

Nordic Journal of Dance

– practice, education and research



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Editorial

Embodied Dance knowledge—four perspectives

This edition of *Nordic Journal of Dance: Practice, Education and Research* invites the readers to an in-depth exploration of the contemporary narratives concerning bodily knowledge and deep educational experience. The Dance which is the object of interest takes place in several contexts and includes a variety of dance forms and expressions. The four articles we will present below focus on topics departing from breath and subjectivity, the silenced body of the gypsy and the beauty of (im)perfection, whereas the lastly mentioned theme interestingly is captured both from a researchers point of view (Østern's research paper) and a choreographers perspective (Channells' practical oriented paper). We admire the engagement the contributors have shown in their mutual efforts to share their knowledge, and hope the readers appreciate it and are eager to generate further discussion in their networks.

We have chosen Leena Rouhiainen's *Priming the Body: Breath as a Foundation for Exploring Ethical Performance Practice* as an opening of this issue. She presents an artistic project as well as a teaching experiment aimed at enhancing the collaborative, creative and critical skills of MA students of dance and theatre pedagogy at the TEAK. Through the reading of the interview material gathered this article rigorously explores the cultivation of breathing applying phenomenologically oriented thought from Irigary and Klemola. As a tentative opening on the thematic that according to Rouhiainen requires further exploration, it also provides valuable insight in what breath can offer in producing and supporting the evolution of ethical artistic collaboration.

The second research article presents Diane Oatley's field-work: *Becoming Gypsy: Tell Me What*

the Body Knows in Flamenco Dance where the perceptions of women studying Flamenco dance in Jerez de la Frontera, Spain, are investigated, and a "grey zone" is uncovered. The exposure to the dance-form and it's culture both provide a possible revision of stereotypes which the reader may be surprised to discover remain on an unconscious level. She questions if the processes of "gypsy embodiment" unfold differently in the art form's originary setting, making it highly relevant to Nordic practitioners. Does this represent other than mere exotism? This question the article may offer some response to as well as offering a continuation of this topic of discussion in earlier issues of Nordic Journal of Dance. Thus, this research article brings these challenging and highly relevant questions of embodiment paired with exotism to a well-informed theoretical discussion which argues the relevance to Johnsons's theory of embodied cognitivism.

The context of the third and last research article *The Dance Project Perfect (im)Perfections as a Deep Educational Experience of Plurality* written by Tone Pernille Østern, is the Australian choreographer Philip Channells' residency producing a dance performance *Perfect (im)Perfections—stories untold*, together with 20 different dancers, age 23 to 80, for a festival in Trondheim (2014) arranged by DansiT. In addition to freelance dancers, the participants were recruited from The Dance Laboratory and The Dance Theatre, and together with these dancers Channells explored the concept of beauty in dance. Following the production and performance processes, Østern focuses in this article on the learning experiences of these participants. Adapting a hermeneutic-phenomenological approach (van Manen 1990), Østern finds that despite being an art project, the participants experiences deep education, which involves a sense of one's deep identity, concerning the whole person, in other words

a deep educational experience of plurality.

From a choreographers perspective *Perfect (im)Perfections–The Choreographer's Reflections on the Creative Process* by Philip Channells, this practice oriented article highlights the successes and challenges of working bilingually across hemispheres. Focusing on the creative processes of the performers, guided by his own reflections and experiences, this article captures a mosaic of dance, theatre and spoken word. In this article the nature and value of the collaboration, the performer's commitment, the use of social media and the language barriers are discussed together with his thoughts around his own learning experience. Through this work Channels succeeds in uncovering a collection of unique stories and life experience, which appealed to how the performers inhabit their skin, their minds and their physical and emotional environments.

In addition to this current volume brimming with interesting research, the reader will find two book reviews, one conference review and an overview of a monograph. The first one is Riikka Korppi-Tommola's *Methodological Demonstrations in Finnish Dance Research and Decoding of Dancing Research* which in addition to confirming the scope of Finnish dance research, offers a thorough, appreciative and reflective evaluation of this wide field of analysis. As well as highlighting Rouhiainen's extensive overview of phenomenological research approaches, the review also proposes how dancing research texts can engage better with multimedia presentation formats. A question which may arise is if not this highly relevant contribution to the field of artistic research could be made accessible to a wider audience. In the second, Camilla Damkjær's review of Eiva Lilja's *Research, Art, Empowerment - The Artist as Researcher* sheds light on the core issues evolving around the topic of artistic research, and to the readers both inside academia as well as those on the outside, it offers a valuable interpretation of how Lilja

distinguishes between the arts, politics and political art. An important gesture which can keep the field navigating within the mechanisms of art markets and international educational politics, this book of ideas and manifesto for the importance of art and artistic research in society may also remind us how the field of dance bears relevance to a cross-disciplinary enquiry. Following up the theme of artistic research, which was the main topic of the NOFOD conference Expanding Notions held in Reykjavik May 2015, it also gave the opportunity for a contribution from Iceland. The editor therefore requested Magnúsdóttir, Sture Iversen and Lyche Campos to initiate what in the future might be a valuable source of documentation. Those of the readers who are eager to keep updated on the current "State of the Art" of Nordic dance research will appreciate a short review of the main keynotes as well as two of the many engaging lecture demonstrations. Eeva Anttila gives an overview of the important topic of dance and embodied learning and the many skills can be generated through this. Through the publication of the monograph *The Entire School Dances! The Possibilities of Embodied Learning in a School Context*, the main aim is to keep the discussion going. Based on a school-project held at Kartanonkoski School, Vantaa in 2009–2013, the study leans on collaborative action research and communicative evaluation research, providing an example of the versatile learning experiences dance and embodied learning have generated within this school community. In this particular issue we are also offering a gift voucher with 20 percent discount, which is an excellent chance to delve into a general overview of writers across the globe who reflect, comment on and share their expertise and experiences in *Dance Education Around the World*.

We experience an increasing interest for the journal both in its paper edition as well as online and are glad to register more contributions of both practice and research oriented articles. Having that said, we still encourage you to use this opportunity for sharing your

work with other dance practitioners and researchers working in the Nordic context. Since all of this current issue's articles have been written in English, we will appreciate more future contributions in the native Nordic languages. We remind all the readers that the journal can only develop and be a forum of discussion with your participation. We continuously work to develop the accessibility and visibility of the journal, and are proud to announce that we have been accepted as members of The Norwegian Society of Journals. We look forward to new possibilities this may generate.

Finally, before inviting you to turn the page and leaving you to absorb this issue of *Nordic Journal of Dance* we would like to give a special thanks to the important effort which we all can appreciate due to our excellent pool of peer-reviewers, which has expanded over the years. We all know what importance you have in maintaining the high level of quality of this journal.

Kristine Høeg Karlsen
Editor

Corinne Lyche Campos
Editorial Secretary

Priming the Body: Breath as a Foundation for Exploring Ethical Performance Practice

Leena Rouhiainen

ABSTRACT

This article contemplates how the cultivation of breath through specific body awareness techniques might be understood to support a dialogical and ethical relatedness between collaborators constructing a performance through an open-ended process. The article introduces a teaching experiment based mainly upon exercises drawn from strands of body psychotherapy that took place within a larger experimental and cross-artistic workshop and performance project. This project aimed at enhancing the collaborative, creative, and critical skills of MA students in dance and theatre pedagogy of the Theatre Academy of the University of the Arts Helsinki. The article discusses the overall artistic project as well as the kind of bodywork the teaching experiment involved, and it makes a phenomenologically oriented reading of the written interview material gathered from the students. The specific theoretical perspective taken on the topic draws from two phenomenologically inspired thinkers, namely, Luce Irigaray's and Timo Klemola's views on the influence that cultivation of breathing can have on subjectivity. The article suggests that exploring and cultivating breathing through compassion can support the evolution of ethical collaboration in open-ended performance processes.

TIIVISTELMÄ

Tässä artikkelissa tarkastellaan, miten tiettyihin kehon-tietoisuusmenetelmiin pohjautuva hengityksen harjoittaminen voi tukea dialogista ja eettistä yhteistyötä avoimen prosessin varassa rakennetussa esityksessä. Artikkelissa esitellään kehopsykoterapian innoittamiin harjoitteisiin pohjautuvan opetuskokeilun, joka oli osa laajempaa kokeellista ja poikkitieteellisestä työpa- ja esitysoikeutta. Projektin tavoitteena oli edistää Taideyliopiston teatterikorkeakoulun tanssi- ja teatteri-pedagogiikan maisteriopiskelijoiden luovia ja kriittisiä yhteistyötaitoja. Artikkelissa luonnehditaan taiteellista projektia ja opetuskokeilun kehitysoikeutta. Tarkem-min siinä tehdään orientaatiotaan fenomenologinen luenta opiskelijoilta kerätystä kirjallisesta haastatte-luaineistoista. Teoreettinen viitekehys, jolla aineistoa tarkastellaan, perustuu kahteen fenomenologisesti inspiroituneeseen ajattelijaan; Luce Irigarayn ja Timo Klemolan näkökulmiin hengityksen harjoittamisen vaikutuksesta subjektiiviseen. Artikkelissa ehdotetaan, että myötätuntoinen hengityksen tutkiminen ja harjoitta-minen voi tukea eettistä yhteistyötä avoimissa esitys-prosesseissa.

Priming the Body: Breath as a Foundation for Exploring Ethical Performance Practice

Leena Rouhiainen

Introduction

Based on a teaching experiment that was undertaken as a part of a larger artistic-pedagogical performance project, this article presents a phenomenologically oriented reading on the potential impact the practice of breathing can entail. The teaching experiment addressed body awareness exercises drawn from body psychotherapy that place strong emphasis on breathing in order to support the self-awareness and collaborative skills of, in this case, dance and theatre pedagogy students. The article introduces the overall context of the experiment and places the interview material gathered from the students in dialogue especially with the notions of breathing of both Luce Irigaray (2002; 2004a; 2004b; 2004c), a French phenomenologically inspired, psychoanalytic feminist thinker, and Timo Klemola (2004), a Finnish phenomenologists of movement. Their writings on breathing are among the rare few phenomenologically oriented texts on the transformative process a consecutive breathing practice can trigger in our relatedness to ourselves, others and the environment. They likewise offer insight into how breathing might be understood as an ethical body practice. This latter theme relates to one of the overall aims of the artistic project with its dialogical ethos that appreciated vitality, difference and an unforced manner of relating to creative production. That said, this article is limited by the narrowness of the teaching experiment as well as the interview material, and it should be read as a tentative opening on a thematic that requires further investigation.

The Artistic and Pedagogical Project

During spring and fall term 2012, I worked with fourteen MA students in dance and theatre pedagogy at the Theatre Academy of the University of the Arts Helsinki, who were engaged in their final artistic project. In its entirety, the project was titled *The School for Unforced Errors*, and its last workshop was called *Garden for Errors*; the final performance was *EPISODE III*. The concluding parts aimed at scrutinizing error and control in a collaboratively produced performance. The main authors, theatre director Riku Saastamoinen and architect Toni Kauppila, utilized an experimental and dialogical pedagogical approach in guiding the students in the evolving work. Aside from being a part of the MA program curriculum, the project likewise belongs to the doctoral research in art pedagogy that Riku and Toni are completing together. In their overall pedagogical project, they aspire to enhance creative processes at the intersection of art and pedagogy, to support collaborative learning, and to encourage students in risk-taking and enduring insecurity for artistic ends (Kauppila and Saastamoinen 2014, 156). In the particular artistic project discussed here, performance, pedagogy and everyday life intertwined with an ethos to support vitality and difference as opposed to a forced unification of people and things. In it, curiosity and exploration, encountering difference, openness for the unforeseen, and responsibility and constructive criticism were taken to be core values investigated and discussed amongst the collaborating group (Kauppila and Saastamoinen 2014, 158). The

final workshop and performance specifically aimed at creating an environment in which the students could explore different kinds of social norms that were inscribed in them. According to the handout, the goal of *EPISODE III* was “to create operational cultures and practices that allow a possibility for hearing one’s inner voice, experiencing the happiness of ‘not knowing’ and ‘not succeeding’, as well as enjoying the simultaneous presence of big and small events and issues” (Kauppila and Saastamoinen 2012).

The whole project required the students to be both self-directed and open for collaboration while both solving problems related to the artistic process and performing. Based on Riku’s and Toni’s facilitation, the students together devised the scores of and materials for the six different performances that included audience participation. The work focused on constructing structures that supported exploration in the now moment and instant forms of performance. Toni designed a versatile podium structure in the black box theatre venue at the Theatre Academy where the performance took place. It allowed different scenes or events to happen at the same time and the audience to move in the space and engage with performative sections in different ways. In the end, the six different performances that took place in October 2012 were formed around the following themes and titles:

1. Fri 5.10. at 19.00 Listening inner voices—open rehearsal
 2. Mon 8.10. at 13.00 Workshop of errors
 3. Tue 9.10. at 19.00 Unrehearsed performance
 4. Wed 10.10. at 10.00 Mundane practice
 5. Wed 10.10. at 13.00 No-can-do
 6. Thu 11.10. at 19.00 Performance we don’t know yet
- (Kauppila and Saastamoinen 2012)

As part of the project, Riku and Toni asked me to support the students in fostering sensitivity both to their own experiences and those of the other members

in the group through bodily work. I was happy to join the project, as I appreciated their approach of working in an in-between space that constructively questioned existing structures, norms, and values related to being a teacher and a student as well as art, pedagogy and performance. As a contemporary dancer and dance researcher, I have worked with somatic approaches and taught contemporary dance and body awareness practices for nearly two decades. Recently my practical research work had centred on how approaches utilized in body psychotherapy might support the work of performers (Rouhiainen 2012a; 2012b). In the project, this background informed my teaching, and during the three-month-long workshop period, I offered the students what we came to call *body priming* classes twice a week. In order to accommodate students’ schedules and the construction of the performance, in the end I met the students twelve times for an hour and a half to two hours at a time. The classes in the discussed project drew on my experience with body awareness routines drawn especially from the breath work I was familiar with. This work involves my experience in the heritage of Reichian body psychotherapy as it has been introduced in Finland. I took a three-year training course in this approach between 2007 and 2009 offered by the Institute of Character Analytic Body Psychotherapy (www.luonne.fi).¹ One of the basic assumptions of this psychotherapeutic approach is that we tend to suppress uncalled-for emotions by controlling our breath. Simultaneously, we limit the scope of our sensations, feelings, perceptions and reactions—the scope of our vitality. Much of the work done in Reichian body psychotherapy is therefore oriented towards supporting clients in becoming aware of and accepting their sensations and emotions as well as freeing their body from tensions that hinder free breathing. (Rouhiainen 2012a; 2012b.) While this practice forms my main orientation to breathing, I likewise familiarized myself with another, perhaps softer, approach to breathing just before the project

began. Finnish movement therapist Maila Seppä, psychologist Päivi Lehtinen and psychotherapist Minna Martin have developed what they currently term psychodynamic breathing therapy. This form of therapeutic intervention aims to increase clients’ awareness of the significance of breath regulation and to foster balanced breathing to support physical and mental health. One of its main goals is to offer clients a space in which they can simply be and surrender to the rhythms of their bodies in an accepting manner (Martin et al. 2010).

In both methods, a variety of techniques are used to foster the clients’ capacity to breathe more flexibly. These techniques include breathing exercises, tasks in body awareness, inter-relational work, observing characteristic bodily comportment and mental imagery related to oneself and others. Thus breathing is considered an embodied way of relating and addressed as a function that engages the full body or subjectivity of an individual. In fact, Klemola relates to this in describing how inhalation and exhalation affect the whole body through movements of expansion and contraction. In his view, when we become aware of this full body movement, the overall sensations of our body are increased (Klemola 2004, 223).

The body priming classes I offered to the students always involved exercises that aimed at allowing the students to sense their bodies in the now moment and to become aware of their breathing. The classes likewise involved simple exercises that supported release in bodily tension as well as ones that prompted physical exploration in interaction with partners. The logic was to create contact with one’s own sensations and breathing and from this ground to move on into exploring one’s interrelation with the other members of the group and the surrounding space. The classes usually ended with some form of reflective articulation of the experiences the students had had during class: either through conversations by students had amongst themselves, conversations with the whole group, or by drawing and

writing. The students were also consulted on the content of the class on several occasions, so as to support the artistic exploration they were engaged with. However, it must be said that my overall pedagogical approach was not as open and explorative as Riku’s and Toni’s. I had a limited amount of time to work with the students and a specific focal task. The manner in which I aimed to support dialogue and creative difference was through creating a grid of exercises that allowed for degrees of openness in the manner in which the students solved and experienced them. It must also be stated that the work we did was not directly therapeutic either. The classes concentrated on honing students’ awareness of their own experiences and reactions to given assignments and relationship with others in order to offer them tools relating to the artistic process. Therapeutic settings are built on long-term commitment in which great care is taken to create a sufficient bond of trust between therapist and client in order to generate a sufficiently safe space to work with and potentially resolve problematic issues.

To offer more concrete understanding of the class contents, below is an example of the exercise scores I created for one of the classes. The scores were distributed to the students during or after the class for their further use, as they were already experienced practitioners in either dance or theatre and were almost qualified MA-level pedagogues.

Exercises Monday April 23

1. Stand in basic position and simply feel what you feel. Make observations on how you breathe and on your body’s sensations. Pay attention to your body’s position.
2. In standing position inhale and reach your arms up high in the air. Exhale, soften your joints and find a slowly flowing way of placing yourself on the floor. Rest there and observe how you touch the floor. Observe if you can release any further tension. When you can release no more tension, find a way to come to standing. Repeat the exercise, now finding another

route to descend to the floor and lie in a different position.

3. Lying on the floor, listen to your body and sense where it needs more space. Initiate an internal stretch. When you have reached full length in this part of your body find another body part that feels like it needs more space and allow your body to move in a way as to stretch this area. As you proceed in creating more space in your body, you might repeat working with the same part of the body until you are satisfied or move from one body part to the next. In either case allow the movements to flow into each other.

4. From one side of the room, cross the floor by moving close to it, at a low level. Proceed to the other side of the room, continuously changing the parts of the body that support you on the floor or touch the floor. So move across space by changing from one position or supporting point to the next keeping some kind of motion going on all the time.

5. A) Lie on the floor on your back. Have your knees bent and feet on the floor. Take a moment to observe your breathing. Then inhale shortly allowing your belly to expand and keeping your chest softly still. Then make a long and full exhalation through your mouth with a sighing sound. Continue. Then, while exhaling allow an aaah-sound to emanate from your belly. Rest and observe how you feel.

B) Do the same exercise but now allow your chest to expand and the sound to emanate from there. Try to keep your belly relatively still. Rest.

C) Do the same, but now on inhalation allow the belly and then the chest to expand. While you exhale purse your lips slightly together and allow an uuhh-sound to come out. Rest.

6. With a partner sit and face each other. Simply look into each other's eyes.



A moment in class in which students Emmi Komlosi and Saara Anttonen are reading the exercise scripts. Photo: Leena Rouhiainen²

Phenomenological Inquiry into Insights from the Body Priming Classes

When I began working with the students, I shortly told them about my previous research interests and the students were made aware that materials such as class content, photos taken of the class situation, student feedback and interviews might be used in this research. This they all accepted and I promised to let them know when I would be using materials related to them. However, the theoretical frames such as phenomenology or the theories related to body psychotherapy were not discussed with them in any detail. Together with the students we focused on exploring bodily practice and consequent experiences and insights. During the workshop period, while observing the students working and seeing some of the performance materials they were devising, I became increasingly curious about how the students experienced the classes and what impact the classes might have had on the students' overall artistic project.

In the following paragraphs after discussing the methodological frame, I will present a phenomenological reading of the students' responses to the email questionnaire I sent them. My interpretations are limited, as only four out of the fourteen students answered the email. I sent the questionnaire to the

students four months after the project was over and they were already involved in their final thesis work. I assume it was those students who answered who most enjoyed or benefitted from the priming classes. Thus, the reading lacks views that challenge the work done in the classes. However, a phenomenological research orientation allows one to focus on a small sample of research material in order to understand the details of particular phenomena more closely. So I dared venture on, acknowledging that further investigation into the teaching practice would bring to the fore insights and interpretations beyond presented here. What is worth mentioning as well is that the overall artistic-pedagogical project has had an impact on the manner in which the students related to the work done in the body priming classes. The first version of this article was sent to the students whose interview material is examined here to be viewed and commented upon. They asked for no revisions.

The analysis and interpretation of the interview material followed a phenomenological approach in the following sense: To begin with, the questions posed to the students inquired into the nature of their experiences. In introducing the questions, I asked the students to focus on their experiences and write in descriptive terms. These are the questions I sent to the students:

1. What is the first impression of the bodywork sessions that you now remember?
2. What kind of observations or insights did you make during the bodywork session?
3. What kind of a relationship with yourself, your body did the bodywork sessions foster?
4. What kind of a relationship with the other participants did the bodywork sessions foster?
5. Did the bodywork support your overall process in the School for Unforced Errors in some manner?

The analysis of the student responses, on the first level, aims to be descriptive. It introduces an English translation of the written descriptions the students wrote³

about their experiences according to three themes that I found to running through their responses, namely, *modes of self-awareness, encounters with others, and constructing the performance*. These themes were partly derived on the basis of my knowledge of what had taken place in the classes and the project they related to, the questions given to the students, and in direct relation to the contents of their responses. The second level of analysis, or the interpretation, instead aims at interlinking the insights drawn from the interview material to the chosen philosophically oriented phenomenological works, which will be discussed in the next section of the article.

But how are the above-mentioned choices and procedures to be more closely understood as phenomenological? Phenomenological research as a mode of qualitative inquiry usually takes as its starting point the lived experience of particular individuals. It focuses thus on how individuals relate to the world and participate in it from an experiential and embodied point of view. It likewise aims at a fresh and rich description of these concretely lived experiences. What this initial idiographic approach means is that a small sample of interview material is a legitimate starting point for research. Typically either spoken or written and sufficiently detailed verbal descriptions of experiences by the research subjects are likewise considered to form a trustworthy research material to be analyzed further. The nature of their idiosyncratic experiences is considered to be sufficiently conveyable through the verbal accounts they make of them. In analysis, openness to the meanings entailed in consequent descriptive material is important, in order for the singular qualities of meaning to move the researcher's thinking further. Thus analysis follows firstly a non-commitment to presumptions and theoretical frameworks. However, especially in an interpretatively inclined phenomenological orientation the research problem and framework are tied to the life circumstances or situation of the researcher. For this

reason the subjectivity of the researcher becomes part of the research. In the case of this study, I am engulfed in the research through and through, not the least by participating in it as a teacher, observer, interviewer, analyst and interpreter, among other things. With my background as pedagogue, performer, and practitioner of the body awareness approaches utilized, I believe I opened up to a keen tacit or bodily attunement to what was happening in class. This accumulated into an embodied understanding that I carried with me of the teaching experiment and which had an impact on how I interpreted the interview material. In the end, while aiming to relate to the interview material sensitively and by acknowledging the otherness of the students, it is actually my increased and hopefully more general understanding of the explored subject that is laid bare in this article as I dialogue with the different source materials it relates to. Again, this is not considered a drawback as interpretatively oriented phenomenological research moves from particularities of experience to scrutinizing the more prevailing patterns they involve. It aims at a coherent consensus between the materials and people involved in the research. The reliability of phenomenological research is in the quality of the dialogue between the researcher and research materials. (Rouhiainen 2003; 2014; Finlay 2008; 2009; 2011.) For example, Linda Finlay who has written extensively on phenomenological methodology considers phenomenological research to be phenomenological when it involves both rich description of lived experience and when the researcher has adopted a special, open phenomenological attitude. This attitude requires an initial refraining from judging the realness of the explored phenomenon and viewing it through certain contextual frameworks. In her view, a phenomenological method is likewise sound if it links appropriately to some phenomenological philosophy. (Finlay 2009, 8.)

Now to move on to the actual interview material and the first level of analysis in which I bring excerpts

of the interview material together under the three themes mentioned earlier. With the first theme, modes of self-awareness, I brought together passages that discuss how the priming classes induced experiences related to the mood the students found themselves in, the kinds of observational attitude they enacted during class, the nature of their self-awareness. In my view, these experiences either open a view to the interiority of the students or are evoked by it:

Personal, voluntary, peace, time. I myself, my body, how are you? Probing, the existence of breath, becoming aware.

Accepting, observing, explorative, curious. The work drew attention towards the body and the space in between bodies.

The bodywork sessions have been for me a training of self-awareness, in particular I felt they were sharpening my own inner sensitivity, helping me to recognize very subtle processes of mutual impact between the mind and body.

It felt easy to become aware of different ways my attention was working, according to the different tasks. For example, when we were blinking our eyelids rapidly or training peripheral and focused sight, I could sense that very different inner operations were affecting the responses of my body.

I noticed many times that it was difficult for me to deepen and silence myself. In the beginning, the exercises felt tedious, but when I noticed that the tempo would not increase, it was calming. It was good that one could leave an exercise or do something else than asked for. I remember that the exercises often brought strong experiences of the skin's sense of touch.

I remember a calm rhythm of working, demanding in terms of concentration, sometimes physically relaxing, some other times physically exhausting, but never arousing mind-stress: during and after the work I felt my mind was clear and calm.

Brought together under the heading *encounters with others*, the following passages relate to interaction amongst the student members in the group. They point to a curiosity to explore interrelation, acknowledgement of boundaries between individuals, respect for and compassion towards the difference between the other and oneself, a susceptibility to one another as well as a sense of sharing or belonging together.

Encountering another is so interesting and often exciting or challenging.

Also to refuse and appreciate one's own boundaries, gently but determinately.

In my view when working in pairs my relationship with the other became more sensitive. The exercises brought forth my own and the other's vulnerability without it having been discussed. Perhaps respect towards the other's body now comes to mind.

I felt great harmony and respect towards my partners. During the "watching into the partner's eyes" session, it was easy for me to feel an emphatic response of love. I was not simply watching "into" my partner's eyes, but I had the intuition of watching "through" her/his own eyes.

My perceptions in relation to the others are also related to how I experienced myself and them, meaning if I was strongly bodily "present" my

relation to the others was closer since there was not such a strong intellectual differentiation in the encounter; instead the being together was the togetherness of shared flesh.

I moved together in space as a part of a group, a herd, of something that consisted of several bodies. I observed most a shared rhythm and style of being in movement. As we walked with our gaze focused on a clear object and again when we broke this and allowed our gaze to wander, I had the feeling of a collective manner of acting, something that extends or falls below the individual. A fish swarm.

The students had a few short insights into how the body priming work influenced constructing the performance, as well. Among other things, the classes had a calming effect in the midst of a stressful creative period. They continued and supported the playful quality of the performance project and offered support in tolerating incompleteness.

I did not experience the bodywork sessions as something isolated from the rest of our work: for me, the whole day was permeated by an atmosphere of simplicity, playfulness, lightness.

In general, since a long time, in this process it was easier for me to accept my own inadequacy in creating a performance. Our no-can-do group explored ineptitude. Exactly in face of the experience incompetence bodily work was very important. I can learn to tolerate the incompleteness of life, my own deficiency and perhaps also the imperfectness of the performance.

I believe that the sessions played an important role in the atmosphere of the performances.

I was grateful for them. When the morning classes finished as well as the daily practice, I felt like the true values came visible.

I remember them to have had a calming effect. For me who usually stresses a lot about theatre productions, the sessions had a grounding effect. I especially liked that we drew a picture of the proceedings of the week at the end of one that had been real turmoil.

The Potential of Cultivating Breath

In relation to the above accounts offered by the students and the manner in which they point towards sensitive awareness of both oneself and the other that the breathing work that we did in class engendered, it is worthwhile to think about the potential that breathing entails more closely through some phenomenological and psychoanalytic insights by Irigaray and Klemola. They contain descriptive analyses of the experientially transformative nature of practicing breathing-oriented somatic methods. In the following text interlinks between notions from the interview material are made to a summarized view of Irigaray's and Klemola's thoughts about breathing. Faithful to her oeuvre, while discussing breathing, Irigaray likewise contemplates sexual difference and especially feminine spirituality. My intention is not to forward her somewhat heteronormative views on sexuality. Instead it is to address those of her notions that help in further understanding the students' experiences and classroom activities

Inspired by Irigaray's texts and while exploring bodily learning and skill, Klemola (2004, 133) opines that there are two ways of breathing: one by cultivating breath, the other by forgetting breath. Klemola bases his phenomenological analysis on the practice of such oriental methods as Karate, Tai Chi, Yi Quan and Rinzai Zen meditation, and suggests that consciously cultivating awareness of one's breathing



Students Outi Paananen, Eerika Arposalo, and Saara Anttonen explore the felt sensation of their bodies through movement. Photo: Leena Rouhiainen

is a way of investigating one's inner spatiality and thus enhancing bodily awareness. With the term *contemplative body* Klemola denotes a bodily subjectivity that has become competent in sensing different qualities in bodily experiences and capable of grasping an evermore nuanced awareness of the body's felt-sense. Indeed, he considers body awareness a skill that can be cultivated. In his view, it is a process that mainly involves proprioception, which informs us about the movements of our body, muscle tensions and body position. But it likewise opens a shifting and ambiguous domain that contains such experiences as

pain, pleasure and other more ineffable qualitative characteristics. The dimension opened by both these experiential domains he describes as our *inner spatiality*. In his view, it is this experiential internal milieu that is the base of our sense of our vitality. (Klemola 2004, 81, 85, 89.) Klemola likewise argues that this dimension is related to empathy by stating that:

The experience of the other as a sentient being is based on my experience of myself as a sentient being. The more sensitively I experience the flow of life in my body, the deeper I experience the life in other sentient beings. The intensity of my emphatic experience is grounded in how intensively I experience the flow of life in myself. (Klemola 2004, 81) ⁴

My teaching was based on the assumption that sensitivity towards one's own bodily experiences indeed is something that can be cultivated. The students allude to having been in touch with a sense of vitality that Klemola discusses, as several of their comments presented in the previous section relate to their taking note of the observational attitude the exercises brought forth and that might be considered to open access to proprioception. They mention the following attitudes: *voluntary, personal, accepting, observing, probing, curious* and *sharpened inner sensitivity*. Similarly they are aware of some more ambiguous experiences that Klemola also points to. Some of these are moods, and the students relate to them with such terms as *peace, calm and clear*. They likewise make a few more detailed comments on the feelings and sensations of the processes of the body, for example, *recognizing the subtle mutual impact between mind and body*. Thus they attest to the fact that the priming classes provoked attention to what, according to Klemola's thinking, could be termed as one's inner spatiality. A sense of vitality is crucial in maintaining

our experience of being alive and living a meaningful life. Co-relatively, one of the students suggests that the work in the morning classes, like that in the overall project, made her perceive what she terms as *true values*. Additionally, there are points in the interview material that suggest that already inner spatiality lends itself to features that at least partially influence empathic relatedness, for example in that one student became aware of the *sense of touch* and another the *space in between bodies*. What Klemola writes about empathy seems to have an especially strong affiliation with what another student writes about his feelings of respect and empathy towards another student whose eyes he was looking into. He was able to be so sensitive to how he sensed the otherness of his partner that he intuited himself actually looking "*through*" his partner's eyes. In my view, this is a good example of how being aligned with one's inner spatiality opens appreciation of the otherness of the other.

Klemola's views offer a clarifying background from which to understand Irigaray's analysis on the effects that cultivating breathing can have on the subject that touch upon what the students write about, too. In several of her texts that are found in *Between East and West* (2002) and *Key Writings* (2004), she contemplates the significance of breath and breathing for the constitution of a singular subjectivity and its potential for grounding a new kind of ethical community. Irigaray's interest in respiration⁵ springs from the yoga practice she has engaged in for several decades now (see also Arlander 2008). She tells us that through it, "First, I learned to breathe. Breathing, according to me, corresponds to taking charge of one's own life" (Irigaray 2002, 50). She theorizes about breathing by maintaining that the cultivation of respiration constitutes the mental in a way that is not simply driven by social norms or instinctual behaviour. Irigaray goes so far as to argue that: "... we are not really born, nor really autonomous or living as long as we do not take care, in a conscious

and voluntary way, of our breathing” (Irigaray 2002, 74). Taking a step further than Klemola, she argues that cultivating breathing opens an avenue for the individual to acknowledge her autonomy in addition to her interiority. According to Irigaray, it offers her the possibility “to remain faithful to herself, to turn back to herself, within herself, to be born again free, animated by her own breath, her own words, her own gestures” (Irigaray 2004a, 166). And it is autonomy that founds ethical relations that appreciate the otherness of the other. In lacking proper borders, individuals cannot approach others without appropriating them in a manner that leaves behind who they are in their ownmost nature (Irigaray 2002, 18).

These views by Irigaray bring to focus the potential importance the cultivation of breath entails for *Garden of Errors* and *EPISODE III*, which aimed at ethical dialogue and acceptance of difference, and questioned the social norms inscribed in the students. The interview material itself relates to the autonomy of the subject in a manner that resonates with Irigaray’s thoughts. For example, one of the students shortly comments that the classes evoked the possibility of gently but determinately containing *one’s own boundaries* and another points out that in feeling *present* to oneself she was opened to a closer sense of being together with the other members of the group. Yet another student became aware of the vulnerability of both herself and the other group members while working together with them. Understanding *vulnerability*, I believe, is one basis for compassion and appreciation of the otherness of the other.

But to continue with what Irigaray offers: She opines that breathing and air offer a means to understanding difference, as they cannot be appropriated (Irigaray 2002, 79). Working with them entails a path of attentiveness and receptiveness to an energy that cannot be mastered (2004a, 168). It grants attention to the education of the body and of the senses, to their receptiveness to what can be

qualitatively unpredictable. This in turn can lead to a concentration and communication with the world that moves the individual from what Irigaray terms natural existence to a spiritual existence, to a desire that is not satisfied with consuming and annihilating the world but respects it and lives maturely together with it (Irigaray 2004b, 187). I suggest that the experiences of becoming *shared flesh*, part of a *herd* or *swarm* that a few of the students mention could be related to this. I understand them to arise as a consequence of an embodied attentiveness and a surrender to the ongoing flow of differences in group work that simultaneously allowed each member sufficient room for both their interior space and exterior relatedness to coexist in a smooth relationship.

In fact, I believe that some of the work done especially in the psychodynamic breathing therapy directly seeks what Irigaray describes as respectful and mature communication. A simple exercise that exemplifies this is the following: Encounter another person by retaining connection to the sensations and rhythm of your own breathing. According to Seppä and Martin, this allows the other to remain connected to their own breath and spirit alike (Maila Seppä and Minna Martin, personal conversation February 7, 2013). Unsurprisingly, my experience confirms their view and this understanding informed my approach to teaching. There were no instructions as to how to solve the exercises, except suggestions to observe what one experiences and how one relates to the assignments. I also tried to allow my breath to flow unhindered and to stay aware of or connected to the students and activities going on in class. One student finds the openness of the exercises positive by stating that *it was good that one could leave an exercise or do something else than asked for*. Another points out that despite being *demanding in terms of concentration, sometimes physically relaxing, some other times physically exhausting, never arousing mind-stress*. To me both these comments suggest an atmosphere of trust

and openness to one’s own way of experiencing and working through the tasks in the class.

Nonetheless in her writings, Irigaray does not reason as to why breath work can offer a means to construct interiority, integrity, and autonomy for the subject. This might owe to the fact that what happens while working in this way is ineffable. It needs to be experienced in order to be concretely understood. Klemola likewise introduces the difficulty of talking and writing about the inner spatiality the contemplative body opens. He states that “when we listen to the vitality of our bodies and try to describe them, we have to use metaphors and similes” (Klemola 2004, 138).⁶ The students’ responses to the questions follow this logic. Their writings do not have many detailed descriptions of the sensations of the body; the felt-sense is often described in one word or two. Nonetheless, even if Irigaray does not explain reasons for the impact or the exact procedures of cultivating respiration, she does write about the teaching that conveys the potential that breathing entails. In her view it is a compassionate teaching that transmits an experience (Irigaray 2002, 58, 79). The teacher shares the breath she enlivens with the student. In the classes, in addition to myself, each student was a teacher to the other students through the shared work they did together. Yet, no one can accomplish the process of cultivating breath for another. Someone else’s experience or instructions cannot substitute one’s own path in learning to breathe (Irigaray 2004a, 165). It requires attentive listening, silence and continued gentle practice.

To consider the space of compassionate teaching a bit further: In sharing breathing exercises with a teacher or another person, an interrelation, what psychoanalyst Donald W. Winnicott termed a potential space, can be established. This space is an area in which our distinction from the other is a form of being together—a togetherness in which we have access to external reality and can retain a vital connection to our internal images as well (Kurkela 2004; Martin

et al. 2010). It is a creative space of mutual rapport and care. Here one’s experience encounters another’s experience through the attuning of breathing, voice, gesture, touch and rhythm. It is thus based on bodily communication. It is a mediating space of respectful and open-ended encountering and play. In it an individual can form a connection to her or his internal reality. By finding an integrated relation to it, the individual can likewise open to others from its basis. Thus, the potential space is such sharing that allows us to give up our magical or omnipotent views on the world and build genuine interaction between ourselves and a separate external reality. (Kurkela 2004; Martin et al. 2010.) Sharing breathing is especially opportune for the emergence of this intermediate potential space, as phenomenologist Drew Leder points out:

Physiologically, respiration stands at the very threshold of the ecstatic and visceral, the voluntary and involuntary. While we can modulate our breathing at will, it is primarily an automatic function. The meditator finds that he or she “is breathed” as much as the breather. Watching the breath come in and go out for minutes or hours, one is saturated by the presence of a natural power that outruns the “I”. . . Inside and outside, self and Other, are relativized, porous, each time one takes a breath. The air is constantly transgressing boundaries, sustaining life through interconnections. (Leder 1990; 171–172)

I believe that during the body priming classes there were at least some moments in which a potential space was enacted, especially in such instances when students worked with each other in pairs: They touched and held each other simply to support each other’s breathing, they sat and silently looked into each other’s eyes, they explored to what proximity it felt comfortable for them to allow another person approach them and so on. Here their actions and reactions were mediated on the

basis of bodily understanding of their encounters and relatedness with each other. The students introduce observations as to how the body priming classes supported the emergence of a creative potential space related to the overall artistic project. One describes that the bodywork sessions were aligned with and offered foundation for the project by stating that *the whole day was permeated by an atmosphere of simplicity, playfulness, lightness*. Another discusses how the sessions gave her a more stable support to work from in the creative process by writing that: *for me who usually stresses a lot about theatre productions, the sessions had a grounding effect*. Yet another student experienced the classes to help in coming to terms with her sense of incompetence: *exactly in face of the experience incompetence bodily work was very important. I can learn to tolerate the incompleteness of life, my own deficiency and the perhaps also the imperfectness of the performance*.

Summing Up

All in all, the interview material implies that the students became aware of their own sensations and thus interiority, of their individual limits, of a silent sharing and togetherness, as well as the ability to surrender some of their personal control through the exercises in the priming classes. I would even like to claim that the students' comments convey an acceptance of their singularity and the difference of the other in a manner that seems to have suited the overall goals of the artistic collaboration. Perhaps the students' experiences in the body priming classes supported the collaborative group's formation into a community that, while exploring being-in-common, opened up their habitual gestures for new potential use—and in so doing paved the way for new collective modes of articulating errors, dancing, acting and performing (see e.g. Lepecki 2013; Nancy 1991). I have to underline, though, that this certainly is not the result of the body priming classes alone. Instead, the student feedback suggests that the



Students Saara Anttonen and Outi Paananen exploring interaction with the aid of a stick. Photo: Leena Rouhiainen.

classes suited and supported the overall approach of the performance project. Nonetheless, according to the feedback during the body priming classes, there were moments in which encounters and even community was built in the sense that Irigaray calls for, that is, with receptiveness to both the subjects' own singularity and the otherness of the other. This in her view offers foundations for a new kind of community that takes into account particularities, differences, contingencies and opens a non-inscribed space liberated from the imperatives of one single culture (Irigaray 2004c, 175). Following Klemola's suggestion, this could be described as an ethics of the heart, in which the foundation for virtues is sought through experience and practice instead of learning moral social norms by rote (Klemola 2004, 266). Cultivating breathing can create a process in which we give ourselves back to ourselves as ethically co-embodied vital subjectivities for whom the body and interaction with others and the environment is no longer given but creatively produced anew in each instant (Irigaray 1991; Manning 2007).

However, this cultivation requires an appropriate pedagogical approach that requires compassionate teaching, which I believe Riku and Toni enacted during the overall project and I attempted to do as well in the body priming classes. Further dialogue with their doctoral research, a part of which *The School*

of Unforced Errors is, would be required to produce deeper insights into the overall pedagogical approach of the project and its implications in producing ethical artistic collaboration. I will end with a quotation from a text Riku and Toni have drafted together on their pedagogical approach, as I want to acknowledge the discussed teaching experiments' indebtedness to their work. The quotation addresses their metaphoric understanding of the kind of third space their collaborative pedagogy entails and aptly points to air. I believe it reveals their quest for what was introduced earlier in this article as a potential space. This article has aimed to substantiate that cultivating breath through body awareness exercises can foster such. These are Toni's words evocative words on something that is best experienced and witnessed together:

I think that the third is present in us all the time and perhaps like a gas it fills space when necessary. I do not know if this way of talking about the issue is too abstract or enigmatic, but I want to find ways to understand the nature of collaboration. Why does it work between some? But also, when working why does it pulse in different ways? How do we listen to the changing moods of others and how do we react to them? It is said that partners learn to sense each other almost telepathically knowing what is going on in each instance. Is this the gas between us? At times I inhale air and at others I blow carbon dioxide out. A gas can travel anywhere, it fits even between small gaps, it can be tasteless and odorless. You do not necessarily notice it, yet at the same time it crucially influences everything and surrounds our activities. At its best, collaboration is fresh, healing air that is easy to breathe, at its worst a lethal toxic gas. (Kauppila and Saastamoinen 2014, 15)⁷

Notes

- 1 Owing to renewed regulations related to psychotherapy education in Finland, the character analytic body psychotherapy training program was terminated in 2011, and I could not complete the final stage of my training. I am not a licensed therapist.
- 2 The photographs were taken during class by me with the permission of the students. The students in the photographs presented in this article have given permission to publish them with their names
- 3 Three of the four students wrote their answers in Finnish, the fourth in English. I have not included the original Finnish passages from the interview material in the footnotes to retain the anonymity of the student writing in English.
- 4 Translation by the author. Original text: "Kokemus toisesta tuntevana olentona perustuu kokemukseeni itsestäni tuntevana olentona. Mitä herkemmin koen kehossani virtaavan elämän, sitä syvemmin koen elämän muissa tuntevissa olennoissa. Empatian kokemukseni intensiivisyys perustuu siihen, miten intensiivisesti koen elämän virran itsessäni" (Klemola 2004, 81).
- 5 Irigaray uses the term respiration and breath interchangeably when writing about her views on cultivating breathing. In presenting her views, I follow her example. But more generally in this article, I will use the term breath to substantiate terminology that is typical to dance and theatre-related somatic practices and training methods, even if both of the following meanings are often implied. In general usage, the term breath relates more closely to the ventilation process of inhalation and exhalation, while respiration denotes the metabolic process on the cellular level.
- 6 Translation by author. Original text: "... kuunnelllessamme kehomme vitaalisuutta ja yrittäessämme kuvata sitä, joudumme käyttämään metaforia ja vertauksia" (Klemola 2004, 138).
- 7 Translation by author. Original text: "Ajattelen, että kolmas on tietysti meissä kokoajan läsnä ja ehkä kaasun tavoin, se täyttää tilan tarvittaessa. En tiedä, onko tämä tapa puhua asiasta liian abstrakti tai mystinen, mutta haluan kuitenkin löytää jotain tapoja hahmottaa kollaboraation olemusta. Miksi se joidenkin välillä toimii? Mutta myös, miksi se toimiessaankin

sykkii eri tavoin? Miten kuuntelemme toisen vaihtuvia mielen-tiloja ja reagoimme niihin? Sanotaan, että partnerit oppivat aistimaan toisiaan lähes telepaattisesti, tietämään missä mennään milloinkin. Onko tämä juuri se kaasu meidän välillämme? Välillä vedän ilmaa keuhkoihin, välillä puhallan hiilidioksidia ulos. Kaasu voi mennä minne vain, se mahtuu pienistäkin väleistä, se voi olla hajuton ja mauton. Sitä ei välttämättä huomaa, mutta samalla se vaikuttaa ratkaisevasti kaikkeen ympäröiden toimintaamme. Parhaimmillaan yhteistyö on rakasta, tervehdyttävää ilmaa, jota on helppo hengittää, pahimmillaan tappavaa myrkykaasua” (Kauppila & Saastamoinen 2014, 150).

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BIOGRAPHY

Leena Rouhiainen works as professor in artistic research and is the head of the Performing Arts Research Centre as well as vice dean of research at the Theatre Academy of the University of the Arts Helsinki. She is a dancer-choreographer and somatically oriented dance teacher. Together with her artistic collaborators, as a member of the Suomussalmi-improvisation group she has received several national awards for their artistic work in Finland. After submitting her phenomenologically oriented doctoral dissertation on freelance dance artists (2003), she has been awarded funding for several research projects by the Academy of Finland. She has edited books and published articles related to phenomenology, artistic research, somatics, dance and performing. She has been the chair and vice-chair of the board of Nordic Forum for Research in Dance (NOFOD). She is a member of the board of the Society for Artistic Research.

KIRJOITAJA:

Leena Rouhiainen on taiteellisen tutkimuksen professori, esittävien taiteiden tutkimuskeskuksen johtaja ja varadekaani Taideyliopiston Teatterikorkeakoulussa. Hän on tanssija-koreografi ja somaattisesti orientoitunut tanssinopettaja. Suomussalmiryhmän jäsenenä hänelle on myönnetty useampi kansallinen palkinto taiteellisesta työstä. Fenomenologisesti orientoitunut freelancetanssitaiteilijuutta käsittelevän (2003) väitöstutkimuksensa jälkeen hän toiminut useammassa Suomen Akatemian myöntämässä tutkimustehtävässä ja tutkimushankkeen johtajana. Hän on toimittanut kirjoja ja kirjoittanut artikkeleita fenomenologiseen ja taiteelliseen tutkimukseen, somatiikkaan, tanssiin ja esiintymiseen liittyen. Hän on toiminut Nordic Forum for Research in Dance (NOFOD) -hallituksen puheenjohtajana ja varapuheenjohtajana. Hän on Society for Artistic Research –hallituksen jäsen.

Becoming Gypsy: Tell Me What the Body Knows in Flamenco Dance

Diane Oatley

ABSTRACT

In *The Meaning of the Body*, philosopher Mark Johnson makes a case for the significance of movement in terms of the body processes he holds as essential to the generation of meaning and knowledge acquisition in physical interaction with the world—equally essential as language and cognition. The article employs this theory in interpreting the experiences of women learning flamenco dance in Spain. The investigation of the perceptions of women studying flamenco dance, a dance tradition often defined as “gypsy,” indicates that exposure to flamenco dance and culture leads to revision of stereotypes regarding embodiment and difference, but respondents did not relate this revision to bodily engagement, or physical processes particular to dancing flamenco. Although Johnson’s failure to properly account for the role of the unconscious proved to be a serious shortcoming in the theory, and one which had implications for the findings, application of the theory disclosed the parameters of a discourse on the body in flamenco. The theory thus represents a radical gesture in redefining embodiment in its own right in a manner that precludes dualism with the consequent opening of a range of alternative perspectives on the articulation of embodied knowledge.

SAMMENDRAG

I *The Meaning of the Body* gjør filosofen Mark Johnson rede for hvordan bevegelse og fysisk utforskning av verden er grunnleggende for menings- og kunnskapsproduksjon hos mennesker, like grunnleggende som språklige og kognitive prosesser. Artikkelen ser på kvinners erfaringer i læring av flamenco dans i Spania i lys av teorien, særlig med tanke på evt. holdningsendringer i forhold til sigøynernes betydning i flamenco. Kontakt med flamencodans og dens tilhørende kultur førte til en endring av oppfatninger omkring den spanske sigøynerkulturen hos kvinnene som ble intervjuet i undersøkelsen. Ingen av kvinnene derimot ga uttrykk for at disse endringene hadde sammenheng med fysiske prosesser, følelser, persepsjoner eller fornemmelser i forbindelse med å danse flamenco. Selv om Johnsons teori syntes dermed å komme til kort da den ikke tar en klar stilling til underbevissthets og det denne hadde av konsekvenser for funnene, avdekkes det ved hjelp av teorien konturene til en diskurs omkring kroppsforståelsen i flamenco som kunnskapsfelt. Teorien representerer dermed et radikalt grep i den grad den omdefinierer det kroppslige på et vis som overskrider dualisme og slik åpner opp for alternative perspektiver på kroppslig viten.

Becoming Gypsy: Tell Me What the Body Knows in Flamenco Dance

Diane Oatley

Introduction

Hundreds of women travel to Andalusia every year from all over the world to study flamenco dance. Why women decide to make such a journey and what they are seeking to achieve is, of course, very individual. Flamenco dance has in fact a multitude of manifestations: it is both a dance for the stage and a folkloric practice, and the role of the *gitano*¹ population in the development and practice of flamenco remains a source of controversy. In this regard, the *gitano*, whether perceived as a mythical figure, a cultural identity, or an ethnic or racial category, represents a complex site of negotiation that dancers who come to Spain from abroad to study flamenco must address in their journey to understand the dance as an aesthetic practice and art form, as a tradition, how and where it takes place, its position in society, and the role it has assumed or been assigned in terms of cultural identity. Flamenco dance scholar Michelle Heffner Hayes offers the following explanation for some of the underlying complexity:

Flamenco dance has a multitude of manifestations and the role of the gitano population in flamenco remains a source of controversy. On stage here is dancer Miguel Angel Heredia from Jerez de la Frontera. Photo: Loly Castellano Alcedo.



A gypsy at the time of Cervantes or Mérimée had a different ethnicity, a different community and way of life from that at the turn of the century or today. However, the category of “gypsy” retains some of its exotic, mythical significance in contemporary contexts. In flamenco dance, the “gypsy” style exists independently of gypsy bodies, or rather, constructs gypsy bodies through the layering of coded visual and audible signifiers. (Hayes 2009, 137)

The negotiation of this complexity is a learning process that is lived and unfolds in different ways in different women. I was interested in exploring how practitioners experience this process, both within and outside of the dance studio/performance space. Did the experience of learning about flamenco culture specifically through the practice of dancing in the art form’s originary setting produce a particular form of knowledge about that culture and its manner of being in the world? Second, in exploring the *gitano* identity as found in flamenco, or the specific manifestations of flamenco perceived as being particular to *gitano* practitioners with an eye to its embodiment, are practitioners seeking to “become gypsy” or, at the very least, to learn to dance like the “Other(s),” however they have or have not defined this for themselves? A Finnish study of teachers of transnational dances in Finland suggests that “probably it is specifically this [Spanish] exoticism that attracts people first” (Siljamäki, Anttila, and Sääkslahti 2012, 8) to flamenco. The authors state further that:

According to the teachers, many Finns—both the so-called general public and some of the beginners in flamenco dance—still consider flamenco a feature of Spanish exoticism, and this may have several different implications. Some of the amateur flamenco dancers are drawn by this dance form because they find it different, fascinating, and exotic. (Siljamäki et al. 2012, 8)

To reframe my question in these terms, are women who come to flamenco initially seeking to “become exotic” in the sense of finding expression for and/or embodying through dance a felt sense of exoticism, which they otherwise do not find space for in their own culture? Based on the above, it is reasonable to believe so. Is this perception of the above-cited exoticism of flamenco gradually shed and revised in the process of learning the dance in the site of its sociocultural origins?

These questions in themselves proved to be fraught with a number of issues: On the one hand, I was looking for something more than “socially desirable responses” and was unsure about how to acquire these. I was also interested in disclosing knowledge that was specific to the experience of dancing and dancers. Finally, I wanted to employ an approach that would enable me to steer clear of any Orientalist² assumptions that one might best access the *gitano* identity, and any perceived exoticism pertaining to this, through dance and the body. The idea that, by moving into a state of being-subsumed by/in the body through dance, one will be better equipped to become/access the Other, relegates the Other to a position outside of language, as if that Other could be somehow reduced to the body, thereby rendering it dumb and mute, to be best understood sensually.

Embodiment in and of itself is neither an authentic or privileged state—it does not enable us to “access” the soma³ of other bodies in a manner that is more true. The issue thus became how to go about exploring these questions without further perpetuating stereotypes and in a manner that enabled bypassing a reactionary fetishizing of the body as the bearer of “the real,” also in my own perception of embodiment (Hewitt 2005, 7). Inversely, how can one get away from privileging cognitive knowledge as more true than the knowledge of the body? In short, is it even possible in such an endeavor to bypass dualist thought and all of its trappings?

The Meaning of the Body

What I was looking for was a theory that configured the body and knowledge in a manner opening up for the possibility of thinking about these issues through different parameters. This search brought me to the theory of philosopher Mark Johnson as presented in *The Meaning of the Body*. Working within the interdisciplinary field of embodied cognitive science, Johnson makes a case for the significance of movement, perception, and emotion in terms of the primary body processes he holds as essential to our production of meaning and knowledge acquisition in interaction with situations in the world. The embodied cognitivism of Johnson as outlined in this book and in earlier writings with George Lakoff (Lakoff and Johnson 1999) has been addressed by dance studies scholars from a number of sub-disciplines ranging from kinesthetic empathy studies to dance ethnography, and critical performance and movement studies.⁴ Drawing from findings in neuroscience, what Johnson’s theory explores is not only how the body is lived, but how the body experiences and is wholly implicated in the acquisition of knowledge and sense-making, as he makes a case for the mind and body as a continuum. On the basis of this, he claims that “it is originally through movement that we come to inhabit a world that makes sense to us [...] we literally discover ourselves in movement” (Johnson 2007, 20).

Johnson’s theory thus rejects mind-body dualism, stating that “the cognitive/emotive dichotomy [that pervades Western philosophy] does more harm than good” (Johnson 2007, 9). Instead, Johnson holds that meaning is actually grounded in our bodily experience, reaching deep into our physical encounter with the world: there is no disembodied mind, no transcendent soul or ego that is the source of meaning. Thought is not something external that we apply through our intellect to represent our experience. Meaning emerges from our sensorimotor perceptions, our feelings and visceral connections to our world, and

our imaginative capacities to create abstract concepts out of the continuum of lived experience. Reason is an embodied event, by which our experience is explored, criticized, and transformed in inquiry. It is tied to structures of our perceptual and motor capacities and inextricably linked to feeling. Emotion is significant because “what is meaningful to us and how it is meaningful depends fundamentally on our ongoing monitoring of our bodily states as we experience (have feelings about) and act within situations in our world” (Johnson 2007, 57).

The theory thereby offers a means of rethinking knowledge in a manner that profoundly institutes the body, sensation, and perception, and the role of emotions/feelings in knowledge acquisition. All of these types of experiences are traditionally discounted by Western science and philosophy as subjective and therefore as not being “factual,” scientific, or even useful in determining truth. To understand embodied meaning, Johnson maintains that you must look at the affordances of felt qualities – meaningful qualities and patterns of bodily experience, which ground our more abstract structures of meaning. Central to his theory is the connection of abstract thought to sensorimotor experience through what he calls image schemas—“dynamic, recurring pattern[s] of organism-environment interaction” (Johnson 2007, 136) that enable us to make sense of and navigate the world – and metaphor, which “makes it possible to extend body-based meaning and inference into abstract thought” (Johnson 2007, 177).

Johnson stresses, however, that meaning cannot be delimited to such felt qualities, nor to conscious thought, both of which can only *lead us* to meaning. The sensorimotor processes he is describing are by his own admission predominantly automatic and unconscious. He notes, “Mostly, meaning emerges for us beneath the level of our conscious awareness” (Johnson 2007, 17). So, although meaning-making, as Johnson defines it, is intimately tied to perception and

emotions, this does not necessarily imply a *conscious* feeling of the emotion having a meaning, and in fact, as he concedes, in most cases it does not. While he explains at length how such unconscious processes of embodied meaning-making take place neurologically speaking, and relates this to metaphor, the broader implications of his theory for language (if any) or more importantly for discourse and power remain unaddressed. As will be seen, for the purposes of this study, the fact that “most of this ongoing processing and action is never consciously entertained” (Johnson 2007, 68) proved to have immediate ramifications for the findings, not least because my thesis question relates to preconceived notions.

Methodology

I interviewed five women who had been dancing flamenco for four years or more, where at least half of that time had been spent learning the dance in Spain. The women were from Spain, the Netherlands, Canada, Norway, and Japan. With the exception of the Spanish woman, all the women first began learning flamenco dance outside of Spain, in their respective countries of origin, and subsequently moved to Spain to pursue study of the dance in depth and with time began dancing professionally. As such, all of the women, again with the exception of the woman from Spain, pursued flamenco dance as if it were a job: it was a full-time endeavor involving regular classes and private rehearsal on a daily basis. The Spanish woman was from Jerez de la Frontera, and did not begin dancing until late in life. She was the only one of the group with no professional ambitions, but she invested all of her free time and resources on activities such as studying the dance and the music, attending concerts, and taking private lessons and group classes. One of the women was based in her native country at the time of the interview, and performed and taught internationally, while all of the other women travelled back to their countries on a regular basis to perform

and teach flamenco.

I conducted the interviews individually and in person (orally as opposed to in writing). The interviews were structured and based on a list of questions I had prepared in advance (see appendix) in Spanish or English. The interview style was informal, and transpired as a conversation in which I pursued relevant information through follow-up questions. I assured the informants of their anonymity as a means of enabling them to open up and share experiences that they otherwise might not want spread throughout the flamenco community. For this reason, when I make direct quotations below, I do not mention the nationality of the woman in question; furthermore, the subject of nationality was neither addressed as a part of the interviews, and at this preliminary juncture, its relevance has not been entertained. The interviews were very interesting for a number of reasons, not least from a narrative standpoint. I would have liked to have commented on the details here, but for reasons of space I will restrict myself to a summary of main findings. The most striking feature of the material relevant to the question at hand was in fact a commonality in the nature of their experiences, or more specifically, in the way they spoke about them, as will be discussed below. Neither do I present or explore the diversity of their backgrounds. However, the commonality of their responses was in fact all the more striking given the diversity of nationalities, dance backgrounds, and personal histories.

My position as researcher as pertains to methodology. I began studying flamenco dance in Oslo, Norway in 2002, and travelled to Jerez in 2005 for the first time to take flamenco dance classes in Spain. I have since that time spent on average six months every year in Jerez de la Frontera studying the dance. My position as a foreign student, with a long-term relationship to flamenco's host culture, thus mirrors that of my informants. This found expression in the inductive nature of the interviews. I was not seeking to

uncover a “reality” or “truth,” but rather to encourage and take part in the construction of a narrative about the bodily experiences of studying flamenco dance in Spain. With this in mind, I designed the questions to target Johnson's felt qualities—meaningful qualities and patterns of bodily experience as explained above — particularly through follow-up questions on what I perceived as the expression of relevant information. None of the informants had a dance studies or theoretical background, and neither did I present or seek to teach them the theories forming the basis of the study. The underlying intention was then in part to “stage” an (implicit) encounter of theory with practice with an eye towards, on the one hand, testing the veracity of the theory itself and, on the other, exploring the nature of a potential discourse of the body in the experience of dancing flamenco in Spain.

How Does It Feel?

Will dancers who have spent the greater portion of their lives working with precisely the levels of knowledge that Johnson seeks to elucidate have a more acute understanding of what he proposes as the inevitably embodied nature of knowledge? In being experts in movement, will they then, as a matter of course, also expertly produce meaningful metaphors about that expertise? And on the basis of such expertise, will women coming to flamenco with all kinds of stereotypes about that tradition, through the experience of learning the dance, gain and produce knowledge through the learning of the dance itself that will inevitably undo those very prejudices?

With regard to the question of becoming gypsy, what the interviews revealed was that the respondents' exposure to flamenco dance and the culture of flamenco led to a revision of received notions regarding ethnicity, difference, and otherness particular to that same culture. In other words, they all gave me politically correct, well-informed responses and otherwise demonstrated an awareness of the complexity

of the *gitano* community and the role of the *gitano* in the history and practice of flamenco dance. However, they did not relate this revision to bodily engagement, movement acquisition, or other forms of sensory perception experienced while dancing. On the whole, their responses for the most part bypassed the level of physical sensations altogether, to such an extent that the obvious conclusion was that they either were not aware of any processes taking place at this level or, if they were, were not able to verbalize them. When asked whether learning to dance flamenco had introduced new embodied knowledge⁵ or bodily experiences, most of them had difficulties understanding the question, and gave little or no indication of this having taken place. This was the case no matter how I reformulated the questions. For example, one woman cited articles and books she had read, and although I reminded her again and again that I was interested in her experiences, she seemed unable or unwilling to speak of these. The “experience” she wanted or was able to give me was that of what she had read about flamenco and dance.

Three of the five women had dance-related injuries at the time of the interviews. None of them understood these injuries as a potential source of new knowledge about themselves, the art form of flamenco dance, or about dance in general. They did not contextualize their injuries within the situation of dancing flamenco, or as being something particular to their own manner of responding to the dance. Their perception of their injuries was wholly instrumental, a mechanical, health condition to be treated, viewed as a malfunction for which they were personally responsible, as opposed to a potential cause for reflection about any felt qualities of the movement patterns specific to the aesthetic of flamenco dance, the teaching methods to which they had been exposed, or any other type of physical process particular to the dance or learning situations.

Two of the respondents did speak about, on

the one hand, a changed body image: “I accept my large frame in a way I did not before; there is more acceptance for this in flamenco”; and on the other, improved self-esteem: “I have more self-confidence since I started dancing flamenco. My body is stronger. I feel proud of myself as a woman.” I find this to be relevant to the issues at hand, although the respondents again did not specifically relate these changes to any experiences particular to the physical processes or sensations involved in learning the dance or dancing; rather, this was presented more as an unintended outcome or a side-effect. But certainly the fact that the dance practice produced a revision of their body image is relevant, and it is of interest that the discourse they used to speak about this was a psychologizing discourse, on the one hand, and the discourse of self-esteem, on the other. These represent perhaps the most available discourse we currently have on hand to speak about such processes.

Another respondent made clear reference to a transition in her learning experience whereby she came to understand flamenco dance as being about self-expression, about the importance of finding “her own” flamenco. In this context, she described a very specific experience whereby she ceased “copying” the teacher’s movements, and began “pulling the dance out of [herself], from inside of [her] body.” When I followed up by asking her how this felt, she elaborated that it implied “a particular embodied understanding, greater presence, more coordination, and interaction between different parts of the body.” So rather than exploring in greater depth any specific sensations or feelings involved in “pulling [the dance] out of [her] body,” which I viewed as a complex observation and an opening to precisely the types of knowledge I was interested in exploring, her subsequent explanation closed this opening, shifting instead into a formalized and general contemporary dance vocabulary, using concepts such as presence and embodied understanding. I do not want to dismiss this out of

hand as being irrelevant: it is a type of knowledge and a valid means of describing experience. However, it also serves to highlight precisely some of the parameters I am seeking to transcend by encouraging the women to consider *how it feels* to dance flamenco. Understanding the flamenco dancing body through the lens of contemporary dance will of necessity serve to delineate those areas (if any) in which the two dance practices are similar, and risks bypassing altogether that which is particular to flamenco. I will expand upon this point below.

The same woman spoke of the experience of dancing with live music, and how “the guitar music goes right into your body.” When I asked her to comment on this further, whether she had any recollections of how this felt, she replied that “the movements of the dance come of themselves [...] that I stop thinking and let the body improvise.” She moved here again from a personal statement, opening up an embodied experience, to close it, in this case through a reinstatement of a mind-body dualism: the implication is that it was when she stopped thinking that her body movements were freed. Thought is contrary to “free” movement.

One of the respondents did speak briefly and articulately about sensation in relation to the dance, stating that, when she danced well, it was as if her “blood vessels seemed to expand and [her] blood was vibrating.” This is an experience I could identify with, as an informed viewer of the dance, in the sense of a particular kinesthetic texture that is produced in flamenco. In my mind, it also corresponds with what Johnson would call the felt qualities produced through a given aesthetic, in a given situation. This respondent was thus able to identify and verbalize an awareness of bodily sensations that were specific to her experience of dancing flamenco. But they fed only back into the dance itself: she demonstrated no awareness that the sensations she was able to speak about might have consequences in a broader sense, for herself personally,

or her perception of (her own) embodied identity, of these sensations being a potential opening for further reflection about flamenco or the dance itself, her practice of it, alternative perceptions about life, aesthetics—in sort, as an opening for the production of knowledge.

So What If I Can’t Talk About It?

To paraphrase William James (quoted in Johnson 2007, 92), what sensible difference to any-body does the theory’s truth make? What does it mean that these women – all of whom it must be said were highly educated, intelligent, and extremely articulate – for the most part did not refer in any sense to experiences related to sensation, perception, feelings? There was very little reflection whatsoever about their experiences with the dance that surpassed on the one hand a predominantly dualist, instrumental view of the body, and on the other a very conventional, even romantic, perception of dance as transcendent performance object.

Reading these findings against Johnson’s theory, what can also be identified here is a grey zone, comprising non-verbalized layers of experience, between a psychologizing discourse or the discourse of self-esteem, which posits a very specific and in fact conventional perception of knowledge and the body, and a discourse for the description of sensation that remains sequestered, if not within the body’s soma, then within the understanding of dance as artifact referred to above. I am not saying that either of these experiences are wrong; neither am I saying that an understanding of dance as artifact or transcendent object represented here is defunct or without value. The latter is also a tradition that is very much present in flamenco and a thread that has played a very important part in the evolution of the dance itself, with regard to the mutually influential practices of flamenco as folkloric practice and flamenco as dance for the stage.

What I am suggesting is that this particular understanding of dance and its concomitant transmission does not stimulate the types of reflections or processes that I was hoping to find: it presupposes an understanding of embodiment and aesthetics, an understanding of meaningful movement that is very different from the implications of Johnson’s theory which, as I will seek to show, offers among other things the possibility of thinking about dance also as *enactment* rather than solely mimetic spectacle. Such a perspective would be of interest with respect to women coming to the dance from outside of flamenco’s sociocultural context, who will of necessity be dancing flamenco unhinged from its [originary] “putative historical determinants” (Hewett 2005, 212). This feeds immediately into the site of negotiation that is the focus of this article. However, what was revealed by the study is that the interview subjects had in fact very specific unquestioned, preconceived notions about dance and the body, which either had been reinforced by the tradition of flamenco itself, or at the very least, flamenco had not led them to question these.⁶ These notions in fact presented a stumbling block in the investigation with regard to exploring any ideas they may or may not have had about *gitanos* cultural identity. As such, rather than answering the specific question I had posed at the outset, the study served to open up and give further nuance to the field of investigation.

Second, what is at stake here is the articulation of types of experience and knowledge that are so profoundly devalued by our culture that we do not view them as important: such experiences are merely “subjective,” personal, private, and therefore not scientific. In an interview situation, the respondents were seeking to provide me with information that would be valuable to a study, however they might define this. They sought to appear well-informed and intelligent, and also to demonstrate their (extensive) knowledge of flamenco, all of which are agendas in

which such “subjective knowledge” or “emotional experiences” will not even be considered, no matter how much I explicitly asked for this. For indeed, as Johnson emphasizes, “One of the serious limitations of philosophy and of much cognitive science[...] is that it tends to equate meaning with language, more specifically with propositional language” (Forceville 2008).

Another interpretation is that it is simply not possible to speak about such things—that we do not, on the one hand as I intimated above, have an available discourse by which to refer to them, and that, on the other, that there are quite simply levels of embodied experience that cannot be told. I would however maintain that, if knowledge exists, it must be possible if not to express it in straightforward terms, at least to *refer to it*, to say something *about* it. This leads us back to all of that which Johnson holds cannot be “consciously entertained” as mentioned above, which I would propose is a wrench in the mind-body continuum Johnson is proposing here. However, while I cannot speak about the knowledge of my heart that enables its beating, there are nonetheless many other layers of sensation that I can certainly become conscious of and reflect upon, however much I may be little practiced at doing so. Johnson himself insists upon this, stating that “...once you start to pay attention to how you feel as you think, you will notice an entire submerged continent of feeling that supports, and is part of, your thoughts” (Johnson 2007, 97). The implication would appear to be that it is necessary to cultivate a particular type of awareness. Despite this, and despite Johnson’s insistence to the contrary, an insidious dualism is reinstated in the theory between that which can and cannot be known, whereby the body (and by extension, dance) is inevitably relegated to the obscure realm of the unconscious/unknowable. I would maintain that it is here that a barrier remains securely in place, with respect to any revolutionary implications this theory might have.

Where Discourse Meets Practice

I would hold that Johnson’s theory is valuable for dance studies because of its proposed reconfiguration of the traditional body-mind dualism by which Western philosophy organizes the world. In the context of this study, the theory did, albeit somewhat by default, serve to shed light on a meaningful path towards the formulation of an alternative understanding of the body and knowledge. Although it is perhaps the case that many of the experiences Johnson holds as being critical to knowledge production cannot be told, his theory represents a radical gesture to the extent that it suggests a redefinition of embodiment in its own right, with a basis in neuroscience, and along with it, the cognitive/emotive dichotomy that pervades Western philosophy. It hereby offers sufficient grounds for a rethinking of our definitions of knowledge because, in the very simplest of terms, what Johnson is saying is that our meaning-making is always inevitably embodied—and that embodiment is of interest to the extent that we can come to grips with it not as a representation of ideas, but as something ideological in its own right.

It is of interest to note in closing that the subtitle of Johnson’s book is “Aesthetics of Human Understanding.” He explains the use of the word *aesthetics* here by stating: “Aesthetics is not just art theory, but rather should be regarded broadly as the study of how humans make and experience meaning, because the processes of embodied meaning in the arts are the very same ones that make linguistic meaning possible” (Johnson 2007, 209). There is an obvious and interesting convergence here with the insights of cultural studies scholar Andrew Hewitt about social choreography, which I feel opens further the intended field and direction of this study and its subject matter. Social choreography is, on the one hand, an approach to *dance practice* that proceeds on the premise that site-specific movement interventions will impact performatively. The Institute of Social Choreography

in Frankfurt works on such a premise, stipulating that “Social Choreography engages everyone’s perception and knowledge of ‘how things move’, inquiring if and how individuals can imaginatively order and re-order aspects of their personal, social, cultural and political lives” (Institute of Social Choreography 2015).⁷ Social choreography as a *theoretical* branch of aesthetics, on the other hand, addresses all movement as ideological rather than ideology’s representation. Andrew Hewitt’s work *Social Choreography* is perhaps currently the best-known proponent of this approach in offering, as dance studies scholar Mark Franko has written, “a certain conception of the aesthetic,” the framing of which foregrounds a historical shift in the aesthetics of ideology from a mimetic (representational and idealist) to a performative (integrated and embodied, ultimately “productive”) mode. With this shift, choreography becomes social. (Franko 2006, 189)⁸

Hewitt states in the introduction,

In this book I think of the body as doubled: neither as the brute soma that must resist or conform to a social choreography, nor as the purely discursive construct that it can become in an overzealous new historical reading. (Hewitt 2005, 14)

This echoes my observation regarding the discursive grey zone that emerged in the interpretation of the respondents’ experiences through Johnson’s model. As Hewitt puts it,

I do not claim that aesthetic forms do not reflect ideological positions: clearly they can and do. *But they do not only reflect.* My claim, instead, is that choreography designates a sliding or gray zone *where discourse meets practice.* (Hewitt 2005, 15)

In terms of my investigation of the concept of “becoming gypsy,” I would propose, to paraphrase Hewitt, that the dancing does not do away with such

categories, but [hereby] contains the potential to rehearse and refine them (Pristaš 2007).

This reverts back to my above comments on validating other modalities of thought. On this basis, the theory encourages us to view and value dance in a manner that has larger socio-political implications, as something less removed from our pedestrian manner of being in the world. As an example, Johnson’s focus on situations, “which comprise physical, biological, social, as well as cultural conditions” (Forceville 2008), opens for understanding of embodiment and dance also as situational, interactive spaces of being, and by extension—for understanding dance as situation rather than performance object – the enactment of ideology rather than (solely) its mimetic representation, as a space for the working through and production of embodied identity.

As suggested above, this particular insight is of interest in terms of flamenco due to the fact that flamenco dance remains, also, a folkloric practice that is inexorably implicated in the social structures and identities of Andalusia as a profound manner of forming and preserving identity, within which there is performance, but also a highly performative aspect, having to do with the enactment of social identities and the creation and confirmation of family and community.⁹ A dense tangle of social choreographies reverberates within this of which anyone participating in the dance at this level will of necessity have a visceral knowledge, however intuitive and non-verbalized that knowledge may be. The exploration of the site of negotiation sought elucidated by this study has taken its cue from this, as an implicit attempt to come to grips with flamenco dance as a field of social enactment. It has asked: How does my body feel when I’m dancing? What does this feeling know? Although Johnson’s embodied cognitivism would seem to be implying that these types of experiences—to the extent that they are conscious – are straightforward and even universal, the study has demonstrated that they are not in any

sense easy to access, much less express. It is not simply a matter of “getting one’s head around” the idea that mind-body dualism is an illusion, and developing the appropriate awareness to enable one to talk about “felt qualities.” This is but one of the somewhat naïve conjectures running through Johnson’s work.

In the endeavor to bypass dualist thought, the study has disclosed the need for an exploration of the properties particular to the dimension of folkloric dance as embodied identity and social enactment, and the interfacing of such perspectives with readings of contemporary (flamenco) dance expressions. Here too a dichotomy exists with respect to established genre conventions in the field of dance itself, in the distinction between “ethnic” (understood as local, quaint, and traditional) dance forms and contemporary dance. Flamenco dance as an art form in its own quintessentially errant fashion blatantly flies in the face of such a distinction. The approach I am proposing also challenges the implied social hierarchy informing such definitions and their colonialist, racist legacy. It proposes instead a suspension of the “folk” vs. “high art” dichotomy, seeking to view movement practices as a unified field wherein all dances are equally meaningful and, to the extent that they are currently unfolding in real time, equally “contemporary.”¹⁰

For on the basis of all of this, a nagging question is subsequently and pertinently begged: do the above-cited barrier and stumbling block constitute two sides of the same coin, a coin that in fact represents a larger issue? In that the experience of “becoming gypsy,” for the participants of the study, was not something they were able to “feel,” i.e., isolate, identify, or describe in relation to the process of studying the dance of that culture, does this and the overall image of knowledge as outlined here suggest as well a silencing of “the gypsy” within the discourse of flamenco itself? And does the silence in its own right indirectly imply an equating of the gitano with somatic sensation, rendered thereby sequestered and mute—but in this case within

the perception of gitano identity as exotic unknown/unknowable Other, like the body itself? To the extent that the women’s accounts of their flamenco dance-learning experiences upheld conventional perceptions of the body and knowledge, the “Western” subject is thereby preserved in the discourse of flamenco. The subaltern, on the other hand, remains silent (Spivak 1998). While the study provided no basis through which to answer such a question, an abundant potential can be gleaned in the delineated grey zone, underscoring its relevance as an important field of inquiry.

Appendix

Interview questions

How long have you been studying flamenco?

How much time in that period have you spent in Spain?

Do you remember your first meeting/experience with Flamenco?

What was it that made you decide to learn to dance Flamenco?

Do you have any recollections about your initial experiences in learning the dance?

Has learning the dance changed you? Your self-perception as a woman? Your relationship to your body?

How do you relate these changes to the tradition itself?

Are these changes related to a physical knowledge?

Do you feel that in learning to dance you acquire knowledge about things beyond the actual dance in and of itself? Knowledge that has ramifications for you in your life outside of the dance situation (studio, performance, class)?

Do you have specific bodily or emotional reactions after having danced or while you are dancing?

Has your perception of Flamenco changed since you started learning?

What are your goals with the dance, and are they the same as what they were when you began?

What is your definition of Flamenco?

What are the origins of Flamenco as a dance form? How do you understand the role of the gitano culture in the evolution of Flamenco?

Is the gitano culture something you feel it is important to know about and understand in order to dance Flamenco?

Who are some of the dancers you have been influenced by or like?

Do you have close contact with any Flamenco dancers/practitioners from Jerez (natives)?

If so, how have they influenced you and your perception of the dance/yourself as a dancer?

Do you feel that you are part of a Flamenco community in Jerez?

Do you have any experience/training with/in other dance forms or other art forms, or was Flamenco your first experience with dance, an art form?

In your opinion, is it possible for somebody who is not Spanish or gitano to dance Flamenco well? Explain your answer with examples from your own experience.

Notes

1 The Romani people in Spain, from the Iberian Kale group. The Spanish word gitano means “gypsy”, and I employ the Spanish term here because I do not perceive it as having the same pejorative connotations in usage as the word gypsy does in the English language.

2 As defined by Edward Said, “Orientalism was ultimately a political vision of reality whose structure promoted the difference between the familiar (Europe, the West, ‘us’) and the strange (the Orient, the East, ‘them’)” (Said 1979, 43). Said continued by discussing the Orientalist attitude in general. It shares with magic and with mythology the self-containing, self-reinforcing character of a closed system, in which objects are what they are because they are what they are, for once, for all time, for ontological reasons that no empirical material can dislodge or alter” (Said 1979, 79). I would in my approach seek to avoid the reproduction of such a bias, and specifically its perception of

“Oriental women” “who are usually the creatures of a male power-fantasy. They express unlimited sensuality, they are more or less stupid and above all they are willing” (Said 1979, 207).

3 I use the word soma in its conventional sense, and as defined by Stedman’s Medical Dictionary, meaning the body of a person, as contrasted with the mind or psyche (The American Heritage® Stedman’s Medical Dictionary. Retrieved June 21, 2015, from Dictionary.com website: <http://dictionary.reference.com/browse/soma>).

4 See e.g. Sklar (2007), Daly, (1995), Hewitt (2005). Lakoff and Johnson, specifically *Philosophy in the Flesh: The Embodied Mind and Its Challenge to Western Thought* (1999) is required reading for the Masters in Choreography at the Oslo National Academy of the Arts.

5 In philosophical terms, knowledge “... which has been embodied has, literally, been put into a body. Embodiment can mean either the process of taking form in this way, or the state of having been embodied. Philosophers are most concerned with the embodiment of consciousness, that is, with the way in which thinking, conscious things inhabit physical forms, and how a conscious being relates to its embodiment” (Glossary of Philosophical Terms, at http://global.oup.com/us/companion.websites/9780199812998/studentresources/pdf/perry_glossary.pdf).

6 It is relevant here to mention the categories of teaching methods outlined in the above-cited Finnish study of transnational dances as taught in Finland, which stipulated a combination of a teacher-oriented method and constructivism in the teaching of flamenco. About the latter approach, the authors stated, “The teachers emphasize that the learning should go ‘through the dancers’ body and mind’ and the responsibility for learning is shared by both the teacher and the students. Even though the teachers use a lot of teacher-oriented methods, at the same time they stress the importance of the students’ own thinking when learning flamenco dance” (Siljamäki, Anttila, and Sääkslahti 2010, 6, my emphasis). I have not explored the types of teaching the respondents had been exposed to in this study, but based on the findings, it is reasonable to suggest that constructivism as defined here has not been a method they have been exposed to when learning the dance in Spain. This

corresponds with my own experience of learning flamenco dance in Spain, where teacher-oriented methods were the norm.

7 The Institute of Social Choreography website elaborates as follows: "Emerging from a specific historical configuration of transformative and ultimately paradigm-shifting artistic work at Ballet Frankfurt in the late 1990s ... the term 'Social Choreography' has become synonymous with a *new participatory / situational epistemology* which has begun to emanate from the institution and conceptual architectures of contemporary dance" (http://socialchoreography.com/?page_id=35; accessed 20 March 2015).

8 Mark Franko gave the book a scathing review in *Dance Research Journal* (2006), citing among other things its failure to engage with dance history and/or the writings of dance studies scholars, and its conflation of dance studies with cultural studies. Franko's conclusion is univocal: "I understand that Hewitt considers dancers and choreographers as caught within a dialectical movement of history, not as initiators or respondents. He reads choreography's social embeddedness through the narrative fantasies of its literary expression" (191). However much Hewitt may fail in his work to carry through on his intention, this article takes the social choreographic bull by the horns of his initial premise, which invokes the performative as central to meaning making, and the focus of social choreography as being precisely the above-cited shift in aesthetics. Movement is hereby instituted as central to meaning and identity, in keeping with Johnson. This approach also takes its cue from the aforementioned practice-based applications of this school of thought.

9 This observation is my own, and is based on my own experiences and conversations with members of the gitano community in Jerez de la Frontera. For an explanation of the particular importance of flamenco for the gitano community, see e.g. Pedro Peña Fernández, *Los Gitanos Flamencos*, pp. 93–6.

10 See e.g. Lena Hammergren's article "The Power of Classification" in *Worlding Dance* (2009) where in the context of reflections on perceptions of ethnicity and difference in the fields of cross-cultural and multicultural dance studies, she asks, "What kinds of meaning and power reside in the category of 'multicul-

tural' forms of dance?" This book in its entirety intends examination of "the legacy of Western dance history—and the violence against dancing wrought by various rubrics of categorization, such as the 'primitive', that have created complex hierarchies of value and worth" (Foster 2009, 3) and which inevitably translate "ethnic" dance as "local rather than transcendent, traditional rather than innovative. ... a product of the people rather than genius" (Foster 2009, 2). Hammergren's contribution also identifies an underlying perception of "ethnic dance" as somehow static and unchanging, in short, an Orientalist perception (see footnote 2).

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BIOGRAPHY

Diane Oatley (b.1960) holds a Masters in comparative literature from the University of Oslo, with areas of specialization in gender issues and expressions of the body in poetic language. The latter have remained consistent themes in her dance practice, research, and literary publications. She is an independent scholar, writer, and translator with an extensive list of publication credits in the field of dance studies. Born and raised in the USA and a resident of Norway since 1982, since 2005 she has divided her time between Oslo and Jerez de la Frontera in Andalusia, Spain where she is studying Flamenco dance and culture.

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BIOGRAFI

Diane Oatley (f.1960) er cand.philol. med hovedfag i litteraturvitenskap fra Universitet i Oslo, med spesialfelt innenfor kjønnsrollestudier og kroppsuttrykk i det poetiske. Hun har en lang publikasjonsliste innenfor dansestudier og arbeider som selvstendig forsker, forfatter og oversetter Etter avsluttede studier begynte hun å jobbe som dansekritiker og har etter hvert definert et eget felt og tilnærmingemetode der kroppsuttrykket er et gjennomgående tema.. Født og oppvokst i USA, og bosatt i Oslo siden 1982, har hun siden 2005 hatt flere lengre studieopphold i Jerez de la Frontera i Andalusia, Spania.

The Dance Project (im)Perfections as a Deep Educational Experience of Plurality

Tone Pernille Østern

ABSTRACT

The focus of this article on the experiences of learning of the participants in the Norwegian-Australian dance project Perfect (im)Perfections—stories untold (shortened to P(im)P). The context for the research project is the Australian choreographer Philip Channells' four week long residency in Trondheim, Norway, where he produced a dance performance together with 20 very different dancers for MultiPlié dance festival 2014. The dancers varied in age from 23 to 80, they were differently bodied, some worked professionally with dance, others were dancing for almost the first time. The dancers seemed to have strong experiences, including a sense of deep learning, as they took part in the project. That led the author to an investigation of theory about deep learning (Tochon 2010) and about doing and acting plurality as an educational experience (Biesta 2006, 2014). In addition to following the production period as an observer, the author interviewed six of the dancers and the choreographer about their experiences in the project. As the author interprets the interviews through the theoretical lenses created by combining the perspectives of Tochon and Biesta she characterises the pedagogical opportunities and value in P(im)P as a deep educational experience of plurality.

SAMMENDRAG

Fokus i denne artikkelen er opplevelser av læring hos deltakerne i det norsk-australske danseprosjektet Perfect (im)Perfections—stories untold (forkortet til P(im)P). Konteksten for forskningsprosjektet er den australske koreografen Philip Channells' fire uker lange residens i Trondheim, der han produserte en danseforestilling for MultiPlié dansefestival 2014 sammen med 20 svært forskjellige dansere. Danserne varierte i alder fra 23 til 80, de var ulik kroppede, noen jobbet profesjonelt med dans, mens andre danset for nesten første gang. Det virket som om danserne hadde sterke opplevelser, og et opplevelse av dybdelæring, mens de deltok i prosjektet. Det inntrykket ledet forfatteren til en undersøkelse av teori om dybdelæring (Tochon 2010) og om det å gjøre og agere ulikhet og mangfold som en dannende opplevelse (Biesta 2006, 2014). I tillegg til å følge produksjonsperioden som observatør, intervjuet forfatteren seks av danserne samt koreografen om deres opplevelser i prosjektet. I dialog med de teoretiske perspektivene til Tochon og Biesta fortolker forfatteren den pedagogiske muligheten og verdien i P(im)P som en dypt dannende opplevelse i forhold til mangfold og ulikhet.

The Dance Project (im)Perfections as a Deep Educational Experience of Plurality

Tone Pernille Østern

As I enter the P(im)P rehearsal space one afternoon in March 2014, I am soon engulfed in a space filled with embodied concentration and investigation. There are only two people in the space: the choreographer and a dancer. The dancer is deeply focused, improvising, searching for something. The choreographer is quiet as he observes the dancer and sometimes offers a short, encouraging comment. The dancer does not notice me at all; the choreographer nods to me, but he stays connected to the dancer. As they stay in a space with embodied communication flowing back and forth between them, more and more dancers drop in.

In this introductory narrative I share how I, in the role of researcher, made my first embodied encounter with

a project that I was going to follow for the next four weeks¹. The context is the Australian choreographer Philip Channells' four-week-long residency where he produced a dance performance together with 20 different dancers for the MultiPlié dance festival² in Trondheim during spring 2014. The festival and the project were arranged by the regional dance agency DansiT³. My attention was soon drawn to the fact that all participants seemed to have strong experiences, including a sense of deep learning, as they took part in the project. As I followed the production and performance processes, the following research question developed: *How can the learning experiences of the participants in the dance project*

Perfectly imperfect dancers in Perfect (im)Perfections April 2014. Photo: Arne Hauge.



P(im)P be described and interpreted in dialogue with theory about deep education and plurality as an educational experience?

The dance project

Philip Channells⁴ is central to the development of dance with dancers with and without disabilities in Australia. In 2014, Channells was engaged as a festival artist at MultiPlié and he worked in Trondheim for one month. The different dancers in the project were recruited from The Dance Laboratory (including dancers with and without disabilities) and The Dance Theatre (for senior citizen dancers), in addition to freelance dancers. The dancers varied in age from 23 to 80, with little or a lot of previous dance experience; some of them were professional dancers. At the festival, they showed the performance nine times for a sold-out audience and taught several workshops for school kids. The production and performance period was intense, I recall from my embodied encounters (observations) with the project:

The rehearsal space has a warm atmosphere in many ways. It is warm and sweaty with movement, ups and downs to the floor, weight shifting and lifts, but it is also warm with inclusion and generosity towards one another, across differences and ages. The musicians are included as dancers; there is constant translation between those who speak English and those who do not, and the movement material developed builds on the dancers' own life stories and different capabilities.

With the differences among the dancers in mind, Channells came up with the title *PERFECT (im) PERFECTIONS—stories untold* for the dance project, reflecting Channells' interest in the perfect in the imperfect, and in the beauty in difference. Together with the participants, he wanted to use the project to question beauty, discuss the concept of beauty in

general and examine what beauty in dance can be specifically.

The research project and methodology

When I heard about P(im)P, I asked if I could follow the production period as a researcher. My relationship to the participants is that I have been the artistic leader in various periods for both The Dance Laboratory (until 2012) and The Dance Theatre (until 2009). The development of The Dance Laboratory was the field work for my PhD project in dance art (Østern 2009). I thus knew many of the participants from that period and there was a sense of trust between them and me in the role of researcher. Still, there were also many new participants in both groups whom I had not met before. I thus studied a group of people who I had different relationships with; some knew me very well, while some had never seen me before.

Philosophical approach

In order to understand what was going on in the project from an experiential perspective, I adopted a hermeneutic-phenomenological approach (van Manen 1990). In dialogue with theory, I tried to understand and articulate the participants' experiences during the project. During this process, I went through moments of both closeness and distance (van Manen 1990; Svendler-Nielsen 2012). The moments of closeness occurred when I approached the project and tried to understand it in a way that allowed me to get a sense of the whole and communicate with the participants about their experiences. In this article I try to share these moments of closeness through narratives that display my embodied encounters with the project. The moments of distance took place when I withdrew and tried to create meaning through describing and naming themes that seemed significant for the participants' learning experiences.

A phenomenological analysis starts with a naïve

or holistic reading of the text in order to get a sense of the whole (van Manen 1990; Giorgi 2009). I see my first naïve 'reading' more as a lived sensing of lived experiences among the participants in the production process. My first and overall impression was that the participants had strong experiences, and that deep and transformative learning took place, I recall:

As the two dancers I observe engage in an improvised duet, trying to create choreographic material, they are totally absorbed in what they are doing. I see and sense blushing cheeks, wide-awake presences and strong shared commitment towards carrying out the task given by the choreographer. One of them, a musician, has never created choreography before, and the two dancers have to find out of how to collaborate around this task together. Between them, their own unique piece of choreography develops.

In a hermeneutical movement, this first overall impression or 'with-ness reading' (Shotter 1999, 10) of the lived experiences of the participants directed me towards dialogue with theory about deep education and plurality as an educational experience.

Observations and interviews

During the observations of rehearsals, I became interested in interviewing some of the participants and asked for volunteers via email. Of the 20 performers in the project, six performers volunteered to be interviewed, in addition to the choreographer. I had no specific selection among the dancers for interviews, but simply picked those who said that they would like to participate. In addition, I specifically asked the choreographer to participate. I asked them (among others) the following questions that I focus on in this article:

1. What are the aims of the choreographer in this project?

2. Thinking about this process, what were your experiences?
3. Have you learnt something during the project? What? Please explain.

Of the seven interviewees, three were female and four male; all adults; two of them work professionally as artists in addition to the choreographer; one of the seven is visually impaired and one of them is a wheelchair user. I interviewed all individually. All interviewees were verbal and reflective, and the material I received was rich.

As I analysed the interviews, I first transcribed all the material. Directed by my theoretical perspectives, my first naïve reading/sensing of the rehearsal process and by the video observations as background material, I carefully read the transcribed interview material many times. I marked different parts of the text with different colours and post-it notes and slowly got a sense of connections and themes. Through the analysis of interviews in dialogue with theory, video observations and my own embodied experience when following the production process, I ended up with themes that characterise the interviewees' experiences of learning. The analysis is not a 'neutral' analysis, or just 'any' analysis, but an analysis and interpretation directed by the theoretical perspectives I was drawn towards through my first naïve reading/sensing of the processes during the production period.

Deep education and plurality

I interpret the participants' experiences through theoretical lenses inspired by Tochon (2010) and Biesta (2006, 2014)—theoretical lenses that my first naïve reading/sensing of the experiences drew me towards. In doing so, I point to the pedagogical opportunities and value in P(im)P as experiences of *deep education* through *deep learning* and *deep teaching* (Tochon 2010), through *doing* and *acting plurality* and through engaging with the otherness

of others as an educational experience (Biesta 2014, in dialogue with Arendt 1958). In the following I will present these theoretical perspectives.

Deep education

The concept 'deep learning', as opposed to 'surface learning', was developed in the 1970s and 1980s and is now well established within higher education literature (for example, Entwistle & Wilson 1977; Biggs 1978; Säljö 1975; Pask & Scott 1972). Deep learning, in short, can be described as a situation where the learner takes an active role in her or his own learning; seeks to understand and interact critically with the issues under study; relates ideas to previous experience and knowledge and examines the logic of arguments and conclusions (Beattie, Collins and McInnes 1997; National Research Council 2000). Research into deep and surface learning has focused on student approaches to learning cognitive, academic skills and is not originally related to dance or arts education.

The concept of 'depth', however, cannot be fixed to the described development of the concept of deep learning alone. Instead, the idea of depth in education has emerged from a variety of disciplines, like philosophy (for example, Næss 1989), ecology (for example, Salleh 2000) and educational philosophy (for example, Christensen-Scheel 2012). The point is that depth in education, in contrast to more shallow education, concerns the whole person and the whole teacher and works towards a whole, ecological understanding and responsibility for the future world and its inhabitants. Tochon's (2010) contribution is that he connects the idea of depth across many perspectives and emphasises that deep politics (for example, Gitlin 2005), deep education and philosophy (for example, Næss 1989), deep learning (for example, Entwistle & Wilson 1977), deep teaching (for example, Tochon & Hanson 2003) and deep linguistics (for example, Chomsky 1965) come together and imply a deep turning in education. Tochon (2010) points to

how depth in education implies a sense of purpose and deep, transformational learning, involving a sense of one's deep identity. Tochon (2010, 2) underlines that deep education is not a 'method'; rather, it is all about mindset and action. It is never fully achieved and it is always in the making.

Deep teaching, Tochon writes, is project-based and learner-centred, based on the meaningfulness for the learner. The approach is contextualised and situated, and meanings are embodied in action. Information is understood as value-laden. Tochon writes that deep learning focuses on meaning and engages learners intellectually, socially and emotionally—to which I would add bodily. Both deep learning and teaching seek to meet life-goals and to integrate ethics with the aim of social justice and promoting individual and group work in real-life situations and real-world problems. Further, Tochon (2010, 7) writes, lessons are organised on principals of meaningful conversations, moderated by a teacher with knowledge of the context, and carried out as semi-structured dialogues around a theme.

Ideas equivalent to the idea of depth are found in art educational practices and theory about embodied learning, contemporary dance pedagogy and in art educational thinking in general, even if the word 'depth' is not necessarily used (for example, Anttila 2013, Svendler-Nielsen 2012, Winther (ed.) 2012, Østern & Strømme (eds.) 2014). On the other hand, the word 'body' or 'embodied' is not easily found in the more general higher educational literature about deep education. In the Norwegian school evaluation reports NOU 2014:7 (preliminary, partial report) and NOU 2015:8 (final report), a connection is made between deep learning, which the evaluations stress should be aimed for, and the social and emotional development of the pupils. Still, social and emotional development is not connected with embodied learning as part of the main understanding of learning that comes through in the reports, other than very sparsely (see one of

very few comments about the value in developing movement competence in NOU 2015:8, 52). The body, and the insights developed from the field of embodied learning (and arts education), seems to be largely missing. However, I suggest, embodied learning may in fact be the missing link in creating the depth in education that is sought for.

Education as experiences of plurality

Biesta (2006:2014) discusses the relationship between democracy and education. Instead of thinking of education as a process of producing democratic individuals, he transmutes that relationship into something that is concerned with facilitating opportunities for democratic practice and learning from it (see also McDonnell 2014). As I was sensing and observing the P(im)P process, I wondered whether I was encountering such a practice. In his discussion about the relationship between democracy and education, Biesta (2006:2014) engages in deep dialogue with Hannah Arendt's (1958) philosophy. Leaning on Arendt's thinking, he argues that democracy should be seen as *action*; an action that is depending *on ways of being together* and which has to be *created-in-action* again and again. Central in Arendt's philosophy is the view that action *as a subject* is never possible without *plurality*:

As soon as we erase plurality, as soon as we erase the otherness of others by attempting to control how they respond to our initiatives, we not only deprive others of their actions, but at the same time we deprive ourselves of our possibility to act, to come into the world, and to be a subject. (Biesta 2006, 134)

Biesta (2014) underlines that real pedagogical communication (in contrast to the transfer of information from A to B as in surface learning) is a radically open and undefined process; it is a process

which is thus always in the act of deconstruction and reconstruction. According to Biesta, democracy is the core of pedagogy and is also what is at stake in pedagogical situations. He sees the becoming-a-subject as an action (and not as an essence), and he sees democracy as action that can only take place in spheres characterised by plurality among subjects.

Next, I continue with an analysis and interpretation of the empirical material in dialogue with these theoretical perspectives.

The choreographer's artistic-pedagogical values

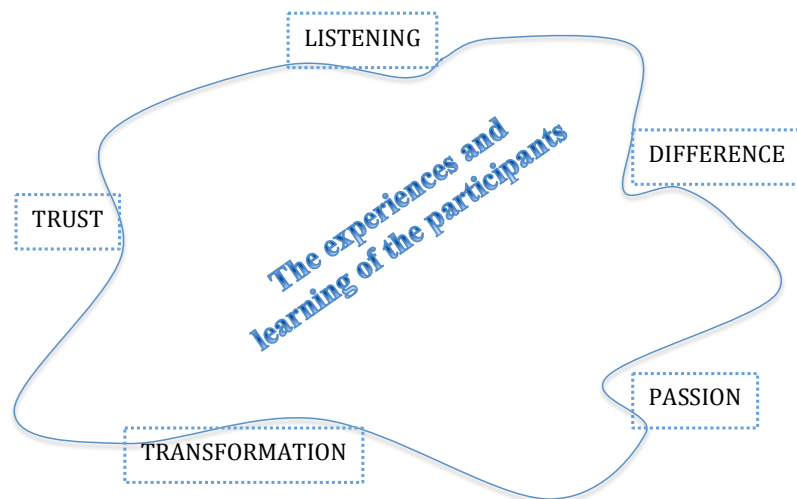
If I compare the choreographer to a teacher, since the situation in many ways is identical with a teaching situation in the contemporary dance landscape, his teaching philosophy or pedagogical values and comprehensive aims will have a major impact on what he is actually doing in the classroom or studio (see, for example, Anttila 2013; Buck 2013; Østern 2014). This again heavily influences the participants' experiences and learning.

When I asked the choreographer about the comprehensive aims of his work, he answered that they were as follows:

- a) To create excellent art
- b) To change the landscape of dance
- c) To break down misconceptions and stereotypes

With the expression 'excellent art' in this context, I got the impression that the choreographer wanted to underline that first and foremost, this was an art project, not an educational project. The aim was clearly to create a piece of art, and the educational value emerges from the steady focus on the artistic processes with a performance as the goal (see also Østern 2009).

I have tried to listen to the choreographer in a way that allows me to formulate the central and value-



laden concepts that guide his actions as he navigates complex artistic and pedagogical landscapes. These concepts are in my interpretation *listening, difference, passion, transformation* and *trust*. With these artistic-pedagogical values of the choreographer as a frame, the experiences and learning of the participants take place:

Listening as a central value comes through when the choreographer says, for example, that 'they teach me how to teach them'. The choreographer listens to what the participants bring with them, and facilitates and uses that to choreograph for/with them. The **difference** of people, cultures, bodies and life experiences is appreciated, throughout and on all levels. In terms of Biesta (2014), the level of plurality is high, and the otherness of the other is not being erased, but instead is allowed to be alive, used and appreciated. The **passion** or commitment of the choreographer is visible and tangible throughout. He says, for example, 'I raise the bar and expect a lot from people', while one of the interviewees says 'His passion sticks onto us'. The work is important to the choreographer because, in Tochon's (2010) words, it has life-meaningful contents for him and the participants. The art developed deals with a life-goal of breaking down stereotypes and

The central and value-laden concepts that guide the choreographer's actions serve as a frame for the participants' experiences and learning in P(im)P.

changing the landscape of dance. The choreographer says that 'When I notice something small that this person has offered, I try to make something big out of that'. In this attention towards what each and every one has to offer in the choreographic process, there are great possibilities for **transformational** art and pedagogy (Mezirow 1991; Østern 2009). In order to take the participants with him on the undertaking of creating a performance in a few weeks with 20 very different performers, an undertaking full of both very special opportunities but also the 'wonderful risk of education' (Biesta 2014) and art, the choreographer needs to develop **trust**, fast and fully. The way he creates trust is closely connected to his passion to make this work, his appreciation of difference and his ability to listen to the contributions, however small, of the different participants. I recall from my embodied encounters (observations) with the project:

During the rehearsals a very special moment unexpectedly opens up as one of the dancers starts telling about life memories connected to a

childhood photo she brought into the studio. What starts as a tiny story develops into a deep story. Tears flow down the choreographer's cheeks as he listens and gives her the time and space to tell until the story is finished. In the opening of the performance, this moment is used. Moments of beauty and intimacy are created as the dancer tells short stories connected to her photo to parts of the audience in a whisper.

The participants' experiences of learning

It is clear in all parts of the empirical material that the participants have strong experiences in the project. The process provides depth as it engulfs the participants and they 'swim' in emotional, embodied experiences. The participants are passionate and they feel vitalised. When I asked the interviewees if they have learnt something during the process, they all immediately answered 'Yes! A lot!' or 'A tremendous amount!' I have found it fruitful to divide their experiences of learning into the following four main themes:

1. Learning about dance
2. Learning about language and inclusion
3. Self-development (or subjectification in Biesta's terms) and a greater need for closing the process
4. Learning about community and society (as a public sphere characterised by plurality)



A dancer opens the performance by whispering memories connected to a childhood photograph to parts of the audience. Photo: Arne Hauge.

Learning about dance

Their experiences of learning about dance vary greatly depending on the dancers' previous experience with dance. What the participants tune into and learn regarding dance depends on where they already are in their development as dancers; one participant tells that he has learnt to count to eight in dance, while another has learnt how to evoke creative impulses in dancers from observing how the choreographer works as a choreographer. It seems there are different things to learn about dance for everybody, regardless of previous experience. The plurality among the participants, in terms of their different previous experiences with dance, is not seen as negative or a hindrance, but instead as exactly the richness needed to open up a deep, semi-structured dialogue (Tochon 2010) about dance and beauty in dance.

Learning about language and inclusion

All participants talk about the importance of language for inclusion and a new consciousness about details in movement. This group was not lost in translation; they grew from translations. The choreographer alone does not become the only source of inspiration and knowledge (Tochon 2010), as his impulses wander via different translators who all add new possible meaning as they translate. One interviewee observes as follows:

He is thinking about absolutely everybody. For example, XXX, who is blind. He is always thinking about the fact that somebody should explain to her what is going on. So there is constantly somebody whispering in the studio, and there is always somebody translating from English to Norwegian. That really allows for a focus on details.

The constant translation—either from movement to spoken words in order to provide description for the visually impaired dancer, or from English to Norwegian—is understood as a meaning-making act in itself. It seems like everybody learns from and appreciates these different translations.

Self-development (or subjectification) and a greater need for closing the process

Overall, there are a lot of statements about learning about oneself, or self-development, among the participants. From the theoretical perspectives presented, I see the process going on as a process of subjectification. The participants are going through processes of further subjectification (Biesta 2014) throughout the project; they act, and act anew, and they are in the process of constant becoming of a subject in a sphere characterised by plurality among subjects.

The performers talk about the fact that they have been personally challenged during the process; some

of them say that they have been challenged almost too much. One of the interviewees explains that the choreographer uses a lot of self-development tasks in order to create deep movement material:

He is very good at setting processes off. To get people in touch with feelings. Sometimes I have thought that he is maybe not as good at gathering those feelings together again.

It seems like the process has been closed artistically through the making of the performance, but that it is not so easily closed on a personal level. The personal processes in terms of reflections and feelings over life-memories that have come up, been shared and used during the process still continue, and would need to be dealt with even more. When I talked to one of the interviewees a month after the project, I understood that these processes on a personal level were still going on, and were only slowly winding down.

Learning about community and society (as public spheres characterised by plurality)

Overall, there are also a lot of experiences of learning on a community or even societal level. The participants also here are tuned into different aspects depending on where they already stand as they enter the project. A participant who is not already part of The Dance Laboratory, for example, says that he has learnt a lot about the everyday life of somebody who is blind, since he did not know many people with disabilities before this experience. Those already a part of The Dance Laboratory are used to the differences among them and are more tuned into the leading style of the choreographer and how inclusion takes place, as the following quote reveals: 'He kind of leads the group ... in a socialistic way, in a way ... which I like a lot'. I interpret this as part of the comprehensive appreciation of difference that prevails in the project as such.

Concluding remarks

To conclude, the lesson learned from this research project is that P(im)P, being an art project, still has deep pedagogical value. The experiences and learning of the participants point to experiences of deep education defined as concerning the whole person, a sense of purpose and deep, transformational learning involving a sense of one's deep identity (Tochon 2010). The dancers are in a process of on-going subjectification (Biesta 2014), a process that has the possibility to flourish and challenge because of the high level of plurality in the group.

The aims of the choreographer can be connected to deep teaching that seeks to meet a life-goal of mirroring a society characterised by plurality and changing the landscape of dance. Further, the approach is contextualised and situated in that it connects to the different participants' life experiences and uses them as dance material, and the meanings that are created are embodied in action (Tochon 2010). However, the analysis conducted could contribute to challenging the choreographer even further in understanding the power in the personal, or in Biesta's words, the subjectification processes that the work sets off. Because the processes in the project are so overwhelming and deep, the choreographer could work on closing the project even more fully, not just artistically, but also on a personal level for the involved participants. The choreographer could benefit from realizing more fully the deep pedagogical dimension and *risk* in his artistic work, since he stimulates deep embodied life memories among the participants he works with.

Still, I would say that the pedagogical value is there precisely *because* the process goes deep into the participants' embodied life experiences. There is a clear element of risk-taking and challenge, both on behalf of the choreographer and the participants. Their meeting is one characterised by plurality (Biesta 2006), where the otherness of the other is not only allowed

and appreciated, but even used as a central value, a generative force for the art created (see also Marques 1998; Østern 2009). Their meeting in the art-making becomes 'real' and the meeting can be understood as existential: the outcomes are unknown in advance; there is a real listening into the differences of the other and all involved have the possibility of developing as a subject, as part of a community and in connection to dance as an art form.

My conclusion, in dialogue with the theoretical lenses created by the perspectives mainly of Tochon (2010) and Biesta (2006:2014), is that to take part in the art project *PERFECT(im)PERFECTIONS* offered a deep educational experience of plurality. The plurality of the group was understood as generative and vitalising for the art made, for the teaching/choreographing and for the learning experienced.

Notes

- 1 The article is based on a paper presentation at the Arts Activated conference in Australia, 28–29 October 2014 (<http://aarts.net.au/artsactivated/>). The presentation took place online and can be seen on <https://vimeo.com/109104804> (Both websites accessed 22.10.14). The project was further presented at the daCi (Dance and the Child International) conference in Copenhagen 5–10 July 2015 (<http://www.daci2015.dk/>) (accessed 31.07.2015). Both presentations were made jointly with the choreographer Philip Channells.
- 2 MultiPlié dance festival at <http://www.dansit.no/> (accessed 27.01.15)
- 3 www.dansit.no (accessed 27.01.15)
- 4 <http://philipchannells.com/> (accessed 27.01.15)

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BIOGRAPHY

Tone Pernille Østern, PhD (Dr. of Arts in dance), is a dance artist / choreographer and Associate Professor in Arts Education at the Program for Teacher Education, Norwegian University of Science and Technology. Her PhD in dance art (Østern 2009) is from the Theatre Academy at University of the Arts Helsinki, Finland.

Since 2010 she is head of the Department for Arts, Media and Sports teaching and learning at the Program for Teacher Education, and she is the leader of a master's degree in arts education. For Østern's artistic work please see www.dance-company.no and www.danselaboratoriet.no

Perfect (im)Perfections—the choreographer's reflections on the creative process

Philip Channells

ABSTRACT

In 2014 Australian director/choreographer Philip Channells (Dance Integrated Australia) was commissioned by DansiT–Senter for Dansekunst i Sør-Trøndelag to collaborate with 20 members of the Danselaboratoriet and Danseteateret 55+ companies. The end result was a full-length intergenerational, disability-inclusive work that merged poetry, dance, theatre and music. *Perfect (im)Perfections—stories untold* was created with an international cast of artists with diverse backgrounds and life experience. The work premiered at the Multiplié Dansefestival in Trondheim on 3 April 2014. In his article, Channells shares his personal history and dance background before focusing on the collaboration. He discusses the inspiration behind the work, the creative processes and the successes and challenges in working across cultural boundaries.

SAMMENDRAG

I 2014 ble den australske koreografen og regissøren Philip Channells fra Dance Integrated Australia engasjert som gjestekoreograf for Multiplié dansefestival ved DansiT–Senter for dansekunst i Sør-Trøndelag, Norge. Oppdraget var å på fire intense uker skape en forestilling sammen med 20 svært ulike dansere fra Danselaboratoriet, Danseteateret 55+ og frilansdansere. Resultatet var en helaftens forestilling med ulikekroppede dansere på tvers av generasjoner og fra ulike land; en forestilling som blandet poesi, dans, musikk og teater, og som brukte dansernes bakgrunner og livserfaringer som kunstnerisk materiale for forestillingen. Forestillingen hadde premiere på Multiplié dansefestival 3. April 2014. I denne artikkelen deler Channells sin personlige historie og dansebakgrunn før han fokuserer på produksjonen P(im)P. Han diskuterer impulsene til arbeidet, den kreative prosessen og utfordringene ved å jobbe på tvers av ulike typer kulturelle grenser.

Perfect(im)Perfections—the choreographer's reflections on the creative process

Philip Channells

In this article, I first focus on my background in dance before I highlight the creative process and what I learned during the Australian–Norwegian collaboration, *PERFECT (im)PERFECTIONS—stories untold*. The article is a reflection on the creative process of developing *P(im)P* and what I learned during this process. I discuss the nature of the collaboration, the use of social media as a communication tool, performers' commitments, language barriers and finding value in everyone's contributions to the process.

I was the director of this intergenerational, disability-inclusive dance/theatre work, which was commissioned by DansiT–Senter for Dansekunst i Sør-Trøndelag, Norway, and which premiered at the Multiplié Dance Festival in Trondheim on 3 April 2014. In this article, I share some of my personal history and journey into dance. I highlight the successes and challenges of working bilingually, and across hemispheres, and how both my own intuition and the use of modern technology played vital roles in the creative process.

My dance background

Dance Integrated Australia is a not-for-profit collective that engages people of diverse cultural backgrounds in an inclusive environment. By engaging artists with different life experiences, my vision is to challenge stereotypes, generate process-led artistic outcomes, develop exciting collaborative opportunities for artists to excel in dance, and search for new opportunities to influence people's perceptions of those living with disabilities.



Australian Director/Choreographer Philip Channells surrounded by a school audience at the Multiplié Dance Festival 2014. Photo: Arne Hauge.

My introduction to disability-inclusive dance practice was in the late 1990s through my involvement with Company CHAOS, an integrated dance company, which included adult performers with and without disabilities. At the age of 28, and with no formal dance training, this invaluable experience would lead me to make a life-long decision that would broaden my perception of contemporary dance, particularly what dance could look like and who could dance. The following definition of disability-inclusive dance by Jeff Meiners from the University of South Australia fits well with my own view:

Disability-inclusive dance is a practice that engages people of wide-ranging abilities and different life experience working together with artistic concerns for both the process and product. (Meiners 2014,22-7)



Philip Channells discussing his creative process with Tone Pernille Østern on stage during a panel discussion of the MultiPlié Dance Festival. Photo: Arne Hauge.

About the collaboration—establishing new international relationships

Through an invitation to attend the Dance and the Child International/World Dance Alliance (daCi/WDA) Global Dance Summit 2012 in Taipei, I had the opportunity to present my previous full-length work, *Next of Kin—no ordinary status family* (2010) in a dance dialogue session. Delegates from around the world attended this very short presentation, including representatives from DansiT. This opportunity sparked many conversations regarding my work and was directly related to my vision, which is to continually challenge the stereotypes and aesthetics of mainstream contemporary dance around the globe. Email and Skype conversations with DansiT then continued to flow for the next 18 months or so.

The *P(im)P* project captured a mosaic of dance, theatre and spoken word that was part confessional, part visionary. At times, it was deeply moving and even strangely absurd. This international collaboration was a journey through performers' personal accounts of their hidden stories, thoughts, dreams and

imaginations, which reflected and mirrored their own perceptions of perfection.

The creative process

When DansiT first invited me to direct a piece for the two companies, I was very excited about picking up on this theme of perfection. DansiT staff and I first met on Skype; later, Skype, Facebook and Dropbox became crucial tools for communication in the early stages, enabling the pre-planning and filmed responses of weekly tasks I assigned to the dancers. The Danselaboratoriet Artistic Director, Ingeborg Dugstad Sanders, and I continued our correspondence through email and social media for several months prior to the rehearsal period.

Prior to this project, I had not led a creative process remotely, so I was curious to know how best to approach the process without physically connecting with the performers. The intuitive nature of my work usually happens at the first point of contact in the rehearsal space, so although I was unable to establish a shared language and rapport with the dancers, I was still able to establish mutual trust.

The initial idea for *P(im)P* had been brewing in my mind since I directed *Next of Kin* for Restless Dance Theatre (AUS). The idea stemmed from observing one of the performers articulate her movement phrases at a much slower pace than any of the other dancers. In witnessing her perform the choreography so perfectly slowly, I began wrestling with the idea that my own concept of perfection may have been tainted by a different experience, which I needed to investigate. A colleague once asked me, "Have you always been a high achiever and why are you always so hard on yourself? So throughout the research of the *P(im)P* project I began unraveling my own perception of what perfect meant.

In asking the dancers to think about the initial question, "What is your idea of perfection?" resulted in varied responses. I was struck by the most common answers which were "There's no such thing" and "For

me it doesn't exist". Using a palette of ideas sourced from the dancers' responses, I wanted to capture a mosaic of dance, theatre and spoken word. I wanted to uncover a collection of unique stories and life experiences, one that encompassed how the dancers inhabit their own skins, their minds and their physical and emotional environments.

The rehearsal period went something like this:

I first met the Danselaboratoriet and the Danseteateret 55+ performers through video recordings. Ingeborg filmed the dancers' initial and individual responses to the questions I proposed. Some of the responses were in English but most were in Norwegian. This meant Ingeborg was both filming and translating during most of the interviews. My excitement levels rose to a huge spike at this point as I gathered more information about the dancers' personalities. At that point, they became more than random names in my Dropbox.

In response, I recorded a short film of myself in which I answered their questions, such as whether I had worked with people with disability before, my hobbies, what makes me angry, and my favourite colour. The process of getting to know each other was an important aspect.

I would then email a lesson plan with instructions for the dancers, which Ingeborg would relay to the performers in Norwegian, film their responses and email the clips back to me, usually within a week. I would watch the footage, take notes and then she and I would follow up with a Skype call to discuss the responses and the next lesson plan. Viewing the footage week after week enabled me to gage the group dynamics, determine the performers' skill levels (both verbal and physical), gather information about whether my tasks were understood or misunderstood, and build my knowledge based purely on visual and auditory information.



Dancer Elen Øyen sharing her childhood stories with young audience members. Photo: Arne Hauge.

What the videos revealed to me most were the individual personalities of all the performers, which inspired new creative possibilities. It became clear that my question about the relevance and universality of working authentically in dance did indeed have merit—I learned that although we are from different cultures, our basic need to connect with other humans through creative expression is inherent, regardless of social and cultural upbringing.

In person with the artistic collaborators—their commitment to the creative process

Having met the musicians Trond Wiger and Arnfinn Killingtveit only a couple of times on Skype, I tuned into an intuitive sense that drove me to propose the possibility of them both doubling as both artistic collaborators and performers. Thankfully, they were very interested in the proposal. Our face-to-face meeting in Trondheim was four hours long, and at first, I was not sure how things would turn out because they both had quite different approaches to sound design. By our next meeting, however, we had developed a deeper understanding of our motivations,

which paved the way for effective communication for the remainder of the process.

In the end, Trond danced throughout the four-week rehearsal period and became a key performer in the work. His music was an almost god-like booming from above and Arnfinn switching from composing to dancing gave the uncanny impression of both a supermodel and a lovesick dog—he was such a natural. They were both crucial in bringing together all the elements of poetry, dance and theatre.

The dancers usually only met once a week, but some were more available than others, which meant the more I worked with the dancers, the more I got to know their creative possibilities. In our first meeting, Trond mentioned that he had blocked out the next four weeks to dedicate himself fully to the project. After the first week, we designed a contract ceremony, which implied that those who came for the first Sunday rehearsal and contributed to the ceremony had given their full commitment. From this point on, dancers from both companies were 100% involved—and then some. They all gave their best to the work, and we developed mutual respect and trust for each other quite early in the process.

The language barrier—finding value in what everyone offered

The first two weeks of creative development were both about the dancers developing new skills and me discovering how I was going to create the work with mainly Norwegian speakers. Thus, language, mine in particular, became very important. Because of the language barrier, everything I said needed to be translated, so I quickly learned to slow down the pace at which I usually work.

Sometimes my sense of humor didn't translate well, so I found the dancers looking straight through me with blank faces. "Could this staring be a cultural difference?" I wondered. Of course, I realised further into the process, with critical feedback from the

English-speaking cast, how to improve my expressions and directions in ways that would be culturally understood. I had to be very clear with what I asked from the dancers, so as frustrating as it may have been for some of them, this challenge was a fantastic learning experience for me.

It became evident through the intuitive way I worked and developed trust amongst the performers in the very early stages of the process that embodying our life experiences through dance theatre has universal appeal. This experience clearly answered my question about our desire to experience human connection through creativity. It also became clear that we are all perfectly imperfect.

The members of this diverse, intergenerational group all had vastly different life experiences, and it's these differences that I often find fascinating when making new work. I was fortunate to have had the support of some professional dancers within the group of 20 who I could rely on for many different aspects of the process. Their support not only included translation but also in helping me to develop new relationships within the group. They also guided and supported the less experienced, non-English speaking performers through different aspects of the creative process. Everyone in the cast brought something to the process, however large or small it might have been, and each one was just as significant as another's. In fact, being a collection of stories, P(im)P was inspired by what people could offer and how they responded to specific tasks and to each other. The cast was an extraordinary group of artists who trusted the creative process from start to finish.

Conclusion

Because I was introduced to dance at a later stage in life, I was equipped with the necessary life skills that enabled and sustained my new career in dance. The aesthetic I'm predominantly drawn to is one that defies stereotypes, one in which non-normative

bodies and artists with different cultural backgrounds and life experiences become the co-authors of the art form through self-expression.

Thus, after witnessing a learning disabled dancer in Adelaide, Australia perform her precise choreography without urgency or in unison with other dancers, I became fascinated and totally immersed in the ideas of individuality and authentic self-expression that made up *P(im)P*. I was motivated to look for new ways of thinking about and making dance. Nature, time, distance, technology, language and cultural differences took centre stage in the creative process of this international collaboration. Without the trust and dedication of the collaborators and full commitment from the dancers, this intergenerational project would never have become such a perfectly unforgettable experience, which I will recall for many years to come.

A research component was conducted during a four-week intensive period by Tone Pernille Østern (see her article, 'The dance project PERFECT (im) PERFECTIONS as a deep educational experience of plurality', in this issue). Norwegian theatre critic Ine Therese Berg summarises her experience of watching the performance in the following statement:

PERFECT (im)PERFECTIONS is not a project that performs disability, rather it performs 'humanness', that's something to aspire to for dance, which in my view, frequently puts a rather too large emphasis on physical perfection and spectacular physicality. Inclusive dance places an emphasis on

the individual, and the dancer becomes a person, becomes irreplaceable. (Berg 2014)

Finally, I would like to acknowledge everyone who was part of this creative process, including the partnering organisations for their extraordinary contributions. I give a special thank you to all the individuals who brought their stories and imaginations to life to reflect and challenge our perceptions of perfection.

Norwegian collaborators

DansiT—Senter for Dansekunst i Sør-Trøndelag; Multiplié Dansefestival; Danselaboratoriet; Danseteateret 55+ (Dance Theatre 55+); Den Kulturelle Skolesekken. Trond Wiger (poet, musician and performer); Arnfinn Killingtveit (musician, sound artist and performer); Svein Inge Neergård (lighting designer) and Berit Haltvik With (costume designer).

Not least of all, thank you to the 20 dedicated dancers who brought this project to life.

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- (2010). Philip is fiercely committed to the development of thriving artistic communities that integrate people from diverse age groups, backgrounds and life experience. Through his work in Australia, the UK, Norway, Finland, Singapore, Hong Kong and Papua New Guinea, Philip builds collaborative environments conducive to creativity and social inclusion.

BIOGRAPHY

Philip Channells (Dance Integrated Australia) is considered one of Australia's foremost experts in disability-inclusive dance practice. His choreographic credits include: *PERFECT (im)PERFECTIONS—stories untold*, *The Main Event* (2014), *Skin-deep*, *Enter & Exit* (2013), *Second Skin*, *inPerspective #1*, *Lythophytes & Epiphytes* (2012), *Next of Kin—no ordinary status family*

Methodological Demonstrations in Finnish Dance Research and Decoding of Dancing Research

Tanssiva tutkimus: Tanssintutkimuksen menetelmiä ja lähestymistapoja.

Authors: Järvinen, Hanna & Rouhiainen, Leena (toim./eds.), Nivel 3. Helsinki: Taideyliopiston Teatterikorkeakoulu, 2014.

This anthology of collected research articles (*Tanssiva tutkimus: Tanssintutkimuksen menetelmiä ja lähestymistapoja*, *Dancing Research: Approaches and Methods in Dance Research*) can be considered the first volume focusing mainly on methodological questions in dance research written in Finnish. As the first part of the title indicates, dancing is strongly emphasised in the articles in the volume. Seven writers out of eleven are actually bodily involved at some points of the research processes they discuss. The collection gives a good impression of the state of dance research in Finland, particularly of the approaches and methods that are commonly being used. The writers' diverse backgrounds from universities all around Finland affect the manifold impression the book offers (University of the Arts Helsinki, Aalto University, University of Helsinki, University of Tampere, University of Turku and University of Jyväskylä). In general, it is a good sign for the research field that dance research is practised in several universities, even if it could still be considered a marginalised academic discipline. However, the contribution of the Theatre Academy of the University of the Arts Helsinki is represented in several aspects in this volume, for instance, in practice-based research.

The studies presented cover a wide field of research orientations. Theoretical frameworks and methods derive from phenomenology, ethnography, dance pedagogy and dance history and analysis, as well as narrative and artistic research. Interestingly, several approaches in different texts interact with each other, thereby giving readers an opportunity to view how



each individual research topic can draw tools from diverse directions and areas. An interdisciplinary use of theories and methods is present in several papers, but since the articles are quite short, it is not always quite evident how these diverse areas relate to one another, or how tools and concepts are determined or applied in relation to source materials.

Each scholar in the collection presents examples of her/his own subject matters where methods have been applied. Even the paths of researchers' concrete study processes are discussed, allowing the basic problems and challenges writers face in their concrete work to be brought to light. Seldom are practical

challenges discussed explicitly in the main text of a scholarly article. The more 'research-in-practice' is presented in these texts, the more evident and transparent the chosen approaches become. In this way, the approach seems to support the argumentation. As the editors of this carefully edited book, Hanna Järvinen and Leena Rouhiainen, mention in the *Preface* that the main emphasis of this collection is not on the methods; but instead, how methods have been used (*menetelmällisyydessä*), as well as what kind knowledge, choices and methods can be realisable/followed and carried out in dance research more generally. As a dance studies book, this volume addresses the huge shortage of methodological dance theory editions in Finnish, and thus completes the offering of several seats of learning despite its emphasis on practical approaches to dance.

Theoretical and methodological approaches require a longer time span and thorough study in projects where researchers can internalise the chosen theories and tools. In the current anthology, Leena Rouhiainen presents a competent and surprisingly extensive overview of phenomenological research approaches, including those practiced in Finnish dance research. Her text indicates how a phenomenological framework is utilised in several ways. Essential for such study is a concentration on bodily experimentation with a specific phenomenological attitude. Kai Lehtikainen previously published an edition of dance analysis in Finnish (2014). In this volume, his article crystallises the intertextual approach while analysing dance. Meanings are constructed with the different aspects and components of each performance and textualised with its sociopolitical, cultural and historical contexts. As an example, Lehtikainen provides a nuanced analysis of Lloyd Newson's and DV8 Physical Theatre's performance *Enter Achilles* (1995).

Most of the writers use their own previously, possibly partly, published material. I assume this leads to several issues: These texts mediate assimilated,

compact and well-written substances, but new published research would be extremely important and useful to the field in circumstances where publishing opportunities are quite restricted, at least in Finnish language. Petri Hoppu has combined ethnography, history research methods and dancing in his research processes. According to him, dance ethnography can methodologically be attached to historical methods. While analysing a historical dance—the minuet—and contextualising it with sociocultural environments, Hoppu uses his own dancing, interviews and analysis of the archive resources as the tools of inquiry. Aino Kukkonen uses her previous material (concerning the Helsinki Dance Company) and introduces the historical approach from her experienced scholarly perspective. In this text, she concentrates and opens up the paths of a researcher facing practical challenges while searching for information about the past. Eeva Anttila's research belongs to the field of action research, particularly participatory action research. She thoroughly reviews her own personal previous research areas and backgrounds in pedagogic research.

Hanna Järvinen focuses on historiography, metahistory and *Foucauldian* genealogy, asking how we form conceptions concerning the past and what we need dance history for. In her insightful analysis, she points out the importance of the source criticism and suggests that dance history could use more typical history sources. According to her, dance history writing—especially that concerning the beginning of the 20th century—lacks a focus on dancers' experiences and everyday practices in the dance field, such as dance rehearsal processes. Although Järvinen does not mention it, this approach has already been realised in several pieces of Finnish dance research and in a few dissertations. Thus, it is up to the historian to give voices to 'mute' sources, as Järvinen observes.

Teija Löytönen connects the narrative approach to the dance field. This approach has been increasingly adopted in dance studies in the past few years. She finds

the approach fertile when studying the biographies of dance artists, or when narrations imply change processes in everyday practices of dance agents' lives. The path of the writer as a researcher opens up interestingly in this text, but the connections between source materials and methods remain quite narrow in the examples given in her article.

As the discussed case studies are situated in Finland, we can raise the question of applying international (dance) research literature (often Anglo-American) into local contexts. In her research on gender in oriental dance, Anu Laukkanen rightly states that the most important context in her source material analysis was cultural context—how her research literature concerning gender could be applied in her material. I would also like to raise a question concerning the teaching of oriental dance in the Finnish context: What are the circumstances in the premises concerning the basic features of the 'origins' of different dance techniques? Each dance method has developed individually, possibly in several different cultural contexts over a longer time span and even each teacher gives it its personal nuance in the method. How do we now produce meanings about 'oriental' dance forms in our cultural context? Mariana Siljamäki also explores dance forms from different cultures (flamenco, oriental dance and West African dance), but in this article, they are discussed without any definitions or contextualisations. Contextualisation of the theoretical frameworks of dance could have been utilised in the analysis, and this would have strengthened the methodological argumentation and credibility of the results. In her pedagogic research, Siljamäki utilises an elsewhere seldom used method, namely a *phenomenographic research* approach; in this way, she investigates whether the abovementioned dance forms can bring other cultures closer to Finnish dance students while practising them as a hobby.

In the interdisciplinary approaches of the articles, besides phenomenological orientations,

an ethnographical approach (dance ethnography, performance ethnography) acts as the other main common denominator in *dancing* studies. In her manifold research area, Hanna Väättäinen uses movement improvisation as a central method for analysing interview material (concerning disability, Swedish language and music). Improvisation, which could have been defined in more detail, embodies the material, and according to Väättäinen raises more questions than it offers foundations for a clear-cut analysis or certain answers. Inevitably, this notion increases curiosity in the use of visual research material, since embodied meaning interacts here with the analysis of written material of the same movement experience. Väättäinen concludes with the argument that movement improvisation as a research result might reach a *watching* audience better than a written scholarly article reaches and impacts its readers. However, it remains unclear how the interlinks between bodily movement or embodied meanings and analysis in written accounts of these experiences can be understood and interpreted without such scholarly articles.

Visual material attached to the articles would also have been interesting in relation to Kirsi Heimonen's exceptional research processes, some of which took place in the context of a financial company. Although Heimonen fluently disseminates her personal corporeal existence in writing, I would suggest that information concerning the connections between contextual happenings and the methodological approaches would have been better conveyed to receivers via visual media—if it was considered necessary after all. One of the ideals of dancing research texts could be that they engage with multimedial presentation formats, for example, internet installations where visual materials attached to the literal form could be easily available at the same time.

The more research is embodied, fastening on an active body itself, the greater the abyss that is

created between written analysis and corporeality. This seems to be the same area where dance research is interwoven into artistic research. In actively decoding the wondering around this orientation, one of the most illuminative texts in this anthology is the last article by Leena Rouhiainen, Eeva Anttila and Hanna Järvinen—“Taiteellinen tutkimus yhtenä tanssintutkimuksen juonteena” (“Artistic Research as one of the Features in Dance Research”). This article brilliantly clarifies

the backgrounds, terminology and some crucial core ideas of this approach, while raising challenges and particularities concerning the written part attached to artistic and movement-based research. Although the basic focus of the text is on the artistic perspective, this information would be helpful for the reader earlier in the volume, and the article could have been placed before the practise-based research texts.

Riikka Korppi-Tommola

Research, Art, Empowerment—The Artist as Researcher, Author: Efva Lilja

Regeringskansliet, Stockholm, 2015.

What is artistic research? This is a question which many art fields, including dance and choreography, have dealt with over the last decade. As Efva Lilja writes, however, 'Many of us artists as researchers are thoroughly tired of this question' (Lilja, 2015, 13). Nevertheless, the question still needs to be raised for many reasons: Artists and researchers who enter into the field need to know how this has been discussed so far; policymakers may ask the question because they don't know and those already familiar with the field reconsider it or are confronted with it in discussion with others. Therefore, there is a strong need for accessible information where one can obtain an overview of the political and structural situation of the field of artistic research. Efva Lilja's book provides such an overview. However, the strength of the book is that it not only addresses the question of what artistic research is, but also dares answer the question of why it is important. As such, it is not simply a description of a field, but rather a book of ideas, a manifesto for the importance of art and artistic research in society.

Research, Art, Empowerment—The Artist as Researcher is written 'from the point of view of an artist' (Lilja, 2015, 9)—an artist who has had a key role in the establishment of artistic research in Sweden, and who has been part of many Swedish, Nordic and international fora where artistic research has been developed and discussed. This book is a generous sharing of the insights and reflections that Lilja has acquired on her way. The book addresses 'all of us who choose to dedicate ourselves to art and research' (Lilja, 2015, 9); Lilja writes for 'artists within academia and for those outside who wish to address it with curiosity'—perhaps with an emphasis on those artists who are curious about artistic



<http://www.government.se/contentassets/7c02c282af4a43fc9c3623b7d9a9089e/art-research-empowerment--the-artist-as-researcher>

research and want to apply for a PhD education, a research grant or a research position in artistic research. At least, that is the impression one has when she addresses the 'you' of the reader in certain sections. The purpose of this address is not only to inform, but also to encourage artists and artist researchers to take responsibility for the field, to engage with, navigate in and if necessary transform the political and practical structures which regulate artistic research at the moment.

The book is structured around a series of questions and areas: 'What is Artistic Research?', 'What Does the Artist as Researcher Do?', 'Artistic Research Education',

'What is Good in Art?', 'What Does Research Do for Art?'. Within Efva Lilja's answers to these questions there is an emphasis on the way artistic research is structured in Sweden and the opportunities which these structures open; however, the book also provides an overview of the way artistic research has developed in several other European countries (Austria, Belgium, Croatia, England, Finland, France, Germany, Norway, Romania, Switzerland). The emphasis on Sweden is of course a result of Lilja's experience, but also represents an attempt to show how this model 'implies a faith in art and the importance of art for progress in society and culture' (Lilja, 2015, 11)—a faith in support of which Lilja's book can be seen as a passionate speech.

What is specific to Efva Lilja's book is this combination of structural description of a field and proposition of ideas, or even creation of ideals. The shifts between these two elements influence the tone and the style of the text. Lilja also sees this combination of structural knowledge and strategies and strong ideas as necessary if we want to develop the field not only according to current policies and seemingly unavoidable demands, but also in terms of the needs of artists and the ultimate purpose of developing art and the role of art in society:

If we, from our artistic experience and competence, learn more about the systems, regulations and statutes that organize our society, we can more easily make use of them and strengthen the conditions for good work and research processes. With insights about things we perceive as shortcomings, follows a responsibility to criticize and suggest improvements. (Lilja 2015, 53)

Throughout the different chapters, Lilja underlines the elements which she finds structurally important for the further development of artistic research. She stresses the importance of artistic competence in situations of evaluation or decision making:

These fields of research need strong artists to contribute to knowledge formation, new didactic work forms and a development of qualitative criteria. These artists are not complacent, they demand improvements of research organization, infrastructure, leadership models and positions. (Lilja 2015, 23)

She argues for the need for the field to trust its own artistic methodologies and artistic theories developed within artistic practices:

I contend that many artists present theoretical reasoning in their work and in research that contributes to the evolution of theories within the arts. (...) These contributions can function as support for methodological development, but also for production and communication. (Lilja 2015, 59)

Further, she insists on the importance of keeping the multiplicity of the field of artistic research and of defining quality from within:

In my opinion, artistic research must strive to work within a wide definition, inclusive rather than exclusive, where artistic quality is given more weight than traditional academic quality (...) It is up to us to be able to express what we mean by quality. (Lilja 2015, 93)

Another thread which traverses the book is the insistence on the critical and transformative power of art and research in society and the importance of stressing this politically. Art should be thought of not only as something that needs support to develop, but also something that supports the development of society: It 'widens the ability to perceive each other and the world around us' (Lilja 2015, 10), or as Lilja writes—with a shift of register—'Innovative art keeps

its focus on the contemporary and shines its strongest light toward the future' (Lilja 2015, 11). However, she also identifies a number of constraints threatening to inhibit such a future, including the increased pressure put on artists by the market and the lack of time and funding for in-depth exploration. But how does one keep one's trust in art in an increasingly tight situation? Efva Lilja's answer is action:

Trust in what art does and what art represents is obtained through education, work and research. We prove this through public presentation and discussion, sometimes through provocation, occasionally through pure pleasure—but nothing is a given; neither is the role of art in the societal, multi-cultural world we inhabit; nor is education or research; (...) We must stand up for our work, take power and share in the strategic development work. We can do this in many different ways. We can do it through art, through political activism (...) A critical perspective is sustained through action (...) Research is one way. (Lilja 2015, 111)

Research, Art, Empowerment—The Artist as Researcher is a contribution to the political debate about artistic research and the improvement of the conditions of art and artistic research. At one point, Lilja makes the following distinction between art as politics and political art: 'Art as politics is the art that by insisting on the right to organize, produce, present and interact in various social and societal situations, can be understood as a political action. Political art on the other hand, is art that takes a political stance.' (Lilja 2015, 102). In this book, Efva Lilja does take a political stance when it comes to the political structures of the field of artistic research. She does so in order to encourage others to organise, produce, present and interact in ways which can continue to develop the fields of art and artistic research, and if necessary, change the conditions within which artists work. In a

world where many of the structures and conditions that surround the work are linked to complex economical mechanisms of art markets and international educational policies, this reminder that it is possible to make a difference is refreshing and crucial.

Camilla Damkjaer

Review of 12 NOFOD Conference Expanding Notions: Dance, Practice, Research, Method Reykjavík 28–31 of May 2015



*Participants at the conference dinner.
Photo: Sesselja G. Magnúsdóttir*

A sunny, but cold May afternoon in Reykjavík researchers and practitioners from the Nordic Countries, Germany, Lithuania, Canada, New Zealand, The Netherlands, U.S.A and U.K. met at Tunglið—the new dance studio of the Iceland Academy of the Arts (IAA), situated right in the centre of the city—to register for the 12th NOFOD conference EXPANDING NOTIONS and to see #PRIVATEPUSSY, the graduation performance of the dance students.

The cheerful energy emerged as people met and gave notice of the warm and intimate atmosphere which from then on characterised the whole conference. The many hugs and handshakes indicated that a number of the participants already knew each other quite well, and the existence of a „NOFOD-family“ became evident by the exchange of goodbyes at the ending of the conference: A caring and welcoming family for new as well as old members.

For the conference committee in Iceland it was a pleasure to have the possibility to give the conference

guests glimpse of what is going on within the Icelandic dance field. This was especially appropriate for the thematic focus of the conference being the practice of dance creation and teaching as the main base which artistic and other dance research draws on. The formal reception was therefore held at Reykjavík's City Theatre where the conference participants after a light dinner were invited to see *Blæði*, the spring performance of the Icelandic Dance Company.

In Iceland dance is a fairly new as a subject at university level. Few Icelanders have completed their MA in dance, and therefore, we are still waiting for a PhD in dance. At Iceland Academy of the Arts there are discussions going on about how research in arts and arts education, including dance, can be developed within the university, focusing on the perspectives of the artist instead of the conventional terms of the academic research tradition. From these discussions

the NOFOD conference was conceived, by connecting to the basic rationale of dance research and dance practice and how artistic practice can be seen as a way of research. It was also in relation to this rationale that those interested in participating in the conference were encouraged to present not only conference papers but also more practical presentations. This resulted in that nine out of 34 presentations were practical in form of lecture demonstrations, works in progress and workshops.

The title of the conference was *EXPANDING NOTIONS: Dance–Practice–Research–Method* and in the vision statement it was stated that: “This conference will address the multiple understandings of methodologies in dance practice and research, in order to contest pre-conceived conceptions of methods and revise our understanding of doing and knowing.” (Accessed August 2, 2015. <http://akademia.is/526-call-for-proposals-nofod>.) The encompassing title and the overall theme was intended to appeal to the broad community of NOFOD as methodologies in research

and practice should always be challenged in order to keep us conscious of the understanding of doing and knowing being culturally constructed.

The bodily approach to dance research was our main guidance when the NOFOD board was choosing keynote for the conference. It was decided to invite two scholars from the Nordic countries instead of someone from outside the community, two who have had strong influences on dance research within the area as well as being internationally recognised. This choice was reflected in the tendencies that could be found in the program recurring as the main themes: Dance education and dance as a theatre art.

Efva Lilja has been a key figure in the Nordic countries as an active force nationally and internationally, improving the conditions for artists to undertake research in their artistic practices. Former Artistic Director of the E.L.D. Company based in Stockholm, Professor of Choreography and Vice-

From Black Marrow by Erna Ómarsdóttir & Damien Jalet. Photo: Bjarni Grímsson



From Black Marrow by Erna Ómarsdóttir & Damien Jalet. Photo: Bjarni Grímsson

Chancellor of DOCH, she was the Expert Advisor on Artistic Research at the Swedish Ministry of Education and research in 2014, and author of the government report “*Research, Art, Empowerment–The Artist as Researcher*” (reviewed on page 59, editor’s note). Pointing towards the political issues regarding the bureaucracies of culture and academia, the rising role of the curators in the restructuring of intra-artistic hierarchies, and the effect of politics on the national and regional level create the ground for informal economies, Efva Lilja’s opening keynote lecture “Why Claim to be Dancing?” offered a variety of thought-provoking viewpoints to the value of dance. Underlining the importance of knowledge-production of both artists-as-researchers and scientific researchers to push forward the methodologies in basic artistic education, she also emphasized how cross-disciplinary work offers dance room to expand, within the larger artistic scope, as an alternative to what she called “the industry’s pacifying bling-bling”. Stressing the importance of flexible, open structures for the creation

of dance, the performative art institution’s resistance to change can be found in their hierarchical organization models and political mandates, but to Efva Lilja this emphasises how institutions need relevant artistic management. Also, how philosophers and sociologists together with artists can participate in advisory boards. In making room for artists to develop their knowledge, she expressed her criticism of a limiting horizontality and demanded political positioning, warning us of how commercialism effects power hierarchies and can risk holding ownership over concepts and movements within the art of dance. The word “Dance” which she repeatedly voiced in between her main points during her lecture could sound as an imperative, a question, or just a matter of fact. Resounding through our bodies, it was very symbolically through verbal language urging us as to push forward our field of interest: Dance.

The same way *Eeva Anttila* has used a practical approach in her research within dance pedagogy. Eeva

Anttila (Ed.Lic, Doctor of Arts in dance) who works as a professor in dance pedagogy at the University of the Arts Helsinki, Finland, has been actively involved in national and international dance and arts education organizations and journals. She served as the Chair of Dance and the Child International (2009–2012), and has published several articles and book chapters nationally and internationally. She has been the editor of the Nordic Journal of Dance: Practice, Education and Research and currently being the co-editor of the International Journal of Education in the Arts. Eeva Anttila's main research interests include dialogical and critical dance pedagogy, embodied learning, embodied knowledge and practice-based/artistic research methods.

In her keynote presentation **On be(coming) and connecting: Participatory approaches to dance research and pedagogy** Eeva Anttila pointed out how new theories used in academic research open up for a new possibilities for investigating in dance practice as they uncover how human meaning-making is always connected to the physical, material conditions of life. Meaning arises through manifold actions and interactions rather than in discourse or symbolic order. These approaches reveal how social change and transformation can be made through dance. According to Eeva Anttila, it can be fruitful in this context to connect art and pedagogy as artistic-pedagogical events can foster connectedness and participation.

*Panel discussion about artistic research.
From the left: Per Roar; Christina Blicher-Johansen,
Steinunn Knútsdóttir, Eeva Anttila, Eflva Lilja.
Photo: Sesselja G. Magnúsdóttir*



By creating situations rather than objects, and seeing performance as on-going events, it should be possible to encourage action and interaction, participation and affect.

Eeva Anttila also contributed to the conference by participating in two other presentations very much related to her keynote presentation and the theme of the conference. In cooperation with Teija Löytönen and Anita Valkeemäki she talked about their experimentation on how embodied collaboration could help them in their academic work. That is, instead of sitting and discussing research subjects, they meet in a dance studio improvising on simple patterns, everyday actions, verbal reflections and experimental writings.

She then in cooperation with Hanna Järvinen and Leena Rouhiainen introduced their article about artistic research in an anthology on research methods utilized by Finnish dance researchers.

As mentioned above, more practical presentations could be found on this year's conference program compared to earlier; therefore we have selected two examples of practical presentations; a workshop and a lecture-demonstration, to give an impression of the variety and scope of themes within the ongoing practice of Nordic dance research.

Joban Borghäll is a teacher in Performance, Laban Movement Analyses, Movement Communication and Dance at the University of Southern Denmark, a teacher of body expression, body language and

*Eflva Lilja delivering an inspiring keynote
Photo: Sesselja G. Magnúsdóttir*



From Black Marrow by Erna Ómarsdóttir & Damien Jalel. Photo: Bjarni Grímsson

drama pedagogics at The Danish National School of Performing Arts, as well as the creator of Decenter—an institute for movement communication. His workshop “Sensing and make sense” was a practical investigation in different pedagogical methods to deal with sensing and making sense of the dance and discussed how to stimulate the students’ awareness and reflections in a (creative) dance class, through basic task oriented exercises. The exercises had a special focus on contact and interaction and emphasized the value of both awareness and the reflection on how we value and evaluate “the other”. With reference to Martin Buber, we questioned whether we improvised together in an “I and You” relation or in an “I and It” relation? Transferring these experiences from the studio to everyday life and its many relational meetings, Johan asked:

What is the impact of the movement experience? The experience has two modes: momentary sensations and lasting impression, referring to Hans-Georg Gadamer: We appreciate the immediate

sensation of movement. But do we provide space-of-awareness for the special imprint of the experience, so the experiences bring a special kind of lasting significance, an immersion? Friedrich Nietzsche says that, “in a deep human being all experiences remain longer.”

The workshop suggested that being aware of one's movements in dance may lead to a change in movement quality both in dance (performance) and life—a perspective that might be developed more within dance research and practice in the future.

Hanna Pajala-Assefa's lecture demonstration “The body as an instrument and the pursuit of authentic self” presented her ongoing artistic research on body and sound, i.e. the body as an instrument. A contemporary dance artist with an MA degree from TEAK in choreography, she works in various disciplines; choreography, performance, dance film and production. In 2013 she was awarded the “Finnish

Dance Achievement"-Award, for her groundbreaking work in founding and developing Loikka-dance film festival. In her research, artists from dance and music disciplines collaborate exploring the creation of live interaction between movement and sound. Can one's body manifest itself in an instrumental form, and how can this practice be transferred into contemporary performance? She approached the research from two observation points: 1) How do we enable the body's instrumentality? 2) How does the experience of moving alter when the body is treated as an instrument?

The demonstration began with Pajala-Assefa and her assistant improvising as we entered the black box. There were microphones placed on the floor in front of the dancers and also in the ceiling. The sound went from the body's movements being registered in a very subtle and credible way, to being amplified and altered by a sound technician. The absence of the sound of breathing was striking. After the improvisation the audience/participants could ask questions or make comments, and a recurring remark was that the distortion of the sound somewhat reduced the quality of the experience for the audience. The dancers explained how the sound influenced their immediate exploration of the movement and how this is thought to influence the continuation of the process. This lecture demonstration appeared to be an excellent format for presenting Pajala-Assefa's work-in-progress, but also to demonstrate what artistic research can be and the shape it can take.

Through these examples of the many themes and presentation forms this year's NOFOD conference consisted of, we can conclude that there was great range of themes which were addressed, not only artistic and educational, but also bringing in historical, experiential, methodological, political and cultural perspectives in this cross-disciplinary field which characterizes dance research. The number of presentations arising to 34, we hope the next conference will show results of this year's engaging

and important exchange.

NOFOD has fostered dance research in, about and on dance in its broadest sense from the beginning, which makes the NOFOD community diverse and vital. As formulated on the homepage, accessed on August 2, 2015: "The Nordic Forum for Dance Research, NOFOD, is a non-profit organization that promotes collaboration between dance scholars and practitioners. This it does by arranging seminars and conferences as well as spreading information through discussions, performances and publications on dance. The purpose of the organisation is to enhance, empower and bring together diverse forms of dance research, knowledge and practice especially in the Nordic context." The NOFOD conferences have usually mirrored this variety somewhat different to in Reykjavík where dance as an art form was given more focus than usual without this traditionally being the aim within a NOFOD context. However, due to this year's two main themes this may be contested on analysis of the program, as dance research and dance education deals with dance in a broad sense, the relation between education and dance as an art form being so interconnected. This being said, the identity of the dancer is very much related to his or her education, not, of course, to exclude the choreographer. The choreography's artistic outcome will always be marked by the sum of this input.

It has been decided that the next conference will be held in Gothenburg Sweden in 2017 and the theme will hopefully be announced soon. The authors of this article are looking forward to meeting the NOFOD family members there and are excited to participate in the further expansion of the notions of dance and dance research.

*Sesselja Magnúsdóttir, Anette Sture Iversen
and Corinne Lyche Campos*

"The Entire School Dances! Project Generated New Insights on Embodied Learning"

Eeva Anttila

The Entire School Dances! The project was conducted in Vantaa, Finland in 2009–2013. The project was funded by the Finnish Ministry of Education and the City of Vantaa and carried out in collaboration with the Performing Arts Research Centre of the Theatre Academy Helsinki. A peer-reviewed research monograph was published by the Theatre Academy in Finnish in December 2013 (Anttila 2013). The monograph includes the following abstract in English, which highlights the main idea and findings of the project.

The Entire School Dances! The project took place at Kartanonkoski School, Vantaa in 2009–2013 as a part of 'Aladdin's Lamp', a national arts education network. A fulltime dance teacher was hired for four years to teach dance to all pupils at the school, and

dance was integrated in the curriculum. Professional development days were arranged for the teachers, and several performances, artists' visits and events took place in the school. A broad study accompanied the project. This publication presents the theoretical and philosophical background, pedagogical principles and practical procedures of the project, as well as the methodological framework and outcomes of the study. The main focus is the significance of dance and embodied learning in schools.

The pedagogical and methodological premises of the Entire School Dances! project are intertwined, concentrating on the question of the embodied origin of learning. Thus, embodied learning is the

*On the right teacher Reetta Riekkinen and 3rd grade pupils of Kartanonkoski school in October 2013.
Photo: Eeva Anttila*



pedagogical basis and scholarly focus of the project. A deeper understanding of embodied learning advances a conception of learning as a comprehensive phenomenon that takes into account the human being as a whole. The notion of embodied learning entails that learning takes place within the entire human being and between human beings, within the social and physical reality. It also means that embodied activity is a fundamental element in learning. Embodied activity refers to both actual movement and inner bodily sensations, experiences and physiological changes. This view of learning is wider than traditional conceptions and is connected to an epistemological shift, that is, the embodied or corporeal turn. This shift rejects Cartesian dualism as the explanatory model of human existence and endorses a holistic view where distinct forms of human existence are interdependent.

Probing embodied learning in practice may lead to further articulation of the significance of embodiment in learning. The purpose of the study is to articulate what embodied learning is and what it means in the reality of school life. Methodologically, the study leans on collaborative action research and communicative evaluation research. It has generated continuous feedback for developing the project. The starting point has been the participation of the entire school community. The study has supported the pedagogical aims of the study, namely the development of the school community, teachers' professional skills and pedagogical thinking, as well as the generation of new pedagogical practices. The study also aims to elucidate how embodied learning works in practice, and how is it experienced by the students and teachers.

A particular school community is the context, and thus the focus, of the study. However, the main focus is on the researcher, as well as on her values and beliefs concerning the significance of dance and art in learning. The wider aim of the study is to evoke discussion about the significance of dance and art in society and about the meaning of embodiment in

learning and holistic development. Thus, the personal and contextual may generate relevant issues for discussion on a wider—even political—level.

Based on this study, it seems that dance may trigger a positive cycle where individuals' bodily experiences become intertwined with the pleasure of collaboration. An essential element in this process seems to be the awareness of everyone's participation in dance instruction. This enhances a communal experience which everyone shares. It seems to reduce embarrassment, prejudices and fear concerning one's own bodily expression and performing.

Performing seems to be an important path towards bodily awareness and self-confidence. It seems to connect self-confidence and a sense of community. Performing becomes possible when self-confidence develops, and performing strengthens self-confidence further. Witnessing each other performing seems to create a sense of being recognised and being seen, and this creates a common experience which builds the sense of community. In this project, the sense of community has developed primarily within specific classrooms, but it has also extended and affected the entire school community through common events and performances.

There were many obstacles for dance instruction in the school, including lack of time, packed and subject-driven curricula and teachers' professional autonomy. Based on this study, it seems that teachers should collaborate more with each other. In this way, the teachers could give models for collaboration, interaction and bodily expressivity to their pupils.

When the project ended in May 2013, it was evident that dance was a part of everyday life at Kartanonkoski School. Pupils and teachers had become used to dance being part of the curriculum, and most of them had also accepted it. Dance was not mere recreation and deviation from routine; rather, it had affected the way of being in school, as well as the energy and atmosphere within the school.



*3rd grade pupils of Kartanonkoski school, Finland.
Photo: Eeva Anttila*

From this viewpoint, it is possible to see school life as social choreography, where interaction is enacted as embodied events and performative acts, and the school can be seen as the stage of life.

Dance and embodied learning have generated versatile learning experiences within the school community. These experiences are reflected in a sense of comfort in relating to one's own embodiment, bodily expressivity, interaction, and performing. Dance has not necessarily generated visible, measurable outcomes in motor skills or conceptual thinking. However, there are no indications that integrating dance in the curriculum has generated weaker learning outcomes in academic subjects. This observation is concurrent with the results of studies where the amount of physical education within school curricula has been increased.

The skills generated by dance and embodied learning extend beyond subject areas and possibly beyond the school world. These skills are related to being together and living together, to accepting oneself and others, to creativity and collaboration. The aim of

this publication is to ignite discussion about how these skills are appreciated in the school world.

Reference:

Anttila, Eeva. 2013. "Koko koulu tanssii! Kehollisen oppimisen mahdollisuuksia kouluyhteisössä" [The Entire School Dances! The Possibilities of Embodied Learning in a School Context]. *Acta Scenica* 37. (Accessed July 21, 2015) https://helda.helsinki.fi/bitstream/handle/10138/42322/Acta_Scenica_37.pdf?sequence.

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Dans i Skolen (DiS) is a Norwegian association that works to support the subject of dance in elementary, secondary and upper secondary schools. A membership in **DiS** offers you 1–2 issues per year of the Nordic Journal of Dance, electronic newsletters, reduction rates for courses and conferences arranged by DiS and more. For further information and membership fees see www.dansiskolen.no.



Nordic Forum for Dance Research (NOFOD) is a non-profit organization that promotes diverse forms of dance research and practice in the Nordic region by organizing a biannual international conference and local events. A membership in **NOFOD** offers you one yearly issue of the Nordic Journal of Dance, newsletters and reduction rates for international **NOFOD** conferences.

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Nordic Journal of Dance

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with subject heading "Contribution to Nordic Journal of Dance Vol. 7(1)"

Volume 6(1), 2015

Research Papers:

Priming the Body: Breath as a

Foundation for Exploring Ethical Artistic Practice

Leena Roubiainen

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