

de -
archiving
movement

#7

research : choreography : performance

ed. by Rose Breuss and Claudia Jeschke
in cooperation with IDA research lab

Ninette Rothmueller
**MEMORY OF THE FUTURE –
ENGAGING IN RELATIONAL
WORLD MAKING**

Rose Breuss
PHATIC ETUDES – A STUDY

Constantin Georgescu
**THE MOVING WORD:
MURMURATION AS DANCE**

© Rose Breuss, Claudia Jeschke, epodium (München)

Website: www.epodium.de

E-Mail: info@epodium.de

Alle Rechte vorbehalten/All rights reserved

Covergestaltung: Drahtzieher Design & Kommunikation, Wien

Satz: Frankowsky – Grafik & Kommunikation, Gernlinden

epodium ist eine eingetragene Marke

ISBN 978-3-940388-82-7

Germany 2021

Reihe de-archiving movement

Herausgeber: Rose Breuss, Claudia Jeschke

Bibliografische Informationen Der Deutschen Nationalbibliothek.

Die Deutsche Nationalbibliothek verzeichnet diese Publikation in der Deutschen Nationalbibliografie; detaillierte bibliografische Daten sind im Internet über

<http://dnb.ddb.de> abrufbar.

Ninette Rothmueller

MEMORY OF THE FUTURE – ENGAGING IN RELATIONAL WORLD MAKING

Introduction

In Spring 2016, Smith College, US, based Department of Dance faculty members Chris Aiken and Angie Hauser presented three evenings of dance improvisation titled *Memory of the Future*. The title of these shows references and honors Soviet neuroscientist Nikolai Bernstein and “his passionate search for determinants of movements in the future, rather than in the past” (Sirotkina and Biryukova 269). Aiken invited two dance philosophy scholars to respond to the dance shows by presenting lectures after the showings. The presentations were to reflect on the interfaces between dance improvisation and philosophy. I was one of these two scholars. My French colleague Professor in Art Epistemology at the Ecole Supérieure d’Art in Aix-en-Provence, Romain Bigé was the other one. This article is based on conversations held with the dancers before and after the performances, the works of dance presented, and the lecture that I offered in response to them. There are three thematic foci this paper will concentrate on throughout. These are: 1) ‘movement, language, and world-making’, 2) ‘memory’, and 3) ‘being relational’. The methodology applied writing this article follows the lead provided by Smith College Alumna writer, curator, feminist, and activist Lucy Lippard who states that her, “methodology is simple and experiential, one thing leads to the other” (6:30). This article draws on knowledge arising from philosophy, neuroscience, dance improvisation, and translational studies.

The ‘Memory of the Future’ Dance Improvisation Shows

The *Memory of the Future* dance improvisation shows, directed by Aiken and Hauser, brought together five internationally recognized dancers, namely Aiken, Hauser, Canada based contact/compositional improviser Andrew Harwood, Jennifer Nugent, and choreographer and dancer Bebe Miller, in whose company Hauser danced for many years. Musicians Mike Vargas and Peter Jones provided the improvised live sound scores for the dance performances. The Smith College Dance Department press release distributed a few days prior to the shows explained,

Aiken and Hauser’s process for making performance centers around the art of collaboration—co-creating through action, perception, and imagination; weaving aesthetic practices, personal histories, and embodied techniques. These collaborations and the performances they produce reflect an ongoing effort to understand the worlds of which we are a part.

The release also provides liminary insights into the composition of the *Memory of the Future*, as it informs that three trios will be offered. The dance improvisation shows *Memory of the Future* took place on three consecutive evenings. One week later the presentation of the two responsive philosophical lectures took place. I attended all three dance events. This article references experiences made during all three.

Prior to presenting *Memory of the Future*, Aiken's and Hauser's teaching, dancing, and scholarly practice have been strongly influenced by neuroscientist Bernstein's research. Aiken and Hauser summarize, "The ability to recognize, coordinate or deviate from emergent forms depends on our ability to extrapolate from what *is* happening *what is likely to happen*, to imagine the effects of one's choices and to make an intelligent choice. This is fundamental for all improvisers" (3). This statement references insights by Bernstein that both dancers put into practice in their daily improvisation practice. Multidisciplinary researcher Josef M. Feigenberg explains that Bernstein's research emphasized that, "Memory is organized in such a way that it allows, based on the information about past events, for prognosis of the future with a degree of certainty and for preparation ahead to the actions appropriate for the expected future. In memories orientation towards the future (not the past) lies its important biological significance" (75). For Aiken and Hauser, Bernstein's writing had provided the impetus for producing the *Memory of the Future* dance improvisation shows. Working from Bernstein's writing, it is interesting that Aiken requests that the two responses to their work are word-based, thus closing the circle between world-making through words and movement.

Phenomenology and the Moving Body

The philosophical area that this article will draw from is phenomenology. Simply said, phenomenology is concerned with embodied experience and it acknowledges our bodies as central to acts of knowing and relating. Professor at the Department of Dance at Oberlin College, US Ann Cooper Albright explains, "phenomenology is the study of how the world is perceived, rather than the study of the essence of things as objects or images of our consciousness. It is a way of describing the world as we live in it" (8). Thus, investigating the relationship between movement and phenomenology opens up a rich conversational space. The article responds to a deficiency recognized by dance scholar Aili Bresnahan, among others, as she writes, "Dance improvisation has been a neglected topic in philosophy" (86). Phenomenology belongs to a Western tradition of philosophy, which has historically been male dominated and continues to be intersectionality imbalanced. One of the objectives of this article is to bring more recent female and/or postcolonial theorists into a conversation between movement practice and scholarship and phenomenology. Liberal Arts Professor of Philosophy and Women's, Gender, and Sexuality Studies at Penn State College of Liberal Arts, Amy Allen provides a historical context to women writers in phenomenology, "The locus classicus of feminist phenomenological approaches to theorizing male domination is Simone de Beauvoir's *The Second Sex*" (2016).

Historically, until German philosopher Martin Heidegger challenged prevailing understandings, Western philosophers, such as Immanuel Kant or René Descartes, related their ideas strongly to the notion that if we know anything, it's that we are a thinking thing, and thinking here was located in the mind. In short, one could say that through the first steps that Heidegger and, later, French philosopher Maurice Merleau-Ponty took, 'the body', embodiment, and movement emerge as key elements to philosophical thought. Why? Because, Heidegger afforded a framework in which the most important thing about humans is that we get involved and engaged in worlds through our bodies. In a conversation with Serge Prengel, Professor of Philosophy Maxine Sheets-Johnstone strengthens such perspective and states: "Movement is our

mother tongue" (2). We are what she calls 'movement born'. From this perspective, we make sense of our bodies and ourselves through and in movement. This means that we engage in embodied modes of (joint) sense making with the worlds around and within us – we participate in 'world-making' through 'world-moving'. I suggest that movement is dynamically and intentionally used to emphasize and bring forth the relational aspect of place.

When originally writing the presentation, I re-visited Merleau-Ponty's and Heidegger's work 'in translation' in order to write in English. Had I originally read both authors in German, reading their writings in English meant to (re-)enter 'the translational space'. I had to move between languages; between German, a language that I feel that I have ownership of and English, a language that I do not own, but improvise in. Writer Eva Hoffman, although being in a very different situation, describes her experience of having been displaced from her mother tongue as a child by stating, "The reference points inside my head are beginning to do a flickering dance" (132). What is interesting about her statement is that it uses the image of dance when describing the struggles of living in a foreign language. From my perspective, Hoffman's statement describes an improvisational act. Furthermore, she connects moving between languages with movement itself; here movement 'inside' of her. I will reference Siri Nergaard's work in the next paragraph to strengthen this connection. As I read Merleau-Ponty's and Heidegger's work in English, it meant dealing with understanding a language that I had been displaced into. As also the case in Hoffman's use of the word dance as quoted above, my writing often-times leads to improvisational expansions of meanings that words might transport for a native speaker. 'Limbo' is one of these words. Entering the 'translational space,' however, also meant that I could meet English readers there.

Being in Limbo

It is a rather exciting request for me as a dance scholar to be invited to respond directly to a dance improvisation show. I need tools for this response. Words are my improvisation tools. In this following section I introduce key terms that I further develop in relation to the improvisation-based dance performances. In doing so, I move between worlds. Translation theorist Siri Nergaard, speaks of persons moving between languages and movement worlds as "inhabiting the translational space from which to continuously contribute and add to the relationship between transformation, interpretation and borders" (2016). In my reading of her work, 'borders' refer not only to geographical borders, but to borders between disciplines, membranes, languages, skins, modes of experiencing, bodies, realities, and so on. For Nergaard, this 'in-between space' is the "contact zone" (Pratt, 34) where boundaries blur and – I add – differences interact in ways that are sometimes hard to grasp, as 'contact zones' are filled with 'undisciplined interactions.'

A 'space in-between' needs components of what it is in-between. Aiming to release the idea from this (binary) tension, that it transports, I am taking a lead from Nergaard; yet, I reframe/rephrase what she calls the 'space in-between', to 'being in limbo'. I thus remove the term from transporting a focus on binaries in space, to conveying a focus on a state of being and doing. It is in this flexible capacity that 'being in limbo' can be the habitat of 'undisciplined interactions'. Why 'limbo'? The word limbo stems from the medieval Latin *limbus* meaning

border or hem. Referring to both place and state of being, Merriam-Webster.com *Dictionary* provides the following definition of limbo, “1 [...]: an abode of souls that are according to Roman Catholic theology barred from heaven because of not having received Christian baptism; 2a: a place or state of restraint or confinement; b: a place or state of neglect or oblivion; c: an intermediate or transitional place or state; d: a state of uncertainty”. Referencing the first meaning listed in *Merriam-Webster* and reflecting on Saint Thomas Aquinas’ writings on the limbo of children that die unbaptized, philosopher Giorgio Agamben writes, “The inhabitants of limbo, in contrast to the damned, do not feel pain from this lack” (5). What I extract from Agamben’s writing, is that ‘limbo’ is habitable. If it is, there must be sources of nourishment that allow for habitation. For the following exercises, I suggest that ‘being in limbo’ is both; as intermediate and transitional, *state* or *place* can be inhabited and ephemerally owned. To habituate is an activity. Given the conditions of limbo (intermediate and transitional), I suggest habituating in limbo to be durational, nondirectional, and unchoreographed. These conditions, I propose, allow for the emergence of new imaginative and relationality between humans. Contact improvisation co-founder and dance scholar Nancy Stark Smith wrote, “Where you are when you don’t know where you are is one of the most precious spots offered by improvisation. It is a place from which more directions are possible than anywhere else. I call this place The Gap” (3). As Stark Smith emphasizes many directions - or as I would put it anticipated futures - are possible from what she calls ‘The Gap’, and what I call ‘being in limbo’. One is never alone ‘being in limbo’.

Undisciplined Interactions

Earlier I wrote that being in ‘limbo’ can be the habitat of ‘undisciplined interactions’. Undisciplined refers to interactions either leaving the code of conduct of a discipline (behind) or moving between disciplines, membranes, languages, skins, modes of experiencing, bodies or realities, and thus moving all of these as well. With moving between these I, for example, refer to the establishment of new terminologies (e.g. being in limbo) by moving between languages, or to new inter- or post-disciplinary collaborations. When framing interactions to be undisciplined in the sense of leaving the code of conduct of a discipline (behind) I, for example, refer to actions such as one conducted by one of the musicians, Vargas, during one of the *Memory of the Future* showings. Vargas is playing the piano, seated, using the keys to cause sound. However, he then leaves this conduct, which is deemed appropriate and recognizable, remembering a plastic bag under his seat and starting to create a soundscape, using the plastic bag only. As soon as he starts using only the bag, the soundscape is much quieter than it was when produced with the piano. As a result, I can hear the dancers’ movement, hear their feet, their breath, as these sounds melt into a soundscape entering my ears. Suddenly, a group of soundscapers are creating sound-hybrids that my ears can’t separate properly anymore. Properly here refers to extracting and thus verifying sounds made by Vargas, since he is after all one of the two musicians listed in the program. Plastic bags are not instruments that one could study in order to get a degree in music. Immediately when Vargas starts ‘playing’ the plastic bag, I remember my grandfather playing the only instrument that he owned; a comb covered with a sheet of baking paper. Thus, Vargas’ improvising radiates out towards the dancers, now co-pro-

ducing the soundscape. For me, it causes time to collapse as an intimate memory occurred, a memory I didn't know I had.

When engaging in a conversation with Vargas during the philosophical response session, he shared that the bag had only been under his seat because someone had returned a borrowed sweater to him, just prior to the start of that night's showing. This reminds me of Lippard, as quoted in the beginning of this article, describing her methodology to be "one thing leads to the other" (6:30). The sweater had been lent, and it had been returned on a night of a *Memory of the Future* showing by the person returning it, who had decided to put it in a plastic bag. The bag had been stored under the seat, as Vargas had already been seated when he received the bag. He had, however, already been seated, because it had been decided earlier that that's where he would be at the start of the show. Amidst providing a soundscape for the show, he remembered the bag. However, he transformed its original purpose (to contain the sweater) and used it as instrument, thereby expanding the plastic bag's *Wirkkraft*, which I use in the sense of power of action, towards the future. I will come back to the idea of an expanded *Wirkkraft*. Vargas' action radiates out socially. First, I sit in the audience watching and listening to him playing the piano, knowing that what he does is other than what I could do. It 'others' the two of us. I have no training to play an instrument and in my capacity as a mover, a piano feels awfully big and static. However, a plastic bag I have used before even in a playful manner, playing with the dog of a friend. Thus, Vargas' undisciplined interaction opens his disciplinary conduct — in this case to provide the soundscape for a performance — to my everyday life and my skills. I can relate to it and in doing so Vargas and I relationscape. I will come back to this term. Pro term, let us establish that I perceive Vargas' doing something in a relational manner. It is relational in the sense of the action; we both can move a plastic bag with our hands, and it is relational in the sense of time; we both have used plastic bags in the past, and this history opens up a fast terrain of improvising with plastic bags in the future. Moreover, as the event this article responds to brought dance improvisation and philosophy together, all participants engaged and activated one way or another in 'un-disciplined interactions' as dance, conversations, and writing were presented across disciplines and improvised. To summarize: terminologies (tools) introduced so far are 1.) being in limbo, 2.) undisciplined interaction and 3.) expanded *Wirkkraft*.¹

I continue by introducing one more term. I propose that when we move, or in (self-) movement, we structure and order worlds - inner and outer. Yet movement, and movement as it resides in the embodied collective memory of a peopled place, has a strong cultural component. Defining the term 'place' Lippard writes, "[Place] is about connections, what surrounds it, what formed it, what happened there, what will happen there" (7). Thus, what we remember, and what our bodies remember has to do with where we are, what language(s) we speak, who we move with, whether moving is promoted or oppressed, whose (and which) movement is part of a (collective) imagination, and improvisation, and so on. I suggest that through improvised movement, people make anticipated and ephemeral worlds appear by making their moving selves visible to the world and to others and with others. Describing such process Aiken expands and states, "It isn't just our moving selves that we are making visible, it is our perceptual selves, our intentional selves and our imaginary selves.

1 Footage of the plastic-bag soundscaping can be found at <https://vimeo.com/172390709> (min 6:00).

You see me perceiving. You see me not perceiving. You see me engage with the process of imagining and enacting action” (2020).

At the same time, improvised movement itself is subject to being promoted or oppressed. In the case of the location of the *Memory of the Future* shows, these took place at Smith College, which for the first time in its history had afforded itself employing two Department of Dance faculty members that specialize in improvisation, thus providing an institutional framework of support.

As much as movement is subject to being promoted or oppressed, so are scholarly ideas. University Research Chair in Relational Art and Philosophy in the Faculty of Fine Arts at Concordia University, Montreal, Canada, Erin Manning developed and coined the term ‘relationscapes’ in her eponymous book (2009). Relationality, thus, is put forth in her scholarship and her job title. Manning uses the term relationscapes in analyzing contemporary aboriginal art. She describes relationscapes as “propositions for future thinking” (228). Relationscapes are an inescapable key condition of being human, and they are the intimate and variable spaces and forms of ‘being with’, in and during which processes of creating take place. In creating, humans relationscape with each other in a dialogic movement that tells us as much about who we were, are, and might be—with and to each other—as it questions it continuously. However, such dialogic movement is always subject to intersectional conditions that influence how we inhabit worlds. The American political theorist and socialist feminist Iris Marion Young, among others, emphasized that such intersectional conditions include the social positioning of “gender, race, cultural age, ability”, class, and so on impact how humans perceive and inhabit space (82).

To summarize: Humans are always ‘with’. This condition is a resource to improvised dancing and moving. I suggest to be with in improvisation takes place ‘being in limbo’, as state of being that is, per se, intermediate and transitional. ‘Being in limbo’, in its social, spatial, and temporal capacity, holds the potential to foster relational and improvised knowledge production processes through processes of joint relationscapes. In a simplified manner one could say that relationscapes is a nuance to how ‘being in limbo’ activates improvised anticipations of how to be ‘with’ (each other). I have now added the term relationscape.

Where Does Memory Start?

I met with Aiken and Hauser a few days before the first show. During the meeting they shared their thoughts about ‘acting’ through the memory of another body – the enactment of this being movement. Aiken and Hauser, partners in life and dance, relationscape. Furthermore, they talked about co-presence of body memory and how this for them organizes choice-making in dance improvisation. Aiken emphasizes that as he is improvising, he works from his or Hauser’s embodied memory. Applying a distinction between one or the other seems one option for Aiken. In this sense, Aiken’s and Hauser’s movement is relational to inter-corporeal memory as it resides between or within bodies. Australian dance scholar Elizabeth Schwaiger whose book *Ageing, Gender, Embodiment and Dance. Finding a Balance* engages intersections between dance and age writes, “In dance practices such as contact-improvisation the body both touches itself and other bodies, who in turn reciprocally touch it and themselves” (121).

For Aiken and Hauser such reciprocity seems to not, per se, take place 'between' (two dancers) but within relationscaping (dancers). Or said differently, in moving from inter-corporal memory, 'between' is no longer an applicable term, as Aiken and Hauser seem to move from 'within' their joint inter-corporeal memory.

Where does memory start? At first glance it might seem plausible to say, from the present. I'm not convinced. Memory does not equal the past in the sense of what we remember of it, in that it expands into the future through anticipated world-making actions. Moreover, memory multiplies. Holocaust historian and memory studies scholar Michael Rothberg emphasizes, "memories are mobile" between communities, as "histories are implicated in each other" (313). Thus, memory is not a subject of the present, neither is it subject to one person or community, nor to one body. If memory is not a subject of the present, an image that can be used to approach Aiken's and Hauser's practice is that they are 'spatially expressive time travelers', in the sense that their world-making, their dance improvisation, is embodied anticipation of worlds to come. Anticipation is memory traveling, as in traveling in a space/time web rather than along a singular linear time-line or a spatial inward or outward radiation. For lack of better words – remember I conduct a 'flickering dance' writing in English – I use the term space/time. While I can't expand on relationalities contained in space/time, I wish to highlight that this idea moves beyond entities (space and time) that could be clearly distinguished from each other. The connections drawn from and within this net are what I call 'embodied relational connections in anticipation and consciousness'.

As shared above during one of the shows, Vargas' plastic bag soundscaping expanded relationally to me. Yet, Aiken's memory also expands to me. I am in the web, as I am participating as an audience member through all three shows. First, I watch Aiken's movements in real time in the sense of, as they appear. Later, during the third night, knowing just a split second before Aiken smiles that he will. How can that be? His smile isn't choreographed by a set score I could have learned. Albright writes, that studying Maurice Merleau-Ponty's work it became crucial to "understand the reality of our existence by recognizing that our perception is interactive with the world" (2). Such interactive perception is impacted by who we are to each other and it has to do with politics in place, time, and space to mention just a few impacting factors. Sensing that Aiken will smile corresponds further to what I call relational anticipation.

French phenomenologist Merleau-Ponty writings investigate the interconnected relationality of humans being-in-the-world. He writes, "In every focusing movement my body unites present, past and future, it secretes time, [...] My body takes possession of time; it brings into existence a past and a future for the present; it is not a thing, but creates time instead of submitting to it" (1994, 239ff). Time and space are intimate, intertwined partners in processes of world making. Space, in my reading, is far from being reduced to extension. More so, it is understood as the place in which movement unfolds itself. Yet, place, unlike space, is in Lippard's words "latitudinal and longitudinal within the map of a person's life". She continues and defines place to be where "space [is] combined with memory" (7). Her writing is crucial to understanding that place, as 'peopled', is an activated discursive encounter involving actors, stories, movement, sounds, memories, internal and external sensations, and so on. The peopled place, the worlds, created by the performers of *Memory of the Future*, comes into being through relational anticipation enacted by skillful people engaging in something that is deeply

meaningful to who they are (with each other). With relational anticipation, I mean anticipation based on knowing each other. To have skills is deeply related to moving through this world in meaningful ways. In making worlds yet to come, humans remake memory through anticipatorily expanding its *Wirkkraft* (power of action) into the future. Philosophically speaking, one can say that what one saw while watching the show now resides in the fibers of one's body and in the socio-spatial fabric of a peopled place as well as 'between' people's bodies. This also extends how humans relationscape with each other, as humans are co-present in the body memory of others, and that, as far as relational world-making goes, matters deeply. Had Aiken before the shows explained to me how he might improvise 'from' Hauser's embodied memory, my knowing that he will smile soon also responds to how, he working from embodied memory into expression, had entered my embodied memory; there is no other way I could have known he would smile. Manning writes, "Movement is one with the world, not body/world, but body-worlding" (13). Movement thus is the ultimate form of interpersonal and interworld relationality. To be relational means to always be 'with'.

Intentionality of movement frames choices to be made as dancers improvise and in turn, allows for various connections within a peopled place to be transitionally established. Without relational imagination this is not possible. By relational imagination, I mean imagination that relates us to others and expands who we are with others further in time and space. Earlier I put forth the idea that 'being in limbo' is habitable, and suggested 'being limbo' to be both intermediate and transitional *state* or *place*. It is this condition of intermediality and transitionality that allows relational imagination during improvisation. In an extended reading of Dmitri Nikulin's work on productive imagination, I understand both imagination and anticipation to be, in his words, "fundamentally indispensable for the proper functioning of memory" (1). Imagination then, is (in its relation to memory) the prerequisite for movement in anticipation. Imagination stems from the Latin *imaginare* which means to form an image. Image refers to new ideas. Such new ideas are anticipated in worlds in which humans are with each other and become part of each other's anticipated futures. Such anticipated futures emphasize being, in the sense of relationally engaging and moving in meaningful ways with each other, thereby providing glimpses towards futures to come (e.g. I know when Aiken will smile).

Movement is an unlimited possibility of expansion, as humans elaborate possibilities. If perception, following Merleau-Ponty, must persist incomplete, its incompleteness requires expansion. Within this framework, improvisation is expansion of possibilities. All intertwinement of past, present, and future are dependent on improvisation. In this sense one can say that as humans are improvising, they are 'full of world' and through that, they engage in embodied forms of world-making. In this framework, movement is a source of meaning. Movement is being in the world. Questions arising here include: How is movement world-making?; how does it generate worlds, challenge intimate and social or political questions, positions and dispositions the body, mine – others, the body that space itself is? Post-colonial scholar Sara Ahmed writes, "It is not, then, that bodies simply have a direction, or that they follow directions, in moving this way or that. Rather, in moving this way rather than that, and moving in this way again and again, the surfaces of bodies in turn acquire their shape. Bodies are "directed" and they take the shape of this direction" (15ff). Thus, how bodies take on what Ahmed call the "shape of this direction" through relational moving is always political. Ahmed's writing

focused on experiences that disorient oneself in the sense of making one turn around in order to “reorient toward what may have been part of a background or what felt initially like it was out of our reach” (15ff). In doing so Ahmed emphasizes that, “By bringing what is “behind” to the front, we might queer phenomenology” (4). Thus, with Ahmed one could move from investigating the interface of dance improvisation and phenomenology to include queer phenomenology. While this is not possible here given the length of an article, I deem it a crucial route to investigate.

Seeing, Improvising, and Merleau-Ponty’s ‘flesh’

Audiences for the *Memory of the Future* showings were seated on two sides of a central stage on floor level marked by a pristine white dance floor mat. Each side had three raised seat rows. As part of the showing, approximately midway through, members were asked each night to cross the dance floor and find a seat on the other side of the stage. Right after the second show Aiken and I walked down the corridor ajar to the venue. As we walked, he shared with me how much it mattered to him to see everybody at any given point in time during his performance. How I am seeing and am seen is one form of how I am relational. The night before he said to me, “I can feel your eyes watching.” Thus, on both nights, his first comments to me after the show related to seeing. I take his comments as impetus to investigating seeing and improvising using Merleau-Ponty’s notion of ‘flesh’. Seeing for Merleau-Ponty is being drawn into a dimension of being. His notion of ‘flesh’ expresses the intertwinement and reversibility of the sensate and the sensible. ‘Flesh’ coordinates the relationship between the visible and the invisible. In a text that examines Merleau-Ponty’s writing and Louise Bourgeois’ art, French Philosophy scholar Lorna Collins underlines, “Flesh brings forward [...] the carnal matter of a fundamental univocal being preceding this division” (48). Division here refers to divisions between subject/object and between visible/invisible. To say it differently, in seeing and being seen we become. Thus, in seeing and being seen Aiken becomes. It is not surprising that his first comments after the show referred to seeing. Seeing and being seen never come to humans without the other, and they come to humans as these humans are ‘with’.

Ahmed, rethinking Merleau-Ponty, emphasizes, “the very experiences that make the body ‘my body’, are the very same experiences that open my body to other bodies, in a simultaneous mutuality of touch and being touched, and seen and being seen. In this sense, my body does not belong to me: embodiment is what opens out the intimacy of ‘myself’ with others” (2013, 47). Earlier I wrote that to be relational means to always be ‘with’. For Merleau-Ponty, this ‘with’ is the flesh of the world. The question for Ahmed is, if touch opens bodies to other bodies, “how, in that very opening, touch differentiates between bodies” (2013, 48). This is where cultural stereotyping comes in, as humans are ‘culturally trained’ to see a ‘female’ dancer, a dancer of ‘color’ and so on. This matters, because in seeing and being seen, we not only order world, but we also apply hierarchies, which is a political action. My reading of Ahmed’s work suggests that such embodiment is always relational and it includes movement as a crucial political form of embodiment. One night, as I watch the show, Hauser takes Aiken’s weight. A woman seated next to me whispers, “Now, how can this woman carry this man?” Given her statement I wonder whether, if the exchange of weight had happened the other way around,

it would have caused less surprise. Through such improvisational doing (Hauser takes Aiken's weight) improvised dance holds the potential to challenge cultural stereotyping, because what we see impacts greatly on how we make meaning of the world and relate to others within it.

Referencing Merleau-Ponty's later work, philosopher April Flakne states that "the self and its [...] body are not to be assumed in advance [...]. They are instead nothing but an ever-improvised centering in contact with the improvisations of others in an open dynamic space" (48). One can read *Memory of the Future* using this notion. 'Being in limbo' takes place in such dynamic spaces. Processes of knowing and knowledge are present in their unfolding; flows and interruptions are marking experience and space to become places of social, political, and creative world-making and thus grant modes of ephemeral relational ownership. Yet, this open dynamic space is a different space for different actors, or, to say it differently, had I watched *Memory of the Future* during the summer I spent in a wheelchair, crossing the narrow wooden bridge that ran across the dance floor would have caused a dynamic process of 'othering'. Because crossing the dance floor would simply have needed an alternative solution, as the breadth of the wheelchair would have exceeded that of the bridge. Or yet again said differently: If you are not here, I can't be here. In moving we are making worlds; and these are improvised and relational worlds.

Conclusion

To conclude, I will share a misreading with you. When preparing this article, with tired eyes, I read Merleau-Ponty. I read 'The world pushes its way through my body.' I closed the book and looked out of the window. The next morning when I opened the book, I read, "The word pushes its way through my body" (1994, 236). There really should have been an 'I'! What happened to the 'I', I wondered? To wonder, is a crucial creative activity in encounters with others. Vargas' use of the plastic bag is like a misread sentence, a score (mis-)produced with an item destined for the trash can and it makes me wonder. Ah, I think, that's what one can do with a plastic bag; and new worlds unfold through every misread sentence and every soundscape produced in unexpected ways.

During the *Memory of the Future* show, as I sat in the audience, as I crossed the bridge, I made worlds; audiences and performers make worlds together; and, in doing so, I am beyond myself (as we are beyond ourselves). Lives intertwine, just for a moment. As I sat in the audience my perceptual field intersected with the perceptual fields of others. Having studied Bernstein, Aiken and Hauser shared with me that they are interested in and exercise the capacity to extend backwards and forwards on a temporal level. Thus, in moving, humans are beyond and within themselves, and humans are beyond and within time. Only if we are beyond ourselves can we reach the world; only if we are within ourselves can our desire refer to world-making. In Merleau-Ponty's words: "I am not in space and time, nor do I conceive space and time; I belong to them, my body combines with them and includes them" (2002, 162).

I conclude with performer Bronwyn Preece's thoughts on how philosophy and improvisation are intimate ways of being in this world. She writes, "improvisation and Merleau-Ponty's phenomenology [...] (invite) the sensuous intimacies of interaction: with ourselves, with each other [...]" (61). In this sense, in improvising and in philosophy alike we interact – and we

make worlds. I quoted Sheets-Johnstone stating that we are 'movement born'. I believe that Manning's writing communicates with Sheets-Johnstone's, yet brings forth the potential intentionality of movement. Manning writes, "Movement is one with the world, not body/world, but body-worlding" (13)

During the *Memory of the Future* shows audience members and dancers engaged in experiencing as a process of making world available. The 'here' of the dancers of *Memory of the Future* is brought into being in relation to the other; that other can be either a breathing other or an object. In any case, nothing is ever nonrelational.

Acknowledgements

I thank all members of the *Memory of the Future* events for their inspiring creativity and input. I thank Josh Miller and Chris Aiken for providing feedback to an earlier version of this article and Bonnie Katusich and John Burnham for copy-editing it.

Works Cited

- Aiken, Chris. Personal email exchange, 2020.
- Aiken, Chris and Angie Hauser. Manuscript. "Preparing for the Unknown: Dance Improvisation in the Liberal Arts." 2016.
- Agamben, Giorgio. *The Coming Community*. University of Minnesota Press, 1993.
- Albright, Ann Cooper. *Engaging Bodies: The Politics and Poetics of Corporeality*. Wesleyan University Press, Nov 20, 2013.
- Ahmed, Sara. *Queer Phenomenology: Orientations, Objects, Others*. Durham, NC, Duke University Press, 2006.
- Ahmed, Sara. *Strange Encounters: Embodied Others in Post-Coloniality*. Routledge, 2013.
- Allen, Amy. "Feminist Perspectives on Power." *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, 2016. plato.stanford.edu/entries/feminist-power/#PheFemApp. Accessed May, 15 2020.
- Bresnahan, Aili. "Improvisational Artistry in Live Dance Performance as Embodied and Extended Agency." *Congress on Research in Dance*, 2014. Accessed May, 13 2020. DOI:10.1017/S0149767714000035.
- Collins, Lorna. "The Wild Being of Louise Bourgeois: Merleau-Ponty in the Flesh." *Romance Studies*, vol. 28, no. 1, January, 2010 pp. 47–56.
- Feigenberg, Josef M. *Nikolai Bernstein - from Reflex to the Model of the Future: From Reflexes to the Model of the Future*. LIT Verlag Münster. 2014.
- Flakne, April "Contact/improv: a Synaesthetic Rejoinder to Derrida's Reading of Merleau-Ponty." *Philosophy Today*, 51, SPEG Supplement, 2007. pp. 42-49.
- Hoffman, Eva. *Lost in Translation*. New York, Penguin Books. 1990.
- Lippard, Lucy. *The Lure of the Local: Senses of Place in a Multicentered Society*. New Press, 1997
- Lippard, Lucy. "Marion Barthelme Lecture: Lucy Lippard, Presented at The Menil Collection." May 17, 2019. www.youtube.com/watch?v=L-Q7tBR6oKg. Accessed, 15 May, 2020.
- "Limbo." Merriam-Webster.com *Dictionary*, Merriam-Webster, www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/limbo. Accessed 30 May, 2020.
- Manning, Erin. *Relationescapes*. MIT Press, 2009.
- Merleau-Ponty, Maurice. *Phenomenology of Perception*. East Sussex, Psychology Press, 2002.
- Merleau-Ponty, Maurice. *Phenomenology of Perception*. New York, Routledge, 1994.
- Nergaard, Siri. "The Migrant Is Today's Translator: Possible Interpretations." Lecture presented at Smith College, 2016.
- Nikulin, Dmitri "What is Productive Imagination?" *Productive Imagination. Its History, Meaning and Significance*, edited by Geniusas, Saulius and Dmitri Nikulin, London, New York, Rowman and Littlefield, 2018.

- Pratt, Mary Louise. "Arts of the Contact Zone." *Profession*, Modern Language Association, 1991, pp. 33-40.
- Preece, Bronwyn. "The Eco-Improvisatory-Theatre of Merleau-Ponty's Phenomenological Narrative." *Phenomenology & Practice*, vol 7, no. 2, 2013, pp. 61-77.
- Prenzel, Serge. "Maxine Sheets-Johnstone on Movement." *Relational Implicit*, May 2010 relationalimplicit.com/zug/transcripts/Sheets-Johnstone-2010-05.pdf.
- Rothberg, Michael. *Multidirectional Memory, Remembering the Holocaust in the Age of Decolonization*. Stanford University Press, 2009.
- Schwaiger, Liz. "The Flesh and the World: Intercorporeal Body-selves, Ageing and Dancing," *The Senses and Society*, 2008, vol.3, iss. 1, pp. 45-60.
- Schwaiger, Elizabeth. *Ageing, Gender, Embodiment and Dance. Finding a Balance*. Palgrave Macmillan UK, 2012.
- Sirotkina I.E. and Biryukova E.V. "Futurism in Physiology: Nikolai Bernstein, Anticipation, and Kinaesthetic Imagination." *Anticipation: Learning from the Past*, edited by Nadin, Mihai, Cognitive Systems Monographs, vol 25. Springer, Cham. 2015.
- Smith College Dance Department Press Release. "Smith College Department of Dance Presents Memory of the Future." Northampton, MA, March 23, 2016
- Stark Smith, Nancy. "Editor Note: Dedication to the Moment". *Contact Quarterly*, 1987, 12:3, pp. 3-4.
- Young, Iris Marion. *Inclusion and Democracy*. Oxford University Press, 2002.

Rose Breuss

PHATIC ETUDES A STUDY

In 1991/92, Thomas Schallmann created a notation for excerpts from Jean Cébron's études.¹ The 56 sheets using Kinetography Laban are found in the Kinetographic Archive of Folkwang University of the Arts in Essen, and are thus far unpublished. I am grateful to Henner Drewes and Thomas Schallmann for facilitating access to the sheets during my visit to the Kinetographic Archive in 2018.

The architectural structure of this long-standing institute is notable. Via a door with a bell that is labeled, on the uppermost floor the visitor enters a light dance studio. At the back end, another staircase leads to the archive. As you walk up, there are archival boxes to the left and a screening room to the right; you can also see that the latter leads into a classical lecture hall with rising seats and integrated writing desks.

The Kinetographic Archive presents an impressive dimension, vision and concept of dance. We encounter an almost prototypical spatial arrangement for artistic work and for praxeological research (currently much-talked-about). The dancers' physical practice in the studio correlates, in this case via actual spatial planes, with an array of different dance meditations and transfers.

Writing, notating, projecting, deciphering, reading, realizing, translating – all of these take place (spatially) as related praxeological techniques. Material transitions, fluctuations, connections and references become manifest in their architectural super-imposition, in the sequencing of work spaces. As you traverse the archive, you experience continuous changes of perspective. The open spaces are suffused by air, and a variety of smells and spheres blend into one another.

The archive forms a staged assemblage of dance-related knowledge, a mediated and interactive practice. According to Sybille Peters, "materialization, temporalization, spatialization, embodiment, negotiation"² are constitutive to the emergence of knowledge, that is, they are "not, as it were, belated or secondary processes".³

Phatic Etudes makes the process of deciphering and translating the Jean Cébron étude-sheets the starting point for developing drafts and conceptual sketches. These sketches are *phatic*⁴ insofar as the dancers involved initiate, maintain and break a communicative tension between concretely deciphering the movements notated by Schallmann on the one hand, and, on the other, incorporating a dance technique unknown to them and removed from their practice. Via reading and studying the sheets, dynamic physical movement figures are de-

1 In 1991/92, Thomas Schallmann completed Kinetography training with Christine Eckerle and attended classes run by Jean Cébron, who during this period was teaching at the Folkwang Institute of Dance.

2 Sybille Peters: *Der Vortrag als Performance*, Bielefeld: transcript, 2011, p. 23.

3 Ibid., p. 23.

4 Phatic communication is a term that goes back to anthropologist Bronisław Malinowski. He is concerned with words and sentences, greetings and commonplaces that are said for the sake of communication as such – that initiate, continue or cut off communication. An example for phatic communication would be to say: "The weather is nice today."

veloped as much as movement space is constructed with precision. According to Michel de Certeau, the act of reading is already constitutive of space, as “space is a place something is done with. [...] Hence a street geometrically defined by urbanism is transformed into a space by those walking in it. Similarly, reading constitutes space through one’s practical engagement with a place that is a system of signs – something written down.”⁵

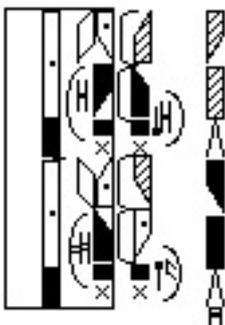
The following drafts and sketches (1-5) are the result of inspired studies in the ‘Cébron Reading Room’. It proved to be a space of incarnation: the incarnation of routines and techniques, dance-choreographic tools and historically asymmetrical temporalities.

Drafts, Conceptual Sketches 1 – 5:

1. *An Example: Sheet 17, Bar 77 from Thomas Schallmann’s Notation*
2. *choreía gráphein – Writing Dance, Dance Writing*
3. *Routines in Processes of Developing Dance*
4. *Reconstruction/Re-enactment of the Dance Score*
5. *‘Re-Tooling’ Time and Space in Kinetography Laban*

1 Sheet 17, Bar 77 from Thomas Schallmann’s Notation

(my transcription)



The notation configures leg and arm swings, with diagonals crossing-over in the center; arms and legs moving inversely to one another; the upper and lower sides of arms and legs ‘lead’ the movements; rotation, slight bending of arms and legs; palms orientated; pliés and stretching of the supporting leg; 6/8 beat.

The example bar demonstrates a complex spatiality, differentiated coordination, precise temporal sequence and a directed, dynamic discharge of body movements.⁶ Deciphering

5 Michel De Certeau: *Kunst des Handelns*, Berlin: Merve, 1988, p. 218.

6 The complexity of Cébron’s work becomes evident, for instance, in the étude “Starting Point” as reconstructed by Henner Drewes and Stefan Brinkmann (the original was notated in 1983 by Dunja Plitzko,

the notation step by step renders possible the reconstruction of the physical movement space and the dynamic-temporal dimension of movement. Yet how does the dance notation mediate between movement concept, the moment of transcription, physical repetition, and the production of dance, that is, a (past or future) work?⁷

2 *choreía gráphein* – Writing Dance, Dance Writing

“If we think choreography as writing, it may be because the very concept of dance depends in some measure on the notion of a trace in which the body, language as sign, and the gesture of drawing coincide as the very definition of what *dancing* means.”⁸

Points of contact

According to Jean-Luc Nancy, drawing establishes a “point of contact between a thought and a gesture, between a sensibility and an activity, this indivisible and mobile point where a form and with it a manner are born”.⁹ Strokes, lines and drawings generate movement on formless ground. Drawn, written, drafted materials (mostly developed on the side; often correlating with the physical energy of the rehearsal room) allow for the emergence of specific points of contact between the physical, sensory and intelligible.

In the context of artistic research in relation to dancers and choreographers, field notes, video annotations, sketches of conversations, interviews and ‘signature practices’ have established themselves as relevant archival materials. Scott deLahunta considers the different notation praxeologies as “new literature for a new knowledge space, the emergence of an intrinsic discourse coming from dance practice”¹⁰. Dancers and choreographers make productive

assisted by Jean Cébron). The études’ thematic variability is legendary. In the étude “Starting Point”, for instance, the title already indicates that “the étude is concerned with the question of where a movement starts. For Jooss and Leeder, this source point is either central or peripheral. Their introduction of this differentiation replaced Laban’s propelling factor of ‘space’ (and its characteristics) directly and flexibly with the factor of ‘source point’. According to this view, a central movement is propelled by the body center, a peripheral one by the extremities. What might be added is that even movements of the arms or legs can be considered as central when they emerge from the respective limb’s central joint, such as the elbow.” (Cébron 1990) Stephan Brinkmann and Henner Drewes: “Notation – Reflexion – Komposition: Die Etüde *Starting Point* von Jean Cébron”, in: Susanne Quinten, Stephanie Schroedter (eds): *Tanzpraxis in der Forschung – Tanz als Forschungspraxis: Choreographie – Improvisation – Exploration*, Bielefeld: transcript, 2016, p. 76. Also see: Stephan Brinkmann: *Bewegung Erinnern: Gedächtnisformen im Tanz*, Bielefeld: transcript, 2013.

- 7 Concerning questions of modalities of notation, also see Hubertus von Amelunxen, Dieter Appelt and Peter Weibel: *Notation: Kalkül und Form in den Künsten*. Berlin, Karlsruhe 2008.
- 8 Mark Franko: *Writing for the Body: Notation, Reconstruction, and Reinvention in Dance*, https://www.researchgate.net/publication/254933819_Writing_for_the_Body_Notation_Reconstruction_and_Reinvention_in_Dance (3/10/2019), p. 334.
- 9 Jean-Luc Nancy: *Pleasure in Drawing*, New York: Fordham University Press, 2013, p. 101.
- 10 Scott deLahunta: “Publishing Choreo-graphic Ideas: A Discourse from Practice”, in: *Tanz & Archiv, Heft 5, Mobile Notate*, pp. 14-22. Munich: epodium, 2014.

use of notations in particular with view to developing methods, as memory support, and for the creation of movement material.

Whether and how such signature practices can contribute to knowledge production in dance and can shed new light on routine procedures, largely depends on whether static and objectivist knowledge concepts are critically examined. As Michel de Certeau suggests, praxeological knowledge can consist of many different moments and heterogeneous elements:

[It] does not have [...] its own place. It is a form of memory in which knowledge cannot be separated from the time in which it was acquired, having emerged in its distinct qualities in this time. Memory is made up of a multiplicity of events, moving in the midst of these, yet does not own them (each of these events is gone, has lost its place, yet is a fragment of time); it also anticipates the manifold paths of the future by combining past and possible singularities.¹¹

Dancers' sketches/documents/documentations have the potential to render concrete both the discrete movement material emerging from first drafts and the specific application of routines. Like archival materials, these 'signature practices' can be 'stabilized'.

Steps, figures, positions

In systems of dance notation, detailed movement material appears structured and systematized through distinct individual elements. In currently prevalent notational practice, it is not the dancers and choreographers that notate dance. The function of notation is externalized and carried out by notators. Frédéric Pouillaude regards such a practice as

probably a consequence of a more fundamental externality. All dance practice – at least the *codified* dance – rests, like its notation, on the isolation and identification of discrete, nameable, and repeatable entities: all dance isolates steps, figures, positions, and the codification of a dance vocabulary, however implicit or transitory, is conditional on introducing discontinuities within the ensemble of human movements. For there to be dance and a dance vocabulary, the infinite continuum of possible movements must be carved up and distilled to exact identifiable elements.¹²

Archaeological findings in notations

Acts of writing and reading dance scores/notations are complex acts of embodiment.¹³ What occurs in the realization of a score is no simple transposition from sign to body. In the act of transposition, dancers go through multiple layers of filters of interpretation, at times even physical resistance or breaking points. At first, working with dance scores/notations overrides established dance routines. By attending to individual elements, concretely identifiable movements are deciphered and reconstructed step by step. Routines play a role in their epis-

11 De Certeau: *Kunst des Handelns*, p. 164.

12 Pouillaude: *Unworking Choreography*, p. 164.

13 Anaïs Loyer: *La notation choréographique: une forme de survivance du passé* <http://larevue.conservatoiredeparis.fr/index.php?id=1815> (3/10/2019)

temological potential, rendering a deciphering of symbols possible. Executing the notation can upset habitual dance and choreography routines – which can support a certain mobility in engaging with dance knowledge.

The symbols used in scoring fixate the material trace of movements and the immaterial essence of dance – gestures. As the body that has produced this score does not exist (they are either not present or, in the case of historical works, have deceased), the notation does not refer to the body itself, but to the immaterial movement form traced by a particular body.

Anaïs Loyer considers the act of reading, re-constructing or re-creating a dance score an archaeological process: “L’identité originelle du passé est définitivement passée par un processus de fossilisation.”¹⁴ The notation reveals remnants and ‘remains’ of tactile, palpable gestures, as well as phantoms of postures, and of present bodies (but not the original). A dancer’s body is the sole and necessary vector that can produce live movement, that can re-enact movement. In returning to a gesture fixed by the notation through a live body, the core’s phantom-like movements/gestures are exhumed and made flesh. The symbols’ rigidity is dissolved as they begin to move – with it being uncertain whether such movement can in turn be compressed back into the symbols it has emerged from.¹⁵

Processes of notation and reading seem to shift, to transform the routine structures, the praxeological structures of dancers. In this sense, Jean-Luc Nancy’s “pleasure in drawing” also applies to processes of notation:

what draws itself – what announces itself, what gives itself to sense – in an incessantly renewed way is nothing other than this: that the dance [my change from “world” in the original, RB] never conforms to a pre-given plan but its truth is inextricable from its drawing/design in perpetual formation and transformation. In all its forms, in all its allures.¹⁶

3 Routines in Processes of Developing Dance

Underrated routines

A praxeological, performative understanding of knowledge makes us attend to individual, singular artistic methods and procedures, and especially to previously underrated routines of dancing and choreographing. In this respect, Katharina Kleinschmidt has examined praxeologies of rehearsal in contemporary dance, shedding light on contemporary choreographers’ rehearsal processes. She has noted that these processes are not “entirely removed from es-

14 The French archaeologist Laurent Olivier speaks of a ‘deformation’ of the past. In relation to the past, we do not know at what point something was fixated. Was a particular work found at a particular point in the past – was an “object” (in our case the score) finalized in the moment of its fixation, or was it in motion – was it still being produced? Which version was fixated? Olivier, Laurent: *Le Sombre abîme du temps: Mémoires et archéologie*, Paris: Seuil 2008.

15 Hubertus von Amelunxen, Dieter Appelt, Peter Weibel: Vorwort und Dank. In: Hubertus von Amelunxen, Dieter Appelt, Peter Weibel (eds): *Notation: Kalkül und Form in den Künsten*, Berlin: Akademie der Künste, 2008, pp. 6-8, p. 6.

16 Nancy: *Pleasure in Drawing*, p. 105.

established forms of knowledge and routines”¹⁷ and that such processes – understood mostly as open, unconventional and critical of academic approaches – do not constitute an art practice removed from verbal concepts. The assumption that art- or dance-based epistemologies take place beyond the verbal realm, implicitly, and that they are transgressive as ‘another form of knowledge’ is put in question by Kleinschmidt’s study of routine in choreographic processes.

Praxeological research (artistic research) is variously considered as an alternative memory store or as a theory-proximate, open and critical project, with the memory store mainly seen as the foundation of technical competency and contrasted to academic knowledge. By contrast, artistic research projects especially focus in on theory-proximate choreographic approaches. Both understandings question certain static, objectivist knowledge concepts found in art and the academic environment, as they are interested in overlaps and interdependencies, instead.¹⁸

In artistic research processes, dancers are not mere executors, no merely the choreographer’s ‘instruments’. They are researchers carrying out dance-based, subject-oriented, praxeological processes and routines. By contrast to secondary literature from dance studies, which primarily addresses artifacts and choreographic object-like materials, praxeological artistic research develops its research questions through dancers’ and choreographers’ performative experimental set-ups and routines. Thus it underlines the important role they have to play in research processes and knowledge production.¹⁹

Work factures

Routines involve discrete elements, “nameable and repeatable schemes determining a work’s facture”.²⁰ They are developed through the implication and incorporation of physical abilities, competence gained through practice, stabilizing terminologies and historical codes. As Claudia Jeschke notes, however, “as long as the descriptions of dance-based activities can be assigned to or adhere to institutionalized codifications and therefore the stabilizing terminologies of historiography and discourse, [...] the agency involved in dance is not sufficiently recognized”.²¹ And for Karin Harrasser, “practices don’t sum up to mechanistic, linear, function procedures. Rather they unfurl in interaction within an entanglement of spatial, material, tem-

17 Katharina Kleinschmidt: *Artistic Research als Wissensgefüge: Eine Praxeologie des Probens im Zeitgenössischen Tanz*, Munich: epodium, 2018, p. 18.

18 Ibid., p. 27.

19 Also see the explications concerning artistic research by the Association Européenne des conservatoires, Académies de Musique et Musikhochschulen, *Artistic Research – Künstlerische Forschung*, “White Paper”, 2015: “Artistic Research shares with other research focussing its study on the arts the aim of promoting the understanding, and thereby the development, of artistic practice [...]. Artistic practice is the source from which it draws its questions and also the target towards which it addresses its answers.” <https://www.aec-music.eu/userfiles/File/Key%20Concepts/White%20Paper%20AR%20-%20Key%20Concepts%20for%20AEC%20Members%20-%20EN.pdf> (3/10/2019)

20 Claudia Jeschke: *Corporeal Scores as Indiscrete Historiographies*. Unpublished manuscript, here quoted with the author’s generous permission.

21 Ibid.

poral co-activities: with other subjects, things, artefacts, concrete spaces; but also in dialogue with both embodied and externalized traditions (e.g. with narratives of dance history).”²²

According to Theodore R. Schatzki, too, praxeological approaches unfold embodied, material, mediated arrays of human activities centrally clustered around practice. Such research processes do not only focus on abilities and activities, but also on body experience.²³

Dance-technical études

Dance-technical études/routines are prototypical of praxeologies in dance. As part of the infinite continuum of possible body movements, dance études isolate elements, rendering them recognizable as components of a relevant dance technique. Frédéric Poulliaude writes:

The term technique generally refers to a systematic collection of gestures, which are codified, repeatable and transmissible. A technique is thus like a verbal language or a scale of distinct musical notes [...]. It consists of a repertoire of identified gestural entities and, in this sense, depends on a prior process of selection and imposition of discontinuities. [...] A gestural practice is collectively organized around these elements and persists through dissemination.²⁴

Etudes form a storage base for repertoires. As study and practice pieces, they set particular difficulties, school a dancer’s (body- and movement-) technical abilities and render available an identifiable repertoire of gestures in space. Movements/gestures emerge as motifs; they are set in space and time and composed in variable manners. They conceptualize dance and choreography routines, exposing the hidden, discrete materials that form and make a work’s facture. In different ways, études record arrangements of spaces and bodies, positions, selecting these from an infinite continuum of possible body movements.

4 Reconstruction/Re-enactment of the Dance Score

The past is something that exists in the present.

Theoretical approaches to re-enactment have rendered possible new perspectives concerning methods and technical ‘tools’ with regard to reconstructions. For Mark Franko, the reconstruction of dance follows the aim “of witnessing the past again as a past.”²⁵ ‘Re-enactors’, by contrast, conceptualize the past as something existing in the present, and look for methods “beyond the effects of preservation and/or reinterpretation of dances past”;²⁶ they

22 Karin Harrasser, from an unpublished proposal, here quoted with the author’s generous permission.

23 Theodore R. Schatzki et al. (eds): *The Practice Turn in Contemporary Theory*, London, New York: Routledge, 2011.

24 Poulliaude: *Unworking Choreography*, p. 253.

25 Mark Franko: „Introduction: The Power of Recall in a Post-Ephemeral Era“, in: *The Oxford Handbook of Dance and Reenactment*, New York: Oxford University Press, 2017, p. 8.

26 Ibid., p. 4.

reconstruct earlier works as an integral part of their contemporary artistic activities and mobilize their body memory/memory store (archiving their respective individual dance techniques and codified repertoires).

“The re-enactor assumes closeness to the past through the body itself as archive.”²⁷ Dancers’ archives of body memory are historically overdetermined in that they consist of a multitude of exclusive temporalities. Gerald Siegmund considers the body as an “updated historical formation one enters through dance in order to follow the traces of one’s history, one’s histories, and related emotions”.²⁸ By means of routines and practice (necessarily shaped by history) and in working with contradictory temporalities, dancers destabilize chronological trajectories. Through re-enacting, they become engaged “more fundamentally with a critical, polemical, and philosophical reflection on temporality and spatiality in relation to the dance’s pasts”²⁹ than the case in conventional dance historiography.

‘Displacements’ of space and time

‘Displacements’ of space and time (interventions toward a-symmetrical historical temporalities and spatial executions, a practice of space) are characteristic production forms of re-enactment. Mark Franko argues:

When it comes to dance, let us emphasize that it is also an act that reclaims *space* for movement. Because of the prominence of gesture in dance, space also has certain claims on historicity. The carving of space in particular choreographic actions cannot be identified uniquely with the present, no matter when the actions are performed, because formally defined uses of space do not evoke a temporal as much as a rhythmically shaped dimension. Further, the idea of remains or the remainder is based on materiality, and hence cannot do without space and spatiality. Any remainder is a proposition for space and, if it is a performative remainder, for spatial practice. [...] Temporal displacement of choreographic thought may work with, but also against, the special *mise en scène* of the choreographic act.³⁰

5 ‘Re-Tooling’ Time and Space in Kinetography Laban

Spaces/Traces/Places/Surfaces

The spatial elements ‘distilled’ from bar 77, sheet 17 are characteristic of both Cébron’s études and elements of Kinetography Laban. In “The Essence of Movement”, Jean Cébron explained his understanding of movement as follows: “Movement is the result of a freeing of

27 Ibid., p. 10.

28 Gerald Siegmund: “Archive der Erfahrung, Archive des Fremden”, in: Margrit Bischof, Claudia Rosiny (eds), *Konzepte der Tanzkultur*, Bielefeld: transcript, 2010, p. 172.

29 Franko: *The Oxford Handbook of Dance and Reenactment*, p. 4.

30 Ibid., p. 3.

energy by means of a muscular response to an inner or outer stimulus. This response produces a visual result in space and time.”³¹ There are three components involved in movement:

mode (source point) – central/peripheral,
energy (intensity) – piano/forte,
time (speed) – slow/fast.

According to Cébron’s conception, space is a result, that is, not a primary constitutive component in the execution of movement. In the 56 sheets, Thomas Schallmann records the form taken by movement in the spatial components of Kinetography Laban. It is fascinating to see how the components originally determined by Cébron – mode, energy, time – seem to transform into the complexity of a space, to be rewritten as a spatial practice, a ‘proposition for space’ (Franko).

Via reading, the movements’ spatiality notated with precision by Thomas Schallmann leads into a multi-layered spatial assemblage of *spaces/places/traces/surfaces*.³² The actualization of space occurs in accord with/simultaneously, or in multi-variant successions that render the movements rhythmical. In the score’s incarnation, in the spatial execution of the movements, in the embodied ‘return’ of a gesture that had been stored through notation, Cébron’s components of mode, energy and time are updated, actualized.

Empty, stereometrical surface space

The translation and re-translation of the notation also sets in motion Laban’s movement space, only superficially static. Laban’s kinetographic space is a geometrical, Euclidean body structured as an icosahedron. It represents one of the five Platonic bodies, namely the polyhedron, which comes closest to the sphere; its surfaces are made up of twenty equilateral triangles, thirty edges and twelve vertices, at each of which five surfaces meet. Kinetography Laban is based on planimetry, that is, surface aspects, surface structures and surface ratios. Into these, a body’s movement is projected. The movement trace is notated;³³ yet the movement line, as trace, remains invisible to the observer. Only a realization of the notated trace that would split it into many stills, many intermediate positions, could make it visible (as in the Edward Muybridge’s movement photographs). Frédéric Pouillade points to how the observation point for such projected traces and lines is external. In relation to floor path patterns, for instance, he suggests:

31 Jean Cébron (1990): “Das Wesen der Bewegung: Studienmaterial nach der Theorie von Rudolf Laban”, in: Urs Dietrich (ed.), *Eine Choreographie entsteht: Das kalte Gloria* (Folkwang Texte 3), Essen: Die Blaue Eule, p. 73.

32 Cf. the following spatial components from bar 77, sheet 17:
a) Movement in space, in segments of space (spaces)
b) Points in space, body positions (places)
c) Spatial traces on specific geometrically projected spatial lines (traces)
d) Body and space surfaces (surfaces)
e) Accents as spatial (counter-)directions (spatial accents)
f) Spatial nets/temporal clusters and successions (transitory presence)

33 Rudolph von Laban: *Choreutik: Grundlagen der Raum-Harmonielehre des Tanzes*, Wilhelmshaven: Noetzel, 1991, pp. 54-62.

Moreover the *figure* is the projection of a nonexistent point of view, a point of view that belongs to no one and has become known since Desargues and Leibniz as the “geometral”. To see the figure actually being traced, one would need to place oneself directly above the dancers, exactly perpendicular to them, in the ideal and infinitely distant space of the geometral.³⁴

The organic score

Laurence Louppe interprets Kinetography Laban as an organic score. In her view, space emerges from (body) weight. She writes:

Laban [...] seems to be the first to have introduced the notation of dance with view to storing the sensory circumstances given to the human body (that is, not formal figures), that is, the entirety of circumstances determining the organic score, on the basis of which we can comprehend space and project ourselves into it. The most fundamental of these circumstances is weight, as shifting weight from the center of gravity – and shifting the center of gravity itself – is the starting point of all ideas of the body. [...] The size of the weight blocks refers to the duration of the movement inside, now liberated from all rhythm, from all external symbols.³⁵

In her approach to Kinetography Laban, Laurence Louppe not only analyses the planimetry of the fundamentally empty geometrical bodies. Rather, she emphasizes the inner movement, the movement of a score that unfolds organically. Is this the counter-image/a counter-movement to having a full picture of a motion from where it starts at an unknown source point? Tension emerges between the geometries of traces and lines, and the organic movement score. According to Michel de Certeau, the movement trace can be made visible in the form of a line, yet “it has the effect of making invisible the operation that made it possible”.³⁶ Do the body’s movements become invisible in the web of geometry and space?

Phatic practices in space

In *Spatial Practices*, Michel de Certeau develops a concept of space whereby space is defined through the activities/actions taking place in it. Such space diverges fundamentally from the panopticon, from geometrically mapped, visually totalized space. A praxeological approach to space is not totalizing in this way. With view to walking the city, de Certeau develops a ‘rhetoric of walking’, interpreting *spatial practices* as discrete practices. Routes taken can be traced on maps, as they describe paths and tracks; the places passed by walkers can be marked as points, and sketched as reversible lines. The walker’s acts, however, disappear: while the line

34 Pouillaude: *Unworking Choreography*, p. 174. Concerning space geometrically configured, Gaston Bachelard writes: “Who doesn’t see that geometry, where it speaks of bodies, only concerns the surfaces that form their limits? The sphere of geometry is the empty, fundamentally empty sphere.” Gaston Bachelard: *Poetik des Raumes*, Frankfurt am Main: Fischer, 2007, p. 232.

35 Laurence Louppe: “Die Makel im Papier”, in: Hubertus von Amelunxen, Dieter Appelt, Peter Weibel (eds): *Notation: Kalkül und Form in den Künsten*, Berlin: Akademie der Künste, 2008, pp. 216-24, p. 221.

36 Michel De Certeau: *The Practice of Everyday Life*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984, p. 97.

is visible, what remains invisible is the operations that rendered it possible. "These fixations constitute procedures for forgetting. The trace left behind is substituted for the practice."³⁷

In similarity to the procedures used in Kinetography Laban, in *Spatial Practices* de Certeau tracks action sites/body positions in the form of linear traces on the surfaces of a geometrically mapped, totalized space. He also makes the following observation:

[In] escaping the imaginary totalizations produced by the eye, the everyday has a certain strangeness that does not surface, or whose surface is only its upper limit, outlining itself against the visible.³⁸

The walker (in de Certeau) and the dancer/person that moves in space (in Laban), select particular places, thus fragmenting space. Covertly, they actualize locations, constructing discrete orders, detours and short cuts. Their actions are 'phatic' insofar as they maintain presence at particular points in time, and actualize particular locations/sites. They impress their action traces, as it were, into totalizing surfaces. We observe a very real oscillation between place and space.

Place

Place is the form of order (of any kind) that divides its elements into relations of coexistence. This excludes the possibility that two objects might be found at the same site. The law of 'property' applies: one set of elements is adjacent to the next, each in their 'own', separate area, which they define. A place, then, is a momentary constellation of fixed points. This entails a sense of possible stability.³⁹

Space

Space emerges when directional vectors, speed factors and the variability of time are related to one another. Space is a network of mobile elements. In a certain way, it is filled with the entirety of movements that give it directionality and temporality and that lead it to function as a polysemous unit of conflictual programs and contractual agreements. In relation to place, space is a word spoken aloud, that is, grasped by the ambiguity of its realization and transformed into an expression that relates to different conventions; it is posited as an act of presence (or time) and changed via transformations that emerge from consecutive contexts. By contrast to place, it involves neither definiteness nor the stability of 'property'.⁴⁰

Acts of presence

The categories of place and space are fundamental to Kinetography Laban. Analogously to de Certeau, Labanotation posits place as one's 'own' location in space, with no one and

37 Ibid., p. 97.

38 Ibid., p. 93.

39 De Certeau: *Kunst des Handelns*, pp. 217-18.

40 Ibid., p. 218.

nothing else present, no other body part coinciding. Here, too, place is a momentary constellation of fixed points in a space that becomes momentarily stable. Furthermore, place is dependent on gravity, the 'lead line' (the line of a weight leading into the earth's center). It is never fiction; it remains bound to gravity; it is of this world. Places exist for all body parts. It is also the starting point, position zero, the positioning/position/pose of the body affected by gravity.

Space in Laban's system is a geometrical body, a surface space, a form of planimetry on which dancers can execute movements in a 'mesh of mobile elements'. Place and space oscillate, can merge into one another at any point. In order to determine an endpoint to a movement and therefore produce a specific directionality in space, a spatial endpoint, an 'act of presence' is inscribed as part of Kinetography Laban. It endows movement with a moment of stasis, of pausing, a momentary presence, the point of contact to the (invisible) surface.

More than anything, however, de Certeau considers *places* as "symbolizations encapsulated in pain or in the body's desire".⁴¹

Body positions as archives of space

The formations and transformations of place and space mark the transition of body and space. In the transition, the body works to archive space, or, in the words of de Certeau: it encapsulates space – in pain and in the body's desire. Considered in terms of de Certeau's place, one's position/one's 'own' site fixed in writing becomes a site of the unfolding of stories and narratives. Two years prior to the invention of Kinetography Laban, Bronislava Nijinska had already written in 1926:

What constitutes a dance position?

6. A position is the placement of the body in a certain form that consists of proportionate distances separating the arms, trunk and legs.
7. A position is the beginning and the end of movement, the station through which movement passes. *The basic points comprise the design of movement.*
8. A position is that form of the body in which movement realizes itself. All movement is concentrated in one position.
9. A position transfers the body from one plane to another, prepares the body for a certain movement, and helps to direct movement correctly and freely.
10. A position creates congruence – the harmony between movement and the body's physical design. It gives equal weight to the body and to the form of movement.

Up until now the dancer simply moved from position to position. He sought to *reproduce accurately the pose he had learned*, but between one pose and the next he left a dead and unconscious space. He did not join the positions to one another with living movement.⁴²

41 Ibid., p. 206.

42 Bronislava Nijinska: "On Movement and the School of Movement", in: Baer Nancy Van Norman: *Bronislava Nijinska: A Dancer's Legacy*, San Francisco: Fine Arts Museums of San Francisco, 1986, p. 85.

Where and how does the Cébron-Certeau reading space release encapsulated narratives, the body's pain and desire, symbolizations and the enigmas of a past removed (especially – as in this case – for dancers who have not emerged from Jooss-Leeder-Cébron's practice)? This is what *Phatic Etudes* is about.⁴³

The German version of *Phatic Etudes* was published in: Susana Zapke (Hg.): *Notation, Imagination und Übersetzung*, Wien: Hollitzer Verlag, 2020, pp. 21-38.
Übersetzung ins Englische: Lisa Jeschke

43 An excerpt from "Phatic Etudes" was performed at Studio Molière as part of the festival Wien Modern with dancers Damian Cortes Alberti, Andressa Miyazato, Eszter Pétrany and Maria Shurkhal.

Bibliography

- Association Européenne des conservatoires, Académies de Musique et Musikhochschulen, *Artistic Research – Künstlerische Forschung*, “White paper”, 2015. <https://www.aec-music.eu/userfiles/File/Key%20Concepts/White%20Paper%20AR%20-%20Key%20Concepts%20for%20AEC%20Members%20-%20EN.pdf> (3/10/2019)
- Amelunxen, Hubertus von, Appelt, Dieter, Weibel, Peter (eds): *Notation: Kalkül und Form in den Künsten*, Berlin: Akademie der Künste, 2008.
- Bachelard, Gaston: *Poetik des Raumes*, Frankfurt am Main: Fischer, 2007.
- Brinkmann, Stephan: *Bewegung Erinnern: Gedächtnisformen im Tanz*, Bielefeld: transcript, 2013.
- Brinkmann, Stephan and Drewes, Henner: “Notation – Reflexion – Komposition: Die Etüde *Starting Point* von Jean Cébron”, in: Susanne Quinten, Stephanie Schroedter (eds): *Tanzpraxis in der Forschung – Tanz als Forschungspraxis: Choreographie – Improvisation – Exploration*, Bielefeld: transcript, 2016.
- Cébron, Jean (1990): “Das Wesen der Bewegung: Studienmaterial nach der Theorie von Rudolf Laban”, in: Urs Dietrich (eds), *Eine Choreographie entsteht: Das kalte Gloria* (Folkwang Texte 3), Essen: Die Blaue Eule, pp. 73-98.
- De Certeau, Michel: *Kunst des Handelns*, Berlin: Merve, 1988.
- De Certeau, Michel: *The Practice of Everyday Life*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984.
- deLahunta, Scott: “Publishing Choreo-graphic Ideas: A Discourse from Practice”, in: *Tanz & Archiv, Heft 5, Mobile Notate*, pp. 14-22. Munich: epodium, 2014.
- Franko, Mark: „Introduction: The Power of Recall in a Post-Ephemeral Era“, in: *The Oxford Handbook of Dance and Reenactment*, New York: Oxford University Press, 2017, pp. 1-17.
- Franko, Mark: *Between Text and Performance, Writing for the Body: Notation, Reconstruction, and Reinvention in Dance*, 2011, pp. 321-34
https://www.researchgate.net/publication/254933819_Writing_for_the_Body_Notation_Reconstruction_and_Reinvention_in_Dance (3/10/2019)
- Harrasser, Karin: unpublished text.
- Jeschke, Claudia: *Corporeal Scores as Indiscrete Historiographies*. Unpublished.
- Laban, Rudolph von: *Choreutik: Grundlagen der Raum-Harmonielehre des Tanzes*, Wilhelmshaven: Noetzel, 1991.
- Loupe, Laurence: “Die Makel im Papier”, in: Hubertus von Amelunxen, Dieter Appelt, Peter Weibel (eds): *Notation: Kalkül und Form in den Künsten*, Berlin: Akademie der Künste, 2008, pp. 216-24.

- Loyer, Anaïs: *La notation choréographique: une forme de survivance du passé*
<http://larevue.conservatoiredeparis.fr/index.php?id=1815> (3/10/2019)
- Kleinschmidt, Katharina: *Artistic Research als Wissensgefüge: Eine Praxeologie des Probens im zeitgenössischen Tanz*, Munich: epodium, 2018.
- Nancy, Jean Luc: *Pleasure in Drawing*, New York: Fordham University Press, 2013.
- Nijinska, Bronislava: "On Movement and the School of Movement", in: Baer Nancy Van Norman: *Bronislava Nijinska: A Dancer's Legacy*, San Francisco: Fine Arts Museums of San Francisco, 1986.
- Olivier, Laurent: *Le Sombre abîme du temps: Mémoires et archéologie*, Paris: Seuil 2008.
- Peters, Sybille: *Der Vortrag als Performance*, Bielefeld: transcript, 2011.
- Pouillaude, Frédéric: *Unworking Choreography: The Notion of the Work in Dance*, New York: Oxford University Press, 2017.
- Schallmann, Thomas: *Etüden von Jean Cébron*, unpublished.
- Schatzki, Theodore R. et al. (eds): *The Practice Turn in Contemporary Theory*, London, New York: Routledge, 2011.
- Siegmund, Gerald: "Archive der Erfahrung, Archive des Fremden", in: Margrit Bischof, Claudia Rosiny (eds), *Konzepte der Tanzkultur*, Bielefeld: transcript, 2010, pp. 171-179.

THE MOVING WORD: MURMURATION AS DANCE

What do we see when we watch flying birds? How do we, as humans, with our anatomical build and kinetic affordances, attempt to make sense of how birds experience flight? Which frames of reference are we going to use when explaining group behaviour observed in the concerted movements done by flocks of birds? What do ornithologists say about this?

In 1931, Edmund Selous suggested that the flocking phenomenon of hundreds, and sometimes thousands of birds flying together, could be explained by a telepathic synchronisation or some kind of “thought transfer between the members” of the flock¹. Also known as a murmuration, this phenomenon can be triggered by evasive manoeuvres from a pursuing predator, and in other occasions by what seems to be a form of voluntary collective behaviour with yet unknown causes. The obvious common logic of movement organisation, which seems to rely on clear rules, while at the same time offering a spectacular appearance, made Selous speculate that birds “must think collectively, all at the same time, ...a flash out of so many brains”².

In the 1950s, following extensive studies of collective animal behaviour conducted on insects and fish, scientists postulated that it is the “rapid transmission of local behavioural responses to neighbours” which enables the apparent synchronicity of big groups of animals moving together³. Later on, and following thorough quantitative analysis of position and velocity of starlings within a flock, a “topological interaction rule” has been proposed, stating that each bird adapts and responds in its actions to the movements of seven of its nearest sensed neighbours⁴. Other studies have argued that there are more aspects involved. One group of scientists proposed the idea that birds will self-organise by levels of perceived density, a sum of each individual’s ability to still see out of the flock in many directions, or how much dark (other birds) and how much light (sky) each bird can perceive around it⁵.

How is observing birds and their behaviour relevant for dance practices? How does the kinetic universe of birds artistically transpose and incorporate into dance? While these questions are way too complex and far-reaching to be properly tackled within the context of this paper, we could bring to attention a first example, which should help in setting the path towards its main focus. *Swan Lake*, originally choreographed by Julius Reisinger in 1877 with music by Piotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky, and revived in 1895 by Marius Petipa and Lev Ivanov, is in many respects a major reference for dance history. This is relevant here for its gestural transposition of birds behaviour, and in this particular case that of swans. In the Petipa-Ivanov version, we see dancers’ arms becoming wings and mimicking the flight, or we see a lifted arm with a bent wrist which is resembling the shape of a swan’s neck.. Meanwhile, groups of female dancers are patterned so as to resemble flocks of flying swans, with rapidly trembling feet raised on the pointe-shoes, in a gliding motion which could be the gliding aerial trajectory

1 (<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC4403201/>)

2 ibid

3 ibid

4 <https://journals.plos.org/ploscompbiol/article?id=10.1371/journal.pcbi.1002894>

5 <https://www.pnas.org/content/pnas/early/2014/07/03/1402202111.full.pdf>

of a flight, but also the swan's claws moving under the water, or a signal of emotional distress. All these transfers are intended to support gesturally the plot of the performance, according to which young women are being transformed into swans and kept captive by an evil spirit. These transfers are mostly addressing visually perceived resemblances, in an attempt to imitate and adapt the swans' behaviour to humanly possible movements, within the stylistic frame and kinetic universe of a ballet performance, and in support of the narrative development.

At the turn of the 20th century, and in tune with the technological, social, and cultural transformations of the modern era, many dance artists challenged the hegemony of ballet performances and what they perceived to be a restrictive movement vocabulary and narrative frames. Alternative corporeal practices and formats emerged, some as hybrids with influences from gymnastics and somatic pioneering work, and in other cases as practices fuelled by plain rejection of the classical dance tradition.

In the 1930s multiple strands of corporeal practices were already in full swing in Germany, with systems of movement advanced by Rudolf von Laban, Emile Jaques-Dalcroze, or Bess Mensendieck being widely spread. These practices were addressing movement from multiple perspectives, being that as a manner of improving the spatial and dynamic sense, relating music with movement, or using gymnastics for an improved sense of corporeal awareness and wellbeing. It was also the time of German Expressionist dance artists such as Mary Wigman, Gret Palucca, and Kurt Jooss.

In 1924 Dorothee Günther (1896-1975) founded together with composer Carl Orff (1895-1982) the Günther-Schule in Munich. This was "a training centre for gymnastics and dance", active until 1944, and based on the concept of elemental music developed by Orff; a "synthesis of music, language and movement". The school offered courses of gymnastics, modern dance education, music-rhythmical movement⁶, as well as singing, breathing, and voice classes, together with anatomy, physiology, and psychology courses.

Maja Lex (1906-1986) was already educated in gymnastics before joining Günther school in 1925, and after only 15 months she received her teaching certificate, soon becoming one of the main teachers at the school. In 1927 she started her work as choreographer of Günther's dance company, and in 1930 she successfully choreographed "Barbarische Suite" with music by composer Gunild Keetman (1904-1990).

In a series of unpublished movement scores⁷ written by Lex between 1930-1933, 78 text entries are listed, ranging from basic gymnastics-inspired exercises, to semi-improvisational movement tasks. This text emerges as highly proficient in corporeal know-how, with profound anatomical, bio-mechanical, and motor knowledge, while at the same often defying linguistic style and syntax.

It is to expect that anatomical terminology will be part of a written description of human movement, however, the way this is done in the Lex's text reflects profound knowledge of a body in motion. This is obvious not only in the practicality of describing movements, but also in the design of the exercises, where it is often the case that precise manners of execution are made explicit with very few words. Many of the exercises are directly targeted at efficiently coupling kinetic actions with methods of execution, following explorations of meaningful

6 <https://www.orff.de/en/life/educational-works/guenther-school.html>

7 Kindly offered for study by Carl Orff-Stiftung, Orff Zentrum in Munich.

patterns. Improvisation techniques are proposed in different situations, such as clearly framed contexts based on simple actions, as a response to certain types of music, or as part of interactive situations with other participants. Quasi-improvised structures are recurrent throughout the text, hinting to a non-restrictive formal frame, yet clear in its references, being those anatomical, spatial, or dynamic.

While most of the listed entries are addressing actions that could be viewed as corporeal training or movement practice, some of these are reaching out to references which come across as narrative contributions towards a choreographic gesture. Some of these are referring to military marching, caged animals, a row of dancing African women, or a group of deported people. One such entry, dated 30.4.1931, is particularly relevant in this context:

9. Flatterndes fluktuierendes Laufen (aufgescheuchte Vogelherde) über die Schräge herüber ab u. zu Blick zurück nach dem Verfolgen - zu zweien, der Stärkere reißt den Schwächeren mit sich fort (irgendwie umgefasst, was er gerade zu fassen kriegt) im Halbkreis.- Dasselbe im nur bei Ankunft stutzen, neue Gefahr wittern und den selben Weg zurückzuziehen .-

(Maja Lex - Carl Orff Stiftung Archiv: Orff Centrum Archiv.)

English translation:

Fluttering fluctuating running (frightened flock of birds) across the slope now and then look back for the pursuer - in pairs, the stronger pulls the weaker away with him (somehow gripping what he can grasp) in a semicircle - The same only that at the arrival support, sense new danger and race back the same way.⁸

In the following text I will use the English translation as reference, and I will start from the premises that it addresses dance practitioners as a movement score designed for performed enaction.

I will now attempt a close reading of the written score, an interpretation which looks for methods of gestural translations through textual means, possibly relevant within the frame of movement practices.

Fluttering fluctuating running

If we were to only read these three words, one could consider a group of people running as the reason to generate such fluttering and fluctuating textures; ; imagining the percussive movements of the legs and the rapid swings of the arms as a result of running perhaps justifying the flutter, while fluctuating would hint an unstable trajectory. More so, there is a rhythmical texture coming from the words themselves - how they sound and how they feel when spoken (also in the original German version) - which seem to match texturally the action of running, and the irregular fast-paced noise of the running feet. However, when reading the next words

8 Translation Georgescu.

(*frightened flock of birds*), one has to drastically switch the register of references. Now, *fluttering* evokes the sound of many pairs of wings, *fluctuating* becomes the textural irregularity of many individual birds flying and manoeuvring together, while *running* reflects the human kinetic translation of a flight. Even the choice of segregating these words with the help of parentheses, seem to place them within a space of conceptual reference, a reference which is requiring us to reconsider and reimagine the beginning part. Fluttering and fluctuating might also sound different, their implied textures reflecting now an affective state, further extended and justified in the second part of the sentence where birds (or in this case the performers) are *now and then* looking back in fear of the *pursuer*.

One could argue that starting a movement score with the words *fluttering fluctuating* will set a qualitative frame for the action of running, a specific textural tone based on the composition of these words, which contain aural, visual, spatial, and kinetic information. It is possible this way to account for an experiential reading of the text, where the visible signifiers (the written words) are to be perceived as units of meaning which are evoking invisible, yet (re)producible movement qualities, sensations, and lines of action. When further relating these with the *frightened flock of birds*, they become a multilayered movement score, which accounts for qualitative references, spatial design, and a narrative context grounded in animal behaviour imagery. More so, each added word within the first sentence of the score (and subsequently each added sentence) will associate with its predecessor, and will contribute to expand the potential for somatic and kinetic references.

This extends beyond a visual description of a common action done by a group of people within a specific spatial design; we actually see here the overlapping of the source-image (*frightened birds*) and a translation of this into humanly choreographed gestures (*running together*). It is an explicit reference to its original inspiration, and invites the performers to contribute with their personal imaginative input and interpretation. With very few words, multiple layers of meaning are being included within a common frame of kinetic expression. This first sentence is treated here almost as a choreographic space, in a quasi-freely generated syntax; a somehow poetic manner of structuring a text.

And this goes on, in what seems to be a component of the same phrase, where a solution for (literally) handling the situation is being offered: - *in pairs, the stronger pulls the weaker away with him (somehow gripping what he can grasp) in a semicircle* -

No precise indications are given whether the coupling is the only way to enact this score, or if this is only a practice to gradually prepare the performers for being part of a larger group. Given the initial reference to a flock of (implicitly many) birds, we can consider the second version as more likely. The text proposes a tactile manipulation between two people as a method of overcoming the challenges of chaotic behaviour within a group of “frightened” participants. At the same time, it implies a distinction between *the stronger* and *the weaker*, both clenched in a sort of kinaesthetic association while navigating the unstable general uncertainty (*somehow gripping what he can grasp*). We are here reminded of the topological interaction rule of birds within a flock, and their individual adjustments to the actions of seven neighbours. While such an action could be (and probably has already been) translated/adapted for movement practitioners within a group situation, the solution proposed by Maja Lex is different, and seems to hint at the (prescribed) wish to maintain the cohesion of that group. This group

dynamic is projecting a specific narrative reading, which inscribes itself in the general narrative development of the text, where the whole action is being repeated, temporarily stabilised, and continued under the threat of the invisible danger: *The same only that at the arrival support, sense new danger and race back the same way.* The spatial design of this part seems to imply a limited amount of options, racing back hinting to a limited horizon of (re)action.

One could approach this text as a template for gestural composition in dance, but also as a manner of understanding transpositional techniques going beyond dance practices. While using a natural phenomenon such as a flying flock of birds as inspiration for choreographed human behaviour is one thing, using text to write about it is another. This does not account only for text as a medium for dance and movement description, but also for its formal and textural composition. In this sense, words are not only describing an action, but are also resonating in a specific manner, becoming kinetic events which have rhythm, affect, and direction. We are reminded that words are made of sounds and are (have been) spoken before being written. The choice of words within a sentence will compose a choreographic space which entices a specific manner of organising actions and movements. A text describing an exercise or a choreography will be a textual container of running and flight, the stronger supporting the weaker, invisible dangers, fluttering wings and lipping feet. This text will also be a line of action, fluctuating individual trajectories flowing within a general spatial design, and a horizon of dynamic development.

The reading of this score is further expanded and enriched with an experiential background once it is physically enacted. Layers of lived qualities will give new meanings and references when performing it within a group. Hearing the irregular yet rhythmical sounds made by the running feet or the challenged breath of each dancer, and having the responsibility to care for another person or being in the “weaker” position to be cared-for by another, will allow personal interpretations to merge and develop into group dynamics. Tapping into previous (possibly traumatic) experiences which could support gesturing fear or adjusting to the running speed of the closest people so as to maintain the cohesion of the group, will contribute at the enactment of Lex’s indications, while having at the same time a unique textural and qualitative configuration.

What one possibly perceives when watching performers enacting Lex’s score is a rich experiential event with a common contribution to an unfolding development. A fluctuating and ever-transitioning mass of moving people is presented as well as aural and visual textures combined with a line of action away from an invisible, yet implied (glanced towards) reference. These fearful glances towards that particular spatial reference, together with the contribution of the “stronger” people in maintaining the cohesion of the group, is signaling a situation which exceeds the abilities of the “weaker” people. Viewers, uninformed of the threatened-flock-of-birds reference which informs the actions of the performers, will be drawn in the kinetic, affective, and narrative flow of what they see. This will be the canvas with perceivable gestures and textures which will offer spaces for projected interpretations and speculations. Again, one could imagine the commotion of the performers as the result of a mysterious, invisible, yet visibly marking reason; a marking trajectory across the perceived horizon which reflects graspable qualities and triggers affective participation. The fluttering texture of the wings have become the fluttering heartbeat of the viewing audience. What Edmund Selous

saw as a telepathic synchronisation between birds, we now see it transposed in a human incarnation. While for the uninformed spectator this is still mysterious in its origins and affording structures, it has become in the enactment of Maja Lex's score a gestural and somewhat e-motional interaction between performers and viewers.

Maja Lex could have written the score differently, but she didn't, and this comes in stark contrast with the general tone of the entire catalogue of scores. In most cases, these entries are directed at coupling anatomical body parts with specific actions and kinetic tasks, with a consequent economy of words. On the other hand, our particular case-study denotes a narrative and affective intention, which seem to be fueled by an experiential background of (probably) having seen birds during a murmuration phenomenon. What Lex possibly experienced when seeing the birds was transposed and repurposed as a gestural configuration, with great help from relevant (and to a certain extent revealing) choice of words. Watching a flock of birds flying on the background of the sky, a line of action opens across one's horizon, a line of a certain (fluttering, fluctuating) quality and dynamic charge. In the case of Lex, this experience will be (culturally) filtered and verbalised, it will become a left-to-right, up-down typewritten development on the horizon afforded by the page, and later on will be a commotion of people running across the horizon of the performing room. We can trace here the methodological steps revealing sediments of a gestural practice, where the image reference of birds has been verbalised, turned into text, and later corporeally transposed in a performative context. The particular choice of words becomes in this case a supportive tool for understanding and enacting such actions. At the same time, this development is relevant chronologically in tracing how this practice found its way into such context.

The perceived animation of a flight fuels Lex's typewriting, a new layer of animation where typing each key will impregnate the paper and will mark the space of the page, generating a signifying trace across its background. This trace is open to the re-animation of a reading gaze, in an encounter which will trigger the imagination and understanding of the reader. The trace will further extend its motility in becoming a performed movement score. The textual syntax and grammatical rules, while still operating within comprehensible formats, are going to support the animation of the kinetic universe serving gestural enactment, rather than merely ensure its formal consistency. *Fluttering* is in this case much more than just an adjective; it is a verb/action (flight), a soundscape (the sound of flapping wings), a state (irregular agitation, irregular heartbeat), and a three syllables (or beats) resonating rhythm. It is word of motion, a container of flight, and a dance, when read by dancers.

Bibliography

- Lex, Maja (unpublished). With friendly support from Carl Orff Stiftung Archiv: Orff Centrum Archiv, Munich. <https://www.orff.de/en/life/educational-works/guenther-school.html> accessed 20.12.2020.
- Pearce, Daniel J.G.; Miller, Adam M.; Rowlands, George; Turner, Matthew S. (2014): *Role of projection in the control of bird flocks*. <https://www.pnas.org/content/pnas/early/2014/07/03/1402202111.full.pdf> accessed 20.12.2020.
- Rosenthal, Sara Brin; Twomey, Colin R.; Hartnett, Andrew T.; Wu, Hai Shan; Couzin, Iain D. (2015): *Revealing the hidden networks of interaction in mobile animal groups allows prediction of complex behavioral contagion*. <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC4403201/> accessed 20.12.2020.
- Young, George F.; Scardovi, Luca; Cavagna, Andrea; Giardina, Irene; Leonard, Naomi E. (2013): *Starling Flock Networks Manage Uncertainty in Consensus at Low Cost*. <https://journals.plos.org/ploscompbiol/article?id=10.1371/journal.pcbi.1002894> accessed 20.12.2020.