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Raising Awareness through Dance

Abstract

This research deepens into the study of the relation dancer- spectator in Contemporary dance solos. Among many layers of a performance, aesthetic, ethic, performative, there is one which is the ontological level of the event itself: the co-presence of the dancer and the spectator. I argue that during performances there is a transfer of presentness (awareness of one's own presence) from dancer to audience under some circumstances: 1. the performance is live, thus a direct and not a mediated experience; 2. the performance is a solo, therefore the relation dancer- spectator is an intimate one, stimulating an exchange of agency, reflection and consciousness; as a consequence, the spectator, is involved in a process which leads him from the role of a passive observer to the agency required to contribute to the performance which becomes an event created by the co-presence and the co-participation of both dancer and spectator. The question that generates the structure of this research is: Which are the premises for the dancer, as the initiator of the performative act, to develop and share presentness?, with the complementary question: Which are the premises for the spectator, as the one who accepts the proposition, to receive and respond? In order to approach these questions, I will introduce and analyse *Lay(ers)*, a solo by the Romanian choreographer Cristina Lilienfeld.

As methodology, the research will borrow from philosophy the phenomenological investigation and key concepts such as: intersubjectivity, perception, consciousness, awareness, lived body (Körper) and living body (Leib). Mainly based on Husserl and Merleau- Ponty's work, but also on more recent writings of Bermúdez, Neisser and Zahavi we will interrogate and expand the knowledge of embodied relationships involved in making and receiving the artistic act of a performance and the possibility dancers develop in order to transfer awareness to the audience.

The Qualitative research will be used in order to provide insights into what dancers experience on stage and how they are capable of inducing their experience to audience; both dancers and a group of 10- 12 spectators will be interviewed. The individual semi-structured interviews (after the solo performance) will use some pre-set questions, in an order which can

vary leaving freedom to interlocutor to suggest own directions (Mason 2002b). The emphasis will be to encourage both performers and spectators to describe what they feel and how they reflect upon themselves during the performance. In analysing data collected, comparing what performer experiences on stage to what spectators experience watching the performance we aim to understand how performer can manipulate self-consciousness and to which extent is able to stimulate awareness into audience.

In this intervention I would like to discuss with the other participants 1. how to define concepts when different writings propose different meanings to the same concept (awareness in the case of this research) and 2. how subjectivity and different media could be exploited as part of the knowledge acquired through interviews (i.e. Romanians express themselves easily when being video recorded while Austrians prefer voice recording, fact which requires different interpretations and analyse of the interviews).