off. After a while, I will call out the name of another dancer who will replace the first one in the center of the circle. The challenge for that second dancer will be to realize what she/he reads as the intend of the first dancer. After a while, I will call out a third dancer who tries to continue what the second dancer had been doing and so on, until near the end of the music, I would say “everyone finish it”.

Note: It was the final version of the previous exercise. Each one was given the same song to improvise on. It was about listening to the music and improvising the way they felt. In the end of the exercise, we had a discussion about how they felt and what they observed.

Questions in this session:

1. “During the dance/acting exercise today, I observed...”
2. “In my opinion, acting expression is necessary, useful or just optional in our dance?”

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