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# MOVING IN CONCERT

MAXINE SHEETS-JOHNSTONE

## Abstract

This article explores both the social and the artistic capacity to move in concert with others. It first provides examples of the everyday ways in which nonhuman as well as human animate forms of life move in concert with one another. Thinking in movement is highlighted in this context and then throughout the article. Also highlighted and exemplified from various perspectives is the fact that infants are not pre-linguistic but that language is post-kinetic. Attention is furthermore called to the silence of movement and to the power of kinetic silence. Sociopolitical human examples are detailed that show how moving in concert has the possibility of enhancing corporeally-awakened and corporeally-inflected social sensibilities and relationships. In elucidating the artistic capacity to move in concert, the article focuses on the qualitative dynamics of movement, on the dynamic line created by movement, on improvisation, and on the “interior” and “exterior” of movement. The article concludes with a convergence of insights by two distinct but equally esteemed modern dance choreographers – Doris Humphrey and Merce Cunningham – and with observations on the history of harmoniously moving together in dance.

## Keywords

Social sensibilities and relationships; creativity; kinesthesia; qualitative dynamics; improvisation; distinguishing between the kinesthetic and the kinetic; distinction of kinesthesia from proprioception; movement as a *sensu communis*

Moving in concert names something not commonly described, namely, the way in which, in the silence of movement itself, animate forms of life move together harmoniously without disruption or slips. When we see a flock of birds take off from one perch and fly to another, or see a herd of cattle take off and run elsewhere as if suddenly jolted, or when we see a herd of any wild animal take off to escape a predator, all of them quickly taking off, we see them *moving in concert*. Whether a matter of flying straight away to another perch or of running this way and that in agitation or terror, we see them moving together without bumping into each other, without running each other down, and so on. We experience a further example of moving in concert not directly but indirectly when we run down stairs “1–2–3”: body parts are moving in concert; neurons are moving in concert; muscles are moving in concert. What we experience in a felt bodily sense are not the myriad inside coordination dynamics of body parts, neurons, and muscles, but the singular kinesthetically felt

dynamics of a smooth, flowing run down stairs. Moving in concert, of course, is not limited to fast, quick movement. When we do something as simple as handing a package to someone and that someone takes the package from us without our letting it go too fast and without the person letting it slip from his or her grasp, we are moving in concert.

Moving in concert means moving together in ways that are harmonious. I would like to explore this meaning first in therapeutic terms – therapeutic not in a strictly psychiatric or psychological sense, but therapeutic in the sense of awakening and facilitating socially-enhanced sensibilities and modes of relating to others. I will initially call attention in this context to the silence of movement. We are so used to words linguistically anchoring our relationships with others that we forget that we come into the world moving and that movement is our mother tongue (Sheets-Johnstone, 1999a / exp. 2nd ed. 2011). I will proceed from this socially therapeutic context to an exploration of moving in concert in artistic performances, focusing especially on dance. In actual performances of dance, our attention as dancers and as audience is on the unfolding qualitatively rich dynamic that is movement. In exploring both the social and aesthetic significance of moving in concert, I will highlight how the ability to move harmoniously with others – to move in concert – necessarily involves the capacity to think in movement.

### **I. Moving in concert: Kinetic social sensibilities and relationships**

To move among others is to be part of an interanimate world. To move in concert with others is, as indicated, to move in harmony with them. To be able to do so is to think in movement, not just one's own movement but one's own movement in conjunction with the movement of others. What might be regarded as the proverbial instance of such thinking is when, on a crowded sidewalk, we move this way and that to avoid bumping into others: we bend a bit to the side or even step to the side; we duck to avoid being struck by an umbrella; and so on. This mode of thinking, however, goes back to our infancy and even prenatal life. That it does so is evidenced in the fact that kinesthesia and tactility are the first sensory systems to develop neurologically. As fetuses, we put our thumb in our mouth, for example, and kick our legs. In-utero research studies of Swedish medical doctors document these fetal movement realities in detail. Their findings warrant quotation. At eleven weeks, they write, the muscles of fetuses "are already at work" and the movements of fetuses "become gradually more coordinated by the developing nervous system. The lips open and close, the forehead wrinkles, the brows – that is, the area of skin where they will be located – rise, and the head turns". They observe further that "[a]ll these motions will gradually develop into searching and sucking reflexes, vital when the newborn baby is to find the breast and start eating. The facial expression will also signal to adults how the baby feels and if it wants something. Wordless language is necessary at first. This is no heavy-weight exercising his muscles – the fetus weighs three quarters of an ounce, the weight of an ordinary letter" (Furuhjelm et al., 1976, p. 91).

Clearly, from the very beginning, moving in concert is of moment in both an inside and outside sense, as indicated by kinesthetically felt body parts moving in concert and by neurons and

muscles moving in concert. The dynamics of moving in concert in fetal life and beyond are clearly integral to learning one's body and learning to move oneself. Just as clearly, such wordless learning is propelled and sustained by thinking in movement (Sheets-Johnstone, 1981 / exp. version 1999a / exp. 2nd ed. 2011, 2009; see also Sheets-Johnstone, 2014d). "Wordless language" is not just "necessary at first", as the Swedish doctors affirm; it is necessary throughout life, and in fact is not a language at all, but a naturally developing kinesthetic-kinetic repertoire anchored phylogenetically as well as ontogenetically. In other words, it is a repertoire not only of humans but of other animate forms of life, a repertoire intimately bound to social sensibilities and interactions and articulated in the silence of movement.

In our infancy, our primary mode of relating to others is in and through movement, just as our primary mode of relating to our surrounding world is in and through movement. Is it any wonder, then, that our first mode of thinking is *thinking in movement*? (Sheets-Johnstone, 1981 / exp. version 1999a / exp. 2nd ed. 2011, 2009). While we might believe crying to be simply a series of sounds, it is something we do – and can do – *only by moving*, by opening our mouths and making audible sounds. Crying is in fact an expression of our primal animation. We are indeed sound-makers in virtue of our capacity to move ourselves and in ways that testify to movement inside and out in a social sense: crying resounds not just in our own ears but in the ears of others. In our infancy, it initially brought others to us; it elicited the movement of others who, in what psychiatrist D. W. Winnicott (1990, e.g. pp. 119, 120) would identify as "good enough" parents and caretakers, would move in ways harmonious with our needs. On the basis of such experiences, we learned that by making certain sounds, others would come to our rescue, answer to our needs, or help us in some way.

It is hardly surprising then that, however much we neglect acknowledgment of it by giving first place to thinking in words, *thinking in movement* constitutes our primary mode of thinking that evolves along multiple lines throughout our lives. Giving preeminence to linguistic thinking ignores the fact that speaking a language is itself a faculty rooted in movement, i.e. in the delicate making of sounds that for their very articulation require from the beginning, both ontogenetically and phylogenetically, developing awarenesses that not simply qualify as thinking in movement but that constitute thinking in movement. Though obviously not linguistically formulated, an infant may very well at times question: "What must I do to make this particular sound?" In this context, we might recall experimental evidence showing that newborn infants who mimic the tongue movements of others correct their imitations when they find that the tongue movement they have made is not a correct imitation (Meltzoff and Moore, 1977, 1983). In sum, though the word "infant" means "one unable to speak", *infants are not prelinguistic; language is post-kinetic* (Sheets-Johnstone, 1999a / exp. 2nd ed. 2011, 2010a, 2014c).

In this context, it is furthermore of interest to note with respect to *the brain*, and in particular to present-day near genuflections to *the brain*, that moving in concert and the thinking in movement that is integral to that ability coincide with well-known physiologist Roger Sperry's research investigations and conclusions showing that the brain is basically an organ of and for movement

(Sperry, 1952; see also Cotterill, 1995; Kelso, 1995). Moreover, it is not just what Sperry found through his research but what researchers in the area of *coordination dynamics* find in their study of brain and behavior (e.g. Kelso, 1995, 2009; Kelso et al., 2013; Kelso and Fuchs, 2016). Such research investigations and conclusions implicitly testify to the preeminence of movement both inside and out and thereby implicitly to a natural ability to think in movement and to move in concert with others. It is relevant too in this context to highlight well-known neuroscientist/neurophysiologist Marc Jeannerod's conclusion regarding the sensory modality of kinesthesia. After a thoroughgoing examination of "conscious knowledge about one's actions" and experimental research that might address the question of such knowledge, including experimental research dealing with pathologically afflicted individuals, Jeannerod (2006, p. 56) concluded: "There are no reliable methods for suppressing kinesthetic information arising during the execution of a movement."

As animate forms of life, we humans are born to move and learn to move effectively and efficiently in relation to others and to the world about us. In the beginning and to this end, we learn our bodies and learn to move ourselves (Sheets-Johnstone, 1999a / exp. 2nd. ed. 2011). We explore our surrounding world and articulate our relationship to and with others in silence. We explore and articulate our desires and aversions, our fascinations and curiosities, our pleasures and fears, and while we might sound our delight or our apprehension, our wanting this or shunning that, we live a life preeminently in the silence of movement. In the course of doing so, we implicitly hone our capacity to think in movement. We successfully reach for and grasp a nearby toy and successfully kick an overhead mobile to make it move. We move in concert with others as well as with objects in the world when we open our arms toward someone who comes to pick us up and when we open our mouths in response to someone moving a spoon laden with food toward us. Moreover, we move harmoniously with others when we join our attention with theirs, looking in the same direction or at the same object in our surrounding world. We move harmoniously with them, furthermore, when we take turns in communicating with them in some way, as when we do something, then they do something, then we do something, and so on, all prior to the time when, ultimately, in verbal conversation, we say something, then they say something, and so on. *Joint attention* and *turn-taking* have in fact long been described as developmental accomplishments in infancy and early childhood (e.g. Scaife and Bruner, 1975; Stern, 1985; Carpendale and Lewis, 2012). They have not been described, however, in terms of their basic dynamic reality, namely, *movement*, the basic dynamic reality that grounds them. Short of recognizing and elucidating this basic dynamic reality, the foundational existential significance of movement fails to come to the fore, and with it, the developmental epistemological significance of thinking in movement. In consequence, that which undergirds our capacity to move in harmonious ways with others and with respect to our surrounding world goes unrecognized.

A striking demonstration of this lapse, or in positive terms, a striking recognition of movement, in particular, a recognition of both the social power of movement and of our native faculty to think in movement, was implicit in historian William Polk's decision to have sign language

performances as well as performances in English of dramatic works by Anton Chekov and Dylan Thomas at his international gathering of politicians for a Pugwash conference. We might in fact note that *turn-taking* by sign language performers and *joint attention* by the audience were basic elements in the success of Polk's innovative introduction of dramas performed by the National Theater of the Deaf. In "What It Means To Be Deaf" (Polk, 2013, p. 74), Polk describes the difference between being born deaf and becoming deaf. With reference to his daughter being born deaf, he writes: "In my daughter's experience, this meant that she missed what appears to be the crucial year or two during which hearing children begin to learn spoken language." He goes on to point out that what we learn early in life is "causal": "children absorb what happens around them. [...] The deaf child is thus cut off from knowledge that the rest of us get just by being there." After further insightful observations and descriptions of a range of experiences he created to expand his daughter's knowledge of the world, he goes on to point out that sign language "can be both beautiful and remarkably evocative". The example he gives in evidence of the beauty and evocative power of sign language is striking. He writes: "I witnessed a stunning example of this when my then organization, the Adlai Stevenson Institute of International Affairs, sponsored the twentieth Pugwash Conference on nuclear arms. We assembled 109 representatives of most of the Academies of Science from around the world, including a number of Nobel laureates. The exchanges were predictably difficult – the cold war was then in full blast – so in an attempt to relieve the tensions and to urge understanding, I arranged for the National Theater of the Deaf to put on two short skits: Anton Chekhov's spoof 'On the Harmfulness of Tobacco' in Russian and sign language and Dylan Thomas's 'Songs from Milkwood' in English and sign language." Polk then states that he introduced the evening "by saying that he hoped 'that in our troubled times the direct visual language of the deaf can perhaps communicate more effectively across the world boundaries'". He then remarks: "What I really meant, of course, is that if the deaf can manage to 'hear' one another across the barrier of enforced silence, there is no excuse for the rest of us not to communicate. The plays changed the mood of the gathering and, many participants subsequently told me, their own approach to international understanding." Polk's innovative approach to political strife is a moving testimony to the power of kinetic silence.

Moving in harmony with others is clearly a social phenomenon – a silent social phenomenon – that has – or can have – sizeable political implications. That it has or can have such implications is surely of special moment in this strife-ridden 21st-century world. In particular, to move in concert is an elemental and reciprocal being-with-others that opens all participants to the possibility of being not just intellectually attuned to a common good, but *kinetically tuning to* a common good by moving in concert with others. This kinetic coming together toward a common good might be described in Sartrean terms (Sartre, 1956) as one's being kinetically for others as one is kinesthetically for oneself. Balancing and choosing in this way are not abstract reflective manoeuvres but actively lived-through structures of thinking in movement, actively lived-through discriminations and judgments that in the very moment and process of moving resonate harmoniously both for oneself

and for others. We see these discriminations and judgments in the kinetic harmony of infant and parent interchanges described by infant psychiatrist and clinical psychologist Daniel Stern (1985) as “affect attunement”. We see them, furthermore, in the kinetic harmony of team players moving cooperatively toward a goal in soccer or hockey or football; we see them in the kinetic harmony of two female tigers in their tracking and pursuit of a prey animal and in the concerted labors of beavers building a dam; and we, of course, see them most surely in the kinetic harmony of dancers in learning a dance and in dancing the dance, whether choreographed or improvised. In short, being equally for oneself and for others in kinetically harmonious ways draws on our natural capacity to move in concert and on our native faculty to think in movement.

It warrants emphasis that especially in a global sense, this natural capacity to move harmoniously with others is not commonly recognized. But then neither is our native faculty to think in movement. Yet clearly, when given the opportunity, it is not simply possible for people to “hear” one another in and through movement, as Polk would say; it is *edifying* for people to “hear” one another in and through movement. Sign language performances indeed demonstrate this awakening. One might in fact wonder whether such an awakening would take place as it did at the Pugwash Conference if members at international political meetings not only saw a performance by deaf performers but would begin their own conversation by moving together improvisationally – in concert, in silence – and in turn find a similar shift in mood and attitude toward international understanding. Clearly, members would need to clear their heads of spoken words and begin thinking in movement. In so doing, they might possibly realize that they are not simply national or cultural representatives, but are first and foremost animate beings who inhabit an animate world that is larger than their own national or cultural heritage, a world that in fact joins them all in a common creaturehood and a common humanity.

However seemingly idealistic or saccharine, this move toward a communal movement conversation would be potentially therapeutic precisely in awakening and enhancing social sensibilities and relationships. Participants in the silent conversation would indeed have the opportunity to draw on their natural but commonly dormant capacity to listen to their own movement and the movement of others, to balance and to choose *kinetically*, and thus to move harmoniously with others – or in resistance to them (of which more momentarily). In contrast to their normal meetings where words dominate, and indeed, where words commonly go in front of the person speaking in just the way Sartre (1956, p. 258) describes the look of another going in front of his/her eyes, all persons would be livingly present, here-and-now not simply in the flesh, but in the full-body wholeness of their kinetically-inclined feelings and qualitatively-inflected, kinesthetically-felt movement dynamics. In moving in concert with others in harmonious ways, they would create ongoing synergies of meaningful movement, both for themselves and for others. Just such synergies would constitute their conversation, an ongoing kinetically dynamic conversation that would have distinctive shadings and prominences, distinctive openings and closings, distinctive hesitations and quicknesses, and much, much

more. In short, a thoroughly lively and engaging conversation would be constituted in the rich silence of movement.

Moving in concert in sociopolitical ways attests to the fundamental sociopolitical significance of movement, and thereby to the fact that moving in concert is not limited to the navigation of a crowded street in ways that avoid bumping into other persons or even to turn-taking in everyday conversations with others. Such realities of everyday life are of substantive significance but not exhaustive. The capacity to move in concert with others is in fact ripe if not overflowing with other possibilities. These possibilities include the possibility of moving in resistance to others. A striking experiment conducted by Stern and colleagues illustrates this possibility. Before describing the experiment, I should first note the context in which Stern relates details of the experiment and its results. That context has to do with the nature of a “core self”. On the basis of his own extended and meticulous studies of infants, Stern shows that a core self is developmentally constituted in infancy on the basis of four essential self-experiences: “self-agency, self-coherence, self-affectivity, and self-history.” As he emphasizes in discussing these experiences, the core self is not a cognitive construct but an integration of experienced realities. Though he does not specify them as such, these realities are clearly rooted in *the tactile-kinesthetic body*. Self-agency, self-coherence, self-affectivity, and self-history are indeed all described explicitly or implicitly by Stern in terms of *movement*. Moreover, a “core other” emerges in the course of a core self. The most real-life, real-time example of this *co-constitution* is precisely in the experiment Stern and colleagues carried out on Siamese twins, twins who were born in the hospital where they worked. The twins were attached ventrally, between umbilicus and sternum and thus faced each other. The experiment turned on the response of each twin who, while sucking her own fingers or the fingers of her twin, experienced the fingers being pulled away, the experimenter pulling on that particular twin’s arm. Stern and colleagues found that when the twin was sucking her own fingers, the twin resisted her fingers being dislodged from her mouth, thus resisted her arm being pulled away, and that, in contrast, when she was sucking the fingers of her twin, she strained her head forward in pursuit of the withdrawing fingers but made no resistant movement with her arm.

Clearly, the twins had not a *postural* sense of themselves, but a tactile-kinesthetically anchored felt sense of themselves, a *dynamic* sense that confirms not only *a sense of agency* but an integrated and holistic sense of oneself based specifically on the felt-perceptual-cognitive experience of oneself and the felt-perceptual-cognitive experience of an other-than-onese. The experiment indeed validates the centrality and pivotal significance of the tactile-kinesthetic body across a broad range of what might be termed essential existential accomplishments: its centrality to, and pivotal significance in the capacity to discriminate among bodies; its centrality to, and pivotal significance in the very constitution of bodies other than oneself; its centrality to, and pivotal significance in the capacity not just to respond, but to respond thoughtfully, i.e. to think in movement; and finally, its centrality to, and pivotal significance in moving in concert with another, both by following the directional pull of another in the one instance, and by resisting that directional pull

in the other instance by moving or attempting to move in opposition to it. While the latter resistant movement might be judged a *non*-harmonious way of moving in concert, it is a way that may more properly be described as a harmonious move that parries and that by parrying is protective in a way similar to one's parrying another's move that threatens one's well-being, or that indeed might be experienced as oblivious of one's well-being. Children from time to time move in this resistant parrying way in their play with overly rambunctious or careless playmates. Moreover, dancers might experience this parrying in an improvisational dance or in the rehearsal of a choreographed dance when other dancers begin moving them in a way unheeding of their flexibility or strength. In short, moving in concert in the everyday world or the world of dance may well involve resistant movement in the service of protection. On the other hand, moving in concert in a resistant way is actually essential to some forms of play, to a tug of war, for example. Parrying is in fact essential to keep the playful tugging competition going. On a more general level, parrying is a resistant move that is highly developed in competitive sports such as soccer, hockey, and US football where it is not only a matter of protection, whether of oneself, one's teammates, or the team's goal, but a straightforward matter of parrying the opposing team in ways that prevent their scoring.

In instances where resistant parrying is protective or where it keeps a game or a competition going, it remains in the service of moving in concert. Indeed, without resistant parrying, many a game or competition would be nonexistent, and, with respect to protection, one might oneself become nonexistent. What is centrally at moment, however, in all instances of moving in concert is the fact that to move harmoniously with others, including moving resistantly, requires not just an awareness and knowledge of the body one is, but *an awareness and knowledge of the body one is not*. Moving harmoniously with others indeed has the possibility of ever heightening awarenesses and knowledge of the bodies one is not, of hearing others in a different medium. The experience of hearing ourselves kinesthetically and hearing others kinetically puts us in touch with our common aliveness, our common capacity for play, for instance, thus with both our common capacity to resonate harmoniously with others and our common capacity to expand the horizons of our knowledge of ourselves and of others and to grow from that knowledge. In short, it puts us in touch with our mother tongue and its inherent dynamics. In doing so, it puts us in touch with ourselves and with others in perhaps the deepest possible way that borders on the density of their being as well as our own. Though culturally inflected in various ways, both subtle and complex, our mother tongue nonetheless binds us in a common humanity, and indeed in a common creaturehood. By speaking it more often with others and listening to it more often with others, we might recognize that common humanity to begin with and move beyond a blinkered – small-minded – notion of those who are other. This existential awareness and knowledge are as pertinent, or at least as potentially pertinent, to international bodies – international organizations and institutes – as they are to everyday animate bodies in their customary movement lives – to pedestrians, drivers, playmates, team members, and dancers – all of them in what we might call their “movement meetings”. The difference between meeting in words and meeting in movement is a critical difference in thinking,

a difference that warrants recognition precisely because that recognition leads to the possibility of enhanced corporeally-awakened and corporeally-inflected social sensibilities and relationships.

## II. Moving in concert: Creativity in art

When we think about moving in concert in terms of artistic performances, an odd observation may come to mind. Orchestral music concerts have a conductor. Theater performances have no conductor. Opera performances have no conductor: though there is a conductor for the orchestra, there is no conductor for the singers. Dance concerts have no conductor. One might explain the conductor in orchestral music concerts by the fact that there are so many different instruments making such distinctive sounds that a conductor is needed to pull them together into a harmonious whole. They are in a sense all talking at the same time and thus need to be regulated by an outsider. In theater, actors do not all talk at the same time, but take turns talking. While there is just such turn-taking in opera, there is also singing at the same time, as in duets, trios, and quartets in which individual singers sing in unison but along their own melodic line. Something similar but not quite the same holds for dance: there may be turn-taking, as when one dancer reaches out a hand and another dancer grasps it, but more often there is moving at the same time, and indeed, at times in larger groups than quartets, groups more like the chorus in opera.

The question of why there is no conductor in theater, opera, and dance leads one to wonder what holds the performance together. One might answer that in theater actors have rehearsed their lines, know their lines, and thus know when to speak and not to speak. In opera, singers similarly have rehearsed and know their melodic lines, and hence know too when to give voice to them and when to be silent. In both theater and opera, however, it is not just a matter of knowing one's lines and when to voice them, but a matter of dynamics, of a felt sense of flow as in qualitatively shaped inflections, pauses, and so on, and further, a matter of the dynamics of others who are there in performance with one. In dance, it is again similar but different, and this because it is not a question of language, whether spoken or sung, but of movement, and of movement alone. Dancers too have rehearsed, not lines that are voiced but lines that are the dynamic lines of movement itself (Sheets-Johnstone, 1966/1979/1980/2015a). Moving in concert in dance hinges precisely on the felt kinesthetic awareness of those dynamic lines, *their qualitatively shaped intensities, expansions and contractions, quick impulses and attenuations, and so on*, and on the thinking in movement that allows mastery of those dynamic lines.<sup>1</sup> Correlatively, it hinges on the kinetic awareness of the dynamic lines of other dancers who are there in performance with one.

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1 The qualitative interrelationship of the spatial, temporal, and energetic character of any movement as it unfolds gives any movement a particular dynamic line, a line that, as described in detail in *The Phenomenology of Dance* (Sheets-Johnstone, 1966/1979/1980/2015a), may be vocalized, and is in fact at times spontaneously vocalized by a choreographer to dancers in the process of their learning the dance as well as by teachers of dance in their attempt to communicate a desired or proper dynamic flow of a movement or movement phrase to students.

In everyday verbal conversations with others, words flow easily out of our mouths. How is this possible? Why do we not have to think word by word about what we want to say, put those words in order, memorize them, and then say them aloud. After all, it is not as if we have said this and that sentence before and so have a formidable reserve of whole sentences we have memorized and can draw on. Yet we speak in conversation with others quite extemporaneously. Our verbal conversations are creative in this sense. We listen to what is being creatively presented to us and respond in verbal kind, running off strings of words on our own. Moving together as well as talking together: what could be more natural?

Moving together, however, may well put us at the brink of largely unexplored territory. Depending upon our previous experience, moving together creatively, that is, running off dynamic lines of movement that are unrehearsed in any way, may plunge us into a largely unknown domain, namely, into the felt qualitative dynamics of our own moving bodies – the felt qualitative dynamics of surprise, for instance, that might take the form of a joyous leap forward or a tense and constricting pull backward. However large the unexplored territory, we may well ask whether we do not need to plunge into just such dynamic happenings to carry us forward, to sweep us off our seats, so to speak, into the afterlife of postmodernism, critical theory, deconstructionism, the year of the brain, and other kinetically immobilizing academic movements. When we improvise together in movement, we find that, precisely because movement is our mother tongue, we do not need a teacher or a class situation; neither do we need to fear being put on the spot since, moving together, there is no spot on which anyone can be put.

Because movement comes with life, we actually have the capacity to improvise in multiple ways. Just as words come forth through breath, through a moving tongue, and through an accommodating supralaryngeal tract, so lines come forth from moving crayons and paint-filled brushes; sounds come forth from moving fingers at the piano and from breath and moving lips at the trumpet; and so on. We can indeed improvise in multiple ways. When we improvise simply with movement, however, *nothing but movement comes forth*. The improvisation is self-contained. It resonates with its own pure kinetic dynamics – and leaves no traces behind. No wonder Merce Cunningham (1968, unpaginated) observed that dancing “is not for unsteady souls”.

When we move in concert improvisationally with others, we attune ourselves to a communally constituted dynamic that is fleeting, that precisely does not stay still. In the course of experiencing this fleeting dynamic, we might experience ourselves not just *being* alive but *feeling* that aliveness – and moreover feeling that aliveness among a host of others whose aliveness is infectious and whom we trust. While the factual notion of being alive if one is moving or can move is commonly recognized, there is commonly little recognition of the experiential possibility of moving and *being alive to one’s* movement. Unlike simply being alive, being alive to one’s movement is not a sign of anything and is certainly not a state of being, but a dynamically unfolding kinesthetic experience. The same observations apply to *feeling alive*, since here too, there is commonly little recognition of the experiential possibility of *feeling alive* in virtue of movement. The lack of

recognition is odd given that our everyday life is filled with movement. But everyday movement is virtually by definition habitual movement, not improvised movement, and habitual movement rarely calls up feelings of aliveness. On the contrary, attention is commonly directed elsewhere – as when, in dressing ourselves in the morning, we find our thoughts and feelings tied to the chores or work that lie ahead of us this day. As detailed elsewhere however (Sheets-Johnstone, 2010b/2014a), when we surprise ourselves in our habits, we not only enliven our lives: we are alive to movement and to feeling our aliveness. Moreover, when we make a habit of surprising ourselves in our habits, we embark on an endless, potentially life-long creative adventure in feeling alive. We might in fact ask ourselves: When is the last time I surprised myself in my habits? When is the last time I felt that aliveness? Consider the following possibility:<sup>2</sup>

Suppose, for example, that you are sitting in a waiting room with nothing to do but wait. What can you do? You can make imperceptible-to-others, but keenly felt tiny circles all over your body, beginning maybe with your index fingers or your eyes, your shoulders, your knees, or your big toe, keeping in mind that you can vary the speed of those circles in ways that make their imperceptibility virtually absolute. You might end up circling your whole upper body on your seat. Wherever the circles, they bring a freshness to your life. You are no longer merely sitting but exploring movement possibilities in the process. In so doing, you cannot help but be attuned to the qualitative dynamics of the circles you are making: their possible variations in spatial amplitude; the fact they can go around in one direction, then reverse course and go in the other direction; the fact that they can go more quickly in one part of the circle and more slowly in another, or even that they go with difficulty in one instance and with ease in the other; and so on. However tiny the circles, they offer you dynamic possibilities that you can feel in distinctive ways, and this because each circle resonates kinesthetically in a distinctive qualitative dynamic.

What do these tiny circles have to do with moving in concert – particularly in dancing with others, whether improvisationally or in a choreographed work? They awaken us to our own creative possibilities in movement. In making these tiny circles, we are forming and performing movement and listening to ourselves moving. We are at the edge of being dancing bodies.<sup>3</sup> We are perhaps even charting new territory for ourselves, creating and moving through dynamic patterns that we have never tried before, much less done before with such keen awareness. We might in this context recall thinking about all the places we have not explored or visited in person. We might similarly think about all the movement we have not explored or visited in person. In doing so, we might awaken ourselves to exploring the inherent qualitative dynamics of movement and thus the qualitative dynamics we witness when we attend a dance concert or other kind of dance performance

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2 A condensed version of a number of possibilities described at length in Sheets-Johnstone (2014a).

3 “Dancing Bodies” was actually the name of the April 2010 Conference in Athens, sponsored by the Association of Greek Choreographers and the University of the Peloponnese Department of Theatre Studies.

(Sheets-Johnstone, 1966/1979/1980/2015a, 2014b, 2014c, 2015b). These qualitative dynamics are at the heart of dance as both a formed and performed art, a choreographed and performed work, and an improvisational work. Just as moving in concert in the common everyday sense awakens us to enhanced social sensibilities and relationships, so moving in concert in an extended sense, both as dancers and as members of an audience of dance, awakens us to enhanced aesthetic sensibilities and relationships. It does so precisely by turning our attention to the richness, subtleties, and complexities inherent in the qualitative dynamics of movement.

Moving in concert with others aesthetically means being alive to the ongoing qualitative flow of movement, being carried along experientially by a streaming dynamics, the sheer qualitative dynamics that constitute the dance. As dancers, it requires our being alive to both the dynamics of our own movement and the dynamics of the movement of others, being fully awake and present to the tensional shadings, amplitudes, directional changes, and so on, in the ongoing flow of movement that is the dance. Experiencing movement in concert with others as audience similarly requires being alive to the sheer qualitative dynamics of movement, fully awake and attentive to the now intense, now lax, now jagged, now smooth, now spacious, now contained, now explosive, now fading flow of those dynamics. What is essential to understand is the difference between dancers' *kinesthetic* and *kinetic* experience of movement in dancing the dance, and audience members' *kinetic* experience of movement in watching the dance. This understanding rests on a recognition of the fact that animate movement has an interior and an exterior, as philosopher and founder of the discipline of phenomenology, Edmund Husserl, recognized (Sheets-Johnstone, 2005/2009, 2008, pp. 194–196; see also Overgaard, 2003). With respect to that interior and exterior, what is essential to recognize is that the qualitative dynamics that constitute movement are there, livingly present in both aspects, but are differentially experienced. The interior of movement is experienced kinesthetically and is felt as an ongoing qualitative dynamic; the exterior of movement is experienced kinetically and is perceived as an ongoing qualitative dynamic. The difference between a *kinesthetically felt qualitative dynamic* and a *kinetically perceived qualitative dynamic* is thus essential to any veridical analysis and description of moving in concert, whether in purely social contexts or aesthetic contexts, that is, to any understanding of "I and Other" movement relations.

A few critical remarks are warranted in this respect. To begin with, kinesthesia cannot be properly expanded beyond its personal reality as a sensory modality – as in "enkinaesthesia" (Stuart, 2012), for example, or in "kinesthetic exchanges" (Rothfield, 2005), or in "interkinesthetic relationality" (Behnke, 2008). To begin with, all such social extensions of kinesthesia obscure even further the experienced felt qualitative dynamics of one's own movement. These qualitative dynamics are a foundational human sensory modality, foundational both in the sense that kinesthesia, along with tactility, is the first sensory modality to be neurologically developed and in the sense of our being movement-born – precisely not stillborn. The terms "enkinesthesia", "kinesthetic exchanges" and "interkinesthesia" furthermore obscure the difference between these felt dynamics and the perceived dynamics of others; that is, they obscure the difference between the interior and

exterior of movement, what is there kinesthetically and what is there kinetically. One might even say that they not only obscure the felt qualitative dynamics of one's own movement and the difference between kinesthetic and kinetic experiences of movement, but obscure even further the experience of animate movement more than it is already obscured in talk of motor control, motor learning, and so on, as well as in talk of dancers and audiences "proprioceiving" the dance being danced (Montero, 2006): proprioception is a sense whereby dancers "proprioceive their movement" (ibid., p. 231); proprioception is an "internal representation of movement" (ibid., p. 240) whereby we, as audience, "are proprioceiving the dancer's movements" (ibid., p. 238; see further comments on this wayward terminology that purports to describe the sensory experience of movement in Section III below).

The foundational challenge with respect to such terms and obscurations is *to connect the visual and the kinesthetic*, the visual in terms of its *kinetic dynamics* and the kinesthetic precisely in terms of kinesthesia. In short, that the same qualitative dynamics inhere in the interior and exterior of movement warrants recognition. Only then can the qualitative dynamics of movement come to the fore in their dual kinesthetic and kinetic realities. The sizeable challenge of phenomenologically homing in on the experience of moving in concert, and with respect to social sensibilities and relationships as well as aesthetic sensibilities and relationships, can only be met by recognizing a kinesthetically experienced qualitative dynamics and a visually experienced kinetic qualitative dynamics, both of which are of the same foundational spatio-temporal-energetic "stuff", but differentially experienced. Their sameness and their difference are quintessentially important to recognize, for their sameness and difference indicate a natural ability to experience the qualitative dynamic reality of movement whether "interior" or "exterior", that is, whether kinesthetically felt or kinetically perceived.

### III. Concluding remarks

Observations and remarks by two highly distinct but equally notable modern dance pioneers, Doris Humphrey and Merce Cunningham, keenly and provocatively highlight the sensory modality of kinesthesia in the context of both movement and emotions.

Doris Humphrey analyzed movement into four elements, elements that she found to be the integral basis of dance, namely, design, dynamics, rhythm, and motivation. I quote from her book *The Art of Making Dances* (1959, p. 46):

Every movement made by a human being, and far back of that, in the animal kingdom, too, has a design in space; a relationship to other objects in both time and space; an energy flow, which we will call dynamics; and a rhythm. Movements are made for a complete array of reasons involuntary or voluntary, physical, psychical, emotional or instinctive – which we will lump all together and call motivation. Without a motivation, no movement would be made at all. So, with a simple analysis of movement in general, we are provided with the basis for dance, which is movement brought to the point of fine art. The four elements of dance movement are, therefore, design, dynamics, rhythm,

and motivation.

Interestingly enough, Humphrey goes on to specify just how she will work with students, especially in light of what she identifies as “[o]ne of the famous definitions of choreography”, namely, that choreography is “the arranging of steps in all directions” (ibid.). After giving her analysis of movement, she states: “So now the student is called upon to think in terms of elements rather than steps” (ibid., p. 47). To think in movement is indeed to think in terms of the quintessential elements of *movement*, not piecemeal in terms of steps or positions, and certainly not in terms of motor control or motor skills (Sheets-Johnstone, 1981 / exp. version 1999a / exp. 2nd ed. 2011, 2009). These quintessential elements of *movement* are of course directly related to kinesthesia. In fact, both Humphrey and Cunningham underscore the prime significance of kinesthesia to movement and to dance.

Humphrey affirms the centrality of kinesthesia to life by calling attention to its neglect and to our need to resuscitate it. She points out that “[w]hen man ceased to run and leap for his food the decay of the kinesthetic sense began”. Furthermore, she emphasizes that the sensory modality of kinesthesia “needs to be enlarged by education and training; nothing else about us”, she comments, “has been so much allowed to atrophy” (Humphrey, 1979, p. 61). Cunningham (1968, unpaginated) points to the fact that kinesthesia is a common human sensory faculty, and notably enough, affirms that “the kinesthetic sense [...] allows the experience of dancing to be part of all of us”. Though he does not spell out just how “the kinesthetic sense [...] allows the experience of dancing to be part of all of us”, his recognition of the fact that kinesthesia is a common human sensory faculty makes his affirmation virtually self-explanatory. We all move. We all thus have the potential to dance and to experience ourselves dancing, and though as members of an audience watching a dance we are not *kinesthetically engaged* in dancing the dance, we are *kinetically attuned* to the qualitative dynamics of movement that we are visually experiencing and that constitute the dance.

Humphrey’s and Cunningham’s observations are notable, even essentially so in terms of underscoring sensibilities to the bodies we are and the movement of those bodies, and sensibilities to the bodies we are not and the movement of those bodies. Their observations concerning the relationship of kinesthesia to emotions are equally notable, and again, even essentially so in light of the fact that they are pioneers of dance at distinctively different periods in the history of modern dance. Both Cunningham and Humphrey affirm the intimate tie between feelings and artistic expression. Humphrey writes of what she calls the emotional meaning overlaying kinesthesia, pointing out that this meaning “can be the whole reason for a dance”, in effect, that a dance does not need to tell a story (Humphrey, 1979, pp. 61–62). In effect, a dance can be a dance for the sheer sake of movement which, purely on its own, articulates an emotional resonance, whether that of joy, sadness, or fear, for example, or something more rarified as of eloquent symmetry or sharply cadenced phrasing from beginning to end. In writing of the relation of movement to emotion, Cunningham points out that “the

sense of human emotion that a dance can give is governed by familiarity with the language, and the elements [music and costume] that act with the language” (Cunningham, 1968, unpaginated; see also Sheets-Johnstone, 1999b/2009). The language of which Cunningham writes is, of course, movement, our mother tongue, and its sensory correlate kinesthesia. Kinesthesia – and, it should be added, kinesthetic memory – is of obvious significance with respect to choreographing a dance and to what Cunningham at one point describes as “wearing it long enough, like a suit of clothes”. He utilizes the analogy when he is describing how he choreographed his dance *Untitled Solo*. He writes (ibid.):

A large gamut of movements, separate for each of the three dances, was devised, movements for the arms, the legs, the head and the torso which were separate and essentially tensile in character, and off the normal or tranquil body-balance. The separate movements were arranged in continuity by random means, allowing for the superimposition (addition) of one or more, each having its own rhythm and time-length. But each succeeded in becoming continuous if I could wear it long enough, like a suit of clothes.

This creative bringing-into-being together with the intimate tie between movement and emotion pertain directly to the aesthetics of moving in concert, to the actual forming of the work and its actual performance. They pertain equally – and no doubt obviously – to the essential, fundamental animate sensory modality of kinesthesia. This sense modality requires clear-cut evolutionary and functional separation from proprioception in order that the qualitative dynamics of movement be uncovered, elucidated, and understood.<sup>4</sup> Humphrey clearly recognized this requirement in her analysis of the fundamental elements of movement. In a different but equally cognizant way via “familiarity with the language”, Cunningham did likewise. Unfortunately, in present-day philosophical writings on movement and dance, the evolutionary and functional distinction between proprioception and kinesthesia is overlooked, which in good measure explains why the qualitative dynamics of movement fail to be recognized (Sheets-Johnstone, 1999a / exp. 2nd ed. 2011, 2014b, 2014c, 2015a, 2015b, 2016). In short, moving in concert in dance rests on enhanced understandings of movement and its kinesthetic/kinetic dynamics.

Moving in concert thus challenges dancers and audience alike in communal ways, ways that test their aesthetic sensibility to movement. As should be evident, for dancers, it is a matter of testing their aesthetic sensibility to dynamics, dynamics that are not just of their own making but dynamics that surround them and that at times literally move them. Of equal importance is the particular relationship of dancer to dance, that is, the relationship of the dancer to the

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4 For a detailed analysis of the distinction between kinesthesia and proprioception, see Sheets-Johnstone (1999b/2009), included as Chapter II, Part I in Sheets-Johnstone (1999a / exp. 2nd ed. 2011), and as Chapter VIII in Sheets-Johnstone (2009).

movement he or she is learning and perfecting. While in learning the dance, dancers may be moving through the form, when perfected, *the form is moving through them – moving through them in concert* (Sheets-Johnstone, 2013b, 2014d). When the form moves through them rather than their moving through the form, the dance flows forth with an effortless fluidity such that the truth of Yeats's famous question is experientially present before our eyes: "How can we know the dancer from the dance?"

The truth of Yeats's famous question poses an aesthetic truth that sustains the very possibility of moving in concert in a creative artistic sense. Aristotle's description of movement as a *sensu communis*, a sense common to all other senses, is of moment to consider in this context. As pointed out in an earlier *Choros* article (Sheets-Johnstone, 2013b), although Aristotle did not recognize kinesthesia in his description, a further possible sense of movement as a *sensu communis* leads us precisely to an appreciation of kinesthesia and its qualitative dynamics. This further possible sense has to do with movement as a communal human capacity, not simply the communal capacity of all humans to move, but precisely *the communal capacity of all humans to move together in a common dynamic – to move in concert*. The communal capacity of humans to move together in a communal dynamic is indeed rooted in a *sensu communis*: in kinesthesia. Short of such a faculty, humans could hardly move in harmonious dynamic accord with one another. In effect, they would hardly have the possibility of moving in concert.

Again, as pointed out in the earlier *Choros* article, a harmonious dynamic accord among dancers traces back to ancient Greek culture and is realized in a circle. A circular spatial form is explicitly acknowledged in studies of ancient Greek dance. Historian of dance Lincoln Kirstein (1969, p. 28) calls attention to the fact that in its beginnings, ancient Greek dance "developed from the communal form of choral dance" in which dancers "[m]ost frequently [...] would move cyclically or circularly". Dance historian Curt Sachs (1963, p. 238) documents what he calls "the round dance" by way of Homeric verse and Cretan sculptures, the latter "illustrat[ing] dances in a circle around the lyre player", for example. Holding another's wrist or hand in the formation of a communal circle binds people together in a communally felt unfolding dynamic: dancers move in dynamic accord with one another because they are kinesthetically bound in the same qualitative dynamic. A hand- or wrist-joined circular form, moreover, testifies to the basic truth that we humans are social animals: forming a circle together is tethered to our being social animals. Joining by hand or wrist with others to form a circle involves recognizing others as like oneself. Communal movement in the form of a joined circle is indeed a staple folk tradition across a range of cultures. That tradition validates the claim that movement is a *sensu communis* not only as sensorily affirmed but as socially affirmed. Movement is a *sensu communis* in being a communally felt qualitative kinesthetic/kinetic dynamic, a powerful means of socially recognizing our common humanity. But it is, furthermore, a *sensu communis* in the aesthetic reality of dance itself. For those engaged as dancers or as audience, the dynamics of movement are a moving experience, a powerful kinesthetic/kinetic aesthetic that resounds meaningfully on its own.

Recognition of movement as a *sensu communis* thus has sizable implications for moving in concert. Perhaps the practice of 21st-century dance will realize its potential to bring together, that is, to celebrate commonalities. Not that cultural differences are to be squelched or overridden – that is definitely *not* what is meant – but that, especially in this age of globalization where a wider and wider awareness of others becomes not a welcome reality but a threatening one, the ties that bind us in a common humanity and common creaturehood would be well to acknowledge, respect, and be given prominence, for they define in the most basic sense who we are: animate forms of life who, through their natural heritage, have both extraordinary possibilities of movement and the capacity to become keenly aware of those possibilities. The art of dance leads the way to those possibilities by way of experiencing the sheer dynamics of movement and the thinking in movement that together anchor the practice, cultivation, and creativity of moving in concert.

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# DEMOLITION: A DESTABILIZING FORCE FOR TRANSGRESSING ARTISTIC DISCIPLINES

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## Abstract

In this text, I wish to use the concept of transgression in order to approach issues associated with the practice of interdisciplinarity between architecture, choreography and digital technologies, laying particular emphasis on the screen and the moving image. By referring to demolition, which implies the violent elimination of an architectural building, I wish to draw parallels with the concept of transgression and place it inside an interdisciplinary choreographic practice and discourse. Transgression has been defined by sociologist Chris Jenks (2013, p. 21) as something that “transcends boundaries or exceeds limits”, and I have been exploring the action of demolition as the process that destabilizes the notions of architecture and choreography by destroying their conceptual and perceptual boundaries. Through my personal research, I discovered that transgression between disciplines is an artistic practice in itself, which helps me to explore the most appropriate artistic medium for dealing with a specific issue, as well as the most relevant theories for responding to a specific question through artistic practice. By referring to a singular case, I hope that I will be able to address common issues in interdisciplinary and post-disciplinary practices and to cover other artistic voices, insecurities and concerns.

## Keywords

Practice-as-research; transgression; interdisciplinarity; architecture; choreography; screen; choreographic environments and events; Chris Jenks; Bernard Tschumi; Maya Deren

## Primary intentions in dialogue with dance scholarship

By examining the artistic outcomes of transgression in the field of dance and choreography, I will attempt to speak about interdisciplinarity as practice and not as a theoretical frame to analyse dances. Interdisciplinarity as a method of creating critical viewership of dance occupies a growing part within dance research, which, as dance scholar and critic Ramsay Burt (2009, p. 20) argues, it is necessary to combine with medium-specific methodologies in order to comprehend the ways that contemporary choreographic works engage “in a critical but imaginative way with

the institutional nature of theatre dance". Moreover, I do not intend to give an overview of interdisciplinary research in Dance Higher Education as Paul Carr et al. (2014) are doing, or to refer to the value of interdisciplinarity (Chettiparamb, 2007). Whilst being informed by such works and while positioning this text close to Erin Brannigan's *Moving Across Disciplines* (2010), which looks specifically at the creative processes of interdisciplinary practices in relation to dance, my purpose is to provide an experience from within that might resonate with other artists and practitioners and, hence, provide a different way of thinking about interdisciplinarity versus disciplinary autonomy in Dance Studies. My focus will be placed on the urgencies that call for interdisciplinary processes, the assumptions that these processes challenge, and the dynamics that occur in the interdisciplinary practices of which dance is an integral part. There will always be supporters and detractors of interdisciplinarity. This text eschews entering in this discourse and, instead, aims to offer an internal view of interdisciplinarity as practice and as transgressive, versatile behaviour.

### **Educational pedagogies**

In a Western philosophical tradition that still carries the residues of Descartes's thinking, the underestimation of the body has caused dance to struggle for gaining its recognition as a high art. Inside a system of values where mind has been considered superior, the art of dance as somatic or corporeally-based knowledge has been "marginalised politically, financially, theoretically and culturally" (Brannigan, 2010, p. 6) affecting the late establishment of dance as an autonomous art and academic discipline. Considering the relatively short history of Western Dance as an academic field and the lack of Dance Departments in many parts of the world justifies the arguments of several dance scholars and artists who advocate the autonomy and purity of Dance as a discipline, rather than an interdisciplinary field. As Burt (2009, p. 3) confirms, "knowing how hard it has been to gain recognition for dance within universities can lead to a certain understandable protectiveness about the specificity of dance". However, placing dance (dancing, performing, dance making, teaching, writing) in a larger context, a dialogue with the other arts, humanities and sciences becomes imperative, because "the way that dancing bodies mediate ideologies is interdisciplinary" (ibid., p. 2). The way that we analyse dance as viewers is a process that requires influences from outside the discipline of dance per se in order to refer to the potential of dance to speak at a cultural, social, political and even economic level. Australian dance scholar and arts' curator Erin Brannigan (2010, p. 2) states:

At the beginning of the twenty-first century, contemporary dance is an interdisciplinary art form. It has found currency with progressive critical theories engaging new concepts of mobility and movement, and choreography is figured as a major player in informing and realising new understandings of key philosophical concepts.

Dance Studies can take various forms and each one of them holds a different percentage of disciplinary purity or interdisciplinary contamination. For instance, several worldwide conservatories

and academies still transmit the art of dance as a competitive sport rather than as a body-mind practice in need of interdisciplinary influences. Equating dance with the embodied art associated with the acquisition of excellence in performing a codified technique for moving in space and time inevitably requires specialisation and expertise. Conservatories and academies aim to transmit “the rigors and specialist knowledge” appertaining to the discipline of dance (Carr et al., 2014). Dance as a broad field of academic study penetrated by its own histories, theories and traditional practices is a twentieth-century phenomenon, well-established among English-speaking and continental European countries. However, we need to well consider that the possibility to be exposed to Dance Studies in Higher Education is not a global phenomenon. Taking as an example the academic contexts of Italy (country of residence) and Greece (country of birth), of which I have personal experience, Dance Studies in Higher Education usually takes the shape of individual and isolated modules instead of holistic programs that aim to examine dance as a broad field of art in which practices and theories are dynamically interrelated. In these cases, and although dance is framed inside an interdisciplinary context (different though from the major and minor options that many American Higher Education institutes provide and, moreover, closer to the Liberal Arts model), little attention or importance is given to the potential of the discipline of Dance as current choreographic practice to create social and political implications.

As a Greek-born dance artist, I was raised inside a disciplined environment where every subject of study – including Dance – at all levels of the educational system was being mastered inside a building (institution) specifically constructed or adapted for the promotion of an autonomous field. Furthermore, even the setting of the desks and their position within the classroom were organized frontally towards the tutor. Therefore, erect walls and internal setting were isolating, framing and disciplining knowledge instead of allowing contaminations and exchanges of knowledge. Poetically speaking, windows were the only openings and architectural elements of the institutions that could allow communication with other disciplines. It can thus be suggested that I have been academically disciplined in dance and architecture in two distinct and separate ways, and that I have not been disciplined in film, at least in a narrow sense. I am being educated in film studies not by attending a program in an institution, but rather by orienting myself independently and in an improvisational manner inside the field; discovering and following a self-exploratory learning path driven by inquiry. Therefore, I think that I can speak from the perspectives of three different modes of learning: rigorous disciplinarity, self-inquiry and discovery, and interdisciplinary research.

In my early twenties, I attended a rigorous dance training program designed and assessed by the Greek Ministry of Culture, which provided me with a Dance Teacher Diploma and enabled me to teach Ballet, Modern and Contemporary Dance, and Eurhythmics, if I wished to do so. Around that time and while being a student at the School of Architecture at the Aristotle University of Thessaloniki in Greece, I heard for the first time a new lexical compound, *dance-architectures*, a concept that explored the unification of those two different and separate

disciplines.<sup>1</sup> In 2002 scholar, practising scenographer and theatre architect Dorita Hannah together with scholar and choreographer Carol Brown coined and theorised the concept of *dance-architectures*, dance *hyphen* architectures: “hybrid forms emerging at the interface between the disciplines of choreography and architecture through the creation of performance events” (Brown and Ramsgard-Thomsen, 2008, p. 217). In 2003, Brown gave a workshop at the Isadora and Raymond Duncan Centre for Dance in Athens, which I was unable to attend. Luckily, the reflections derived from the research workshop were published in the printed issue of *Χορός* (2003), the Greek dance magazine which at that time served as my first research resource. My curiosity for the interdisciplinary research in *dance-architectures* had just begun and, as I will argue, the strict and rigorous disciplinarity during my early education is what urged me to explore interdisciplinarity and approach it through the concept of transgression.

### **Demolition: A conceptual pathway towards transgression of disciplines**

Transgression entails “hybridization, the mixing of categories and the questioning of the boundaries that separate categories” (Jervis, 1999, p. 4, cited in Jenks, 2003, p. 9). *Dance-architectures* is not the only transgressed art form that has emerged from the contamination of dance’s purity and absoluteness by other forms of art and science. A series of crossings and inventions that emerged in postmodern times include a variety of impure manifestations of dance, such as dance theatre, physical theatre, somatics, music theatre, dance therapy, videodance, screendance, and numerous other hybridizations that have resulted from the intersection of dance and technology.<sup>2</sup> Considering the latest post-disciplinary tendencies of artistic research in our digitally interconnected world, I am probably omitting, here, the research outcomes of many dance artists and practitioners, who – coming from diametrically diverse backgrounds – simultaneously and in unique ways explore the frictions and/or intersections of dance with other fields. Without having such an intention, my argument is that placing *dance-architectures* close to established

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1 Architects and choreographers have been looking into each other’s art for inspiration since the first quarter of the 20th century, predominantly during Bauhaus, a period in the Arts characterised by the concept of total work of art; the artistic process and product derived from merging different disciplines. Subsequent collaborative examples include: the couple of Anna and Lawrence Halprin (from 1966 onward); William Forsythe with Daniel Libeskind and Nikolaus Hirsch (1990 and 1997); Lucinda Childs with Frank O. Gehry (1983); Frédéric Flamand with Zaha Hadid, Jean Nouvel and Thomas Mayne (2000, 2001, 2003, respectively); Mårten Spångberg with Tor Lindstrand (2007); Michael Douglas Kollektiv with Michael Steinbush (2012); Caroline Salem with Ed Frith and others.

2 Although this part refers to hybrid forms of dance and less to the inventors of these forms, the short list would have been incomplete without briefly mentioning the contribution of Merce Cunningham to the expansion of dance. Cunningham’s lifelong passion for exploration and innovation made him a leader in applying new technologies to the arts. He began investigating dance on film in the 1970s, and he choreographed using the computer program DanceForms during the latter part of his career. He also explored motion capture technology and collaborated with Paul Kaiser in order to create digital animations such as *BIPED* (1999) and *Loops* (2001).

hybrid forms is evidence of how dance practice is not as pure as some wish to contend.<sup>3</sup>

*Dance-architectures* gradually grows as an area of research attracting artists, scholars, researchers from both fields and, thus, it is enriched by a variety of hybrid and non-homogenized responses that each individual or team proposes. For approximately the last ten years, I am proposing my personal understanding of the merging of the two disciplines by combining two different roles – that of the educated, but not practising, architect with that of the dance artist and slowly becoming research-choreographer and dance scholar. In my research, I aim to explore what new possibilities and frictions could occur when attempting to bridge dance with architecture. However, looking at architecture as an already existing and static shell is not enough to cover the urgency of my inquiry. In the era of social and cultural mobility and economic instability, architecture in adaptability becomes an urgent demand for covering the needs of fast-evolving societies and populations. Moreover, human architectural creations are (and have been) destroyed in favour of capitalistic progress, terrorism or war, and new ones are (and have been) built in search of dwelling. Hence, demolition of architecture turns out to be the favourite habit of expanding neoliberal economies, and the process of demolition becomes a process of change and transition reminding us of the ephemeral, even of the ephemeral nature of architecture. Demolition becomes the moment *before* and *after* architecture happens; the moment that creates a suspended *void* waiting to be filled again. In this way, architecture, in a process of suspension and transition examined through the unstable and ephemeral nature of dance, gradually became central to my research, which keeps on slowly formulating my contribution to the field of *dance-architectures*.

Examining demolition as an architectural phenomenon with social, political and economic parameters that disappears through time urged me to explore ways of archiving architecture not as an idealised space, but rather as a living space transgressed by the everyday user. Transgression is a concept with philosophical roots usually applied in contexts such as madness, culture, art, carnival, ritual, sexuality, and crime (Jenks, 2003). More specifically, to transgress is “to go beyond the bounds or limits set by a commandment or law or convention, is to violate or infringe” (ibid., p. 2). It is the conduct which “breaks rules or exceeds boundaries” (ibid., p. 3). Transgression has been used in recent architectural theory in order to articulate new relationships between the architectural concept derived from the architect seen as an expert and the architectural experience as an everyday phenomenon (Tschumi, 1996). Emphases on the experience of architecture by its users and their agency to alter their living space transgress the laws defined by the architect’s design. Therefore, my personal observation of demolition as destruction of the material boundaries of architecture became a concept that helped me to re-examine notions of architecture associated with fixity and permanence. The concept of demolition became synonymous with transgression

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3 Ramsay Burt (2009) outlines the medium-specific advocacies as voiced by André Levinson (1927/1983), Maxine Sheets-Johnstone (1966/1979), Janet Wolff (1997), Susan Foster (1998).

and was transformed into a metaphor for architectural *appropriation* and a new kind of space production (Lefebvre, 1991) generated by the user and dweller of space who demolishes the fixed identity of space.

Expanding the Tschumian concept of architectural transgression, choreography in addition to film are being offered as tools of spatial appropriation that help me to approach architecture as a time-based experience and contribute to remembering architecture as a living organism variable through time. The surfaces of architecture decay as time passes. Its external remains immovable while the internal space of dwelling is potentially reconfigurable, transformable and adaptable. Filmic space transmits the moving body experiencing space; the filmic lens witnesses from a subjective position and follows across a choreographic path this interaction between moving body and architecture as time goes by. The ephemerality of movement performed in a specific space – originally conceived in the design process as an empty and austere geometric space – and the filmic narrative unfolded through time challenge the understanding of architectural space as void and time as fixed, thus affecting the experience of architecture and its archiving as an austere and objective diagram. Therefore, a bi-disciplinary query (*dance-architectures*), stemming from a personal need to reconcile a double creative identity, opened to a third artistic medium (film) in order to explore: *how to archive architecture as living and not as a series of lines and curves constituting a-temporal diagrams? How to remember architecture as a living experience?* These questions summarise what I previously referred to as the necessity of interdisciplinarity to take place in order to address an issue or a problem. Interdisciplinarity is not taken for granted or it might not be always essential, as disciplinarity builds profound knowledge. But interdisciplinarity emerges when one medium is not enough to deal alone with a specific urgency,<sup>4</sup> such as the archiving of the experience of space examined in this discourse.

Architecture, choreography and the screen in quest of archiving enter in a triadic interplay and become the methodological concept that allows a new hybrid form of art to emerge or a new approach to an existing art form to occur. Here, I am particularly referring to screendance, but also to choreographic environments<sup>5</sup> and events<sup>6</sup> which I propose to be spatio-corporeal art forms derived from the conjunction of the spatial principles of architecture, the time-based values of choreography and film and their demolished and destroyed conceptual and disciplinary borders. Italian Marxist theorist and politician Antonio Gramsci explains that destruction, which is considered here

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4 In my case, film belongs to a broader category of moving image that I shall name here “the screen”. The latter is an umbrella term that can embrace my versatile interests in screendance, videography, cinematography, writing and graphic design, where the screen as medium can refer to the screen of the camera, the smart phone, the computer, but also to any other surface that I can create or adapt in order to project a static or moving image.

5 Dance scholar Sophia Lycouris (2009) defines choreographic environments as installation spaces that have emerged from choreographic thinking and, as a result, they require from the audience to physically engage with them.

6 Architect Bernard Tschumi (1996) defined architectural event as the triadic relationship between space, action and movement.

to be a synonym for demolition, means “to destroy spiritual hierarchies, prejudices, idols and ossified traditions” (Forgacs, 2000, p. 74). Applied to the context of interdisciplinarity, destruction may also mean to destroy limits between disciplines and to enable new crossovers. In this sense, destruction does not become a source for nostalgic sentiments to arise, but by taking a distance from negative connotations it becomes a creative tool for art making. Gramsci reaffirms, as transferred by artist Thomas Hirschhorn and exhibited in his installation *In-Between* (2015): “Destruction is difficult. It is as difficult as creation” (South London Gallery, 2015). Destruction requires creativity, so that something new can surface. The lack of disciplinary ground can also be a powerful place of potentiality and of construction of new possibilities.

### **Transgression and issues associated with interdisciplinarity**

Destruction of disciplinary limits might be challenging and demanding, and the interdisciplinary nature embedded in the process might not always be reflected in the product. At this point, I wish to make a clear distinction between the interdisciplinary process and the interdisciplinary product. An artistic process might be transgressed, but the product not always, and vice versa. An interdisciplinary process can be derived from exchanges, contaminations and transformations of different theories and methodologies, but it may lead to an outcome which is by no means innovative or different from the outcome of a disciplined process. The product or rather the medium of production derived from an interdisciplinary process might be something which others have arrived in after years of rigorous training that has enabled them to understand the discipline and acquire a deep knowledge of its theoretical issues and methodologies. To set this train of thought in motion: I do not consider transgression to transform the *dance-architectures* enquiry into a product closely affiliated with the products of film studies and visual arts, hence, film or installation respectively. I consider the process of *dance-architectures* transgressed, and what makes the product of this transgressed process different from a product derived from a disciplined process and created after years of rigorous training and expertise in film or visual arts is the freedom to create (and to fail); an attribute closely related to the *amateur*.

Maya Deren (1959 / McPherson, 2005, p. 17), a versatile figure of avant-garde film that transgressed dance, poetry, writing and anthropology, spoke about the amateur as the one “who does something for the love of the thing rather than for economic reasons or necessity”. Un-disciplined, free from commodity constraints that are often associated with the aim of providing pleasure to an audience and focused on knowledge production instead of an artistic product is, paradoxically, a position of advantage. Yet, from a product-oriented perspective, can the outcome of an interdisciplinary process be associated with the negative connotations of amateurism? In other words, do interdisciplinary explorations derive from superficiality and the lack of expertise in a specific discipline? These are rhetorical questions derived from a gap between research, usually embedded in the Academia, and product-oriented artistic practices usually located outside of it. But, in an attempt to give an answer, I will reply by paraphrasing Robert A. Segal’s (2009) words that digging

deep can lead to gold – but so can crossing borders. Horizontally acquired knowledge enabled through disciplinary transgression and vertically obtained disciplinary rigour and expertise can be equally negative and positive.

Collaboration inside an interdisciplinary context is a tool that can help overcome the gaps in vertical and horizontal knowledge. Architecture, choreography and filmmaking are in their essence disciplinary collaborative practices, but interdisciplinary collaboration works differently. Groups of different expertise and background are joined together in order to resolve problems by setting in motion their different perspectives. According to academic researcher Paul Carr (Carr et al., 2014, p. 6), there exist different ways of fusing disciplines under the broad term of interdisciplinarity; these include the following aspects:

- Multi-disciplinary: where students/staff from more than one discipline engage in a common learning, teaching or assessment activity.
- Cross-disciplinary: where aspects of one discipline can be explained in terms of another.
- Trans-disciplinary: where students/staff study in a way that blurs or even ignores traditional discipline boundaries to adopt a more holistic approach to learning/research.
- Collaborative mode: where students/staff work together but adhere to their disciplines.
- Integrated mode: where practitioners work together and sample each other's discipline.
- Intra-disciplinary: where collaboration takes place within a discipline.
- Inter-disciplinary: where students/staff from more than one discipline learn with, from and about one another through a common activity, usually in the context of practice.

Collaboration is the fundamental parameter for any sort of interdisciplinary exchange. But what is happening in cases in which an individual has a specialisation in two or more disciplines? By attempting to answer this question, I will refer back to the concept of transgression, which helps me to describe the demolition of boundaries between disciplines and their reintegration in one versatile identity performed by one person, the *cross-dresser*. In Gender Studies, the cross-dresser usually “adopts the clothing and often the characteristics of the opposite sex, but also simultaneously functions as his or her original gender” (Mosley and Sara, 2013, p. 18). Although this discussion does not aim to enter in a discourse on gender issues, cross-dressing refers to people who, in working interdisciplinarily, are not “merely stepping outside of their original discipline” (ibid.) but instead are inhabiting two or more at the same time. At a personal level, the transgressed role of the cross-dresser requires engagement with theories from different disciplines and working in architectural ways of looking, seeing and framing with the camera, and choreographic ways of

filming and editing. Simultaneously inhabiting two or more disciplines brings the cross-dresser in a position between vulnerability and potentiality due to the lack of rigorous expertise. Not belonging in a specific discipline provides the flexibility and advantage of being able to creatively bridge opposites and disconnected ideas and elements.

The transgressive and cross-dressing artist has a paradoxical nature. (S)he functions only because limits and disciplinary norms exist, which, in turn, it his/her role to break. As Jenks (2003, p. 7) reaffirms, we need “to recognise the edges in order to transcend them”. Transgression arises because there are confines, rules, frames and by extension disciplines and specialisation, which transgression confirms by transcending them. In the same way that carnival is considered a temporary liberation from everyday norms of social behaviour and discipline, academic transgression redefines the rules and perceptions that every classified discipline is associated with. Dance is usually perceived as an ephemeral art produced by the human body in motion, whilst staticness is characteristic of architecture. Speaking about the Vitruvian considerations that have been hunting architecture’s limits throughout centuries, architect Bernard Tschumi (1996, p. 108) reminds us of them: “venustas, firmitas, utilitas – ‘attractive appearance’, structural stability’, ‘appropriate spatial accommodation.’” However, seen through the choreographic and filmic lens, architecture in transgression becomes a time-based and corporeal experience of spatial and material sensation.

### **Transgression as practice: An example**

Transgression attempts to challenge the strictly defined and refresh expectations. The theatrical stage remains dedicated to live arts performances, and performance theorist and maker Bojana Cvejić (2015), referring to theatre as an institutional structure, asserts that it protects the relative autonomy of conventional dance as an art form. Challenging this belief has been central to my recent work *Anarchitextures* (2016), in which the theatrical space, where it was presented, was misused and, as a result, its architectural identity was transgressed. *Anarchitextures*, while breaking architectural conventions and applying cinematographic principles to a choreographic context, share proximity with the art form of installation. Therefore, it should be expected to be presented in a space made to display visual art. Instead, the artistic choice was to transgress the rules of where installation art is usually placed, to prioritize the choreographic principles of the artwork, and place it at a theatrical stage; a space conceived, constructed and expected to embrace dance and choreography with live bodies rather than objects. If a theatrical stage anticipates a live human performance and a gallery or a museum an exposition of installed objects, then challenging this expectation becomes transgressive as well. Placing an installation inside a theatre instead of a museum or a gallery space alternates the identity of the space meant to embrace dance; placing dance in the museum context is mutually transgressive as well.

Through a history of almost one century, dance and the predecessors of modern dance have been intruding the art canon of visual arts, and vice versa. This tendency has been increased after War World II and arrived at its apex in recent years, during which galleries and museums have

been transgressed by performers and choreographers such as Jérôme Bel (*Disabled Theatre*, 2013), Xavier Le Roy (*Retrospective*, 2012, 2013, 2014) and Boris Charmatz (*Musée de la danse*).

Visual artists have also been adopting the role of choreographer, such as Bruce Neuman, Tino Sehgal, Pablo Bronstein, who hire dancers to become materials for their works. *Anarchitextures* aim to examine these tendencies, to reconsider the conventions imposed by the theatre, gallery and museum *dispositifs*, to rethink the limits between stage and auditorium, and to propose the stage as a revitalized public space for the dialogue between architecture, choreography and moving image. If theatre's identity is connected with the ephemerality of live performances, and museum with archiving and the creation of history, which challenges provide and which norms transgress the positioning of dance in the museum and of visual arts onto the theatrical stage? While there is a free circulation among the different manifestations of visual art (painting, sculpture, video) in the gallery and museum context, and the same happens among the live arts (dance, theatre, music) in theatrical contexts, how can we destroy and transgress boundaries among less obviously related disciplines such as architecture, dance, and the screen? What kind of spaces are appropriate for hosting these hybrid experiments?

Until now, I have argued that transgression requires order and principles in order to emerge. Transgression is a rather relative term and it depends on the context in which an interdisciplinary work and argument are located. Transgression flows between marginalized or central positions and it is continuously redefined. For instance, my work can be received as transgressive when positioned in the discipline of choreography, but traditional when located in the field of visual arts and film. Tino Sehgal's *This Variation* won the Golden Lion at the Venice Biennial of Visual Arts in 2013 "with a piece that can only be described as an extended, long-duration choreography" (Franko and Lepecki, 2014, p. 1). Sehgal's work has transgressed the world of visual arts by relocating the medium of choreography outside the dance context.

The last point I wish to refer to is that the transgressive and interdisciplinary outcome is often difficult to be categorized and classified. How to classify the transgressed without going against the nature of transgression? How to define as the one or the other or explain without sacrificing the principles, which, coming together from different fields, give birth to an artistic form? In the case of *Anarchitextures*, which definition can include all three disciplines in one? What follows is an attempt to describe *Anarchitextures* as an artistic product. It is also a dialogue with the ambiguous notion of architecture, choreography and film that aims at the provocation of non-explicit statements:

Anarchitecture.

— I wouldn't dare to call it like this, but thank you, Gordon Matta-Clark, for being my progenitor.

An architecture.

– No, as far as architecture is associated with the Vitruvian trilogy of *venustas*, *firmitas*, *utilitas*.

– Yes, as far as architecture is regarded in terms of texture, ephemerality, instability, atmosphere, internal volume, light and experience.

Anarchi-texture.

– Yes, as far as it concerns painting.

A material occupation of space.

– Not only that.

An environment.

– Not quite.

An installation.

– No (referring to Alan Kaprow's definition of installation as a series of objects installed).

– Yes, as long as the term embraces the interaction of different media in the artwork.

A three-dimensional work of art.

– Yes, but not only.

A multimedia sculpture.

– No.

An architectural montage in space that requires a concurrent assemblage by the viewer.

– Possibly.

An organization of "windows" (fabricated screens) with animated and moving images.

– Sounds close enough.

A path in space and time that encourages mobile spectatorship.

– Almost. (Thank you, Sergei Eisenstein, for helping me to comprehend the triadic intersection through this lens.)

An architectural event choreographically devised.

– I wish it could be.

A choreographic object.

– It could also be (if I am not stealing someone else’s copyright on the invented term).

An expanded choreography.

– Perhaps.

A choreography.

– It depends on how you approach it.

A slow process of erasure.

– Yes, in some degrees. Especially when retaining the disappeared trace of Banksy’s statement “Sorry! the lifestyle you ordered is currently out of stock been restored” on the streets of Poplar (London) and in the project itself.

The transgressed product can be all of the above and none of them simultaneously. The hybrid outcome is indeterminate, although it might share similarities with predefined art forms. It is an *emergent whole* in which “the parts are so dynamically related as to produce something new which is unpredictable from a knowledge of the parts” (Deren, 1946 / McPherson, 2005, p. 65). The *emergent whole* is also a *difficult whole*, referring to Robert Venturi’s *Complexity and Contradiction in Architecture* (1966). The interdisciplinary process and product emerge from the assemblage or integration of disconnected parts (challenging collaborators, contradictory ideas, concepts and theories derived from different disciplines) which, through continuous adjustments and repositionings, create *a whole that emerges with difficulty and is defined with difficulty*. The *emergent* and *difficult whole* requires a process of negotiation for balancing opposite and disconnected elements. That could be referred as an *unstable equilibrium*, a concept found in Deren’s essay “Cinema as an Art Form” and is described as “the concept of absolute, intrinsic values, whose stability must be maintained” in order to give way to “the concept of relationships which ceaselessly are created, dissolved and recreated and which bestow value upon the part according to its functional relation to the whole” (Deren, 1946 / McPherson, 2005, p. 31).

While demolition as an artistic concept has been approached in this text as a violent intervention in disciplinarity, Deren’s notion of *unstable equilibrium* helps to apply dynamic relationships to the process of disciplinary destruction. Demolition as a concept, when placed inside an isolated context, risks creating negative connotations associated with the lack of productivity. Deren’s *unstable equilibrium* may suggest the transformation of a practice upon or before its destruction and contamination by another discipline through destabilising processes aiming to move the discipline away from fixed perceptions and convictions. This image works when we imagine disciplines less as authoritarian buildings, but as frames made by malleable membranes; when we imagine them

as *weak*<sup>7</sup> disciplines. Through this lens, transgression (the moment of un-disciplining disciplines) describes the birth of hybrid forms that continue to evolve through dynamic relationships and exchanges. All three claims outlined in this essay (Jenks, Deren, Gramsci) have helped me to advocate the belief that demolition as a concept suggests a creative artistic tactic that enables rebirth, re-orientation and relocations of forms and principles through dynamic processes.

### Conclusion

I have attempted to address the experience and the issues associated with interdisciplinarity. I have arrived to work as an interdisciplinary artist out of necessity to explore a specific question: *how to remember architecture as a living organism rather than a fixed structure*. Throughout this paper, I have tried to shed light on the different ways of working interdisciplinarily and I have examined transgression as intention, as a role adapted by the artist-researcher who is transformed into a *cross-dresser*, as a process and a product. In all four cases, knowing-how interacts with learning-how-to, making and thinking as research. The concept of demolition has been crucial in helping me to transgress different disciplines.

Movement-wise demolition hints in its process the action of *shaking*, and the notion of unstable equilibrium suggests *balancing*; both of them, when they are applied as metaphors to the interdisciplinary discourse, help to expand a strictly defined discipline while maintaining medium-specificity. Without destroying and completely rejecting disciplinarity, *shaking* can help to expand the limits of a discipline and, thus, enrich it. *Shaking a discipline* and *balancing between different disciplines* is a practice that requires continuous adjustments, re-positionings and flexibility in order to maintain equilibrium and avoid collapsing. Specifically for the field of dance and dance making, a broader understanding of *shaking* and *balancing* as movement options may contribute to ideas about transition, transformation, and re-location so relevant to the contemporary concepts of archiving and expanded choreography.

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7 Architectural theorist Ignasi de Solà-Morales (1997, p. 71) defines disciplinary weakness as "a posture that is not aggressive and dominating, but tangential".

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# POLITICS OF PERFORMANCE: NEGOTIATING CONTEMPORARY DANCE IN POST-APARTHEID SOUTH AFRICA FOR ADVOCACY OF MARGINALIZED COMMUNITIES<sup>1</sup>

KETU H. KATRAK

## Abstract

This essay explores the use of Contemporary Dance by South African “choreo-activists”, as I call them, in creating work for marginalized communities. Among the latter, I analyze the stereotypes and violence faced by members of LGBTQ communities, as well as by dancers with mixed abilities. The essay explores the scholarly contributions on “disability dance” made by Professor Gerard Samuel, Head of the School of Dance at the University of Cape Town, and by Professor Lliane Loots at the University of KwaZulu Natal, among other scholarly readings on disability, medical and social information exploring ongoing struggles of access and acceptance for mixed ability dancers and audiences.

## Keywords

Discrimination against LGBTQ communities and mixed ability dancers in South Africa; scholars; “choreo-activists” of disability dance; creative choreography by Mamela Nyamza and Remix Dance Company in post-apartheid South Africa

The porous nature of the art form [i.e. Contemporary Dance] facilitates inclusion of a range of movement expressions and this adaptability and deconstruction of hegemonies comprise a fertile space for dancers and choreographers alike. [...] [Contemporary Dance Theater as a form is] being altered by a growing presence of persons with disabilities who challenge not only their right of inclusion within dance as an art form but also the social construct of the “dancing body”. [...] In boldly arguing for dance to be performed by all persons/human beings much could be taught to 21st century youth-obsessed cultures and xenophobic societies. (Samuel, 2009, p. 1)

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1 Parts of this essay were first presented at the “Confluences 8” Conference, 16–18 July 2015, School of Dance, University of Cape Town, South Africa, under the title “Negotiating Contemporary Dance in Africa”.

The construction of normative perfect moving bodies has been about excluding a body living with disability; now, critical Contemporary Dance has had to heed the agenda of truly democratizing who can dance and what a dancer should look like. Not all dance education is about creating theatre dancers but rather, too, that the ability to dance and move can become one of the fundamental rights of freedom of expression that all learners should access. (Loots, 2015, p. 9)

Marginalized communities such as the disabled in post-apartheid South Africa use Contemporary Dance / Creative Dance as a preferred form. In this essay, I discuss the potency of this form for the disabled, and the advocacy work of choreo-activists, as I term them. Although South Africa's young democracy (since 1994) guarantees rights of sexual orientation and equal access to the physically challenged, the realities on the ground are strikingly different. I argue that African Contemporary Dance Theater, with its openness of movement vocabularies, provides effective and affective tools of advocacy for artists, choreographers, and socially engaged scholars to challenge stereotypes of the disabled and the sexually "deviant" among LGBTQ communities (the acronym LGBTQ includes lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer). Further, such representations participate in creating a socially just environment that recuperates the denuded humanity of marginalized groups and accepts them as artists.

Gerard Samuel's advocacy work in disability dance uses "creative dance as the methodology for disability dance [...]. Dance became a mediator where disabled dance and mainstream performance dance began to bump and intertwine" (Samuel, 2012, p. 128). The emphasis is not on training and technique but rather on self-expression and communication of a myriad of stories told from the point of view of the disabled. Award-winning black choreographer Mamele Nyamza argues against violence directed at lesbians in a collaborative work, *I Stand Corrected* (with UK-based Mojisola Adebayo), which critiques homophobia and challenges the horrific phrase "corrective rape" used to "justify" male violence in raping and murdering lesbians in order to "correct" them. Both Samuel and Nyamza use the multidisciplinary form of Contemporary African Dance Theater, which brings together the verbal, kinetic, and aural in affective performances.

Gerard Samuel, a South African of Indian descent (of the 4th generation) who grew up outside Durban, has several "firsts" in his life and career. He was the first "colored" person to learn ballet, his passion since he was a young boy, during apartheid with its racial structure of white, black, and the colored as the middle, buffer zone. Currently, he is the first colored South African to be appointed Head of the School of Dance at the University of Cape Town (UCT), where he has augmented the curriculum to include Disability Dance Studies.

### **Contemporary African Dance**

Contemporary Dance and, within Contemporary Dance, the delineation of "Creative Dance" provide the space and freedom to explore the body's movement potential, including its limits for different body types. Such an avenue is more open-ended than the strictures of any classical form such as

ballet, which has strict regimes of movement, not open to adaptation for differently able bodies. As Gerard Samuel (2007, p. 139) remarks: "Disability dance has the unique power to reposition contemporary theatre dance notions."

In the South African context, with its colonial and apartheid legacies, unconscious norms that still prefer the normative, thin ballet body prevail. As Juanita Finestone argues effectively in her MA mini-thesis entitled *The Politics and Poetics of Choreography: The Dancing Body in South African Dance* (1995), postmodernism that favors multiplicity over unitary (such as a "common" identity in the "rainbow nation"), that fragments rather than unifies identities, that challenges debilitating binaries (inherited from Western epistemologies) of high/low art or, to extend this, the able/disabled, offers useful avenues for choreographers to explore. "Postmodern choreographic strategies," Finestone (1995, p. 2) points out, are useful "for formulating and articulating new dance directions in South Africa". Contemporary Dance in this context welcomes a palimpsest of various vocabularies and welcomes different body types to experiment with movement and music. Finestone's distinction between "the social body" and "the dancing body" is useful to discuss marginalized bodies – blacks, disabled, lesbians. As Finestone (ibid.) suggests, it is useful to "demystify and deconstruct [...] previous *official* representations of the dancing body".

Since marginalized communities – disabled and LGBTQ – favor Contemporary Dance in their work, it is important to discuss its history in the South African context, especially the Contemporary Dance Conference hosted by JOMBA! in August 2004 in Durban. What changes/continuities do we observe from 2004 to 2015? Lliane Loots, Lecturer at the University of KwaZulu Natal and Artistic Director of Flatfoot Dance Company, continues to be a powerful advocate for the marginalized in her spearheading training programs for disadvantaged children and youth, and in her choreographic work for the Company. In speaking of Contemporary Dance, it is important, as Loots argues in her article in *Agenda* (2015), to seek alternatives to canonic and received notions of Modern/Contemporary Dance from the global North following pioneers such as Graham and Cunningham. Loots probes methodologies appropriate for the global South and the South African context, when, even in post-apartheid times, class often supersedes race. It is crucial not to be "homogenized" in universal, i.e. Western, notions of dance but to remain rooted in South African local issues such as poverty, HIV/AIDS, unequal gender norms under traditional patriarchy, and rigid roles for boys and girls.

In a useful article entitled "Under Fire: Defining a Contemporary African Dance Aesthetic – Can it be Done?" (about the JOMBA! 2004 conference) Gilbert Douglas et al. (2006) remark: "Practitioners from around Africa engaged powerfully" with this topic. "Their discussion revealed mostly divergent, occasionally intersecting and often heated opinions on the issue, clearly indicating that the notion of what constitutes an African Contemporary Dance aesthetic is highly contested" (ibid., p. 103). Sichel (ibid., p. 109) quotes Gregory Maqoma's remark that "each choreographer and artist has a responsibility of cultural translation to mediate but not be swallowed up". Several participants spoke of researching their own indigenous traditions, creating a

“new body language”, even being open to borrowing/appropriating styles from other places while keeping their own identity and integrity. Some speakers connected the word “contemporary” to our present technological age. While some embraced the word “African”, others wanted to be regarded as “artists” who could belong anywhere. There is an overt or unspoken expectation that, even while doing “Contemporary Dance”, a dancer must show that s/he is influenced by “traditional dance”. Or else, one might be accused of trying to be a European. Augusto Cuvilas (ibid., p. 107) expressed discomfort with the designation “African Dance”, since which Africa and which Africans are included in that? Also in talking of Contemporary Dance, he asks if one “is talking of technique or style or aesthetics” (ibid.).

Another conundrum was that, if “Contemporary Dance” is associated with the West, and with modern dance, how could this be brought together with indigenous African traditional dance with its own techniques? Would this endeavor end up as another form of colonization? If traditional and contemporary were “fused”, would the African identity of dance be lost? Would this only become another expression of what Zakhele Mhlongo (ibid., p. 112) describes as “conforming to the universal aesthetic of Contemporary Dance”?

In a review of Lliane Loots and Miranda Young-Jehangeer’s edited volume, *African Contemporary Dance? Questioning Issues of a Performance Aesthetic for a Developing and Independent Continent*, Vasu Reddy (2007, p. 117) astutely points out “the essential ambiguity” of the title. Does the title point to “a type of dance practice” or does it express “resistance [...] to any fixed, redetermined classification”? Does “African Contemporary Dance” point to “the ontology and epistemology” of this genre? Does the question mark after African Contemporary Dance register “possible fault lines”? Reddy (ibid.) points out that participants emphasize the interface between their contexts and their creative work, which share a symbiotic relationship. In the myriad ways that African Contemporary Dance can be delineated, in its postcolonial context, this style is “characterized by hybridity (emphasis on appropriation, assimilation, synthesis and questioning)” (ibid., p. 118). While there can hardly be consensus on a single or even a set of definitions of African Contemporary Dance, it is significant to continue critical reflection of both theory and practice that blends both personal experience and testimony with political and cultural analyses. It is important, as Reddy (ibid., p. 120) notes, to “rethink and conceptualize African Contemporary Dance in non-essentialist frameworks that open up stimulating interpretative modalities focused on a rich, engaging and creative performance project”.

I now turn to the use of Contemporary African Dance Theater by marginalized communities, disabled and LGBTQ, who continue to face the harsh realities of race with attendant inhumane degradation faced particularly by blacks during and after apartheid. In South Africa’s young democracy (since 1994) the Constitution guarantees rights to all its citizens of diverse races, ethnic groups, sexual orientations, and physical abilities (categories that are not even mentioned in the Constitutions of other African nations). However, the road to full recognition and equal access for blacks, the disabled, and the LGBTQ communities is a long and difficult one even though the

Department of Education's White Paper (2001) states that "inclusive education" (or "integrated education") for "the disabled and the able-bodied is part of a human rights culture" in South Africa. As Gerard Samuel (2012, p. 139) remarks, "[i]n South Africa's fledgling democracy, the re-prioritizing of disability within the human rights debate meant that through Creative Dance, the voice of the disabled could be heard". Similarly, Liane Loots (2009, n.p.) advocates in agreement with "radical education theorist Paula Freire, [who] offers alternative ways of imagining a localized education paradigm that allows for the agenda of growing people rather than [...] Northern-based economic and social agendas – and indeed, dance practices". Further, Loots (ibid.) points out that "in post-apartheid South Africa education divisions are no longer along race lines but still exist in terms of class and what school you are able to access or afford to attend. Often township schools (for example) are still beleaguered by poorly trained teachers and no cultural programmes due to funding cuts". Above all, I agree with Loots that dance education is less about "a well-pointed foot" but about "this agenda of 'growing people'; that education and pedagogy should be about [as Freire puts it] 'becoming more fully human'. [...] Dance education can become a site of activism for rethinking who we are both locally and globally and what we are worth" (ibid.).

### **Sexual orientation: Marginalization and violence against LGBTQ communities**

Art has developed me, and opened a totally different book for me to explore the impossible, which is now possible. [...] I love my art [dance] because we have this powerful tool that speaks to all without a word. Giving back to the community is helping those that come from where I come from [Gugulethu, Cape Town], and showing them that this art [...] can heal a lot of them that are born out of issues just like myself. (Nyamza cited in Brand South Africa, 2011)

Mamela Nyamza, winner of South Africa's prestigious 2011 Standard Bank Young Artist Award Winner for Dance, grew up in the 1980s in Gugulethu, Cape Town. She was born on 22 September 1976 (the historic year of the Soweto student uprising) into a large family, and connected with dance from a young age as a means to understand the world around her. At age 8, in 1984, as apartheid's racist policies were being increasingly challenged, Nyamza started ballet classes at the Zama Dance School in Gugulethu with a white Jewish woman, Arlene Westergaard. She then completed a national Diploma in Ballet at the Pretoria Technikon Dance Department in Pretoria.<sup>2</sup> Like other black women aspiring to become ballet dancers, Nyamza also faced the usual prejudices of not having a thin body type, nearly a compulsory requirement for female ballet dancers.

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2 I rely on prominent South African arts critic and journalist Adrienne Sichel's unpublished essay, "Legacies of Violence/Art Resolution: Mamela Nyamza and Fellow Trailblazers" (2014), for biographical details on Nyamza. I am grateful to Sichel for sharing a copy of her essay with me.

Nyamza's yearlong fellowship at the Alvin Ailey Dance Company in New York City was significant in validating her black female body in the ballet studio.

Nyamza, like choreo-activist Gerard Samuel, is committed to community educational work through dance. She has been project coordinator for the University of Stellenbosch's Project Move 1524, which uses dance movement therapy to educate and demonstrate on issues relating to HIV/AIDS, domestic violence and drug abuse. She believes passionately in empowering youth through dance training, from teaching ballet in Mamelodi to doing volunteer work at Thembaletu Day School for the Disabled.

Nyamza's own mother was raped and killed, a horrifyingly scarring experience for the daughter. She began to use her autobiographical material as she developed her own strong, unique signature style. "After my mother died," remarks Nyamza (2009, n.p.), "I could feel her in my dreams telling me to use my dance to tell real stories. I also later came out of the closet and I started experiencing discrimination in society and that's when I thought, 'you know, I'm an artist, so let me be the voice that addresses all these issues'." Nyamza remarks (ibid.) that she had "forced" herself "to live the model life women are expected to have, that of getting married and having a child. But I realized I was not myself [...] I came out as a lesbian and left my husband for a woman. [...] Since then I blossomed into the artist I have always wanted to be".

Nyamza describes *I Stand Corrected* (her collaborative work with Modisola Adebayo) as "dark strange, witty, and absurd". The piece evokes issues of homophobia and rape via layered movement, props, and symbolic gestures.<sup>3</sup> Adrienne Sichel, prominent South African arts critic, in her aforementioned essay "Legacies of Violence" (2014, n.p.) comments on this work as "a passionate response to an epidemic of rape and murder in South Africa". A real event – the gruesome murder of a lesbian woman whose body was dumped into a garbage bin – provided urgency and inspiration for *I Stand Corrected*. Nyamza plays the murdered woman who returns to her female lover after her death to "correct herself". According to Sichel (ibid.), "*I Stand Corrected* weaves a theatrical spell through a fractured, dramatic narrative which succinctly choreographs an epitaph for ordinary people textured with love, pain, loss, brutality and dignity [...] a landmark dance theatre work which marries the skills, experience, sensitivity, sensuality and artistry of two African artists – a theatre director, actor and playwright and an uncompromising dancer and choreographer. The final message is love is stronger than death" (ibid.).

### Disability Dance

Let me begin this section with an example of how Contemporary Dance movement, its free and "porous" nature, to use Samuel's word quoted in the epigraph, along with its use of music and rhythm, provides an artistic avenue for differently able dancing bodies to express themselves

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3 A short trailer of this work is available on YouTube: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DWpccCym-RY>

as dancers and as full human beings. As Coralie Valentyn (2015) remarked in her paper presented at the SDHS/CORD Conference in Athens, Greece, “[d]isability expands the possibilities of dance. [...] Disability creates new possibilities in dance choreography [in which] the vocabulary of movement is radically expanded”. Further, Valentyn (ibid.) regards “integrated dance as making new meaning in South Africa where new identities can be imagined”. Disability Dance enables viewers to challenge ideas around bodies and abilities, accepting the fact that not all bodies are perfect. It is equally a challenge for able-bodied dancers to learn how to work with the differently able. The able-bodied dancers need training, flexibility, and reciprocity, not simply sympathy. They have to rethink what dance is, and to transform their normative aesthetic responses.

Also, at the 2015 SDHS/CORD Conference, Professor Lisa Doolittle of the University of Alberta shared her experiences of running an “All Abilities” rather than a “Mixed Abilities Class” (Paper presentation). Doolittle (2015) renamed the category of the “disabled” as dancers “with” and dancers “without”, in fact making the able-bodied carry the negative connotation rather than the ones “with”. Students “with and without”, as Doolittle noted, omitting the word “disability”, created a work entitled *Unlimited Party*, inviting the audience to enter what Doolittle called “a new conceptual terrain” that created a sense of inclusion with 7 simple works: “May I please have this dance?” High-class ballroom dance expectations were deconstructed as differently able bodies moved on stage, “demonstrating their limitlessness”. This work activated empathy rather than sympathy in positively affective ways. Rather than a charity model, the audience was inspired to rediscover how social justice projects involve the whole community.

This is reminiscent of John Mthethwa’s “perseverance over a 20-year period” in using “ballroom dance, arguably one of the most codified forms”, as Gerard Samuel (2012, pp. 136–137) comments, “to provide for the physical and social upliftment of the disabled in KwaMashu and Umlazi [the black townships which surround Durban]”.

In Cape Town, Remix Dance Project (since 2000) has accomplished its mission of including differently able dancers in highly evocative Contemporary Dance choreographies. Loots (2015, p. 4) describes Remix’s work with different bodies as “its impulse towards a type of visceral democracy that honours difference, be this racial, gendered, or disabled”. Award-winning choreographers like Nicola Visser and Malcolm Black of Remix “argue for legitimacy of the disabled as dancer and valued human being” and assert the subversive quality of their work. As the first and one of the longest-standing integrated dance companies in the country, Remix seeks, through its work, to educate and challenge attitudes and policies that concern the disabled with programs of high artistic excellence. In particular, social and cultural attitudes towards dance, gender and disability within the dance world are tackled. Their mission is “to strive to create innovative dance theatre performance and education programmes that bring together people with different body histories, body types and abilities” (cited in Loots, 2015, p. 4). Great emphasis is placed on audience development in the disabled communities where transport is difficult and where a culture

of watching theatre and dance still needs to be fostered in all South African sectors. Remix continues to pioneer innovative productions and collaborations.

Similar to Remix's mission, UK-based Jasmine Pasch recognizes that teaching dance to the physically challenged is one task; equally important is "to open the minds of able-bodied people to what (the disabled) are capable of" (cited in Samuel, 2012, p. 132). Samuel (ibid.) remarks that "in 1996, Jasmine Pasch, a unique dance teacher working with disabled youth, was arguably the first to encourage expression of the latent dance within disabled children that emerged on Durban's opera stage".

I shall now discuss one of Remix's works (available on YouTube), *On Your Island Does the Night Fall Later?*, with dancers Nicola Visser and Malcolm Black, the latter in a wheelchair. This was presented in 2001 at the prestigious FNB Dance Umbrella in Johannesburg. When both dancers are on the floor, there is a sense of equality between the two differently able bodies. The upper body of the male dancer in wheelchair begins to imitate the standing female dancer. As the wheelchair spins, there is a sense of motion as the able-bodied dancer runs around the wheelchair. At one point, the wheelchair tilts and is balanced at a diagonal. The shadows on the wall make both figures larger than life. The able-bodied Nicola sits on top of the male body in the wheelchair. As the male in the chair gently pushes her off, he demonstrates physical strength and agency. She approaches him and drags him down to the floor, and the two bodies are on top of each other. Such creative expression makes audiences look at rather than look away, as often happens when encountering someone in a wheelchair or with a visible disability. "Looking away from people who make us uncomfortable," remarks Rosemarie Garland-Thomson (2009, p. 83), "differs from granting them visual anonymity. Looking away is an active denial of acknowledgment rather than the tacit tipping of one's hat to ordinary fellow citizens expressed in simply not noticing one another. Looking away is [...] a deliberate obliteration of personhood."

Similar to Remix's mission and values, Gerard Samuel advocates for able-bodied and disabled dancers to work together. Samuel has worked with disabled children in Europe who receive more state funding than in South Africa. In Denmark, Samuel has pioneered several integrated disability arts programs, most notably *Who Says, The Ugly Duckling?*, for three years, in collaboration with educationist Lene Bang-Larsen of Klubvest, Albertslund, Denmark. *Who Says, The Ugly Duckling?* was created in an after-care center for the mentally handicapped from ages 13–20. Five episodes of *The Ugly Duckling* explored notions of the insider/outsider for the disabled using the popular Hans Christian Anderson stories for improvisation. "I have purposefully," remarks Samuel (2009, p. 3), "set out to make works that are socially engaging – that do not ask for the sympathy vote nor are about insipid fairies dancing in the glen. These dances hopefully reposition a 'black is beautiful' and 'the disabled is beautiful' consciousness. As the voice of these dancers matured, these new dance (his)stories saw an increasing acceptance of these differently-abled/otherly-shaped bodies as out and proud dancers who had something of significance to say."

Speaking from the South African context, Samuel (ibid., p. 2) remarks that society views “a person with disabilities as deviant, separates ‘them’ from ‘our’ society (sic) and inflates the position of power and superiority for able-bodied, white and female persons”. Additionally, South Africa’s apartheid system validated ballet as norm, and as performed by perfect, thin bodies. Samuel (cited in Loots, 2015, p. 9) points out that disabled people face barriers to arts training, funding and “inclusion of disabled community’s contribution of artistic product as work”.

Samuel’s significant advocacy as choreo-activist and scholar for the disabled in South Africa includes his work (before he assumed his position as Head of the School of Dance at UCT) as Education Officer within communities and in schools around Durban always striving to integrate rather than segregate the disabled in “Special Needs” programmes that, though well-meaning, perpetuate social stigma. As noted in *Durban Arts* (1998), “[t]eachers of the disabled have been involved in skills workshops and dance courses in creative developmental movement hosted by the Playhouse Company whose education and development dance coordinator Gerard Samuel has been working with 90 pupils from nine schools in the greater Durban area. They will present their shared dance works” entitled *Journeys in Dance* and *Dance Dreams* at the Playhouse Theater in Durban.

Samuel has also written several important scholarly essays in this field, such as “Undressing the (W)rapper: Disability Dance” (2007), in which he asks *why* Disability Dance is *not* considered dance. How are dance forms judged consciously or subconsciously against the norm of the “perfect” ballet body to which several large black women and most disabled people cannot belong? How can negative stereotypes of differently able people as stupid, dunce, moron, retard – “corrosive labeling”, profoundly damaging for anyone’s self-respect, be challenged? For the disabled, or the physically challenged, or the differently able – a “constant adaptation” of this category, remarks Samuel (ibid., p. 138), is telling as struggle between negative and positive names, and worse, negative attitudes continue. As Lliane Loots (2015, p. 5) asks, “does the inclusion of the disabled body into dance result in a disruption of perceptions around who can dance or is the disabled body asked to ‘transcend disability’ to take on the hallowed title of ‘dancer’?” Loots (ibid., p. 7) states that “what is at stake in the questions is not only audience expectations of a correct dancing body, but the very nature of dance as a form of social, sexual, political and cultural representation”. As Ann Cooper Albright (cited in Loots, 2015, p. 9) notes, “insertion of bodies with real physical challenges can be extremely disconcerting to [...] those who are committed to an aesthetic of ideal beauty”.

Loots (ibid., p. 10) recognizes Gerard Samuel as:

Beginning to profoundly challenge audience assumptions of what constitutes a dancing body. Dance as an art form defines itself on the use of fit, able performers and has often excluded the possibility of challenging the elitism of a dance world, which demands perfect bodies.

Loots, Artistic Director of Flatfoot Dance Company, Durban, also manages Samuel's Durban-based LeftFeetFirst Dance Company since Samuel now lives and works in Cape Town. The very names of these dance companies critique ballet norms such as arched feet, and the notion that many people cannot dance since they supposedly have "two left feet". As Professor Sarah Cordova of the University of Wisconsin-Madison pointed out to me, the names of these companies are symbolic and resonant in advocating for the disabled. "Flatfoot Dance Company takes its name," as Loots (2009, p. 294) states, "from a race legacy that has said many black dancers cannot do certain types of dance forms due to a dropped arch and a 'flat foot'."

### **Social vs. medical prejudice**

For the person who is defined as disabled, a constructed notion of her humanity has over many years been infested by various theoretical constructions including medical, historical, political, and I would even posit a cultural definition which could obscure her human presence as a complex dancing being. (Samuel, 2007, p. 139)

In this final section, I draw attention to the *social* rather than the *medical* difficulties that visibly disabled individuals face in daily life so as to better understand the disabled dancers on stage. In an essay entitled "Dancing Wheelchairs: An Innovative Way to Teach Medical Students about Disability" (2011, p. 886), US-based medical practitioner Johanna Shapiro notes the need to "challenge assumptions often made about individuals with disabilities, such as the inherent difficulty of their lives, their lack of sexuality, even their mobility restriction". Shapiro (ibid.) notes that "the social construction of disability" is different significantly from the medical one. The awkwardness of 'staring at' a disabled person, socially different from 'a clinical gaze', embodies how disability becomes a lens through which all aspects of a person are filtered [...] especially the visibly different other". Shapiro (ibid.) also points out the "fear of contagion" as though disabled people carried an infectious disease and, hence, must not be touched. Rather, disability dance ruptures such stereotypes by showing physical connections, caring gestures, and open empathy.

Shapiro (ibid., p. 887), in response to a DVD entitled *Outside-In* made by the University of California, Los Angeles Professor Victoria Marks, which includes able-bodied and disabled in a work by AXIS Dance company (Oakland, California-based), points out an important response to judging disability dance, namely "the persistent seduction of triumphalism, the need to 'defeat' adversity". Shapiro (ibid.) continues:

I am struck by how often students glorify the skills of the disabled dancers, speaking of them as "inspiring". While given the technical and artistic expertise of the performances, such approbation is not misplaced, it also enables a discussion of how excessive admiration of individuals with disabilities can restrict their full humanity as much as denigration and avoidance.

“People with visible impairments,” as Philip Auslander and Carrie Sandahl (2004, p. 2) remark, “almost always seem to ‘cause a commotion’ in public spaces.” Another scholar, Bree Hadley (2014, p. 2), echoes this idea, namely that a disabled body on the street, or in a theater “becomes a spectacle”. It “becomes the focus,” continues Hadley (ibid.), “of more or less furtive stares as passers-by who attempt to make sense of its startling, unruly or strange corporeality. [...] [This] makes the disabled body a source of curiosity, discomfort, stigma or pity”.

In conclusion, varieties of South African Contemporary Dance used by choreo-activists such as Samuel and Nyamza are, according to Samuel (2011, n.p.), “re-choreographing post-apartheid society”. It is crucial to tell the stories that have yet to be told and also for those stories to be heard. For Samuel, Contemporary Dance Theater in South Africa is one significant tool to rupture power relationships in dance and to work fruitfully towards full access and inclusivity of differently able human beings in post-apartheid society.

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# THE FOUNDING OF AMERICAN BALLET THEATRE ON THE EVE OF WAR, 1939–1944: DEPRESSION, MODERNITY AND THE HOLOCAUST

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## Abstract

Founded by Lucia Chase and Oliver Smith in 1939/1940 on the eve of Germany's invasion of Poland, and renamed "America's National Ballet Company" by the US Senate in 2005, American Ballet Theatre has played a vital role in the construction of American civic life and political consciousness. Its ballets and myriad artists articulated a complex artistic and social iconography reflective of European notions of classicism in ballet transformed into something contemporary and laced with American themes. A safe haven for political and artistic refugees fleeing fascism, totalitarianism and artistic duress from the 1940s to the present day, Ballet Theatre has both inherited and affected the cultural identity and social geography of big cities and small towns throughout the US since its inception.

## Keywords

American Ballet Theatre; war; political consciousness; historical experience; émigré European artists; Mikhail Mordkin; Anthony Tudor; *Pillar of Fire*

## Prologue

There is a famous story of Picasso in the archives of the Musée Picasso. He and Matisse remained in France during Vichy Nazi-occupied France. One day the Gestapo came to his studio on the Rue des Grands Augustins. They saw a study of *Guernica* sitting upright on the floor, leaning against a chair, its terrifying gray, white and black lines merging into the cacophonous rendering of war and death. They asked him: "Mr. Picasso, what inspired that painting?" And he answered: "Why you, of course."

## Introduction

American Ballet Theatre was born, unmistakably, at a cruel time in history that we now refer to as World War II and the Holocaust. Founded on the eve of World War II, just two months before the

German invasion of Poland on September 1, 1939, Ballet Theatre,<sup>1</sup> as it was then known, consisted of mostly foreign-born artists – choreographers, dancers, composers, scenic and costume designers, conductors, musicians and dancers – well-versed in the brutality of global conflicts: World War I, the Russian Revolution, and the rise of Fascism in Europe.

Ballet Theatre artists, themselves refugees of these many conflicts, enriched American art, seeding its seasoned modernist spirit with a visual imaginary that contained a latent consciousness about violence, displacement and forced exile. Most, if not all, of the company's members were stateless; most would never return home. Some lacked nation, even citizenship. They had fled countries that would no longer exist after 1945. And, tragically, they understood this.

Ballet Theatre artists' rootlessness – homelessness – became a shared consciousness of loss. A rupture characterized not only their lives but choreographic tracings of the company's war-time repertory.

These ballets, unlike other moments in dance history, no longer articulate a shared history of Russian classical with global contemporary dance. They no longer provide, in the words of Walter Benjamin (2007, p. 268), an "eternal [or stable] picture" of history. Rather, they "seize hold of a memory as it flashes up at a moment of danger [...] a single catastrophe which unceasingly piles rubble on top of rubble".<sup>2</sup> Their performative efficaciousness lies, thus, in their fleeting memorialization of the terrain of historical experience, a sudden and stunning statement of the moment.

Between 1939 and 1945, Ballet Theatre became a significant cultural force in the shaping of American civic society as US citizens and non-citizens alike struggled to contend with the evils of Fascism and the complex roles at home and abroad played by the American government in its defeat of Nazi Germany and allies of the Third Reich. While most of the company's early work fed into a government-sanctioned desire for patriotic-minded works of art, the global diaspora characterized by its stateless artists fed a nuanced sense of urgency, angst and determination heretofore absent from European classical ballet. It is this uniquely existential, empathic quality of the company's wartime repertory that distinguishes Ballet Theatre. Had Ballet Theatre emerged at another time in history, perhaps its influence as a major force in shaping an intellectual and aesthetic discourse about late modernist, early abstract expressionist languages of the body would have been less profound.

Ballet Theatre, while founded with surprising optimism at the end of the Great Depression and, sadly, at the start of World War II, became one of the fundamental channels through which escaping European émigré dancers fleeing either Stalinist Russia, Francoist Spain, Vichy France,

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1 Ballet Theatre was the original name of the American Ballet Theatre.

2 Walter Benjamin's "On the Concept of History", from "Theses on the Philosophy of History", was written in Paris and Lourdes between February and May of 1940, just four months before Benjamin died fleeing the Nazis in the town of Port Bou, in the Pyrenees, on his way to Spain, hoping to reach the US at the invitation of Dr. Max Horkheimer, 6 August 1940.

or the aggressive, swift advance of Nazi armies, made their way to America. Ballet Theatre also became the first American company to go abroad after the War. (They went to England in 1946.)<sup>3</sup> That is to say that consciousness about war (however distant) pervaded the company and the nation from its inception.

If we consider the resounding issues of trauma and memory, of exile and art, of fascism and communist totalitarianism, as powerful forces that shaped the aesthetic and ideological philosophy of Euro-American artists working for Ballet Theatre between 1940 and 1945, might we read these ballets differently? Might we see them differently, thereby coming closer to other meanings? If we place the War at the center of how we read Ballet Theatre's repertory – as the engine that drove its early work – might we excavate from Ballet Theatre more meaningful connections to larger historical currents and, therefore, might we understand these remarkable artists thrown together by the winds of war and their unique contributions to world history? Can we, must we, for example, read restagings of *Les Sylphides* in 1942 differently from in 2015? What ultimately becomes the genealogy – the historiography of our writing on ballet when read against time this way?

Let us add to these broader, theoretical ideas the internal trauma of war: the US had already lived through one war, albeit on other people's land – in a faraway geographic space (Ballet theatre press release, 1963).<sup>4</sup> Americans retained a latent consciousness about war and the distant understanding of what war meant: loss of loved ones, lost limbs, lost minds. Few US citizens and European (im)migrants who went to see Ballet Theatre in its nascent years would not have themselves experienced or had a parent or grandparent untouched by World War I.

As we consider together possible aesthetic and ideological ties between Ballet Theater and the tragic revelation of Hitler's Final Solution, we might take into consideration that many of the company's first dancers were Jewish: Nora Kaye (born Nora Koreff, daughter of Russian Jewish immigrants to Brooklyn), Miriam Golden (born Miriam Ziegler – parents were Oscar [pharmacist] and Freda Goldstein), Annabelle Lyon, Jerome Robbins (born Jerome Milton Rabinowitz, the son of Russian immigrants who owned a corset factory), Harold Lang, Alicia Markova (born Lillian Alicia Marks), Michael Kidd (born Milton Greenwald, the son of refugees from Tsarist Russia), and Muriel Bentley (born Rebecca Siegal, the daughter of Russian refugees). And there were others.

Lastly, Ballet Theatre's émigré European choreographers arrived in the US on the heels of Hitler's invasion of Poland on September 1, 1939. Fascism, the encroaching storm, was *the*

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3 In 1960, before the New York City Ballet toured the Soviet Union, Ballet Theatre had danced already in 142 countries and, at the behest of the US State Department, throughout the East Bloc, earned the title "America's No. 1 Cultural Export".

4 We must also consider the trauma caused by the American Civil War, 1861–1865, which almost split the nation into two parts and resulted in the Jim Crow Laws of the Reconstruction period that effectively legalized racial segregation in the US for the next century.

reason for yet another departure from yet another European land. This philosophy – of being on the run, of living in exile, of not knowing where your next dollar is coming from, of leaving yet another home or another theater – pervaded the ranks of Ballet Theatre for the following decade. Any ballerina entering its ranks would have become profoundly aware of this *mentalité*, and, thereby would have had a deeper understanding of the roles she played: Nora Kaye as Hagar in *Pillar of Fire*, Alicia Markova as Zamphira in *Aleko*, etc. Jews especially filling the ranks of the *corps* and soloist positions came with yet another set of eyes because they knew what was happening to the Jews of Europe. As the postmodern dance pioneer Anna Halprin recently confirmed in an interview: “We knew about the Holocaust, our parents knew, we knew, everybody knew what was happening to the Jews of Europe. It’s just that people didn’t always speak about it; it was too painful.”<sup>5</sup>

### **The Mordkin Ballet Company: Ballet Theatre’s beginning**

Ballet Theatre was born in 1939 out of “the collapse of the Mordkin Ballet Company and the financial difficulties of Lincoln Kirstein”. George Amberg argues in his 1949 book, *Ballet in America. The Emergence of an American Art* (p. 94), that the American Ballet emerged, to some extent, as Ballet Theatre.<sup>6</sup> Mordkin had been Anna Pavlova’s partner on two world tours in 1910 and 1911, performing a full-length *Giselle* and a series of divertissements to sold-out houses at the Metropolitan Opera House. Pavlova dismissed Mordkin as her partner after he dropped her and, according to a 1912 *Times* article, this was just the beginning of Mordkin’s triumphs and troubles that included a \$50,000 libel suit brought by him against another Russian Imperial dancer, Ekaterina Vassilyev Geltzer (*The New York Times*, 1912). Mordkin had returned to the US several times from Bolshevik and Soviet Russia in 1922, 1924 and 1926 respectively, having risen within Soviet ballet ranks to the position of Director of all ballet productions in the newly formed Soviet Opera House in Moscow. On his first day, Mordkin fired twenty-eight dancers “whose figures he considered not sufficiently sylph-like” (Duranty, 1922; Sayler, 1924). Despised by the dancers, his impulsive decisions led to his dismissal.

Mordkin, his wife, Pajitzkaya, also a ballet dancer, and their eight-year old son, Mikhail Mordkin Jr., fled to the woods of Tiflis in the Caucasus, where, starving, they contracted typhus and came close to dying. This was the second time Mordkin had been forced to flee – the first was after the October Revolution. Eventually, Mordkin began dancing in the Municipal Theatre at Tiflis for the

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5 Conversation between the author and Anna Halprin, University of California, Santa Barbara, April 27, 2015.

6 Mikhail Mordkin’s ballet company was called Advanced Arts. Richard Pleasant came to work for Mordkin as a secretary and office manager. Almost overnight, he took over as company manager and, slowly as Mordkin’s financial woes grew, he moved to overthrow Mordkin as the sole company director and choreographer, and create a major repertory company with himself at the helm. Mordkin was removed as director by Pleasant and given the sole opportunity of choreographing new ballets and staging older ones; his dancers were contracted as part of the new company. He was never consulted.

equivalent of fifty cents/month (*The New York Times*, 1944). Luckily, arts manager Morris Gest received word of his plight in 1924 and sailed to Riga to get Mordkin and his family out of the Soviet Union and safely to New York, where he was engaged to dance at the Metropolitan Opera House and as a featured artist in the Greenwich Village Follies (*The New York Times*, 1922, 1924). He had obtained permission from the Soviet authorities to perform in America and chose not to return, residing in New York City until his death in 1944.

Mordkin founded his first company in 1926 and a second, the Mordkin Ballet Co., in 1937, which became one of the forerunners to Ballet Theatre. The company was small. It gave sporadic performances on Sunday nights in New York City and sometimes out of town (Hurok, 1953, p. 147). By 1937, the Mordkin Ballet was formed with Mordkin's student and patron Lucia Chase in the role of *prima ballerina* where she debuted as a complete novice as Aurora in *The Sleeping Beauty* (Martin, 1937). "Toward the end of the company," Sol Hurok (1953, p. 148) remembered,

Mordkin had an associate, Richard Pleasant, who had also acted as supernumerary in de Basil productions. Pleasant had an idea that has lurked in the minds of a number of young men I know: to form a ballet company. In this case, idea and money came together for the Mordkin School and Company had Lucia Chase, with ambitions and interest as well. Chase had money – a great deal of it (her husband had owned Chase Steele and had died, leaving her everything) – and she wanted to dance. She had substantially financed the Mordkin Company. Pleasant went ahead with his plan for a grandiose organization with his ideas and Chase's money. The Mordkin Company was closed up and a new company, on a magnificent scale calling itself Ballet Theatre, was formed.

The new company, Ballet Theatre, was staged as the greatest collaboration in ballet history and comprised: eleven choreographers, twenty-two principal dancers, fifteen soloists, fifty-six *coryphées*, eleven designers, three conductors, eighteen composers' works. Pleasant desired an inclusive United Nations of representation for each influence on ballet and asked Eugene Loring to head up the American "wing", alongside Agnes de Mille, niece of filmmaker Cecil B. DeMille. Antony Tudor became director of the British wing; his partner Hugh Laing and Ms Andrée Howard were included as members of the choreographic team, alongside Anton Dolin, who was put in charge of the Classical Wing. Bolm, not Mordkin or Fokine, was asked to head the Russian wing, alongside Bronislava Nijinska and Michel Fokine. Two more wings were initiated, a Negro wing of fourteen dancers, pioneered by de Mille, who had been working with Katherine Dunham. The second wing was a Spanish wing of nineteen dancers that was supposed to have been directed by Carmelita Maracci. Maracci, always financially strapped, was concerned about leaving her students in Hollywood for a long sojourn in New York City. She passed the job over, giving it to Mexican-born Spanish Classical/Flamenco dancer, José Fernandez.<sup>7</sup>

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7 De Mille was extremely influential in convincing Pleasant and Chase of the necessity of two more wings representative of African American and Spanish dance culture.

There is no question that the works of European choreographers (and dancers) who left Europe for America at the start of World War II – Antony Tudor, Hugh Laing, Bronislava Nijinska, Léonide Massine, Michel Fokine, Adolf Bolm and George Balanchine – were inspired by prescient themes of violence, injustice, absurdist humor and mental suffering – none more than Tudor with works like *Dark Elegies* (1937), created in response to Franco's aerial bombings, Fokine with his restagings of *Petrouchka* (1909) (the psychically torn puppet whose murder we witness) and *Russian Soldier* (1942), in which a Russian soldier lays dying on stage. And finally Massine premiered *Aleko* (1942), a restaging of the Carmenian tale of violent sacrifice, which carries as profound a consciousness about war's psychic and physical wounds transliterated into a gestural language of stoicism, pain and suffering.

### **The founding of American Ballet Theatre**

According to John Martin (1937), chief dance critic of *The New York Times*, "a new organization absorbed the cast of Mordkin Ballet". Four months after Hitler's invasion of Poland, Ballet Theatre premiered on January 11, 1940 at Radio City's adjacent sister theatre, the less grandiose Centre Theatre. It had been an old movie house, an ice skating rink and was converted into a 3,500-seat theater for big extravaganzas before being the only building at Rockefeller Center to be demolished. The immense house was sold out. Eighteen works were presented in the space of two weeks.

After Ballet Theatre's successful three-week premiere season, the company bumped along in a wartime economy, at times on hiatus. By the summer of 1941, Sol Hurok (born in the Ukraine, Solomon Isaievich Gukov), recently engaged to manage the company, could not afford to keep the company in New York, sending them by train to Mexico City for three months, where escaping Europeans and political artists had taken refuge. There, the company rehearsed and realized a number of significant works. Among them were *Aleko* and *Pillar of Fire*.

### ***Pillar of Fire* (1942)**

Antony Tudor's *Pillar of Fire* premiered at the Metropolitan Opera House on August 8, 1942, several months after newspapers began to reveal the millions of people who were dying in concentration camps. Set to the disturbing serial score of Viennese refugee composer, Arnold Schoenberg's<sup>8</sup> *Transfigured Night* (*Verklärte Nacht*), *Pillar* is the story of three sisters trapped within a cruel world; its incisive movement vocabulary repeatedly enacts its characters' suffering. This is an architectural space in which dancers produce movements that lead to their own demise:

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8 Schoenberg, the inventor of the twelve-tone method, was also a painter, music theorist and composition teacher to John Cage. After Hitler's election as Chancellor to the Reichstag, Schoenberg and his family fled Europe, arriving in the US in 1934.

an expressive gesture is met with coldness and complicity; a revelation of desire and love brings no human response.<sup>9</sup>

The ballet's corporeal language is based loosely on a story: its central figure is Hagar who loves the Friend, yet loses him to the selfish scheming of the Younger Sister. Her desire is met with loss and mental harassment as she is forced to accept her loss over and over again. Hagar, feeling inadequate, tells herself that she is incapable of competing with her sister for the love of the Friend and she fears the wrath of her heartless older sister, cast as a spinster, i.e. a woman who has no place in society. Desperate for love, for some reaction to her desire, Hagar gives herself secretly to the experienced Young Man. But she is left feeling sullied and unworthy of the Friend who eventually returns to be with her. Hagar's desperate, frantic movements are choreographed in sharp contrast with the Friend's, whose motions are slow, calm and reassuring. Ultimately, she walks into the future with him, releasing the ballet and those who watch from a crystalline, modernist hell. But she leaves the stage, having forced us to bear witness to her suffering.

*Pillar's* iconography – its geographic map – reveals Tudor's debt to both modernist and abstract expressionist modes of production: ways of producing meaning in movement, aesthetization and yet basic control that serves to sever the dancer from the fruits of her labor. Its meaningfulness is one of psychic wounds – of a war against women's bodies, against freedom and against expression. Rather than exerting the physical and psychic control over one's own subjectivity, each movement executed by Hagar – her expressive capacity / her contribution to the visual culture of the stage – falls on deaf ears, as no one moves toward her as if having listened. Tudor's is a frigid world of those who suffer – the ritual sacrifice of Hagar – the system that produces and condones that suffering – the lurking, present invisibility of a patriarchal world in the face of physical (the gestural movements that she makes seem to indicate that she has been seriously damaged) and psychic tears. She feels desperate for peace of mind. The complicity born of the audience's quiet gaze (we sit there with our quiet decorum) intensifies the cruelty of her suffering.

Tudor constructed the existential hell of *Pillar*, using a number of devices: the materiality of the stage – the surface upon which the dancers come to life – a collision of abstraction – Tudor's classic signature played through controlled and stoic lines and total lack of virtuosity achieved by him as he drives movement into the floor, defying Russian ballet's love of a more decorative, at times superficial use of a modern subject-body. His work has a psychologically-generated, vs. physically generated, use of gesture, bodyline and actual flow of movement created ironically by a dancing body encased within a frigid stoicism. He leaves the tortured soul – she, who generates her own misery repeatedly, the labor of her movement becoming

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9 Schoenberg's 1899 score is a string sextet in five movements set by the composer to a poem by Richard Dehmel of the same namesake, *Transfigured Night*. The poem tells the story of two lovers who, on a dark night, wander through a forest where the woman reveals a painful secret to her new lover: that she carries the child of another man.

a repetitive, masochistic device over which the dancer appears to have no control. She is torn from the production of her own emotional and iconographic being, thereby forcing the audience into an empathic relationship with characters on stage, as they are born before our very eyes. All of these ingenious, architectural devices, enacted repeatedly by the performers' bodies, serve to distance the dancers (and the audience) from a humanistic space. Theirs is a tortured visceral web of their own making.

*Pillar's* guts – her body parts and organs – reveal Tudor's debt to a hard-edged, crystallized aesthetic of modernist intention born out of the Great Depression of the 1930s combined with an encroachingly existential world of the mid-to-late 1940s world of abstract expressionism. Tudor's modernist discourse, however, is not that of Graham or Balanchine. Rather, his crossover aesthetic (from modernist to abstract expressionist) reveals a closer link to the mythopoetic world of images generated by the surrealist filmmaker Maya Deren, where inner experience is revealed through shadowplay and visual restraint.<sup>10</sup> Tudor's formalist aesthetic is revealed in the way he places Hagar and her mental state at the core or center of the work. This is a modernist formalist tool that engages the viewer in the mental suffering of the protagonist. However, Tudor then goes on throughout the ballet to remove Hagar as the central subject of the work, to recuse himself from her subjectivity. Hagar is like Tennessee Williams' Blanche DuBois in *Streetcar Named Desire* written five years later. Like Ines in Sartre's *Huis Clos (No Exit)*, Hagar is trapped. Whilst she explores every part of the room, there is no opening, no exit, and no space through which she can slip to salvation.

Of the ballet dance critic Edwin Denby (1986, pp. 93, 94) wrote:

The audience watched *Pillar of Fire* almost breathlessly. The moving effect of the piece is that all this real complexity and power seem barely able to cope with the shadowy, immense space of the stage above them that becomes, as you watch, vast and real as the doom of fate. It seems to shut down from all sides on the dancers. Tudor is a master in negative space. It gives the movement a peculiar privacy, as if it took place in an immense silence. [...]

In point of dance style, *Pillar* is a work of originality and precision. The devices used are dramatic ones: brief pauses, urgently interrupted they reemerge and amplify; gesture that tends in or braces itself against a direction, an imperative direction in which the dance is driving, urgently into an imminent future.

Ultimately, Hagar lives in a sadistic world, a kind of repetitive, existential hell from which there is no escape.

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10 Other choreographic references embedded within *Pillar of Fire* may be drawn from class-conscious modernist dances of the 1930s: Eve Gentry's *Tenant of the Streets* (1934) and Martha Graham's "Steps in the Street" from *Chronicle* (1936), where the intimate sound of bare feet dragging along the floor and bodies hunched over in pain illustrate the pain and suffering of homeless, hungry, desperate souls.

Like his Russian counterparts – Michel Fokine, Bronislava Nijinska and Léonide Massine – Antony Tudor went on to radically transform classical ballet into a political form of contemporary art whose look and shape moved in tandem with the tragic events of the day. His female characters, in particular, suffered many blows, some psychological, at times the result of a cruel, seemingly non-human environment; at other moments, the existential pain they suffer, much like the women in Spain's martyred poet García Lorca's plays, spills over into our laps, forcing us into a tragic complicit silence. Through these female figures Tudor reveals his sensitivity to the violence that surrounded his working life in Europe, both as a gay man and as an artist. His ballet works from this period, housed within the repertory of Ballet Theatre, symbolize a kind of history book, an embodied record bearing witness to the surrounding global tragedy of war and its resultant human tragedy and displacement. Guilt or responsibility, ultimately, resides within the mind of the prescient viewer, who, while thousands of miles away, through Hagar or the anonymous women in *Dark Elegies*, is brought directly to the battleground.

As an émigré artist whose life before coming to the US was very much shaped by the haunting memory of World War I and the recent civilian violence of the Spanish Civil War, Tudor's penetrating grit told through an uncannily familiar realism hit hard. Audiences left the theater having seen *Pillar of Fire* (1942) or restagings of *Dark Elegies* (1937) with the enigmatic feeling that they had just witnessed something dreadful that was about to happen.

Tudor was by no means alone in deciding that contemporary ballet had to resonate with the surrounding environment. In Tudor's mind, modernist art could not sit still. Rather, it had to confess, to bear witness, to educate and, eventually, to heal. As such, the echo of the world told through female characterization was woven into an American idiom of pre- and post-war dance that, like any archeological site, awaits excavation.

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# SPLIT INTIMACIES: CORPOREALITY IN CONTEMPORARY THEATER AND DANCE<sup>1</sup>

ANN COOPER ALBRIGHT

*Before I begin, I want to thank Katia Savrami and the members of the Department of Theatre Studies for welcoming me to the University of Patras and for facilitating my presence here today. This is my fifth trip to Greece over the past six years. Over the course of these fourteen weeks on Greek soil, I have lectured, taught dance workshops, and organized an international Dance Studies conference. Each time I return, I feel more and more as if this country has begun to weave and wind its way into my connective tissue, and I take this fleshy communion with the Greek world seriously. Today, I am hoping that my talk will continue this exchange and that we can enjoy a lively conversation afterwards.*

Two years ago I had what many would call a classic moment of catharsis at the theater. I had been to see a local production of *The Laramie Project*, and while I was describing the show to a friend afterwards, I broke down crying. I was profoundly affected by the production – something that does not happen very often when I go to see a play. My position as a resistant (read feminist, queer) spectator who is highly suspicious of traditional theater (particularly the convention of the fourth wall) usually disrupts many of the pleasures inherent in realist drama. This time, however, I was completely caught up in the events unfolding onstage. What I found compelling about the performance was not so much the dramatic relationships between characters or the language of the script per se, but rather the layering of dynamic and bodily exchanges that led me to reflect on the very slippery way in which bodies carry meaning in contemporary performance. Attending to this admittedly ambiguous corporeality allows us to chart the split intimacies of embodiment and representation across forms of theater and dance that are not anchored in the usual codes of realistic mimesis or expressive movement.

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1 Lecture given on 12 October 2017 at the Department of Theatre Studies, University of Patras, Greece. The text is excerpted from a longer essay with the same title from the *Oxford Handbook of Dance and Theater*, ed. N. George-Graves (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015).

One classic explanation of my experience in the theater that evening would be to attribute my response to the production itself, claiming it was the kind of magical effect that a successful combination of visionary directing and highly competent acting would inspire in anyone. On the other hand, I could connect my reaction to the fact that I attended the performance during a time when there had been a recent spate of vicious gay bashing in France in reaction to the country's marriage equality vote, and even more egregious homophobic violence in Russia and the Republic of Georgia that may have been abetted by Russian Orthodox priests no less. In addition, since I had just taught a course in which we read a review of the sequel to *The Laramie Project* based on a series of interviews done ten years later, I was deeply familiar with the whole context of the production. Clearly the personal stakes were high for me as I entered the theater that night. Nonetheless, I was surprised by my reaction – I was truly moved.

This talk hinges on the reverberations of that last word, *moved* – the meaning of which splits across the psychic and physical to encompass both an emotional and a visceral responsiveness to the world. Being moved by a performance represents an intertwining of somatic feeling and political urgency that characterizes much of the contemporary performance work that I have attended over the past two decades. There is, I believe, something very vital in these works that leads the audience from passive spectators into the role of active witnesses, raising the stakes of our viewing experience. As I have argued in the introduction of my first book *Choreographing Difference: The Body and Identity in Contemporary Dance* (which, incidentally, has recently been translated into Greek), to witness a performance suggests a response/ability, which includes both an ability to respond to the events onstage and a sense of being implicated in their outcome.<sup>2</sup> This particular sensibility, however, departs significantly from two classic theories of audience reception: the Aristotelian notion of catharsis in the theater, and the modernist concept of kinesthesia in dance, most fully articulated in the work of the mid-twentieth century dance critic John Martin. In the discussion that follows, I explore the possibilities of an affective somatic relationship with the audience that engages neither a direct psychological identification with the protagonist(s) onstage, nor a conventional notion of physical empathy, but rather prioritizes other kinds of exchanges, bringing attention to how corporeality encompasses embodiment as well as cultural representation.

I define corporeality here as an intertwining of sensation and perception where the body remains anchored as the central scope of awareness. In order to use corporeality as a category of reception, it is crucial to think beyond the most obvious effects of vision and language. We need to learn to appreciate the elusive contours of somatic meaning. Although embodiment is enjoying a renaissance in contemporary cultural theory these days, it is most often elided with discussions of affect. I want to resist this well-trodden path, however, and branch off into a territory that is not

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2 See the Introduction to Albright (1997) [in Greek: Ann Cooper Albright, *Χορογραφώντας τη Διαφορά: Το Σώμα και η Ταυτότητα στον Σύγχρονο Χορό*. Athens: Nissos, 2016].

as clearly charted. That is, I want to conceptualize feeling as the practice of sensing (I am feeling) rather than the object of possession (I have feelings). Keeping the verb fully active without letting it settle into the stable structure of a noun not only helps us to resist the psychological construction of an interior self so endemic to discourses of affect, but also disrupts any easy equation of physical corporeality with social identity. Within the context of performance, corporeality circulates between the bodies onstage and those in the audience; but those relationships of power and exchange are rarely predictable. This is not to suggest, however, that they are entirely subjective either. Audience members and performers can share the process of feeling together without necessarily imbuing that experience with the same meaning. My task here is to incorporate a critic's sensibility within a theoretical inquiry such that I both describe onstage events and conceptualize their impact without assuming either a normative, universal audience reaction, or a completely random series of individual responses.

Located in the intersection of reportage and ethnography, *The Laramie Project* is not exactly standard theatrical fare. It is what one might call a "reality drama".<sup>3</sup> The script is based on a series of interviews conducted by the Tectonic Theater Project with local community members after the 1998 brutal beating, hospitalization, and subsequent death of Matthew Shepard. Shepard, a gay student who attended the University of Wyoming in Laramie, became a cause célèbre as candlelight vigils were held in his honor around the world. Each performer in the cast takes on the persona of different characters, each of which narrates their experience of the events surrounding Shepard's assault. News reporting blurs into storytelling, truth into fiction, and life into performance as the actors weave individual responses (both those of the community members as well as their own) within discussions of the media's representations and misrepresentations of the community. The fact that the same actors play homophobic as well as gay community members unsettles any easy or direct correspondence between dramatic characters and their respective physical bodies, complicating the audience's ability to empathize with any one character. The performance progresses like a series of switchbacks, zigging and zagging through multiple interpretations of what happened and why. In the end, there is no resolution to the tragedy and the audience is left on its own to sort out the larger ethical ramifications of the community's response to the event.

This particular production of *The Laramie Project* was directed by Caroline Jackson-Smith, whose theatrical vision is influenced by both African-American performance traditions and her experience with Suzuki actor training. The minimal set allowed for a very dynamic staging which beautifully reflected the multiple voices and points of view of the community members. The actors were constantly moving around the raked stage, entering from the far reaches of upstage or downstage and then abruptly crossing to the center to replace one another like billiard balls ricocheting

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3 This quasi-ethnographic approach to telling stories and reimagining local, individual experiences of highly politicized events is a theatrical genre pioneered by Performance Studies scholars such as Dwight Conquergood and made popular by performers such as Anna Deavere Smith and ensembles like the Tectonic Theater Project.

across a pool table. There was a sense of movement flow to each scene that held its own integrity and operated like a separate physical script, at once splitting from the storytelling and yet intimately connected to it.

I am noticing a similar integrated corporeal sensibility in many theatrical productions these days. It is not uncommon for directors such as Anne Bogart or Peter Sellars to suspend the narrative structure of the dramatic action in order to incorporate moments of individual abstract movement or group gestural sequences as a dynamic intersection with the spoken text. This post-modernist approach is distinctly different from the usual models of theatrical blocking or staging of dramatic action where individual gestures or movements are crafted in the service of portraying a character. In this more traditional approach to staging, it is rare that the whole stage becomes caught up in one dynamic movement or rhythmic sequence that sweeps across the stage space and pulls the audience out of their normal mode of attending to the story. The same kind of parallel yet split physical text also threads through much contemporary dance, where a kinetic texture is woven in ways that operate very differently from traditional choreographies, affecting the audience's bodily sensibility without necessarily registering as an obviously choreographed sequence.

In his survey of contemporary theater practices Hans-Thies Lehman maps out the contours of an international range of contemporary performance work that both confuses and refuses any simple distinctions between theater as strictly focused on a text and dance as movement-based performance. Throughout his book *Postdramatic Theatre* (2006), Lehman catalogues the many aesthetic and ideological differences between mimetic dramas, where the script is the clear priority for the staging and more experimental productions in which the frame of realistic representation is disrupted. "Wholeness, illusion, and world representation are inherent in the model 'drama'; conversely, through its very form, dramatic theatre proclaims wholeness as the *model* of the real" (Lehman, 2006, p. 22). One of the major differences that Lehman outlines in his survey is the difference for the audience between the experience of watching a traditional narrative in which the final scene almost always stages a resolution before "the end" of the script, and that of witnessing the multi-layered, often conflicting and unresolvable aspects of much contemporary performance work. While his discussion of these performance elements is descriptive rather than prescriptive, Lehman insists that there is a fundamentally different audience dynamic within postdramatic theatre. This is not just a question of a new style of staging, but rather a new conception of what constitutes the performance experience. He writes (*ibid.*, p. 85): "it becomes more presence than representation, more shared than communicated experience, more process than product, more manifestation than signification, more energetic impulse than information."

*The Laramie Project* is a telling example of postdramatic theatre precisely because it refuses any personal dénouement or larger political statement. In Lehman's taxonomy, *The Laramie Project* would be categorized as "documentary theatre", which he claims (*ibid.*, p. 56) is "less the desire for direct political action, and even less its conventional dramaturgy". Rather, it disrupts the ideologies of either discourse. In this kind of theater, Shepard's death is not the tragic event that

results in any kind of resolution or classical sense of enlightenment. The emphasis and delivery of the text communicates more disruption and confusion than illustration or explanation of the historical events, or even of any individual's motivation. Moments of dramatic dialogue between characters quickly dissolve into citations of various news reports and discussions of the growing media sensation around the event. As Debby Thompson (2001, p. 644) writes in her review of the November 2000 Wyoming premiere: "The deliberate accumulation of fragments, by turns colorful, understated and conflicting, gradually documents the complexity of the Laramie community."

As staged by Jackson-Smith, *The Laramie Project* confounds any easy identification between certain bodies and their respective political positions. The cast members play a dizzying array of roles and engage with one another only briefly before turning to address the audience directly, often with a meta-commentary on the scene they have just enacted. This self-referential aspect cuts through any mimetic interpretation, highlighting instead the complex mechanisms of individual posturing and institutional justification, not to mention the tensions between local and global media depictions of the situation being enacted onstage. To put it bluntly, there are no good or bad guys, no feel-good redemptions, no final realizations that serve to make the world (or even the town of Laramie) a better place in the end. Thompson concludes her review by comparing the production to the Names Project's collective quilt commemorating friends and relatives who have died of AIDS. "Its [*The Laramie Project*'s] strategy of sewing together fragments captures the community's unresolved struggles, the variety of its individual personalities, and, finally, its ultimate resistance to ever being wholly contained within any representation" (ibid., p. 645).

In the course of reading various reviews of both the New York premiere and the Wyoming production, I was struck by how quickly many of the articles moved past the specifics of the performance itself into discussions of anti-gay bias, homophobia in the West and the status of hate crime legislation. Although it is understandable that these writers would highlight the ongoing connection between the source story and the resulting upswing of gay activism, I was disappointed at how often the theatrical contours of the production were collapsed into pedestrian journalism, making Matthew Shepard, as *New York Times* critic Ben Brantley (2000) succinctly put it, "a poster boy for the casualties of anti-gay violence". With a few wonderful exceptions, the theatrical experience, with all its nuances of kinetic exchange, echoes of images, rhythmic phrasing of dialogue and spatial dynamics, seemed to carry little meaning outside of the direct references to the original scene. Looking at the critical responses to *The Laramie Project*, I realize that this production is an example of how the narrative text still registers as the most significant element, even in the midst of a calculated splintering of any one story line. Although his death is the stone that breaks the placid surface of this small town community where people supposedly "live and let live", Matthew Shepard is never depicted. Instead, the production focuses the audience's awareness on how his absence ripples out to affect us all.

If *The Laramie Project* is part of what Lehman calls "documentary theatre", then many of the performances put together by Liz Lerman and the Dance Exchange could similarly be considered

“documentary dance”. As artistic director of a multi-faceted dance organization, Lerman piloted a number of important collaborations that address ethical issues through the creation and production of work that combines movement, text, and video images. Several years ago, Lerman published *Hiking the Horizontal*, a memoir in which she articulates the possibilities as well as the challenges inherent in what she terms “subject matter choreography”. Subtitled *Field Notes from a Choreographer*, this reflection on her working process locates meaning in performance as an interweaving of critical issues and the somatic insights accrued by moving, witnessing and experiencing those ideas in an embodied way. “In subject matter choreography, various thinking processes are subjected to physical examination” (Lerman, 2011, p. 74). In a section titled “What Is the Dancing About?” Lerman (ibid.) explains: “Subject matter dancing doesn’t feel less than, or like a crutch, or like some simplistic pretend game. It offers, rather, a fantastic dialogue of intellect and impulse, feeling and the matter of the mind, gathered in a weird kinesthetic wrapping.”

*Small Dances About Big Ideas* (2006) was commissioned by the Harvard Law School as part of an international conference on human rights and the legacy of the Nuremberg Trials. In a lengthy program note for the inaugural performances, Lerman details a conversation between herself and Martha Minow, the Dean of Harvard Law School at the time and one of the organizers of the event. In this exchange, Lerman asks: Why? Why choose dance to address the atrocities of genocide? Minow’s reply is remarkably insightful about the potential of performance to saturate the audience with the corporeal experience of ethical discussions.

These are my hopes: that a dance would reach people who seldom think about mass atrocities – students, lawyers – with the chance to be drawn in emotionally and intellectually, with the pacing that can allow people to absorb or begin to absorb the incomprehensible scales of atrocity [...]. For those who think about these matters often ... the chance to imagine images and voices about these things, and to have a shared experience with others who seldom attend to these issues, would be a gift. (ibid., p. 88)

*Small Dances About Big Ideas* begins in the dark. As a single light brightens, it reveals three women of different ages and ethnicities slowly rising and reaching upwards as if awakening from a long sleep. These sister-witches, with long loose hair and flowing skirts, move across the space silently. Looking out through the darkness, they seem frightened. One by one, they venture out to explore the unknown and then rush back to the embrace of the others, their contorted faces reflecting the horrors of the other side of the night. At times instigators, at other times healers, these three crone figures will take on the role of otherworldly witnesses to the human stories and judicial proceedings that make up the rest of the evening’s performance.

Soon, the mysterious and somber music abruptly changes to loud shots, sirens, and the sound of a helicopter overhead as the rest of the cast darts frantically across the stage, hoping to escape the shots that fell each one in turn. Over and over again people flail as if they have been shot, fall, and then get up to run again. The repetitious effect of each body arching backwards and then crumpling forwards into the ground reflects the bittersweet layering of a provocatively beau-

tiful movement sequence with powerfully devastating consequences, splitting our attention between mimesis and abstraction, the literal and the figurative. Eventually the cast lines up with their back to the audience and we cannot tell if they are facing an unseen firing squad onstage, or if we, as the audience, are being implicated in that position. This opening scene dissolves as three people come downstage to sit on benches and tell their stories of persecution and survival. A young black man, an older white woman, and a young white woman relate three different experiences in three different languages, weaving a tapestry of voice and gesture that is echoed in the movements of the dancers behind shadowing them. The personal and lyrical quality of that scene shifts into the stark angular gestures of the men in ties who enter with chairs and set up the repetitive structure of judicial proceedings.

Throughout this dance, institutional narratives are juxtaposed to individual memories. In one of the most extraordinary sequences, a young woman dances to a recitation from Clea Koff's memoir *The Bone Woman*, creating a gestural counterpoint to the horrifying forensic descriptions of collecting fragments of human bones at sites in Rwanda. As the voice-over details her desire to both document the atrocities of that war and to gather the bone fragments to send back to the families, the silent dancer shifts back and forth, edging closer to a pile of bodies onstage, as if she were being pushed by the incoming tide. This contrast between moving figures and still prone bodies speaks its own corporeal language that intersects with the textual progression of historical details of Nuremberg, Rwanda and Bosnia. For Liz Lerman, dancing is not an escape from but rather a process through which we can deal with the recognition and memories of these atrocities.

About halfway through the evening-length work, the cast members drop their performance personas and all come downstage as the lights come up on the audience. What follows is a dialogue between the performers and the audience (basically a talk-back in the middle of the evening) that begins with small group discussions about the issues of justice, retribution, and reconciliation that animate the performance. One of the performers acts as a master of ceremonies and suggests that people begin a conversation by asking themselves: "What it is that we teach our children about questions of justice in the world?" After a while, the cast comes back onstage to report on their conversations. Intentionally repeating many of the gestures used by the original speaker as they actively remembered a comment from the audience discussion, the dancers build a gestural sequence from everyone's contributions, adding a few of their own. One that was particularly striking was "looking back to the past and moving forward", which translated into a turning movement and sweeping of the arm in a big arc from behind to forward. Another striking moment was a description of events unfolding while the hands revolved around one another in front of the chest. It was interesting to me to realize how many audience members were doing the sequence along with the cast onstage. Indeed it was quite an amazing experience to see hundreds of hands doing the unfolding gesture more or less in unison, especially as someone spoke about remembering the feeling that sponsored the original gesture. In this way (admittedly, a tad bit pedantic), the audience was drawn into the theatrical process of the work as both civic and corporeal witnesses.

Merging ideas and ethics with the fleshy substance of their implications, *Small Dances About Big Ideas* insists that our sense of justice – as it is played out across the world's bodies – is inherently connected to our physical selves.

I want to pause for a moment in the midst of this analysis of various contemporary theater and dance productions to think about the nature of the communication I just described. Even though I did not participate in learning the gestural sequence, I could not help but be affected by the movement rippling across the rows of spectators in that performance. Here, for me, was a moment of “*communitas*”, a term that I learned from Richard Schechner, who, in turn, has adapted it from the work of anthropologist Victor Turner. Schechner uses “*communitas*” to describe similar sweeps of energy that are a palpable aspect of many ceremonial gatherings, including theatrical productions, religious rites, political demonstrations, or rituals of transformation such as a wedding or a bar mitzvah. The term suggests a sense of heightened receptivity that is never only intellectual or even strictly emotional, but is also always rooted in a bodily awareness. These situations can be quite magical and remind me of the fact that the etymological root for “communication” is “*commune*”, a word that – like feeling – also splits into a verb and a noun, echoing both the act and the experience. It is in the intimate vibrations between the doing and the being that we find the “*communitas*” of corporeality.

I realize that it may seem to some as if I am edging pretty close to describing a moment of dramatic catharsis, the Aristotelian telos of ancient Greek tragedy that has long been the aesthetic yardstick of Western theater. Many scholars point to the passage in his *Poetics* where (depending on the translation) Aristotle declares: “[T]ragedy is the imitation of men in action [...]; tragedy through pity and fear effects a catharsis of such misfortunes” (cited in Chute, 1971–72, p. 283). One of the distinctions that I want to draw in this talk is the difference between a descriptive perspective and a prescriptive one. Although the moment of “*communitas*” that I am describing may sound similar to catharsis, it is not necessarily the same kind of psychological “purging” of emotion that resolves the conflicts onstage. Nor is it necessarily a “universal” experience. Rather, I want to assert the real possibility of *feeling* together without insisting that we all *feel* the same way.

In a postscript to his erudite essay “On Catharsis, or Resolution”, literary scholar Kenneth Burke unpacks the etymological root of the Greek word “*peran*”, which most often gets translated as “opposite shore”. He suggests a more appropriate term might be something like “beyonding”, rather than the conventional use of catharsis as “purge”, to signify the cleansing of the emotions of fear or pity. Burke points out the kinetic tension in the fact that pity is conceived as a movement towards and fear as a movement away. Traditionally, catharsis is seen as an experience that transcends that opposition and leads the audience towards a resolution. Burke (1959, p. 366) notes: “Such an order of development gives the feeling of *going somewhere* [...]. The curative effect that comes from a sense of direction in the unfolding of an implicational structure may explain why purgative rituals are so often built around a *procession*.” But if we keep the notion of “beyonding” alive, we can replace the implicit teleology of a resolution with an ongoing somatic resonance. That

is to say, we could replace an emphasis on dramatic action with a focus on theatrical states of being, which is precisely what Lehman identifies as an essential aspect of postdramatic theatre. "The theatre here showed less a succession, a development of a story, more an involvement of inner and outer states" (Lehman, 2006, p. 68).

I am intrigued by Burke's use of "beyond" as a gerund, for *beyonding* reverberates past the prepositional or even nominal uses of the word to indicate at once a sense of possibility and the *im*-possibility of ever arriving there. This tension between textual and corporeal meaning animates the power and the complexities of much contemporary performance work, insisting that what happens in the theater actually makes a difference. Indeed, as Burke reminds us, the original experiences of Greek tragedy were civic ceremonies in which the political and the familial were constantly echoing one another such that the human body, the world's body, and the body politic all reflected and refracted one another.

In her book, *The Cultural Politics of Emotion* (2004), Sara Ahmed offers a perspective that, interestingly, tells us a lot about these split intimacies of meaning and (e)motion in theater and dance. She writes (Ahmed, 2004, p. 11):

The relationship between movement and attachment is instructive. What moves us, what makes us feel, is also that which holds us in place, or gives us a dwelling place. Hence movement does not cut the body off from the "where" of its inhabitation, but connects bodies to other bodies: attachment takes place through movement, through being moved by the proximity of others.

As a phenomenologist, Ahmed is attuned to the lived experience of interpersonal exchanges, including communal ones. Her book also tries to shift the emphasis of affective studies from "feelings" to the activity of feeling itself. As Ahmed points out, emotion is derived from the Latin term *emovere*, which literally means "to move away". Attending to feeling as the movement in between people rather than the psychological possession of emotion, Ahmed offers "[a]n analysis of affective economies, where feelings do not reside in subjects or objects, but are produced as effects of circulation" (ibid. p. 8). Although Ahmed is much more interested in how power relations become embedded in somatic exchanges, her emphasis on the circulation of feeling highlights the social work accomplished in the contemporary genre of community-based performance.

*A Life Without* was the culmination of a three-month-long collaboration between the educational outreach arm of Cleveland Public Theatre and Y-Haven, a transitional housing and addiction recovery program in Cleveland's west side. Performed by an intergenerational cast of twelve men (many of whom had spent time in jail), this devised theater piece was staged in a variety of venues, including a church, a high school auditorium, a community center, and at an experimental black box theater. The event itself was framed by casual introductory remarks by the directors before the performance began, as well as by the final talk-back with the performers themselves after the show. While these discussions highlighted the "professional" standards of the work (which meant

showing up on time, memorizing the text, and being able to repeat the scenes with consistency), *A Life Without* was clearly embedded within a specific situational and therapeutic context. Although some men had more dramatic personas than others, and some had a clear appetite for performing, all the men helped facilitate the group transitions and joined in the choral moments, which were especially strong.

The narrative scaffolding of the play is a story of a sister's accidental death and the way that loss creates choices and the possibility of community in the face of individual isolation. In their notes for the program, the directors write: "Experiencing loss – the loss of an opportunity, a job, a loved one – any kind of loss, can amplify our experience of choice. [...] It's ironic; to have such agency at the precise moment when loss leaves us feeling powerless, cheated, even devastated." For me, the melodramatic recitation of the plot was distracting and the character embodiment felt forced much of the time. Nonetheless, the cumulative effect of the whole experience transcended the lack of theatrical mastery or skill. This was due, in part, to the corporeal subtext embedded in the communal moments of stillness, unison gesture, and song. In *A Life Without*, the deep intimacy and sense of kinship among the men came to the fore when they all sang spirituals together, or in moments of group motion such as the time they crossed the stage slowly, rocking back and forth and singing as they marched along to signify a funeral procession.

Collaborations between theater practitioners and people in a specific community often stage a performance to mark the completion of a project. This immersion in a process of making something together is a rite of passage, a baptism of sorts that insists that each man confront his own vulnerability and willingness to trust and compromise within the group dynamic. The talk-back after every performance in which the men share individual stories of survival and transformation highlights this aspect of the process. Indeed, this last stage was crucial in acknowledging the power of the exchange between performers and the importance of the audience's role as witnesses. Renewed applause and verbal affirmations followed each person's discussion of his particular challenges and achievements, including the response to one man's declaration that this was the first time he had ever finished anything in his life. The audience's role as witness in performances such as *A Life Without* raises the stakes of our own participation, allowing us to recognize the real social labor involved.

I began this talk with a description of a recent production of *The Laramie Project* and ended it with one of a community-based collaboration entitled *A Life Without*. Both of these performances navigate the space between mimesis and abstraction, life and art, in ways that call upon a very different engagement with the audience. My discussion of corporeality is an attempt to expand how we might think about the circulation of embodied energies in performances that are based neither on the cathartic reception of a literary text in a traditional play, nor on the belief that a legible kinesthetic impulse underlies all forms of expressive movement. I am interested in the less theorized and often invisible exchanges of somatic and cultural meaning that affect us in ways that we find hard to articulate and conceptualize. Often this is because our primary remembrance

traces the elusive experience of being moved by the current of events (feeling), not necessarily the residue of emotion left behind after it is over (feelings). The examples of work presented here deploy theatrical elements of text, image and motion in ways that confound our usual modes of audience reception. Splitting across the corporeal registers of language and movement, contemporary performance can take us beyond ourselves, leading the audience to develop new responsibilities toward what is happening onstage. As someone who is deeply committed to the intimacy of body-to-body interactions, I think that is a good thing.

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# TRADITIONAL GREEK DANCE AND THEATRE<sup>1</sup>

IRENE LOUTZAKI

## Abstract

In modern Greece staged folk dance performances focus on the representation of a scenario. The outcome of aesthetic experience depends on the narrative forwarded by the organizers of the event. By comparing the master narratives of three dance groups – more specifically, a “national” example, an experienced “traditional” example from one site, and a third example of “historic” evolution – the paper proposes a framework for understanding staged folk dance in Greece. It juxtaposes issues such as: dance movements, dancer’s body, costumes, staging approaches, and the audience. The paper concludes with suggestions of starting a critical dialogue with dance teachers/choreographers in the hope of creating alternative approaches to staged performances of Greek folk dances.

## Keywords

Greece; narrative analysis; staging; performances; folk dances

It is an established fact that over the past twenty years a significant growth is observed in the scholarship on traditional dance in Greece. Meanwhile, most publications are preoccupied with the potential benefits of traditional dance in education. And to a great extent this may be justified. From 1980 onward, when Greek dances are established as a discipline<sup>2</sup> and their instruction is integrated into the school curriculum, a similar interest is observed among other educational institutions (e.g. cultural organizations, dance groups, and various dance schools that integrated teaching into their educational programs); traditional Greek dances are now regarded as a cherished form of educational material, and there is an intention to teach all interested pupils to dance, while also acquiring knowledge with regard to the origin, history and function of these dances. Moreover, as has been greatly emphasized in various publications, their instruction through active participation in the act of dance itself aims at the acquisition of particular skills, while also contributing to the familiarization of those interested in popular Greek tradition, and fostering the notion of diversity and geographic variety; that is, individuals thus learn the differences between dances and are able

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1 Translated into English by Andreas Bloom.

2 Indicative of this are the curricula in the country’s higher education system.

to interpret them using their body. In this manner, their meaning, as well as the worth of the valued Greek dance, are highlighted.

A paradox lies, however, in the fact that, as the staging of the dances on the theatre stage<sup>3</sup> is recognized as part of the educational process,<sup>4</sup> this theatrical phenomenon in and of itself does not seem to satisfy but a handful of researchers so far. That is perhaps because the transition of Greek dances from their natural space to the theatre stage and their “re-dubbing” into an artwork is bizarre to many, as it seems to clash on issues of principle, causing intense confrontation and ambiguity, since such an effort is coupled with a tendency toward balletization. As a result, some recognize only negative aspects in the theatrical performances of dances, and speak in terms of alienation, loss of ethos and authenticity of dance. Moreover, in classifying these performances in the web of folklore<sup>5</sup> or, in the best-case scenario, in the web of the second existence of dance, they do not account for the importance and the value of spectacle<sup>6</sup> as an independent theatrical event. At the same time, others, who are more daring, face this transformation as a provocation, and focus on the challenges to these speculations, and the new relationships that this transformation may bring about, and thus resort to choreographic (re)creations, without, however, being severed from the vehicle of tradition.

In this article, I will not deal with the narration of the process of transition of dance from the public square to the theatre stage – this is, in fact, an issue that several researchers have described in various ways, but have also analyzed and interpreted. Neither do we find in the epicenter the differences and modulations that are located in the form and content of dances (as, for instance, in

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3 In discussing the notion of a Greek repertoire and the ways in which this may be constituted and used by persons and organizations whose chief task is the collection, instruction, and on-stage presence of traditional dances, but also at an academic level, Papakostas (2007) introduces Benjamin’s term “mechanical reproduction” as a basic practice of the educational process of dance. The use of the term seems to stem from the necessity of composing a body of dances that initially offer themselves as “raw material” for the educational process and their instruction, and then for theatrical and on-stage presence.

4 Let us remember events like national holidays, gymnastic demonstrations, events that come with the completion of classes, special performances, cultural associations, and more.

5 According to Meraklis (1989, p. 112), the aggressive definition of “folklore” suggests the artificial revival of traditional forms of folk art and folk culture that do not functionally respond to the terms of modern life, but exert a certain charm, among the bourgeoisie in particular, and vis-à-vis the urbanized modern man in general. This view is both broadened in its meaning and strengthened by the comparison through juxtaposition between the live tradition and tradition as folklore, where the “live” is experienced tradition and eternally changing, as it constantly adapts to the specific needs and life circumstances of its conveyers, that is, of the people and social groups or communities that experience and reproduce it, whereas “tradition” as folklore, collects certain elements selectively from tradition and presents them as performance, cut off from their social function (for the definitions of folklore, folklorism, and tradition, see the collective volume *Folklore and Tradition* [2010], edited by P. Kavouras).

6 See the letter of support by Alkis Raftis, President of the “Dora Stratou” Association of Greek Dances, titled “The door opened on the Cretan dance”, which refers to the attempt of a cultural association to go beyond the established and offer a spectacle based on Cretan dance. <http://www.dancetheatre.gr/xrisima-xoros/arthra-xoros/1972-arthro-alkis-raftis-kritikos-xoros-dora-stratou.html>

the transition from the rural to the urban) in the various stages of the transition and its final adaptations to the new, *by definition* urban environment (cf. Papakostas, 2001).

My own approach focuses on traditional dances, which I see as a raw material for the organization of a “complete” theatrical performance, in order to create an autonomous theatrical event. For this reason, I chose three examples as a case study, through which I intend to approach the subject. The first example, particularly innovative for its time, is titled “Dances and Songs from the Ritual of Wedding”. It was first staged by the Lyceum Club of Greek Women at the Odeon (Theatre) of Herodes Atticus, Athens, on July 1991. The second bears the title “Cheers to the Oncoming Wedding” and deals with the initiative of the “Evros” Cultural Association for Traditional Dances, which staged a local version of the wedding ceremony in Thrace, in the Garden Theatre of Alexandroupoli in July 2005. The third case concerns the performance titled “From Andros to Athens...”, which was staged at the Theatre of the Michael Cacoyannis Foundation on 23 January 2011, and was composed and directed by Giorgos Kotsos and Nancy Harmanta.

### **Traditional dances are staged**

The staging of a classical work in the theatre is a complex process, for the implementation of which the collaboration of various disciplines specific to different art forms is required, in order to highlight the content and meaning of the story; and this is because a classical work reflects the history of the culture that shaped it, while conveying its ideals and values in a present-day context. We could perceive this work as a live representation of history, since, with the realization of the performance (staging, scene, costumes, dance, song, music), the audience is taken to different times, places, and situations. While focusing on this problematization in dance, I would claim that, though many of the stories that have been choreographed are used ritually, they also use other elements, portraying events that date several decades back.<sup>7</sup> Moreover, these elements, as well as the body techniques that the trained eye may discern in them, reflect notions and beliefs that transcend time, since, even today, they not only reflect enjoyment and recreation, but also offer happiness, and a deep spiritual and symbolic significance, both for the creators/artists and for the audience that attends these performances. I do not aspire to compare a performance of classical ballet to a corresponding performance of Greek dances, despite the fact that both are shaped on the basis of a theme, a narrative. The content is different, and so are the goals. However, as with every type of performance, a performance (presentation/demonstration) of Greek dances, with its diverse types of theatrical interventions, presents a structure that seems as complex as that of classical ballet, and one that is clearly included in the theatre’s space. Moreover, as a spectacle, it may lend itself to various

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7 For instance, *Giselle* (1841), *Le Corsaire* (1856), *Swan Lake* (1895), *The Nutcracker* (1892), *Romeo and Juliet* (1935), which are considered to be amongst the most structured forms of romantic ballet.

readings and approaches.<sup>8</sup> It may be studied from a folklore perspective, given that the spectacle may reflect moments from the customary life of a community, as, for example, with the recreation of a wedding ceremony, a Christmas or carnival custom. It may attract the interest of a musicologist, since, as is widely recognized, the dance material presented is accompanied by particular types of music and/or song; it may even be analyzed from the perspective of kinesiology and body techniques by a scholar of dance or an anthropologist (e.g. body positions, means of movement of the dancers from one point to the next, use of body weight, stylistic issues, questions of proximity between the dancers, arrangement of dances in space, use of space).

Since we are talking about the performance of a “representation” of customary practices, a study on the principles of the anthropology of theatre may prove particularly useful, if it focuses on the human behaviors that aim to evoke public admiration through the transformation of bodies. Meanwhile, ideologies expressed through the verses of songs may be studied through a philosophical, social, or religious perspective. Such a performance may also reveal information with respect to the history and use of dances (forgotten dances, new dances, modern dances, imported dances), transmitting values both with respect to the period during which they were performed (dances of the interwar period, and of the turn of the 20th century), as well as the communities that were being represented/representing others (dances of the diaspora, dances of the refugees).

In summarizing these thoughts on dance among rural communities – whose representation on the theatre stage we would also like to examine in the context of this text –, it can be said that the performance whose protagonist is traditional dance as a raw material borrows and uses the materials of social and ritual activity such as the following: dance, music, songs, rituals, costumes, tools, paraphernalia, useful items, customary reason. It composes the above in small or large units, in order to present the image of a narration; an image in which the selected events are *utilized theatrically*, with the intention of demonstrating the function of dance in space and time. Even where the directorial interventions surpass certain boundaries, these performances neither stop presenting, in their own way, nor do they stop short of leading the viewers to the comprehension of the intentions and thoughts of the creator, since the goal of such an effort – as this is underlined in all the printed programs that accompany performances – remains the display of wealth and diversity of the cultural heritage of Greece.

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8 Tsatsoulis (1997, pp. 13–14) believes that a theatrical event is “determined by an organized whole of parts, which, through its own structure and organization, follows defined rules of syntax, while adhering to a particular code that each time also determines the way in which all the parts are combined in a whole in order to produce meaning”. In this sense, it can be said that the corresponding affinities seem to be valid in the theatrical dance event, too.

### **Cultural performances (or performances with a scenario)**

In theatre, several factors create various tendencies. Can we speak of coincidence? Fashion? Necessity? The maturing of long-term processes? Perhaps a combination of all these factors? In any case, the “presentation of Greek dances” in the “domestic market”, without shaking off the notion of tradition, moves toward their theatricalization, a tendency that seems dominant in the past few years. The question is: Why? What happened so that the dance teachers of the amateur/semi-professional, urban/rural, small/large, or even newly-founded cultural centers, suddenly resort to staging a performance with a scenario? Is a new trend being attempted, to ensure that dances remain relevant? Are the reasons clearly artistic? Or is it that in seeking a dramaturgy, more “comprehensible to the public”, as with dance within a framework, the dance teachers resort to recreations of scenes of the past and “tested” recipes, in order to offer a new performance and a problematization related to the practice of staging dance performance? Or, rather, do things tend to become more personal, and thus begin to take on a personal signature?

It should be made clear from the outset that we are talking about a Greek dance performance as an artistically and aesthetically complemented happening on stage, for its organization requires a series of processes that go beyond the hackneyed approach that says, “I teach students certain dances that I will then transfer to the stage,” with the intention of presenting or demonstrating them before an audience. At the core of a “complete”<sup>9</sup> performance is the text/scenario, which contains and guides the assignment of roles, the action of the performances, and the development of the history of the persons and their actions; it subjugates the rhythm, the atmosphere, the images and the interpretation of the events. The role of the coordinator of such a multi-faceted, but also costly production, is assumed by the dance instructor, who is now personally responsible for all its stages of creation (from the conception of the idea, to the bibliographic validation, the rehearsals, and the mounting of the production in the more general sense). Thus, we see a partial abandonment of the model that relied on the reproduction of a geographical map (e.g. *Dances and songs of Macedonia*, *Dances and songs from Greece*) as would repeatedly occur in the past (Loutzaki, 2004, p. 126); now the dance instructor is called upon to serve an idea that functions as an outline for action, already known and agreed upon by the performers of the show. Thus, using a title as a guide, the dance instructor mingles dances, music, and ethnic practices into wholes, together with the human capital, namely the dancers and the instrument players. The dancers, predominantly young boys and girls, who choose dance above other activities – besides, that is why they participate in lessons on offer by every organization

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9 The aggressive description “complete” is introduced by the Lyceum Club in order to distinguish the professional interdisciplinary collaboration of many specializations through a highly aesthetic and artistic result from a “demonstration” of traditional dances, whose goal is orchestrated presence, with the intention of surprising and eliciting praise (Loutzaki, 2010, p. 307).

– are called upon to assume not just the role of the dancer, but also symbolic, social, and ritual parts, and to participate in scenes that reflect events they have almost never experienced.

On the other hand, the dance instructor, in using the semiotics of a popular expression, attempts, through various syntheses and re-syntheses and artistic creations, to activate the subconscious in order to provoke an impression on outsiders, but also for internal consumption. In this manner, s/he takes on a magical aspect, and if s/he is successful in his/her task, s/he also becomes comprehensible to his/her viewers who, in various ways (applause, mass attendance, positive reviews<sup>10</sup>) approve of his/her creation. However, it is still the goal of this effort to move, to charm, to teach. Thus, instructors and dancers are located in a realistic manner, in order to serve stable values such as the vision for national elevation and pride, admiration and love for the ethnic-folk element or the exaltation of cultural heritage.

In focusing on the content, we may turn to Theatre Studies scholar Dimitris Tsatsoulis (1997, p. 14), who says that every theatrical performance “borrows and utilizes aspects of the culture that it composes in order to present their image, and may be understood as a miniature version of the society being investigated”. In our case, however, the question arises as to the extent to which performances that deal with Greek dance aim to secure the conditions that will provide the viewer with the freedom to become an agent of art and culture. Moreover, if we speak of a theatrical event – a performance based on Greek dance –, it brings to the fore not only the content and the means of engaging with the material, but another factor of theatre: the audience. What is it that they yearn for, after all? Is it a “faithful” presentation/reproduction/imitation of real life? Do they perceive the image in front of them as a source of ideas and valued good, rather than as a structure of social identity? Or rather, do they confront the *rural past* as more of a subject of curiosity, an exotic thing?

A first conclusion that could be drawn is that performances with a plot, along with their diverse content, are more of a “national”<sup>11</sup> narrative, which, despite the fact that partial actions are frequently perceived as a field for the pursuit of factual elements, is supported entirely on the re-synthesis of information on rural dance, mainly of the past, seen, nevertheless, through a spectrum of evaluation on the basis of a timeless era: “When that used to happen, when that used to work!” The result is that the past is highlighted and used theatrically, since this usage is combined with a present-day perspective. In this respect, the performances also call for an anthropological reading, which explores expressive arts in which music and dance are central, though the most central element is the theatrical “rendition and interpretation”.

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10 “The last performance by the Dance Group of the Lyceum Club at the Athens Festival was a congregation of feelings and sensations. [...] The new work by the brilliant Lefteris Drandakis surprised us pleasantly and moved us deeply. Because in these ‘Songs and Dances in the Circle of Life’ we must – all of us must have discovered something from our youth, our puberty or even maturity!” (Andreas Rikakis, *Kathimerini* newspaper, 25 July 1997).

11 National in the sense that it is “inspired by the nation or local culture”.

This presentation is related to three performances that I attended, three interesting cultural events, which, using quick transitions and interesting creations (moving picture, word, song, music, dance, scenographic creations and transformation, dress), aim at creating a spectacle for the benefit of the audience. Thus, this text aims, through the description of the basic elements of every performance and the highlighting of the selection criteria and the appropriate codes that guided the production and organization of every theatrical activity, to emphasize the possibilities in using traditional dance as a raw material for the production of an artistic spectacle.

**1. “Dances and Songs from the Ritual of Wedding”. Direction-choreography: Lefteris Drandakis. Assistant directors: Nancy Harmanta – Giorgios Kotsos. Production: Lyceum Club of Greek Women. Athens Festival. Odeon of Herodes Atticus, 7 July 1991. Duration: 3 hours.<sup>12</sup>**

*The scenario:* The wedding ceremony is composed of a sequence of rituals which convey feelings and behaviors with a symbolic character performed according to a particular type. These actions contain the limits of transition from one social state to the next<sup>13</sup> and are celebrated in the various communities of Greece. This passage does not constitute an instant natural phenomenon, but is rather a lasting process, tailored to the circumstances, and may be extended in time. The performance of the wedding ceremony, the *crowning*, is the pretext through which the family and the community are called upon to congregate in order to honor the newly-wed couple. It is in the face of this couple that the creation of a new social unit is welcomed. Entertainment – food, drink, song, dance – and the ritual are played out in parallel. As every ritual follows a structure, so does the ritual of wedding follow a structure in *space* and *time*. Moreover, the organization of this ritual reflects basic features of social life.

*Places of reference:* Euboea, Florina, Orini (Serres), Pogoni, Kefalovriso, Argolis, Drama, Roumlouki, Crete, Lefkada, the Dodecanese, and other places but also different social groups, such as the refugees of Eastern Rumelia and the Sarakatsani. The costume sets emphasize the character of the social group of origin.

*The formulation of the structure.*<sup>14</sup> An analysis of the performance by quantity:

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12 The wedding was a performance in the repertoire of the Lyceum Club, later revised and presented in several theatres, such as the Athens Concert Hall (1992), a theatre in Odessa (1994), and at the “Mediterranea” Biennale in Lyon (1998).

13 The ethnologist Arnold Van Gennep (1960) recognizes that the wedding ceremony, like every rite of passage, has a three-fold structure. It is made up of rites of separation, passage, and integration.

14 The information that follows was drawn from a printed program of the performance (Lyceum Club of Greek Women, 1991). The cinematized version of the performance, directed by television conductor Stamatis K. Chondroyannis, may be found in digitized format in the ERT archive. See <http://www.ert-archives.gr/V3/public/main/page-assetview.aspx?tid=7855&tsiz=0 &act=mMain View>].

a) *Prologue*: A distinct section of the performance, which introduced the spectator to the story of the performance, while using marital symbols,<sup>15</sup> wishes and dances.<sup>16</sup>

b) *Act I*: “From the preparation of the wedding” (washing of hair,<sup>17</sup> the sticks of happiness, the matchmaking,<sup>18</sup> the decoration of the emblem,<sup>19</sup> the arrangement of the bed,<sup>20</sup> the dowry,<sup>21</sup> the eve of the wedding in the bride’s home).<sup>22</sup> In the pre-wedding period, the ritual takes place inside the house, on the bride and groom’s threshold, and reaches a climax with the departure of the bride from the home, to go to church. The separation of the space reflects the difference in the role of women, which appears to be protective and is expressed through song and dance, whereas men, where they are allowed to participate, take on an auxiliary role.

c) *Act II*: “The wedding” (the shaving and bedecking of the groom,<sup>23</sup> the dressing of the bride, the departure of the bride,<sup>24</sup> the procession, the crowning, the *tranos choros*<sup>25</sup> on the day after the wedding).<sup>26</sup> In this transitional stage, we observe a separation of space (in the interior of the bride’s home, in the interior of the groom’s home, in the street). The sacred ritual (the crowning) and the entertainment call for the gathering of the family and the community, which are represented symbolically in the first instance through the creation of two dance circles (by gender), and in the second instance through a circle, where men and women of all ages take part at once.

15 Flags, ensigns, emblems, apple trees, bread loaves.

16 *Kleistos* (Kimi, Evia), *Syrtos* (marital song), *Spiri Piperi* and *Ston Kombo, stin riza kovoun tin elia* (Kimi, Evia). Costumes: from Kimi, Evia.

17 *Patinada* (couplets in this case), *Ballos, Milia*, Yannis of Marathos. Costumes from Lefkada.

18 Funeral song, Dance for two, *The preparation of the leaven* (song), *Come on boys and join the dance, Fesodrevenagas-Tassa, Syrtos* of Pilaia, Thessaloniki. Costumes from Ayii Pantes, Thesprotia.

19 *Leventikos* or *Poustseno, To Flambouro* (song), *Bayratse* or *Gerontikos, Sta tessera-Akritikos*. Costumes: Antartiko, Florina.

20 *Kato choros, Pidichtos, To Sperveri* (song), *Sousta, El pou 'se*. Costumes by Embona, Rhodes.

21 *Ta prikia* (song), *Patinada tou gamou, Oraia pou'ne i nifi mas* (song), *Baidouska, Leventikos*. Costumes by Volakas and Xiropotamos, Drama.

22 *Syngathistos, Syrtos, Troiro* (Thrace). Women’s costumes from the Karoti village of Evros, men’s costumes from Kavakli, Eastern Rumelia. *Road song, Syrtos-Pentozalis, Tragoudi tis tavlas*. Women’s costumes from Anogia and Chania. Men’s costumes: breeches. *Mitrena, Proskinitos* or *Klainiatska, Bela Olympio*. Costumes from Goumenissa, Kilkis. *Kastrinos* or *Maleviziotis*, song. *Rizitika* songs: Karanos Association, “I Riza”.

23 Praising of the groom, *Masenta, Soumbeti-Syngathistos, Lissavo-Geiko, Soumbeti-Patinada*. Women’s costumes: Liti, Thessaloniki, Men’s costumes: Promachi, Almopias.

24 Praising of the bride, The slender lady’s dress, Little Eleni or Eleni the Daughter, *Gaida, Ti stekisi chryso m’ denti, Patinada-Syrtos*, Praising and blessing of the bride, There goes our bride. Costumes: Drimos and Liti, Thessaloniki.

25 *Patinada*, Pilgrimage, *Ekklesia mou koukloti, Byzantine Ecclesiastical Chant, Tranos, Syrtos, Tis Patronas-Traios, Pousnitsa*. Women’s costumes from the Roumlouk region of Macedonia. Men’s costumes: Gidas and Episkopi of Imathia.

26 *Paraxipnimata, Perioli, Ballos*. Women’s costumes: the “megala alajia” of Nissiros. Men’s costumes: breeches from the Dodecanese.

d) *Epilogue*: A distinct section with wishes, marital symbols, song, and dance in which all performers of the act take part.<sup>27</sup>

*Roles*: The groom, the bride, the best man, the best woman, the parents of the groom, the family of the groom and bride, the friends, the guests.

*Participants*: The dance group of the Lyceum Club, Members of the "I Riza" Association (Kidonia, Crete), the traditional choir of the Lyceum Club, as well as musicians from Goumenis, Gida, Florina, Volaka (Drama) and Crete.

**2. "Cheers to the Oncoming Wedding". Scenario-instruction: Giorgos Ziogas – Research team of the association. Production: "Evros" Cultural Association for Traditional Dances. Garden Theatre, Alexandroupoli. July 2005.**

*The scenario*: The wedding ceremony is a link to the Mareika villages (Evros, Thrace), and is accompanied by live music, dance, and food. The core of the ritual is the ecclesiastical procession, though before and after it many rituals will take place, each with a goal in mind (protective, advisory, initiatory, symbolic). The rituals function as a testimony, and as a ratification of an important event, such as a wedding, which creates a new family through the synthesis of two persons.

*Place of reference*: Mareika villages (Evros, Thrace). Costumes: men's *potouri* garments. Women's costumes from the Mareika villages (bridal, festive, and daily), Pirgos and the villages of Eastern Rumelia.

*The formulation of the structure*.<sup>28</sup> In the performance, we observe the reproduction of a Mareiko wedding. And in this case the rituals were united according to the relations in *time* (before the ritual, during the ritual, after the ritual), and *dance* (interior of the home, church, street, courtyard). An analysis of the performance by quantity:

- a) *Prologue*: A distinct section that begins with the reading of a brief text by a narrator. Teeming with personal experiences and memories, the narration introduces the spectators to the spectacle for the importance of this element, the wedding, which is chiefly social, to be understood.
- b) *Chief part*: The preparation of the leaven,<sup>29</sup> the painting of eyebrows and hands by the

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27 Wishes, closed-circle dance, "*Neva kateva Panayia me to Monogeni sou*".

28 The analysis and description were chiefly based on the cinematized version of the performance, by the television channel DELTA, in 2005, but also on a brief elucidatory discussion with its performers. In summary, a version of the performance that lasted 26 minutes, which I had the opportunity to attend at the 37th International Festival of Zakopane (Poland) in July 2006, where the Association was taking part, and earned the third award in the "authentic dances" category.

maid of honour,<sup>30</sup> the shaving and bedecking of the groom,<sup>31</sup> the handing over of the emblem,<sup>32</sup> the gathering in wait for the groom in the bride's home,<sup>33</sup> the departure of the bride and the exit from the home, the breaking of the *protopsomo* bread, the throwing of apples by the bride,<sup>34</sup> the journey to the church,<sup>35</sup> the crowning,<sup>36</sup> the reception of the bride by the mother in law, the washing of hands by the bride,<sup>37</sup> the dance of the best man with the jug.<sup>38</sup> c) *Exit*: the common dance, with the participation of all performers in the performances but also that of the audience.<sup>39</sup>

*Roles*: The groom, the bride, the best man, the maid of honour, the *bratimia*, the parents of the best man and the bride, the family of the groom and bride, friends, guests.

*Participants*: Members of the association, pupils of all ages from the classes, as well as an ensemble of traditional instruments composed of a *gaida*, an accordion, drums, a violin, a *laouto*, a clarinet.

**3. "From Andros to Athens..." Text by Nancy Harmanta. Composition and editing by Giorgos Kotsou and Nancy Harmanta. Production: Andros Nautical Club. Theatre of the Michael Cacoyannis Foundation, 23 January 2011.**

*The scenario*: In May 1821 the modern history of Andros (one of the Cyclades) begins, during which the island found itself at the peak of the island group's economic prosperity, thanks to its strong shipping industry. From that time to the present, the demographic and social web of the island saw many changes, which were "reflected" in society, shaping, as time went by, different "profiles" and social behaviors, some of which are visible even today. A similar development was seen in the spiritual and artistic activity of the island, the course of which was neither continuous nor whole, as it frequently saw periods of downturn that succeeded periods of creative upsurge.

When the Andriots speak of dance, which they regard as an inalienable part of their entertainment, they do not mean the steps, but the context in which the dance moves are played out: weddings, evening parties, name day celebrations, festivals, dances.

29 "Protopsomo" (song), humble dance, "Piristirouda mas" (song), Syrtos-Syngathistos.

30 Syngathistos and Choros gia ti gikna.

31 "Afenti mou sintassontan" (song), humble dance, *sichtir havasi*, Syngathistos.

32 "Simera ine Kiriaki" (song), Zonaradikos, Syngathistos.

33 "Afto t'askeri" (Zonari dance), Syngathistos, *Sou'pa mana'm*.

34 "Chereta nij chereta" (song).

35 "Pigame ke pira", handkerchief dance.

36 "Potirion Sotiriou lipsome" (ecclesiastical).

37 "Evga evga mor' mana m" (song), Syngathistos.

38 Koulouriastos, *Drista*, *Dentritsi-mantilatos*.

39 Syrtos, Syngathistos.

*Time and place of reference:* Villages of Andros and the town of Andros (Chora) (end of the 19th century, beginning of the 20th century), Athens (postwar). Costumes: rural and urban attires from every era.

*The formulation of the structure.* Analysis of the sections of the performance by quantity:

a) *Prologue:* Introduction, where the main hero of the story, the narrator in the part of the grandfather, nostalgically describes real events and occurrences, feelings, and ideas, integrated in a historical and social context through the flashback method. The narration that follows the natural course of events emerges through a local type for every period, and is illustrated through moving and static images drawn from local and private archives. As a figure, the narrator is present throughout the duration of the performance, as his speech functions in an explanatory manner with respect to what will happen; simultaneously, it also functions as a bridge between the episodes in which the protagonists are the dancers, singers, musicians.

b) *Episode A:*

1. Andros toward the end of the 19th century. *During the Celebrations* ("Mars", *Syrtos*, and *Balos* with couplets, *Katsivelikos*, *Sousta*, quadrilles).

2. Andros, interwar period: *In Kotsakis's theatre* ("Let me lean", "Like a magical dream", "In the mouth, in the mouth", "My heart aches for you," "Plou plou"); *At Frangoulis's restaurant* ("*Rezenta*", "*Cumparsita*" (tango), "If you had a heart" (*fox anglais*), "If you don't want me, we will elope" (charleston), "My jealous one" (*Hasapiko*), "Hold me tight" (waltz), "Old tavern").

c) *Episode B:* Athens, after the war:

1. In a family centre ("Many times", "I never want you to come back" (bolero), "People and Kolonaki" (swing), "The last tram" (cha cha), "Put out the fire" (mambo), "You also look like the sea".

2. *At a people's hangout* (sunset – *Zeibekiko*), "You are the reason I suffer" (*Hasaposerviko*).

*Roles:* Men and women of the Andros community.

*Participants:* The Dance Ensemble of the Lyceum Club of Greek Women of Salamis (director: Glafkos Harmantas), framed by an ensemble of artists, such as the narrator-actor Christos Aslanidis in the role of the grandfather, the soprano Giouli Karagouni from the National Opera, vocalists Zacharias Kaerounis and Christina Lazarou. Also taking part were the musicians: Yannis Pavlopoulos (violin and vocals), Nikos Katsikis (bouzouki), Andreas Tsekouras (piano, accordion, guitar, banjo, *havaia* and mandolin) and many others, dancers, as well as a multi-member orchestra.

### **Analysis of the points of the three performances and a suggestion on how to read them**

The preceding descriptions, despite their summary form, offer, I believe, those few ethnographic data that depict in some way the methods that were used in accordance with the melody and content of every performance.

I will subsequently attempt to identify certain interesting passages while describing the same performances in a somewhat more systematic manner. Thus, in initiating this analysis, I would say that the three examples signal three different cases of utilization, of shaping and developing the dances of small agricultural communities, where, once products of collective creativity, they turned in the hands of the “director/dance instructor” into products of individual artistic conscience. Regardless of whether they were expressed or not, or even whether they were broadly understood or not, a methodology, whose theoretical context functioned as a guide that directed both the composition of the material (the choice and order of appearance in the act) as well as the realization of the performance, was adopted for the design of every performance. Thus, based on the content, these three performances constitute three distinct means of managing and highlighting of Greek dance through a narration:

a) *A ritual* (in this instance, a wedding ceremony) *whose composition was based on the patching together of contemporary dance and customary practices from various regions, together with the documentation that relates to the place of origin and their modus operandi* (etic approach).

Using a three-part model – before, during and after the crowning –, the Lyceum Club, as a basic criterion, appears to command the *functional integration* of the activities in the scenario. For the creator, what mattered was that the spectators realized that, in creating a performance, a whole is created, which may be made up of “heterogeneous” (from one point of view) marital activities – their selection was made by different communities; however, they assume importance and meaning and function as a whole from the moment that they are used as elements of an image, in this particular instance of an image that reproduces the idea of a Greek wedding (see the formulation of the structure and the places of origin of the activities). Thus, I would say that the directorial instinct of the creator is established in the fact that they managed, through the “framing” of *specific* customary actions connected to marital rituals, to unfold the story of a “traditional” wedding ceremony. These customary practices, however, obtained cohesion and existed as wedding ceremonies only on the theatre stage. Thus, in the performance, the activities went beyond everything that is presented functionally in the place from which they were drawn, since the goal in selecting them was the creation of a period – when things worked – with “artistic” *pictures from tradition* that reproduced an idea about rural Greece from the start of the 20th century, for instance. At first sight, the geographic indication seems not to account for the choice of different activities. The reference to their place of origin was, however, present (see the printed program), as some elements – for instance, the costume and the means of performance of certain ritual practices as signaling a social group – set the tone for specific places in which every feature may be found.

Another element is the use of dances. Traditionally, dances that are tied to wedding ceremonies are simple, ritual, and marked by variety, since special songs (songs of praise, advisory and symbolic songs) are highlighted. As a rule, these are interpreted by women, close relatives of the bride or the groom. The marital dance, which is unique, is that which the couple will perform after the crowning.

In the particular performance, the dances – particularly scant in number when compared to other performances by the same company – that accompanied every separate action had a more ornamental, rather than functional character, a tactic that leads to the thought that the measure, composition, and melody, together with the form of the dance, all function as criteria that determined the choices of the creators, regardless of whether or not these choices were entirely harmonized with the notion of wedding.

Thus, I would say that the second criterion in choosing the activities, just as important as their functionality, is their aesthetic substance. Because, as acts, these activities also have an aesthetic substance.<sup>40</sup> Besides, dance, music, song and ritual have all been drawn from the broad pool of folk wedding rites and traditional practices in Greece (I would add the term “from the outside in”), with the single goal – as mentioned in the printed program – of presenting them in a “theatrical manner” in order for them to “serve the broader notion of a ‘Greek wedding’” (see Lyceum of Greek Women, 1991, p. 2).

b) *A ritual* (in this particular instance of a wedding ceremony) *the construction of which is composed of dances and ritual practices from a local dance tradition, or of a number of germane dance traditions through a homogenous area, with particular reference to dance as a dimension of the behavior of man in society* (emic approach).

The second example concerns the initiative of a private rural association in Alexandroupolis, which, in June 2005, *dared* to stage its own wedding, in the garden theatre of Alexandroupoli. The performance, produced by the Association itself, was integrated in the context of the event that was organized by the Association with the closing of the school’s classes approximately every two years, and was primarily directed at the students (who also happen to be the protagonists in the performance) and their relatives, but also constituted an artistic event for the city. As the president of the Association admits, the motive for this performance was the performance of the Lyceum Club.<sup>41</sup> But, he adds, their effort was based on the experiences of the members of

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40 “As an intangible concept, dance belongs to common cultural phenomena – like music and poetry – which have no utilitarian functionality; when used only in an aesthetic manner, they are destabilized with regard to the meanings that they convey; their meanings then lose their autonomy, they are dis-jointed from their determined functionality and obtain others, based on aesthetic” (Loutzaki, 2004, p. 115).

41 This particular performance found many imitators, since as a subject it was a basic motive for every form of cultural association to present to their own audience their own wedding. Thus, Antzaka-Vei (2010, p. 334) very eloquently mentions that this performance led to the creation of a school, in one manner of speaking.

the group, and the results of the field recordings that the Association initiated years ago,<sup>42</sup> in the Marides communities (in the Northern section of the Evros prefecture).

The Association, wishing to stay close to reality, attempted to render in the most faithful manner possible the individual activities on stage (I could, for the sake of analogy, compare this effort to Geertz's "thick descriptions"). Upgrading the process of wedding to the level of a theatrical episode – in this instance, we mean the Mareika wedding – the Association attributed importance to the factual material and the means of gathering it, following an "insider's" narration of the ritual, while using local definitions and taxonomic categories (see the formulation of the structure).

Thus, from a mere theatrical narration, the performance is converted into an organic means that expanded its search on three levels: the micro-scale of the steps and sounds (like the use of a single dance, the *syngathistos* dance, as the one that is by definition related to wedding), the medium scale of human relations and behaviors (like the usage of persons of different ages), and the macro-scale of tradition, of civilization and society (like the dramatized historicization of wedding events as they are performed in a particular area). As a result, the view of the creator of the performance approaches significantly the perception of the informants: rituals, dances, music neither as tunes and steps nor as culture or tradition, but as interaction and communication through certain expressive forms, in which practices, steps and tunes, culture and tradition function as constituting elements (Ronström, 1999, pp. 135, 140); and this is because in wedding the roles cease to be clearly dance-related but also become social, symbolic, ritual.

In conclusion, I would say that, in the second example, a basic criterion for the choice of different scenes was that the way the wedding activity was carried out culturally at a local level should be understood. Besides, the audience that it was directed towards, in contrast to the Lyceum Club's tradition, was entirely Thracian. Thus, on stage, the "wedding" of the Association was presented, on the one hand, "from the inside", from the perspective of the organizers who were responsible for its implementation and, on the other, from the perspective of its performers who, as locals, had experienced and could not only render, with particular feeling, the roles they had taken on, but could also interpret the consequences of the event (emic approach). The priority of the performance was based on highlighting the speech and the acts of those same organizations that put together the social event, while functioning in an auxiliary manner toward other perspectives (theatrical adaptation), that analyzed the structure and action of the wedding ceremony "from the outside".

c) *The intense study of the dance tradition as a system of cognitive and social process that in its turn constitutes a part of it, or is associated with the social and political system of an island culture.*

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42 Whatever is taught to the members of the Association is the result of a years-long recording carried out by the research team of the Association during meetings with musicians, singers and residents of various areas of Thrace and Evros Prefecture in particular. See a historical overview on the Association's website: <http://www.oevros.gr/>

While being greatly innovative and wishing to pleasantly surprise its members, the Nautical Club of Andros (NOA), with the pretext of the cutting of the *vasilopita*, an annual holiday that is directed exclusively towards its members, *ordered* the performance for it to be the core event of the celebration. The performance was a “spectacle full of dance, music, songs, based on the memories of old Andriots with references to the celebrations on the island, but also Athens”.<sup>43</sup>

The third example stands out from the other two, as dance, the main subject of the performance, was integrated into the – ever-shifting – aesthetic and ideological, personal and sociopolitical, but, above all, social context. And while in the first and second examples the marital activities are seen in their timeless dimension, in the third example (the Andriot dance activities), these same activities are understood in their development, where what is presented is an element in its succession (Andros, 19th century / Athens, 20th century; Andros: rural/urban; there: the island / here: Athens). Thus, in masterfully utilizing historical testimonies and evidence from the local and family archive, the “directors” of the performance presented the dance culture of the island of Andros, while highlighting various aspects of its urban life.

From the point of view of the theme, the performance was organized into three parts; it constituted a small narrative, where the first part referred to an agricultural space, related to the town of Andros (Chora), its customs and culture, and the second concerned urban space, based on the urban environment of Athens, man in the city and his entertainment. Initiating from the realization that *space* constitutes one of the frameworks of the formulation of memory, there was an attempt in the performance to project the relationship between urban space and historic memory (e.g. in celebrations, in Kotsakis’s theatre, at Frangoulis’s restaurant). Their elements were the daily lives of people, the way they dressed, their food, their habits, and their preoccupations in daily life, the *Syrmos* dances, as well as their entertainment; a form that offered a new understanding through which space might be used (the decoration of space is used) for the “live” frames to materialize. In essence, we are talking about selected moments in history that supported one another, and were there to historicize (visualize) the narrator’s text.

An interesting observation that also set the tone for the performance was that an attempt was made so that the volunteers in the performance, members of the dance ensemble of the Lyceum Club of Greek Women of Salamis, directed their feelings internally, felt it inside, experienced the moment and shared the stylistic and kinesiological tricks of the past. This means that with persistence and several rehearsals, they learned how to walk on stage, how one sex behaves towards the other, or how the individual behaves toward the group, the use of space. It is something that may ultimately be learned.

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43 “We journeyed together through the old Andros festivals, to the interwar taverns at the Port and to the dances that were organized in the Athenian halls and the night clubs. We were carried away by beautiful melodies that we silently hummed, we were moved by them, and danced meaningfully dances like the *ballos*, the *syrtos*, quadrille, tango, waltz, cha-cha, mambo...” (<http://www.noa.com.gr>; see events from 2011).

## Epilogue

The three performances revealed a volume of spiritual work, the greatest part of which went beyond the level of a mere restructuring of the dances. Every creator managed, in their own way, the dances and customs that they chose as means of expression, yet all invested in the search for ideas through “direction”. Thus, they revealed that they shared some concerns, they surpassed the limits of tradition and touched upon the art of dance. An important element in the analysis was the printed program that accompanied every performance – particularly well looked after and informative, with extensive texts and photographs in the case of the Lyceum Club of Greek Women, a brief outline in the other two cases. The digital presentation of the performances – that is, the DVD that every organization brought forward – was also particularly useful as a mnemonic tool, since the analysis was carried out several years after the performances themselves.

In conclusion, I would say that it is a dangerous thing when reality is transformed into something other than what it truly is. What is interesting is to discover theatre within folk activities themselves, as the latter have their own theatricality. Every reading is a revelation. We also proposed a “reading”. However, I would say that there is always the element of subjectivity in the manner of interpreting a spectacle, while, of course, respecting its “objective” features.

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# ΠΡΟΣ ΜΙΑ ΠΑΙΔΑΓΩΓΙΚΗ ΤΟΥ ΧΟΡΟΥ ΣΤΗΝ ΕΚΠΑΙΔΕΥΣΗ ΜΑΘΗΤΩΝ ΣΧΟΛΙΚΗΣ ΗΛΙΚΙΑΣ

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## Περίληψη

Σύγχρονα δεδομένα από τον τομέα της διδασκαλίας του χορού στις πρώτες εκπαιδευτικές βαθμίδες καταδεικνύουν την αναγκαιότητα υιοθέτησης μεθόδων διδασκαλίας που χρησιμοποιούν τα αναπτυξιακά χαρακτηριστικά και τις προϋπάρχουσες εμπειρίες των μαθητών ως βάση για τη διαμόρφωση περιβαλλόντων ολιστικής μάθησης. Σημείο κλειδί στην επιτυχία αυτής της προσπάθειας αποτελεί η ικανότητα των δασκάλων να προσαρμόζουν το περιεχόμενο της διδασκαλίας σε μορφές παιδαγωγικά δυνατές και συμβατές με το επίπεδο ανταπόκρισης που επιδεικνύει η εκάστοτε τάξη. Βάσει των παραπάνω, σκοπός της παρούσας εργασίας είναι η παρουσίαση ενός ευρύτερου πλαισίου γνώσεων παιδαγωγικής που θα πρέπει να λαμβάνονται υπόψη κατά τον σχεδιασμό και την οργάνωση της διδασκαλίας του χορού σε αρχάριους μαθητές σχολικής ηλικίας. Πρόκειται για ένα σύνολο αρχών που προτείνεται να χρησιμοποιηθούν ως αφορμή για αναστοχασμό επί της διδακτικής δράσης καθώς και στο πλαίσιο αυτής, ώστε η τελευταία να διεγείρει τη σωματική, γνωστική και συναισθηματική ανάπτυξη των μικρών χορευτών, προς όφελος της στάσης και της επίδοσής τους στο μάθημα.

## Λέξεις κλειδιά

Διδακτική του χορού· σχολική ηλικία· παιδαγωγικές αρχές

## TOWARD A DANCE PEDAGOGY IN THE EDUCATION OF SCHOOL CHILDREN

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## Abstract

Current research findings in the field of dance teaching in the first educational stages point to the necessity of adopting teaching methods that use the pupils' developmental characteristics and previous experience as a basis for creating holistic learning environments. A key factor for the success of such an endeavour is the teacher's ability to adapt the teaching content to forms that are both pedagogically feasible and compatible with the level of responsiveness in the classroom. This paper thus presents a wider framework of pedagogical knowledge to be taken into account when designing and organizing the teaching of dance to beginning school children. More specifically, it proposes a set of principles as a basis for reflection on the teaching activity and its overall context,

with a view to further stimulating the physical, cognitive and emotional development of young dancers and, therefore, enhancing their attitude and performance in the subject.

### **Keywords**

Dance teaching; school age; pedagogical principles

### **Εισαγωγή**

Ο χορός αποτελεί εκφραστικό μέσο εκδήλωσης κοινωνικών και πολιτισμικών χαρακτηριστικών των ανθρώπινων κοινωνιών και συμβάλλει στην καλλιέργεια και τη διατήρηση ευρύτερων διαπροσωπικών σχέσεων (Δανιά, 2009). Πρόκειται για σύνθετη μορφή ανθρώπινης ενεργητικότητας και συμπεριφοράς η οποία αποτελεί αναπόσπαστο μέρος της συνολικής δομής ενός ευρύτερου επικοινωνιακού συστήματος και έχει αξία ως αγωγή, ως έκφραση ή ως μάθημα που προσφέρει ποικίλα σωματικά, γνωστικά και συναισθηματικά οφέλη (Βενετσάνου και Κουτσούμπα, 2015· Dania, 2016· Κουτσούμπα, 2010).

Η χορευτική επίδοση, ως το παραγόμενο τελικό προϊόν της ενασχόλησης με τον χορό, συνιστά ένα είδος σύνθετης κινητικής δεξιότητας και εξαρτάται από πλήθος παραμέτρων που σχετίζονται με τα ανθρωπολογικά και μορφολογικά χαρακτηριστικά του ατόμου, το επίπεδο των γνωστικών ικανοτήτων του, καθώς και την ικανότητά του για νευρομυϊκό συντονισμό. Στοιχεία όπως η ικανότητα ελέγχου της μορφής της κίνησης, της απόδοσης των ποιοτήτων και του περιεχομένου αυτής, καθώς και του συγχρονισμού με τη μουσική συνοδεία συνθέτουν την έννοια του όρου «χορευτική επίδοση» (Δανιά, 2009, 2013α) και καθορίζουν την πορεία και το τελικό αποτέλεσμα της κινητικής μάθησης. Για τον σκοπό αυτόν, βασική φιλοσοφία των σύγχρονων προγραμμάτων σπουδών είναι ότι η διδασκαλία του μαθήματος του χορού θα πρέπει να βασίζεται σε παιδαγωγικές πρακτικές που υποστηρίζουν τις ανθρώπινες διαδικασίες κινητικής μάθησης (Smith-Autard, 2003· Warburton, 2004).

Με επίκεντρο τις πρώτες εκπαιδευτικές βαθμίδες και όχι μόνο, η εμπειρία που καταγράφεται στη σχετική βιβλιογραφία αποδεικνύει ότι η διδασκαλία του χορού προάγει την ολιστική μάθηση (κινητική, γνωστική, συναισθηματική) (Κουτσούμπα, 2014) όταν επιλέγονται μέσα ή πρακτικές που, αφενός, εμπλέκουν τους αρχάριους μαθητές σε αυθεντικές δραστηριότητες βιωματικού χαρακτήρα άμεσα συνδεδεμένες με τις απαιτήσεις και τις συνθήκες της σύγχρονης ζωής (πολυπολιτισμικότητα, μειωμένη φυσική δραστηριότητα, τεχνολογική πρόοδος) και, αφετέρου, δίνουν εξατομικευμένες ευκαιρίες ελέγχου της προόδου και προσδιορισμού των προσωπικών αδυναμιών.

Παρ' όλα αυτά, η καθημερινή πρακτική αποδεικνύει ότι, στην πλειονότητά τους, οι δάσκαλοι χορού τείνουν να υιοθετούν τις αναπαραγωγικές μεθόδους διδασκαλίας τις οποίες βίωσαν οι ίδιοι ως μαθητές, με επικρατούσα τακτική τη μίμηση του προτύπου του δασκάλου (Bannon, 2010· Warburton, 2008). Στις περιπτώσεις αυτές, ο χορός παρουσιάζεται στους μαθητές ως διαδοχικά βήματα ή κινητικά πρότυπα και η μάθηση ως απομνημόνευση εξωτερικά σχηματισμένης γνώσης

και ως διαδικασία παθητικής μετάδοσης δεξιοτήτων (Δανιά, 2013α· Warburton, 2004). Δίχως αμφιβολία, η οργάνωση της διδασκαλίας γύρω από το πρότυπο του δασκάλου και ο περιορισμός της αυθόρμητης παιδικής ενέργειας και παρορμητικότητας σε μονότονα επαναλαμβανόμενα κινητικά πρότυπα δεν δίνουν στους μαθητές αυτής της ηλικίας τις απαραίτητες ευκαιρίες για βελτίωση των δεξιοτήτων και της γνώσης τους. Επιπλέον, παράγοντες όπως οι μεταξύ τους πολιτισμικές και κοινωνικές διαφορές, το επίπεδο της φυσικής τους δραστηριότητας, καθώς και οι διατομικές διαφορές στο κινητικό τους δυναμικό επηρεάζουν το ποσοστό του ενδιαφέροντος και της προσπάθειας που είναι διατεθειμένοι να επενδύσουν στο μάθημα που διεξάγεται με αυτόν τον τρόπο.

Ξεκινώντας από τη μελέτη της καθημερινής εμπειρίας της τάξης, είναι σημαντικό ο δάσκαλος χορού να μπορεί, αφενός, να διαγνώσει τις ιδιαιτερότητες και τις εκπαιδευτικές ανάγκες των μαθητών του και τον τρόπο που αυτές επηρεάζουν τη μάθηση και, αφετέρου, να τους προσφέρει καθοδήγηση όσο και όπου κρίνει απαραίτητο, πάντοτε βάσει των στόχων του μαθήματος. Η καθοδήγηση μπορεί να αφορά είτε την επίδειξη στοιχείων ή μοτίβων του χορού είτε την παροχή βοήθειας σχετικά με την επίλυση προβλημάτων που σχετίζονται με τη γνωστική εμπέδωση της μορφής της κίνησης (π.χ. στις μικρότερες ηλικίες αυτό μπορεί να σημαίνει επεξήγηση των κατευθύνσεων και των επιπέδων της κίνησης).

Η ικανότητα αυτή του δασκάλου να κινείται με ευελιξία από το περιεχόμενο προς τη μάθηση και αντίστροφα αφορά αυτό που ο Shulman (1987) αναφέρει ως παιδαγωγική γνώση περιεχομένου. Πρόκειται για γνώση που είναι επικείμενη, με την έννοια ότι σχετίζεται τόσο με τη μορφή και το επίπεδο δυσκολίας της χορευτικής κίνησης, όσο και με το πλαίσιο εντός του οποίου τη διαπραγματεύεται ως αληθινό περιεχόμενο διδασκαλίας. Η ικανότητα ποικιλότροπου χειρισμού και (μετα)σχηματισμού αυτής της γνώσης θα καθορίσει τελικά τον τρόπο με τον οποίο θα προσαρμοστεί η διδασκόμενη ύλη σε μορφές που είναι παιδαγωγικά δυνατές και αναπτυξιακά κατάλληλες για το επίπεδο των γνώσεων και δεξιοτήτων που επιδεικνύουν οι μαθητές (Δανιά, 2013α).

Βάσει των όσων προαναφέρθηκαν, σκοπός της παρούσας εργασίας είναι η παρουσίαση ενός ευρύτερου πλαισίου γνώσεων παιδαγωγικής που θα πρέπει να λαμβάνονται υπόψη κατά τον σχεδιασμό και την οργάνωση μαθημάτων χορού για αρχάριους μαθητές, ηλικίας 6–12 χρονών. Πρόκειται για ένα σύνολο αρχών οι οποίες προτείνεται να χρησιμοποιηθούν από τον δάσκαλο ως αφετηρία για αναστοχασμό επί της διδακτικής του δράσης και στο πλαίσιο αυτής, ώστε η τελευταία να συμβάλει στην «εκκίνηση» της σωματικής και γνωστικής προσπάθειας των μικρών χορευτών, προς όφελος της στάσης και της επίδοσής τους στο μάθημα.

Η επιλογή της συγκεκριμένης ηλικιακής ομάδας βασίζεται στο γεγονός ότι σε αυτήν τη φάση της ζωής τους τα παιδιά συμμετέχουν πλέον συστηματικά σε οργανωμένα μαθήματα χορού (π.χ. σχολείο, πολιτιστικοί σύλλογοι, σχολές χορού κ.ά.), εντός των οποίων βιώνουν εμπειρίες και δέχονται επιδράσεις που καθορίζουν τις μετέπειτα στάσεις και συμπεριφορές τους σχετικά με την ενασχόλησή τους με το αντικείμενο. Ειδικότερα, υπό το πρίσμα κοινωνικογνωστικών θεωριών

μάθησης και αρχών ανάληψης κινητικής συμπεριφοράς, παρουσιάζονται:

- τα αναπτυξιακά χαρακτηριστικά και οι εκπαιδευτικές ανάγκες παιδιών σχολικής ηλικίας (6–12 χρονών).
- βασικές αρχές διαμόρφωσης διδακτικών περιβαλλόντων ολιστικής μάθησης (κινητική, γνωστική, συναισθηματική).

### **Αναπτυξιακά χαρακτηριστικά και εκπαιδευτικές ανάγκες παιδιών σχολικής ηλικίας (6–12 χρονών)**

Καθ' όλη τη διάρκεια του δημοτικού σχολείου (ηλικίες 6–12 χρονών), η σωματική κίνηση και ειδικότερα η συμμετοχή των παιδιών σε προγράμματα κινητικής εκπαίδευσης αποτελούν απαραίτητες προϋποθέσεις για την αποτελεσματική ψυχοκινητική τους ανάπτυξη (Laszlo και Bairstow, 1983· Minton και Steffen, 1992). Σύμφωνα με τη Zimmer (2007), η ψυχοκινητική ανάπτυξη αφορά το πεδίο αλληλεπίδρασεων κινητικής, σωματικής και συναισθηματικής ανάπτυξης που συνδέονται με την κινητική δραστηριότητα των παιδιών και τον τρόπο με τον οποίο αυτά θα λειτουργήσουν εντός και εκτός σχολικής πραγματικότητας.

Οι επιτυχείς εμπειρίες που θα αποκομίσουν κατά τη διάρκεια αυτής της περιόδου εντός πολλών διαφορετικών πλαίσίων αλληλεπίδρασης (π.χ. σχολείο, ομάδες, σύλλογοι, τοπική κοινωνία κ.ά.) θα καθορίσουν την εικόνα που θα δημιουργήσουν σχετικά με τον εαυτό και τις επιδόσεις τους, καθώς και τη στάση που θα υιοθετήσουν σχετικά με τη συμμετοχή σε οργανωμένες δραστηριότητες μάθησης κινητικών δεξιοτήτων.

Σύμφωνα με την Eccles (1999), οι παράγοντες που λειτουργούν ως καταλύτες της ενεργού και αποτελεσματικής εμπλοκής των παιδιών αυτής της ηλικίας σε δραστηριότητες μάθησης και εξάσκησης είναι οι εξής:

- Οι αλλαγές στο γνωστικό τους δυναμικό, στη βάση των οποίων θα προαχθεί η ικανότητα αναστοχασμού τους σχετικά με την επιτυχία ή την αποτυχία τους σε έναν τομέα.
- Η διεύρυνση του κοινωνικού κύκλου και των δραστηριοτήτων τους.
- Η έκθεσή τους σε κοινωνική σύγκριση εντός πολλών διαφορετικών πλαισίων ενασχόλησης.

Ξεκινώντας από τις πρώτες τάξεις του δημοτικού σχολείου, τα παιδιά χαρακτηρίζονται από μεγάλη κινητικότητα και αυξανόμενη επιθυμία για αυτονομία και βιωματική, κινητική μάθηση (Gallahue και Ozmun, 2006). Η βιολογική και σωματική ανάπτυξη και ωρίμανση προωθείται ιδιαίτερα κατά τη διάρκεια αυτής της περιόδου σε απόλυτη αντιστοιχία με το ποσοστό συμμετοχής τους σε κινητικές δραστηριότητες (αθλητικές, παιγνιώδεις και εκφραστικές). Η συμμετοχή σε παιγνιώδεις δραστηριότητες είναι για τους μαθητές αυτής της ηλικίας μία από τις πλέον βασικές ανάγκες. Μέσω του παιχνιδιού τα παιδιά εμπλέκονται σε μια μοναδική διαδικασία άντλησης εμπειριών μάθησης, εξερεύνησης, γνωριμίας και κοινωνικοποίησης. Η συγκεκριμένη διαδικασία αποτελεί για τα παιδιά αυτοσκοπό δεδομένου ότι στις περισσότερες περιπτώσεις δεν στοχεύει στην εκπλήρωση ενός συγκεκριμένου στόχου (Δανιά, 2013β).

Οι έρευνες συσχετίζουν το αυξημένο ποσοστό συμμετοχής των παιδιών πρώτης παιδικής ηλικίας σε οργανωμένες κινητικές δραστηριότητες (π.χ. μαθήματα γενικής γυμναστικής, μουσικοκινητικής ή ψυχοκινητικής αγωγής κ.ά.) με αλλαγές στις κινητικές ικανότητες (π.χ. αντοχή, δύναμη, ευλυγισία, ταχύτητα, επιδεξιότητα) (Derri κ.ά., 2001· Matvienko και Ahrabi-Fard, 2010). Η βελτίωση των τελευταίων καθιστά ευκολότερη και αβίαστη τη μάθηση κινητικών δεξιοτήτων, λειτουργώντας ως κίνητρο για άσκηση, έκφραση και δημιουργία.

Η βιολογική και σωματική ανάπτυξη των παιδιών επιταχύνεται ακόμη περισσότερο κατά τη διάρκεια της δεύτερης παιδικής ηλικίας (9–12 χρονών). Η ηλικία αυτή αποτελεί μια περίοδο «ειδικής απόδοσης», δεδομένου ότι κατά τη διάρκεια αυτής τα παιδιά παρουσιάζουν υψηλούς ρυθμούς σωματικής ανάπτυξης και απόδοσης και αυξημένο ενδιαφέρον για μάθηση και βελτίωση νέων δεξιοτήτων (Gallahue και Ozmun, 2006). Ικανότητες όπως η ταχύτητα, η αντοχή και ο συντονισμός αρχίζουν να τελειοποιούνται, και τα χρονικά διαστήματα επικέντρωσης της προσοχής τους επιμηκύνονται. Τα παιδιά αυτής της ηλικίας μπορούν να διαχειρίζονται καλύτερα τον χρόνο και να κατανοούν αιτιακές σχέσεις, είναι ιδιαίτερα συναισθηματικά και βασίζονται πολύ στη γνώμη της ομάδας για αποδοχή και έγκριση της δράσης και των πρωτοβουλιών τους (Kassing και Jay, 2003).

Σε αυτήν τη φάση της ανάπτυξης διαφοροποιούνται τα ενδιαφέροντα ως προς το φύλο, με τα αγόρια να αναζητούν ρόλους σε αθλήματα επαφής και να εξασκούνται σε δεξιότητες δύναμης, και τα κορίτσια να συμμετέχουν σε δραστηριότητες μουσικής και κίνησης ή να επιδεικνύουν καλύτερη ευλυγισία. Στις τελευταίες τάξεις του δημοτικού σχολείου, και λόγω διαφοροποιημένων προσωπικών ρυθμών ανάπτυξης, ορισμένοι μαθητές παρουσιάζουν δυσκολίες στον συντονισμό, αδεξιότητα και αναστολή κατά την κίνηση (στο ίδιο).

Μεταβαίνοντας από την πρώτη έως την έκτη τάξη του δημοτικού σχολείου, τα παιδιά εξελίσσονται γνωστικά, αναπτύσσουν την εννοιολογική σκέψη και χρησιμοποιούν την εμπειρία για να λειτουργήσουν σε ένα ανώτερο επίπεδο αναστοχασμού, ώστε να κατανοήσουν σύμβολα, αντικείμενα και ενέργειες (Dick, Overton και Kovacs, 2005). Αν και στις πρώτες τάξεις η προσοχή διασπάται εύκολα και η επικοινωνία μαζί τους καθίσταται δύσκολη, ειδικότερα όταν αφορά αφηρημένες έννοιες (γνωστικές ή κινητικές) διατυπωμένες από μη εγωκεντρική σκοπιά, μέσα από τις αυξανόμενες εμπειρίες κοινωνικής συναναστροφής αποκτούν μια λιγότερο εγωκεντρική προοπτική και είναι περισσότερο ικανά να ανασύρουν πληροφορίες από τη μνήμη (Δανιά, 2013β). Το γεγονός αυτό ενισχύει την ικανότητά τους να μεταφέρουν και να εφαρμόζουν την ήδη κερκτημένη γνώση σε διαφορετικές μαθησιακές καταστάσεις.

Εξίσου σημαντικές είναι και οι κοινωνικές αλλαγές που υφίστανται τα παιδιά κατά τη διάρκεια της σχολικής ηλικίας. Καθώς μεγαλώνουν, μαθαίνουν να ελέγχουν τις σχέσεις τους εντός πολλών διαφορετικών ομάδων (τάξη, φιλίες, ομάδες, γειτονιά), να ανταποκρίνονται σε ολοένα αυξανόμενες απαιτήσεις, να επιδιώκουν ατομικά ή ομαδικά συμφέροντα και να συγκρίνουν τις επιδόσεις τους με άλλους (Eccles, 1999). Ωστόσο, η διαδικασία σύγκρισης των επιδόσεων δεν είναι εξίσου εύκολη για όλους. Πολλά παιδιά, και ειδικότερα εκείνα που αντιμετωπίζουν την αποτυχία ως αποτέλεσμα έλλειψης ταλέντου και όχι εμπειρίας και εξάσκησης, εμφανίζουν διστακτικότητα ως προς το να

δοκιμάσουν νέα πράγματα που θα εκθέσουν τις ικανότητές τους στα βλέμματα των άλλων.

Σύμφωνα με τους Dweck και Leggett (1988), είναι σημαντικό για τα παιδιά να μάθουν να αντιμετωπίζουν τις ικανότητές τους ως υποκείμενες σε βελτίωση και αλλαγή μέσω κατάλληλων δραστηριοτήτων μάθησης και πειραματισμού – δραστηριοτήτων κατά τις οποίες δίνεται ευκαιρία στον καθένα να αναπτύξει τις δεξιότητές του και να ελέγξει την πρόοδο και το επίπεδο μάθησής του χωρίς αγωνία, άγχος και συγκρίσεις.

Σημασία σε αυτήν τη φάση ανάπτυξης έχουν η παρακίνηση και η παροχή κατάλληλων οδηγιών και συνθηκών εξάσκησης από τον δάσκαλο. Ο τελευταίος θα πρέπει να σχεδιάζει ένα περιβάλλον διδασκαλίας στο οποίο θα προωθούνται με ευελιξία η εξατομικευμένη μάθηση και η ανάπτυξη δεξιοτήτων, χωρίς να δίνεται έμφαση στις διαφορές ικανοτήτων ή να υπερεκτιμάται το ταλέντο προικισμένων μαθητών. Η συνδυαστική χρήση δημιουργικών μεθόδων διδασκαλίας και η συμμετοχή των μαθητών σε βιωματικές δραστηριότητες κιναισθητικής ανακάλυψης είναι εκείνες που θα αυξήσουν το ενδιαφέρον για προσπάθεια και συμμετοχή, επιφέροντας θετικές αλλαγές στο κινητικό δυναμικό όλων (Samuelsson και Carlsson, 2008).

Εκτιμώντας τα όσα προαναφέρθηκαν γίνεται αντιληπτό ότι σε αυτή την περίοδο οι πλέον κατάλληλες μέθοδοι διδασκαλίας του χορού είναι εκείνες στις οποίες βρίσκονται σε ισορροπία η βελτίωση της τεχνικής επίδοσης με τη γνωστική, κοινωνική και συναισθηματική ανάπτυξη. Η χρήση δραστηριοτήτων πολυαισθητηριακής ενεργοποίησης, συνεργατικής μάθησης και κοινωνικής συναστροφής, καθώς και ο συνδυασμός διαθεματικών προσεγγίσεων φαίνεται ότι παρέχουν τις απαραίτητες συνθήκες για αυθεντική μάθηση και ενδυνάμωση του κινητικού δυναμικού και του ενδιαφέροντος για ενεργό συμμετοχή. Επιπλέον, η υιοθέτηση μεθόδων που υποστηρίζουν την ατομική έκφραση, τη λήψη αποφάσεων και τη γνωστική ανακάλυψη των διδασκόμενων εννοιών ενισχύει την προσοχή και τη μνήμη των μικρών μαθητών και συμβάλλει στη μακροπρόθεσμη συντήρηση της παρακίνησής τους για εξάσκηση (Jones κ.ά., 2003).

### **Βασικές αρχές σχεδιασμού διδακτικών περιβαλλόντων ολιστικής μάθησης**

Η χορευτική επίδοση, ως το τελικό αποτέλεσμα της πραγματοποίησης της κίνησης και της μάθησης του χορού, διέπεται από ποικίλους δομικούς και υφολογικούς κανόνες, ανάλογους με την εκάστοτε χορευτική μορφή. Η επιτυχής απόδοση αυτών των κανόνων αποτελεί μιν μεγάλη πρόκληση για έναν αρχάριο χορευτή, ωστόσο δεν παύει να συνιστά και μιν αντικειμενική δυσκολία.

Οι αρχάριοι χορευτές δεν διαθέτουν ανεπτυγμένη εννοιολογική γνώση σχετικά με τα στοιχεία της κίνησης (κατεύθυνση, επίπεδο, διάρκεια, δυναμική, σχήμα, ροή) στα οποία θα πρέπει να εστιάσουν την προσοχή τους. Κατά συνέπεια, επικεντρώνονται σε επιφανειακά χαρακτηριστικά της διδασκαλίας προκειμένου να ανταποκριθούν επιτυχώς. Πρόκειται για μιν φωτογραφική αντιμετώπιση της κίνησης ως προϊόντος-εικόνας που πρέπει να μιμηθούν με ακρίβεια. Το γεγονός ότι πρέπει να επεξεργαστούν ταυτόχρονα πολλαπλές χωροχρονικές πληροφορίες και να τις ελέγξουν κιναισθητικά μοιάζει να δημιουργεί σύγχυση στους περισσότερους, δημιουργώντας τους την εντύπωση ότι ο χορός μαθαίνεται μόνο εμπειρικά.

Σε αυτό το στάδιο της μάθησης, η επιτυχής, συναφής και πλαισιοθετημένη διδασκαλία δεξιοτήτων και εννοιών σχετικών με τον χορό προϋποθέτει από μέρους του δασκάλου ευρύ φάσμα τεχνικών γνώσεων και ανεπτυγμένη ικανότητα χειρισμού και μετάδοσης αυτών, σύμφωνα με το αναπτυξιακό επίπεδο των μαθητών. Επιπλέον, προϋποθέτει εξισορροπημένο χειρισμό των παρακάτω βασικών αρχών διαμόρφωσης και σχεδιασμού του διδακτικού περιβάλλοντος, ώστε σε τελική ανάλυση η γνωριμία με τον χορό να είναι για όλους τους μαθητές μια διαρκής εκπαιδευτική εμπειρία.

#### – Αρχή πρώτη: Πώς θα πρέπει να οργανώνεται το περιεχόμενο της διδασκαλίας;

Οι παραδοσιακές προσεγγίσεις σχετικά με τη διδασκαλία του χορού οργανώνονται συνήθως στη βάση μιας ιεραρχικής τμηματοποίησης των διδασκόμενων δεξιοτήτων (π.χ. διδασκαλία σε μέρη, από τα εύκολα στα δύσκολα κ.ά.), με έμφαση κυρίως στην προσοχή στη μίμηση του προτύπου του δασκάλου. Ωστόσο, αν σκοπός του μαθήματος είναι η υιοθέτηση του χορού ως δραστηριότητας ικανής να προάγει διά βίου την ψυχοκινητική ανάπτυξη των μαθητών και να απελευθερώνει την ατομική τους έκφραση, οι προσεγγίσεις αυτού του είδους φαίνεται να μην επαρκούν (Δανιά, 2013α).

Η προετοιμασία καλών εκπαιδευμένων χορευτών που να μη σταματούν στο επίπεδο απλών εμπειρικών παρατηρήσεων, αλλά να μπορούν να διακρίνουν τα συστατικά στοιχεία της δομής της κίνησης, είναι μέγιστο ζητούμενο.

Η κίνηση είναι αναμφισβήτητα το πλέον διαδεδομένο μέσο επικοινωνίας στον χορό, αλλά ταυτόχρονα και το λιγότερο κατανοητό (Dania, Tyronola και Koutsouba, 2017). Οποιαδήποτε ακατάλληλη κίνηση συνιστά σπατάλη ενέργειας και προσπάθειας από την πλευρά του χορευτή, αμβλύνοντας τις αναλογίες των στοιχείων-παραγόντων που εμπλέκονται στην επιδέξια (ανα)παραγωγή της.

Σύμφωνα με τους Laban και Lawrence (1974), οι έννοιες που συνθέτουν το περιεχόμενο κάθε μορφής κίνησης αφορούν: α) την προσπάθεια της κίνησης – δηλαδή τον ρυθμό και τη δυναμική με την οποία πραγματοποιείται· β) το εύρος αυτής στον χώρο· και γ) τον εντοπισμό των σχέσεων μεταξύ των μερών του σώματος στο τελικό προϊόν της επίδοσης. Η ποικιλία στην ποιότητα οποιουδήποτε συνδυασμού κινήσεων προκύπτει ως το αποτέλεσμα πολλαπλών δυνατών συνδυασμών μεταξύ των παραπάνω εννοιών. Σύμφωνα με τον Laban (1980), η εμπέδωση των παραπάνω εννοιών μπορεί να διευκολύνει:

- την ενίσχυση της κιναισθητικής αντίληψης του χορευτή·
- τη δημιουργία ενός βασικού λεξιλογίου προσδιορισμού και διαφοροποίησης των δομικών στοιχείων της κίνησης (π.χ. στηρίξεις, άρσεις, στροφές κ.ά.)·
- την εξοικονόμηση χρόνου κατά τη διάρκεια μάθησης και εξάσκησης οποιασδήποτε χορευτικής δεξιότητας·
- τη διατήρηση της ροής της κίνησης κατά τη διάρκεια εκτέλεσης του χορού.

Επομένως, εάν το περιεχόμενο της διδασκαλίας οργανωθεί γύρω από την αναγνώριση της

δομής και της πρόθεσης της κίνησης (π.χ. ποιο μέρος του σώματος κινείται; Ποιο είναι το μέγεθος αυτής της κίνησης; Σε ποια κατεύθυνση; Ποιες είναι οι αλλαγές αυτής της κίνησης ως προς τον χρόνο, τη δυναμική και τη ροή; Τι είδους σχέσεις αναπτύσσονται με άλλα μέρη, άλλα σώματα ή αντικείμενα;), προάγεται η χορευτική αντίληψη (Schwartz, 1995) και κατηγοριοποιείται η γνώση του χορού. Η κατηγοριοποίηση της γνώσης θα καταστήσει στη συνέχεια εύκολη την ανάσυρση και τη μεταφορά της σε ποικίλα πλαίσια και περιστάσεις: ξέρω πότε, πού, πώς και γιατί να χορέψω τους χορούς που διδάχθηκα. Το γεγονός αυτό είναι εξαιρετικά σημαντικό για τους μαθητές κάθε ηλικίας, μιας και ένα από τα ζητούμενα της εκπαιδευτικής διαδικασίας είναι και η ενίσχυση της ικανότητας των ατόμων να μεταφέρουν και να εφαρμόζουν την ήδη κερκτημένη γνώση σε διαφορετικές μαθησιακές καταστάσεις, δηλαδή να αναπτύξουν την κριτική τους σκέψη (Κουτσούμπα, 2016).

Οστόσο, η ικανότητα για μεταφορά μάθησης δεν είναι κάτι το προφανές και αυθόρμητο, μιας και εξαρτάται εξίσου από τα χαρακτηριστικά της προς μάθηση δεξιότητας, αλλά και την επιλεγόμενη μέθοδο διδασκαλίας. Στην περίπτωση του χορού, η οργάνωση του περιεχομένου του μαθήματος γύρω από τη δομή και την πρόθεση της κίνησης μπορεί να συμβάλει στη διαμόρφωση επαρκούς εννοιολογικής γνώσης, ικανής να υποστηρίξει οποιαδήποτε διαδικασία μάθησης (π.χ. μάθηση μέσω παρατήρησης προτύπου, διερευνητική μάθηση κ.ά.).

#### **– Αρχή δεύτερη: Με ποιον τρόπο κατακτάται καλύτερα η μάθηση;**

Η μεγαλύτερη δυσκολία που αντιμετωπίζει ένας δάσκαλος έγκειται στο να σχεδιάσει δραστηριότητες που να είναι εύκολα αντιληπτές από όλους τους μαθητές και να τις παρουσιάσει εντός μεθόδων και πλαισίων στα οποία η γνώση θα μπορεί να μεταδοθεί με ευκολία. Στην περίπτωση της διδασκαλίας του χορού σε μαθητές σχολικής ηλικίας, είναι απαραίτητο για τον δάσκαλο να υιοθετήσει ένα συγκεκριμένο κινητικό λεξιλόγιο κατά την επικοινωνία μαζί τους. Για να κατανοήσουν τον χορό, οι μαθητές θα πρέπει να μάθουν να σκέφτονται «χορευτικά», να μπορούν δηλαδή να χρησιμοποιήσουν συγκεκριμένους όρους (ανάλογα με το είδος χορού) για να περιγράψουν τον τρόπο με τον οποίο κινούνται, να οργανώσουν ή να αναπτύξουν στρατηγικές μάθησης και εξάσκησης, να σχηματίσουν αναπαραστάσεις και να επαναφέρουν στη μνήμη τους προηγούμενες εκτελέσεις του χορού.

Για παράδειγμα, η μετακίνηση (εναλλαγή δεικτών στήριξης), ως βασική κινητική δεξιότητα, μπορεί αρχικά να διδαχθεί ως προς τη γενικότερη έννοια Σώμα, π.χ. μετακίνηση πρώτα με το δεξί και μετά το αριστερό, μετακίνηση με μεγάλα βήματα ή μικρά βήματα, μετακίνηση με τεντωμένα ή λυγισμένα πόδια κ.ά. (Laban, 1980). Αφού κατακτηθεί το κινητικό λεξιλόγιο αυτής της κατηγορίας, ο κάθε τρόπος μετακίνησης μπορεί στη συνέχεια να διδαχθεί ως προς τις διαφορετικές κατευθύνσεις, διαδρομές και επίπεδα κίνησης στον χώρο (π.χ. μπροστά, πίσω, διαγώνια, σε κύκλο, σε γραμμή, σε ψηλό ή σε χαμηλό επίπεδο), ως προς τις διαφορές στη ροή και το βάρος της κίνησης (π.χ. αργά ή γρήγορα, με δυνατό ή ήπιο πάτημα, συνεχόμενα ή με παύσεις κ.ά.) και ως προς τη σχέση με άλλους ανθρώπους ή αντικείμενα (π.χ. κίνηση σε ζευγάρια, ομάδες ή ατομικά).

Με τον τρόπο αυτόν, η μάθηση της τεχνικής του χορού συνοδεύεται από σταθερούς, μη μεταβλητούς κώδικες επικοινωνίας. Οι τελευταίοι θα λειτουργήσουν ως μέσα συγκεκριμένως

σκέψης και αντίληψης της δομής κάθε κίνησης (Δανιά, 2013α). Τέτοιου είδους ερεθίσματα επιλογής, οργάνωσης και έκφρασης της επιθυμητής κινητικής συμπεριφοράς είναι απαραίτητα για την αποθάρρυνση κινητικών παρορμήσεων ή αμφιταλαντευόμενων κινήσεων που είναι τυπικές στους μαθητές της συγκεκριμένης ηλικίας (Vygotsky, 1997).

Μην ξεχνάμε, άλλωστε, ότι κατά τα αρχικά στάδια της μάθησης του χορού υπάρχουν πολλές άτυχες ή λάθος στιγμές για τους μαθητές αυτής της ηλικίας (π.χ. στιγμές κατά τις οποίες δεν μπορούν να κατανοήσουν τις οδηγίες που δίνει ο δάσκαλος). Οι στιγμές αυτές οφείλονται τόσο στην κινητική τους ανωριμότητα όσο και στην εφήμερη και μεταβατική φύση του χορού, με την έννοια της πληθώρας των οπτικοακουστικών πληροφοριών που εξελίσσονται χωροχρονικά. Οι δυσκολίες αυτού του είδους φαίνεται να είναι εντονότερες όταν επιλέγονται συμπεριφοριστικού τύπου πρακτικές διδασκαλίας και οργάνωσης του μαθήματος αποκλειστικά γύρω από τις πρότυπες υποδείξεις του δασκάλου.

Προκειμένου οι μαθητές να υιοθετήσουν μελλοντικά θετική στάση διά βίου μάθησης και συμμετοχής στον χορό, θα πρέπει να καταφέρνουν να συντονίζουν αποτελεσματικά νου (γνωστικές διαδικασίες) και επιδόσεις (φυσικές διαδικασίες), ώστε να χειρίζονται το σώμα τους με ευελιξία και να καλύπτουν κατ' αυτόν τον τρόπο την ανάγκη τους για επιτυχείς επιδόσεις. Όσο πιο ενδιαφέρουσες, προκλητικές και ανάλογες με το ηλικιακό τους επίπεδο είναι οι εμπειρίες τους από το μάθημα, τόσο περισσότερο επιτυγχάνεται η μέγιστη συγκέντρωση και παρακάμπτονται πιθανά εμπόδια όπως ο φόβος για την αντιμετώπιση που επιφυλάσσουν οι συμμαθητές, η έλλειψη αυτοπεποίθησης και αφοσίωσης, η σκληρή, χωρίς αποτέλεσμα προσπάθεια.

Από τα πορίσματα σχετικών ερευνών διαπιστώνεται ότι οι πλέον αποτελεσματικές μέθοδοι διδασκαλίας για τους μαθητές της συγκεκριμένης και όχι μόνο ηλικίας είναι εκείνες που συνδυάζουν ασκήσεις μουσικής-ρυθμού-κίνησης και χορού ενταγμένες εντός παιγνιωδών δραστηριοτήτων βιωματικού χαρακτήρα (Δανιά, 2013β· Likesas και Zachopoulou, 2006· Λυκεσάς και Κουτσούμπα, 2008· Lykesas κ.ά., 2010· Venetsanou και Kambas, 2004· Venetsanou κ.ά., 2014). Ο εμπλουτισμός μεθόδων αυτού του είδους με εποπτικά μέσα διδασκαλίας (π.χ. βίντεο, πολυμεσικές παρουσιάσεις κ.ά.) μπορεί να επαυξήσει τις ικανότητες αναπαράστασης των κινητικών πληροφοριών, διευκολύνοντας έτσι την αποτελεσματική μετάδοση και τη μακροπρόθεσμη διατήρησή τους.

Σύμφωνα με τους ειδικούς, το παιχνίδι αποτελεί για τα παιδιά αυτής της ηλικίας το πλέον κατάλληλο περιβάλλον για ανάπτυξη κινητικών και γνωστικών δεξιοτήτων που προάγουν την κοινωνική επαφή και επιρροή. Μέσω των διαπραγματεύσεων του παιχνιδιού μειώνεται ο εγωκεντρισμός, εξισορροπούνται οι ατομικές επιθυμίες και προάγεται η σημασία της προσπάθειας και της συνεργασίας. Συμμετέχω σημαίνει επικεντρώνομαι στη δόμηση των δεξιοτήτων μου ακόμη και όταν κάνω λάθος, χωρίς να χάνω την υπομονή και τον αυτοέλεγχό μου. Μέσω αυτής της διαδικασίας, οι μαθητές αποκτούν αυτοεκτίμηση, αυξάνονται η δημοτικότητα και η κοινωνική τους επάρκεια, και συνειδητοποιούν ότι το μεγαλύτερο ποσοστό της «κινητικά λειτουργικής εξυπνάδας» (αυτό που αντιλαμβάνονται ως ταλέντο) διδάσκεται και μαθαίνεται.

Εντός αυτού του πλαισίου, η χρήση πολυμεσικών εφαρμογών μπορεί να δώσει τη δυνατότητα για συγκεκριμένους νοητικούς χειρισμούς αφηρημένων μέχρι πρότινος εννοιών. Με αυτόν τον τρόπο, η παιγνιώδης δράση και η εξάσκηση μπορούν να αναβαθμιστούν από το επίπεδο του απλού συντονισμού των κινήσεων στο επίπεδο της κινητικής εμπέδωσης, εμπλουτιζόμενες με στοιχειακό αναστοχασμό. Ο φόβος από πλευράς ορισμένων δασκάλων χορού ότι αυτός ο τρόπος διδασκαλίας καταργεί την κιναισθητική επικοινωνία δασκάλου-μαθητή δεν είναι βάσιμος. Κανένα μέσο ή πρακτική διδασκαλίας δεν μπορεί να διασφαλίσει συνθήκες αβίαστης επικοινωνίας της γνώσης, δεδομένου ότι η μάθηση του χορού είναι πάντοτε συνάρτηση της ποιότητας της παιδαγωγικής προσέγγισης την οποία θα υιοθετήσει ο δάσκαλος. Στην προκειμένη περίπτωση, προτείνεται να χρησιμοποιηθεί το πρότυπο: playware + edutainment (play-software + education-entertainment) (σε ελληνική απόδοση: «παιγνιώδη λογισμικά εντός εκπαιδευτικών δραστηριοτήτων που προσφέρουν διασκέδαση») (Lund κ.ά., 2005).

#### – Αρχή τρίτη: Τι συνθήκες πρέπει να επικρατούν εντός του περιβάλλοντος της τάξης;

Σύμφωνα με τους Hidi κ.ά. (1992), το προσωπικό ενδιαφέρον αποτελεί σημαντική πηγή παρακίνησης για έναν μαθητή και καθορίζει τον τρόπο με τον οποίο αυτός θα αλληλεπιδράσει με το περιβάλλον της τάξης. Το ενδιαφέρον είναι εκείνο που θα καθορίσει την ψυχολογική προδιάθεση του μαθητή για συνεχή και συνεχή ενασχόληση, προσοχή και συμμετοχή στη δράση, διαμορφώνοντας αντίστοιχα τους προσωπικούς του στόχους και το επίπεδο επίτευξής του (Hidi και Renninger, 2006). Η διέγερση του ενδιαφέροντος των μαθητών ευνοείται περισσότερο σε εκείνες τις περιπτώσεις που η διδασκαλία είναι διαμορφωμένη στη βάση δραστηριοτήτων που προάγουν την κατανόηση της επίδοσης (τι κάνω και πώς το κάνω) και ενθαρρύνουν την αποδοχή, την ατομική έκφραση και το συναίσθημα.

Εντός του περιβάλλοντος της τάξης, πλήθος σχέσεων και αλληλεξαρτήσεων μπορεί να διαμορφωθούν μεταξύ των ιδιαίτερων χαρακτηριστικών των μαθητών (π.χ. ανθρωπομετρικοί δείκτες, κινητικές δεξιότητες, συναισθήματα κ.ά.), των συνθηκών που επικρατούν μέσα στο μάθημα (π.χ. φως, θερμοκρασία, πρωτόκολλα συμπεριφοράς κ.ά.) και της επιλεγόμενης διδακτικής μεθόδου (Davids κ.ά., 2003). Οι σχέσεις αυτές συνιστούν περιορισμούς για τη μάθηση και θα πρέπει να ληφθούν σοβαρά υπόψη από τον δάσκαλο, μιας και μακροπρόθεσμα θα καθορίσουν τη δυναμική και τα περιθώρια ανάπτυξης κάθε μαθητή.

Σύμφωνα με τη θεωρία των δυναμικών συστημάτων, το ανθρώπινο σώμα—ως σύνθετο νευροβιολογικό σύστημα— παράγει μια ποικιλία κινητικών ανταποκρίσεων προσπαθώντας να ικανοποιήσει τους περιορισμούς που θέτει το περιβάλλον μάθησης, καθώς και να συντονιστεί προς την κατάκτηση της επιθυμητής κινητικής επίδοσης (Dania, υπό δημοσίευση). Ως εκ τούτου, οποιαδήποτε κινητική αστάθεια ή και μεταβλητότητα επιδεικνύουν οι μαθητές, τουλάχιστον στα αρχάρια στάδια της εκμάθησης του χορού, θα πρέπει να ενθαρρύνεται και να μην αντιμετωπίζεται ως δυσλειτουργία την οποία ο δάσκαλος θα πρέπει να καταστείλει.

Για τους μαθητές αυτής της ηλικίας, η χρήση δραστηριοτήτων καθοδηγούμενης ανακάλυψης

της κινητικής γνώσης (π.χ. δραστηριότητες αυτοσχεδιασμού και κιναισθητικής εξερεύνησης), καθώς και πρακτικών ενεργοποίησης της κριτικής σκέψης, της επικοινωνίας και του αναστοχασμού ενδείκνυται ως επιλογή. Επιπλέον, η εξάσκηση σε μικρές, ομοιογενείς ομάδες (π.χ. ζευγάρια, τριάδες, τετράδες) και η επιλογή θεμάτων που να απευθύνονται εξίσου στα ενδιαφέροντα και των δύο φύλων δημιουργούν ευνοϊκές συνθήκες κοινωνικής συναναστροφής και εξάσκησης απαλλοτριωμένης από στερεότυπα φύλου ή συγκρίσεις ικανοτήτων. Τέλος, η υιοθέτηση δημοκρατικών συμπεριφορών από μέρος του δασκάλου και η αναγωγή της διδασκαλίας στο επίπεδο της σωματικής επαγρύπνησης για την κατανόηση και την εκτίμηση της επίδοσης εγγυώνται τη δημιουργία ενός ασφαλούς περιβάλλοντος εποικοδομητικής μάθησης.

### **Αντί επιλόγου**

Πρόσφατες εξελίξεις στον τομέα της εκπαίδευσης του χορού καταδεικνύουν την αναγκαιότητα σεβασμού της ατομικότητας και των εμπειριών των μαθητών κατά τον σχεδιασμό της διδασκαλίας. Οι παραδοσιακοί τρόποι οργάνωσης του μαθήματος γύρω από την εικόνα, τις υποδείξεις και το πρότυπο του δασκάλου δεν προσφέρει σε όλους ευκαιρίες να αναγνωρίσουν τις προσωπικές τους ιδιαιτερότητες και να λάβουν την ανατροφοδότηση που παρέχεται από το σώμα τους.

Είναι σημαντικό για τον δάσκαλο να αναγνωρίσει ότι δεν υπάρχει και δεν μπορεί να υπάρξει ένα βέλτιστο σύστημα επικοινωνίας της πληροφορίας που μπορεί να μετουσιωθεί σε γνώση ή ένα ιδανικό περιβάλλον κινητικής μάθησης. Αντιθέτως, για να μπορέσουν οι μαθητές να εξελιχθούν κινητικά και εκφραστικά και να διεκδικήσουν ενεργά διαμέσου της κίνησης και του χορού τη βελτίωση της ποιότητας ζωής τους, θα πρέπει πρωτίστως να αναπτύξουν την ικανότητα να παραμένουν συντονισμένοι στους περιορισμούς που συνεπάγεται το εκάστοτε πλαίσιο δράσης τους (π.χ. τάξη χορού, χορευτική ομάδα, παράσταση χορού κ.ά.).

Ξεκινώντας από τη σχολική ηλικία, το ζητούμενο είναι οι μαθητευόμενοι να κατανοήσουν τον χορό ως ένα πολιτισμικό και αισθητικό φαινόμενο το οποίο θα εκτιμήσουν για την ομορφιά και τον πλούτο των μηνυμάτων που εκπέμπει και στο οποίο θα μάθουν να αναζητούν και να βρίσκουν ευκαιρίες για ενεργό συμμετοχή. Σύμφωνα με τον Dewey (1980), όταν το περιεχόμενο ή η επιλεγόμενη μέθοδος διδασκαλίας διεγείρει την αισθητική και συναισθηματική ικανοποίηση του μαθητή, τότε ο τελευταίος επενδύει «νου και σώμα», ως αδιάσπαστη ενότητα, στις διδακτικές δραστηριότητες.

Το προσωπικό ενδιαφέρον, η λήψη αποφάσεων και πρωτοβουλιών, ο πειραματισμός και η ανακάλυψη αποτελούν θεμελιώδεις έννοιες για τον σχεδιασμό προγραμμάτων εκπαίδευσης στον χορό για μαθητές σχολικής ηλικίας. Ωστόσο, παρά το γεγονός ότι πλήθος διδακτικών μεθόδων, μέσων ή πρακτικών μπορεί να ενσωματώσουν τις παραπάνω έννοιες, το αληθινό περιεχόμενο της διδασκαλίας θα διαμορφωθεί βάσει των αλληλεπιδράσεων και των διαπραγματεύσεων του πλαισίου κάθε τάξης. Όταν αυτές οι τελευταίες διεγείρουν το ενδιαφέρον των μαθητών, προκαλώντας τους να βιώσουν το περιεχόμενο και, μέσω αυτού, να φανταστούν και να αισθανθούν σωματικά απελευθερωμένοι και δυνατοί, τότε ο χορός κατακτάται δυναμικά ως μια αληθινά εκπαιδευτική

εμπειρία που μπορεί να υποστηρίξει, διά βίου, τη διάθεση για ενεργό συμμετοχή και την παρακίνηση για διαρκή ατομική βελτίωση.

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# BOOK REVIEWS

ANN COOPER ALBRIGHT (2016) *Χορογραφώντας τη Διαφορά: Το Σώμα και η Ταυτότητα στον Σύγχρονο Χορό*. Μτφρ. Ε. Μιχαλοπούλου. Επιμ. Β. Μπαρμπούση. Αθήνα: Νήσος. 258 σ. ISBN 978-960-589-037-7. Χαρτόδεκτη έκδοση. 20€.

Το βιβλίο *Χορογραφώντας τη Διαφορά: Το Σώμα και η Ταυτότητα στον Σύγχρονο Χορό* (τίτλος πρωτοτύπου: *Choreographing Difference: The Body and Identity in Contemporary Dance* [1997]) εκδόθηκε για πρώτη φορά στην αγγλική γλώσσα πριν από είκοσι χρόνια. Ο λόγος για τον οποίον συζητείται τώρα είναι η μετάφραση και η έκδοσή του στα ελληνικά από τον οίκο Νήσος, σε επιμέλεια της Βάσως Μπαρμπούση, καθηγήτριας στο Τμήμα Θεατρικών Σπουδών του Πανεπιστημίου Πελοποννήσου. Στην εισαγωγή της ελληνικής έκδοσης, η Βάσω Μπαρμπούση υποστηρίζει πως η πρωτοβουλία για τη μετάφραση του εν λόγω βιβλίου αποτελεί μέρος μιας ευρύτερης προσπάθειας που αποσκοπεί, πρώτον, στη μελέτη του σύγχρονου χορού σε σχέση με το κοινωνικό και πολιτικό συγκείμενο, και, δεύτερον, στην ενδυνάμωση της ακαδημαϊκής έρευνας για τον χορό στην Ελλάδα, που ακόμη δεν υποστηρίζεται σε πανεπιστημιακό επίπεδο. Συνεπώς, σχολιάζει η Μπαρμπούση (σ. 13), το συγκεκριμένο βιβλίο «είναι πολύτιμο για το ελληνικό κοινό», καθώς διευρύνει την ελληνική βιβλιογραφία, προσφέρει μεγαλύτερη πρόσβαση και, παράλληλα, αναδεικνύει τη σημασία των ακαδημαϊκών σπουδών στον τομέα του σύγχρονου χορού.

Παρότι γραμμένο το 1997 από την ερμηνεύτρια, χορογράφο, ακαδημαϊκό και φεμινίστρια Ann Cooper Albright, το βιβλίο παραμένει επίκαιρο ως προς τον τρόπο με τον οποίο μελετά τον σύγχρονο χορό και το σώμα. Σκοπός της συγγραφείας είναι να αναδείξει πώς το χορεύον σώμα ενεργοποιεί, υιοθετεί και παράλληλα αμφισβητεί πολιτισμικές και κοινωνικές ταυτότητες οι οποίες θεωρούνται δεδομένες. Η Ann Cooper Albright συζητά και διερευνά τον χορό ως καλλιτεχνική πρακτική που συμβάλλει ενεργά στη διαμόρφωση του κοινωνικού και πολιτισμικού πλαισίου, υποστηρίζοντας πως ο χορός «μπορεί να γίνει κεντρικός, για την ακρίβεια ένας κρίσιμος λόγος της εποχής μας» (σ. 21). Συνολικά, το βιβλίο καταπιάνεται με διαφορετικές θεματικές που στον πυρήνα τους μελετούν και αναδεικνύουν τις διαδράσεις μεταξύ του σώματος και της ταυτότητας, «των σύνθετων διαπραγματεύσεων ανάμεσα στη σωματική εμπειρία και την πολιτισμική αναπαράσταση» (σ. 22).

Το βιβλίο αποτελείται από την Εισαγωγή και έξι κεφάλαια τα οποία επικεντρώνονται σε διαφορετικές θεματικές σε σχέση με το σώμα και την ταυτότητα. Το πρώτο κεφάλαιο χρησιμοποιεί φεμινιστικές θεωρίες, κυρίως δε τη θεωρία της επιτελεστικής ταυτότητας της Judith

Butler, για να μελετήσει τον σύγχρονο χορό και ιδίως τις σωματικές και πολιτισμικές ταυτότητες, υποστηρίζοντας πως «τα χορεύοντα σώματα παράγουν και συγχρόνως παράγονται από τον χορό τους» (σ. 39). Το δεύτερο κεφάλαιο συνεχίζει με μια θεώρηση του τρόπου με τον οποίο κατασκευάζονται οι έμφυλες ταυτότητες στον χορό, μέσα από μια συγκριτική μελέτη διαφορετικών έργων και χορογράφων. Το τρίτο κεφάλαιο καταπιάνεται με τον χορό και την αναπηρία, μέσα από θεωρίες του γκροτέσκου, εστιάζοντας στο πώς ο θεατρικός χορός έχει δομηθεί πάνω σε συγκεκριμένες αντιλήψεις περί σώματος που εξισώνουν «τη σωματική ικανότητα με την αισθητική ποιότητα», οι οποίες εν συνεχεία αμφισβητούνται (σ. 102). Το τέταρτο κεφάλαιο αφορά τη διακειμενικότητα του χορού και διερευνά ζητήματα φύλου, σεξουαλικότητας, ταυτότητας και διαφοράς, μέσα από θεωρίες του Jacques Derrida και της Hélène Cixous σε σχέση με ερμηνείες επί σκηνής της χορεύτριας Maria Chouinard. Σκοπός είναι να αναδειχθούν και να μελετηθούν «το γράφον και το χορεύον σώμα» (σ. 170). Το επόμενο κεφάλαιο εστιάζει σε ζητήματα αυτοβιογραφίας, ταυτότητας και χορού θίγοντας ζητήματα «υποκειμενικότητας και αναπαράστασης», προσωπικού και συλλογικού, όπως αυτά προκύπτουν στα έργα χορογράφων όπως της Bill T. Jones, της Johanna Boyce, της Blondell Cummings και του David Dorfman (σ. 173). Τέλος, το έκτο κεφάλαιο, το οποίο λειτουργεί και ως κατακλείδα για το βιβλίο, εστιάζει στον αφροαμερικανικό σύγχρονο χορό και συγκεκριμένα στον Νέο Επικό Χορό, όπως τον ονομάζει η συγγραφέας. Με αυτόν τον όρο η Ann Cooper Albright αναφέρεται σε έργα που διερευνούν την αφροαμερικανική κληρονομιά, έργα που επανεξετάζουν και επαναφηγούνται την ιστορία από διαφορετικές σκοπιές.

Από τότε που πρωτοεκδόθηκε στην αγγλική γλώσσα, το βιβλίο έχει συμβάλει ουσιαστικά στην πολύπλευρη μελέτη του σύγχρονου χορού ως καλλιτεχνικής πρακτικής που συνδιαλέγεται με (και συνδιαμορφώνει) το αισθητικό αλλά και το κοινωνικό, πολιτικό και ιστορικό γίνεσθαι της εποχής της. Από τότε έως και σήμερα, έχουν εκδοθεί αρκετά άλλα κείμενα που συνεχίζουν να συνομιλούν με το συγκεκριμένο βιβλίο και τα ζητήματα που θέτει. Εν προκειμένω, η ελληνική έκδοση του βιβλίου συμπίπτει με μια δύσκολη (αν όχι αντίξοη) κοινωνικοπολιτική περίοδο και αναδεικνύει τόσο τη σημασία του σύγχρονου χορού στη δημιουργία εναλλακτικών κοινωνικών προτύπων όσο και την ανάγκη για ενδελεχή μελέτη καλλιτεχνικών πρακτικών και επανεξέταση εκείνων των πρακτικών που συνθέτουν τις «δεδομένες» κοινωνικές και πολιτισμικές ταυτότητες.

ΜΠΕΤΙΝΑ ΠΑΝΑΓΙΩΤΑΡΑ  
ΘΕΩΡΗΤΙΚΟΣ ΧΟΡΟΥ

## CONTRIBUTORS

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