

Triple Personality: Creating, Performing and Appreciating Physical Theatre

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Abstract: This article represents a closer examination of the triadic perspective of creating, performing and appreciating a performative event. This type of analysis is directly linked to choreological studies, a domain which is not yet part of the Romanian academic field, but, in essence, it does exist through other forms of theatrical studies and practices. I localize every scholarly aspect in current performative practices, more precisely, in that of physical and dance theatre. Through this article I would like to bring more attention to the way these forms of performing arts are created, performed and spectated by individuals who are able to deal with all three processes. Therefore, this analysis will have a more personal mark, thanks to the interviews integrated, with two internationally known artists in physical theatre: Hannes Langolf and Rob Hayden. It is a closer unveiling of how processes of transaction function within a piece of work. It is a way of constant questioning every participant in an artistic event should confront him/herself with.

Keywords: choreology, movement, physical theatre, creator, performer, spectator, interview, Hannes Langolf, Rob Hayden

Introduction

In a previous article, "*Finding Words for Dance from a Choreological Perspective*"², I drew attention upon the *triadic perspective*³ from which

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² Andrea Gavrilu, "Finding Words for Dance from a Choreological Perspective", *Studia UBB Dramatica*, 1/2019, 63-79.

³ Valerie Preston-Dunlop and Ana Sanchez-Colberg, *Dance and the performative, 2.2 A triadic perspective: creating, performing, appreciating processes*, (Laban and beyond, 2010), 12.

performing arts can be viewed. This article's mission is to examine in a deeper manner the ways in which this choreological⁴ tool can improve an artist's understanding towards his or her work. Traditionally, the three perspectives are treated separately, meaning that a creator only creates, that performers only perform and that audiences only appreciate. Therefore, through this analysis, I would like to take a closer look on how much the three processes are overlapping and sometimes unifying. The reason for this is more than obvious: my personal experience proves that I, as an individual, meet all three positions (sometimes) simultaneously. Besides my own perspective, I had some valuable opportunities to interview two important figures of the physical theatre field: Hannes Langolf⁵ (fig. 1) and Rob Hayden⁶ (fig. 2).



Fig. 1: Hannes Langolf

Photo source:

[https://www.hanneslangolf.com/
copy-of-classes](https://www.hanneslangolf.com/copy-of-classes)



Fig. 2: Rob Hayden

Photo source:

The artist's personal
Facebook page

The opportunities to directly meet these two artists were given by my participation to different summer intensive programs across Europe. I met

⁴ *Choreology*, as a general term, is regarded as the scholarly study of dance.

⁵ "Hannes Langolf", accessed May 13th, 2020, <https://www.hanneslangolf.com>

⁶ "Teachers. Robert M. Hayden", accessed May 13th, 2020,
<https://www.ultimavez.com/en/teachers>

Rob Hayden at the 2018 „Paris Summer Academy“⁸, where he held a one week workshop mostly based on improvising and “Ultima Vez”⁹ Company's repertoire, a member of which he has been since 2002. Besides performing and teaching, Rob Hayden also directs his own works and has plenty of valuable experience in physical theatre, a genre which still creates controversy and confusion in the theatrical arts field. I did not interview him in Paris, but in Berlin, one year later, when we coincidentally met again at “B12”¹⁰, where I was taking Hannes Langolf's six day workshop on “Flying Low. Intention and Potential”¹¹. Throughout his career, Hannes has worked and collaborated with numerous artists and companies from Europe. These names include William Forsythe, Angelin Preljocaj, Wayne McGregor, Akram Khan, “Fabulous Beast” and “Punchdrunk”. The company that I am mostly familiar with, which drew my interest in a particular way and which he had joined in 2007, is “DV8 Physical Theatre”¹². Therefore, I managed to gather priceless information from two important ambassadors of physical theatre, artists who participate in the development of this complex theatrical genre.

The two interviews which I am going to reveal further on in this article are answers to three major identities I question as an artist: creator, performer and spectator. In *“Finding Words for Dance from a Choreological Perspective”*, I have analyzed the three aspects from a linguistic, social and historic point of view. There have been, of course, very clear examples from my own professional experience and of internationally known choreographers and companies that represent a huge interest for me. I talked about some creations of “Ultima Vez” that I had the opportunity to see live, I even attached photos from

⁸ “Paris Summer Academy (PSA)”, accessed May 13th, 2020, <https://www.oriantheatre.com/parissummeracademy>.

⁹ The company was founded in 1986 by choreographer, director and filmmaker Wim Vandekeybus. “Ultima Vez. Wim Vandekeybus”, accessed May 13th, 2020, <https://www.ultimavez.com/en/ultima-vez-wim-vandekeybus>.

¹⁰ “B12. Landing page”, accessed May 13th, 2020, <http://b12.space/landing-page-en.html>.

¹¹ “Hannes Langolf. Classes & Workshops”, accessed May 13th, 2020, <https://www.hanneslangolf.com/copy-of-rian>.

¹² Also founded in 1986 by Lloyd Newson, whose work has had a dynamic impact on contemporary dance and theatre. “DV8. About DV8. DV8 History.”, accessed May 13th, 2020, <https://www.dv8.co.uk/about-dv8/dv8-history>.

*“To Be Straight With You”*¹³ and *„Can We Talk About This?”*¹⁴ directed by Lloyd Newson for “DV8 Physical Theatre”, in both of which Hannes Langolf performs. A few months after writing the article, I gave myself the chance to meet him, learn from him and invite him to tell me “his side of the story”. Both interviews are recorded (on the 9th and 11th of July) and afterwards transcribed, which means that they instantaneously and instinctively answered my challenging questions, trying to formulate answers as accurate as possible. Besides the triadic matter, I also asked Hannes Langolf to try and formulate a definition for physical theatre.

Physical / dance theatre: “Movement is the storyteller.”¹⁵

Physical theatre and dance theatre are, in my opinion, the best dance mediums in which this triadic perspective can be analyzed. The main reason for this reminds me of Mary Wigman's first attempts to describe her own works from the 1920's, in the Expressionist Dance era: “The dance form is not determined by dance (only)... On the contrary, it is more of a compromise which has its origins in theatre, where the main accent is no longer on the dance itself but on the total stage event.”¹⁶

As a creator, I am very often asked in various interviews about the difference between these two genres and I am inclined to say that the answer lays so obviously in their titles: “physical” versus “dance”. More exactly, I am tempted to categorize the two based on the type of physicality they contain, since the theatrical substance represents the common denominator. This means that a physical theatre performance does not necessarily embody

¹³ World première on the 6th December 2007 at “Haus der Berliner Festspiele”, Berlin, Germany. “DV8. Projects. Archive. Can we talk about this?” accessed May 13th, 2020, <https://www.dv8.co.uk/projects/archive/to-be-straight-with-you>.

¹⁴ The production premiered in August 2011 at Sydney Opera House. “DV8. Projects. Archive. To be straight with you” accessed May 13th, 2020, <https://www.dv8.co.uk/projects/archive/can-we-talk-about-this>.

¹⁵ Quotation from Hannes Langolf's interview, recorded on July 9th 2019, not published yet as such.

¹⁶ Mary Wigman, trans. Sorrell, 1966, apud Valerie Preston-Dunlop and Ana Sanchez-Colberg, *Dance and the performative*, 9.

a type of movement material which we can generally name “dance”. This also does not mean that it will not have to be meaningful and virtuosic, on the contrary, as Hannes Langolf stated: “...I mean very refined, very examined, extended body language, choreographic, full-bodied experience, so the movement language uncovering layers of the text that the words don't say.” In consequence, the reason why I chose physical theatre and dance theatre for examining the tripartite perspective upon creating, performing and appreciating is to acknowledge that the theatrical component has the unique ability to make a performative event more meaningful.

Both physical and dance theatre have their origins in the Wagnerian “*Gesamtkunstwerk*”¹⁷, where the dance medium can be seen as a way of approaching events through physicality. Such type of work always brings the performer forward, making his presence the centre of the performative event. Therefore, the narrative component of the work lays in the performer's body, whose shape contains a polysemy of the theatrical signs. From a choreological point of view, observing the way in which polysemy operates in theatre means to be able to recognize the specificity of theatrical codes. In physical / dance theatre, these codes have the mission to be anti-mimetic, to be a way of emphasizing emotion. Besides the human physicality, which should be the main focus in such works, all the other layers that are present and embodied in this “total artwork” “coexist or enrich each other so that they inhabit different worlds in order to empower the story of what you are seeing”, as Hannes Langolf states.

It was extremely interesting to see that such an experienced artist who has such a tremendous contribution to the development of physical theatre has similar doubts when it comes to formulating a definition of the art form he is so familiar with. Therefore, Hannes Langolf made it clear that he is speaking from his experience and understanding, trying to make “an uncovering of what it could be”. Some of DV8's artistic missions speak about how they aim to “break down the barriers between dance and theatre and, above all, to communicate ideas and feelings clearly and unpretentiously”¹⁸.

¹⁷Is a work of art that makes use of all or many art forms or strives to do so. Richard Wagner speaks of his ideal of unifying all works of art via the theatre.

¹⁸ “About DV8. Artistic policy.”, accessed May 11th 2020, <https://www.dv8.co.uk/about-dv8/artistic-policy>.

Also knowing that Lloyd Newson named his own company “DV8 Physical Theatre”, long before “physical theatre” became a labeled genre for academic studies and research, it seems obvious why making definitions in the performing arts field can be so challenging and problematic. For example, Langolf started by explaining how “theatrical forms like text and language may inhabit one layer of a production” and then admit that “it doesn't have to necessarily be text involved, it can be just movement that is drawn from a drive of a human experience, or a drive of interactions and... Like something that needs to be told rather than something that needs to be shown. And, therefore, the movement inhabiting really that idea of being the storyteller, the clarity of the interactions in the movement needs to be totally different as to when I just displace... And it's about beauty and it's about architecture...”

“Communicating ideas and feelings clearly and unpretentiously” involves constantly having in mind the spectator's perspective and, even further, the transactional aspect of making art. Therefore, when it comes to the input of codes and meanings in a work, discussion of the theatrical semiotics is triadic because it considers the relationship between the creator's initial intention, the way the intention is materialized and interpreted by the performers and the manner in which that will be interpreted by an audience.

The creator's initial intention: What's the idea?

“Any art event is initiated by ideas which, to become realized as a work, are given a medium of some sort. (...) An emergent event of dance, triadic in nature, continues to impact back in workshop or rehearsal, so generating further ideas. These symbiotic exchanges continue through the procedures and processes of transforming an idea into an embodied choreographic work.”¹⁹ It is a very obvious fact that any creative individual must have a starting point from which he or she develops a work of art. It is very common to say that someone has a certain idea, based on which a process begins and then suffers multiple changes due to that idea's intersection with practice.

¹⁹ Valerie Preston-Dunlop and Ana Sanchez-Colberg, *Dance and the performative. A Choreological Perspective*, 2.3 *Three constituents of a work: idea, medium and treatment*, 19.

How artists find inspiration, or how they feel an urge to communicate through their works is a highly debatable topic, since it involves very many aspects of their experience and culture as individuals. A more exciting side of the process of creation lays in the desire of making something stimulating, “alive” and “fresh”, as they so often describe it. This reminds me of the “here and now” policy, which Ausdruckstanz²⁰ in the 1920's proudly perpetuated and which had this “vision of dance based on the experience of the body in space, an experience capable of revealing to the perceiver the inexplicable and the unfathomable in nature.”²¹

When I asked Hannes Langolf and Rob Hayden about creating a work based on an idea, I received these two strikingly similar answers: “If I think about how an idea can become something that ends up on stage in front of an audience (...), how it can become clear in terms of what you want to communicate to the audience, but, in the same time, also how it can remain free in terms of the structure, or the choreography, or the setting, so that it really communicates what it needs to communicate, but in the same time it can still stay *alive*.”, said Langolf and then Hayden stated: “Well, first of all, for me an idea is dead unless we create a certain frame for it to manifest, to be *alive*. (...) I'm really inspired by spaces and what they say to me and bring to me images. But it's always a dialogue, it's always coming back into my own living experience with that space and then I work to fill that space with a certain living presence, living energy that supports that space and the space supports it.” My most burning question after hearing these opinions was: “HOW do I make things *alive* on stage?” This, of course, represents the main challenge in performing arts: how to feel free in structure? More exactly, I am concerned by finding and experimenting tools which allow a rigorously detailed work to happen perfectly, while constantly giving the impression that it can go wrong in any moment.

²⁰ Expressionist dance (“Ausdruck” = expression, “Tanz”= dance) or “New dance” (“Neuer Tanz”) started as a protest against classical ballet which was seen as an austere, mechanical and conventional form of dance.

²¹ Valerie Preston-Dunlop and Ana Sanchez-Colberg, *Dance and the performative. A Choreological Perspective, 2.1 Embodiment and corporeality*, 10.

From my experience so far, as a creator, I noticed a great deal of trust in one's ability to be *alive* on stage. By this, I refer to how much an idea can rely on the performer's capacity to materialize it "here and now". Therefore, so that the triadic aspect can be set on my own experience as a creator and performer, I can make a comparison between my two solo works that I have done so far: "*OST (Organic Sound Twist)*"²² (fig. 3) and "*Cataclisma*"²³ (fig. 4). Both performances have a basic form and narrative structure, but the first one has a much higher degree of precision in terms of the movement material. This precision, after some time, started to make me loose interest in performing it because of the lack of freedom it gave me. After all those movements stopped being as challenging as they were in the beginning, when it was all new and exciting, I started struggling with the necessity of building up ways not to be slightly bored with my own work. The reason why I chose such a meticulous and mathematic way of creating the movement material was my lack of confidence in myself at that time: the fear of feeling loss of control during performance in front of an audience. I simply needed to make sure that everything I do on stage is not hazardous nor based on *chance methods*²⁴, which can be helpful to a certain degree, but as a long term solution, it can cause loss of interest and commitment during performance. The only section in which I chose the movement not to be fixed was the very end of the show, where I took this decision instinctively, as a result of the music, which really had an emotional impact that I wanted to point out. Furthermore, many of the spectators shared with me their opinion about that specific section, that of having the biggest impact on them. Nobody said exactly why they felt so, but I realized, by trying to be honest with myself, that it was because I was, finally, dancing "here and now".

²² Created in 2017 at "Lucian Blaga" National Theatre of Cluj-Napoca. "Teatrul Național Cluj. Organic Sound Twist", accessed May 11th 2020, <http://www.teatrulnationalcluj.ro/piesa-691/ost-organic-sound-twist/>.

²³ Created in 2019 at "unteatru" Independent Theatre Bucharest. "Unteatru. Event. Cataclisma", accessed May 11th 2020, <https://www.unteatru.ro/event/cataclisma/>.

²⁴ They refer to the accidental content of a work which might or might not be intended.

As a teacher of “Corporal expression” at the Theatre and Film Faculty of Cluj-Napoca, I often tell my students, while they improvise movement, that if they feel bored while moving, there is a big chance that they might bore someone who is watching them in that exact moment. I encourage them to engage their focus in the discovery of movement and in enjoying this process as it is. This usually makes a huge difference in the movement's texture, dynamic and intention.



Fig. 3: Scene from “OST (Organic Sound Twist)”
“Lucian Blaga” National Theatre
in Cluj-Napoca
Photo credits: Nicu Cherciu



Fig. 4: Scene from “Cataclisma”
“unteatru” Independent
Theatre Bucharest
Photo credits: Andreea Leu

Therefore, the constant practice of improvising movement can improve this self-confidence, which is so necessary for a performer to be able “to make things happen”. That is why, two years after the “OST (Organic Sound Twist)” experience, I decided to try again by finding new ideas that could lead to a different kind of approach of performing in a more committed way. After working for approximately two weeks for “Cataclisma” at “unteatru” Independent Theatre from Bucharest in June 2019, I put the creative process on hold, in order to attend B12, the “Flying Low. Intention and Potential” workshop with Hannes Langolf. In the interview he stated that even if he is used to a very set kind of work with other companies, in his own creations he likes an amount of error: “I like a kind of non-perfect way of setting ideas... Where the idea can remain in this kind of exciting seed of freshness, and of unpredictability, and of being in the moment. But, at the same time, not having too much of a system that it becomes just delivery and it just becomes like a dead, non-alive kind of reproduction of a... you know, moves, or angles, or whatever it is.” This very last sentence has been very much of a help for me, as I was still processing my current work at that time, somewhere in the background. Since “Cataclisma” is a work mostly based on a personal attitude and emotions towards the absurdity of life (corrupt politicians, manipulative religious leaders, “flat earthers” etc.), I felt it was time I challenged myself by responding to all of those stimuli in a more different way. Of course, there is also a considerable amount of very detailed choreographic movement in the work, because not everything can be left to chance. But, the conclusion I drew in this stage of my creative identity is that there is a balance to be found between making plans and letting things happen.

Artists may be inspired by various aspects of their personal experiences, but the artistry lays in “how much needs to be said in order for it to be clear and how much needs to be free in order to be fresh”, as Langolf stated.

The performer's mediation: "Form is the visible shape of content."²⁵

Choreological studies view the performer's mission as one of embodiment, which is a practical process not necessarily compatible with verbal language, but rather a process which gives tangible form to ideas. "Embodiment of movement involves the whole person, a person conscious of being a living body, living that experience, giving intention to the movement material. It involves perceiving oneself in the space and hearing one's sound, with kinaesthetic awareness of creating and controlling the movement."²⁶ In the dance medium, the process of embodiment may be focused on a certain technique or a role. In each situation, it requires a process of assimilation and investment, in which the performer's habitual inscription adapts to the choreographer's demands. Physical and dance theatre are known for locating the body in "the world", for its engagement in the "here and now", for the movement arising from the interplay of humans in diverse manifestations. Thus, from the triadic perspective, "dance, like theatre and other forms of performance, is mediated by living, intending, feeling, thinking bodies"²⁷.

Physical / dance theatre are already known to use a diversity of bodies, some of them being far from what we generally call "a dancer's body". This diversity may go as far as using a performer with no legs, like Lloyd Newson did for "The Cost of Living"²⁸, and this is just one example out of, probably, thousands. The reason for this type of decision is that, sometimes, ideas emerge from the story beneath those bodies. From a semiotic point of view, they communicate to the viewer through their simple presence on stage, they are not just another body among twenty other very similar ones, like in

²⁵ Valerie Preson-Dunlop, *Looking at Dances. A Choreological Perspective on Choreography*, 3. *Ideas and Medium, Content and Form*, (Noverre Press, 2014), 14.

²⁶ Valerie Preston-Dunlop and Ana Sanchez-Colberg, *Dance and the performative. A Choreological Perspective*, 2.1 *Embodiment and corporeality*, 7.

²⁷ Valerie Preston-Dunlop and Ana Sanchez-Colberg, *Dance and the performative. A Choreological Perspective*, 11.

²⁸ The example refers to the film, based on the stage production with the same title, commissioned by Channel 4 Television, UK in 2004. "DV8. Projects. Archive. The Cost of Living Film", accessed May 12th, 2020, <https://www.dv8.co.uk/projects/archive/the-cost-of-living-film>.

classical dance. Of course, we often still see this in modern productions too, but that is because their focus is mostly on the technical aspect of the movement mediated by those well-trained bodies. Regarding this aspect, Rob Hayden's opinion is: "I always have to go from my own experience and my own life first, because before I'm a performer, I'm a human being and I cannot cut that off and just do technique. I believe you can have all the technique in the world and execute perfectly, but if there's no inner light, if there's no life inside you, that is really connecting with what someone else is giving you to do, than it remains at a certain level."

When I was a student, my acting teacher, professor Bács Miklós used to tell us: "Casting is the director's first artistic act."²⁹ He was referring to a creator's decision towards the "bodies" he or she requires in order to fulfill his or her idea.



Fig. 5: Scene from "*The Cost of Living Film*". In the centre: performer David Toole.
Photo source: DV8 Physical Theatre's official Facebook page
(posted on December 29th, 2015)

²⁹ Translated from Romanian: "Distribuția este primul act artistic al regizorului."

This brings me back to the amount of trust and responsibility a creator is willing to give the performer he or she chooses to work with. In all the productions directed by Mihai Măniuțiu³⁰ in which I performed, even if I was challenged to embody a role which might have seemed quite far from my characteristics as a being – “*Rambuku*”³¹, for example – I always received a great amount of agency in terms of decision making, not just for my own performance, but also for various aspects which concerned the integrity of the work. This type of experience is something very similar to how Hannes Langolf feels about his collaborations as a performer: “I always felt quite privileged to have been in processes where I understood what the work was about, I was invited into the process (...). I've never felt like I just kind of go:



Fig. 6: Scene from “*Rambuku*” by Jon Fosse, directed by Mihai Măniuțiu
 Photo credits: Adi Bulboacă
 Producer: “Mihai Eminescu” National Theatre Timișoara

³⁰ Romanian theatre director, teacher and writer. “Mihai Măniuțiu. Home.”, accessed May 12th, 2020, <https://www.maniutiu.com>.

³¹ Play written by Jon Fosse and directed by Mihai Măniuțiu in 2017 at “Mihai Eminescu” National Theatre of Timișoara. “Teatrul Național Timișoara. *Rambuku*”, accessed May 12th, 2020, <http://ro.tntimisoara.com/rambuku/>.

'Oh, I'm serving your vision', because the way it was created was always inclusive and always so passionate, that you just go along because you know that the drive is important, that it communicates something that you want to stand behind."

These examples show the fortunate position of a performer who also happens to be in charge with the choreography, or, at least, most of his own, which absolve him or her from the struggle of embodying given movement. But how does this process work when it comes to assimilating form created by another body (or a technique of some sort), which a performer has never (or rarely) experienced before? Rob Hayden's answer to this issue was: "For me, to connect in that sense is to contextualize it, or to find a way for me to bridge the gap between a technique or a form and a reason for doing it. So, it's a bit of a work with imagination, it's a bit of a work with the technique, of course, and of being able to always respond to whatever situation that arises within that choreography or performance – because it's going to be different every time – and making it my own. Because I'm the only one doing it in that moment, so, in that sense, it's mine, I'm the owner of that movement, even if someone gives me that movement, I have to make it my own. It's going to be now my job to live in that movement (...), so, in the end, it's very important to me to make it personal."

Embodying a technique requires time and, of course, lots of work. The speed in which a performer can learn a new technique is also a skill that can be improved by simply exposing the body to as many forms of movement as possible, to expand its *kinaesthetic awareness*³². Of course, any performer will always be more skilled at certain types of movement, but that does not mean he or she stops from constantly discovering new ways of expression. In physical theatre, such skills do not only regard physical abilities, but everything that one's body is able to perform, such as voice and speech, the clarity of intention within, playfulness and unlocking potential. This last sentence describes Hannes Langolf's workshop from B12, where he challenged

³² In Greek "*kines*" = movement, "*aisthesis*" = sensation. It is the way we perceive our body, what creates us that sense of presence.

us to use our voice combined with physical principles of Flying Low³³, in order to be able to command the full force of our physicality: “The voice is your teacher”, as he used to tell us. He is a great example of the richness of tools a performer can accumulate during his or her career. Besides the variety of techniques and movement languages he masters, he is also a certified yoga teacher, making this practice a part of his routine not just as an artist, but as a human being, like a kind of “professional hygiene”. In the same time, he admitted to feel very lucky for not being only employed for what he was already good at: “I mean, yes, to a certain degree, but it's not like 'Ah, Hannes is the floor work guy, so let's always make him do floor work.' Because when you don't have time, you need to draw on people's strengths, but in the long processes, there is time to say 'Oh, that is a weakness. OK. How do I change that? How do we train that up?' And that's what's exciting then, because then you feel like you're learning new things.”

Lack of time is, unfortunately, an issue in the Romanian theatrical field. An average of four weeks for a production is often one of the reasons why the quality of a performative event usually may suffer. We see foreign productions which had even a six month period of setting up and admire them while feeling frustration towards our own artistic products. How does this affect our capacity to appreciate? Are we easily satisfied by what we see or do we constantly compare ourselves with an ideal image we have about performing art?

The spectator's appreciation: being touched and moved

Within the triadic perspective, the relationship between intention, impression and interpretation relate to the embodied processes of making, performance and reception. In this case, the definition of “intention” goes beyond the common idea of something “wanted” to be communicated by

³³ Dance technique developed by choreographer, performer and teacher David Zambrano which focuses mainly on the dancer's relationship with the floor. “David Zambrano. Flying Low Dance Technique”, accessed May 10th, 2020, http://www.davidzambrano.org/?page_id=279.

the creators (choreographer / director and performer) and it is present in all participants in the performative event. "Audiences wish to engage with the work and the actors. Similarly, the performers wish to engage the spectators. This willing is embodied in attending, paying attention, expectancy and, from time to time, interaction."³⁴ There is this myth which says that once you are an artist it is difficult to see art objectively, from a common art consumer's perspective. This is true to a certain degree because knowing how the process usually works, you can easily put yourself in the artists' shoes and judge their work from your understanding of how things are made. This being said, I would like to point out the almost miraculous effect that choreological studies have had upon my perspective as a spectator. It drew my attention on the importance of appreciating the communicative function of a work, rather than aspects of taste. Of course, I can always claim that a certain performance does not meet my tastes in art, but, thanks to a choreological perspective, my argumentation does not stop here. It makes me able to appreciate it aesthetically or technically, if the case, or it can make me start a debate based upon the social, political or moral aspects that it raises. But is that enough for me to be able to say that I liked the performance? Is the comprehensive aspect enough to make me draw the conclusion that I have been *touched* by the work?

Being asked about what they appreciate to see on stage, both Rob Hayden and Hannes Langolf mentioned this idea of "being taken on a journey", which, in essence, makes me think of this pure, child-like type of experience that we all aim for as spectators. "What I like to see on stage: no matter if it's my taste or not, if what you're doing works, I can appreciate it, I can respect it and I can believe you. If I don't believe you and can't go with you somewhere, than I'm just a spectator. If I'm not a participant – in other words – if I'm not attending the situation, if I'm not going with you in it, then it remains the pure definition of 'spectator', which is outside just observing, just a voyeur, just wanting to get something from the outside. And I'm not interested in that. I want to be *moved*, I want the movement that you're doing to move me, somehow..." In this opinion given by Rob Hayden, my attention

³⁴ Valerie Preston-Dunlop and Ana Sanchez-Colberg, *Dance and the performative. A Choreological Perspective*, 2.2 *A triadic perspective: creating, performing, appreciating processes*, 14.

got caught by the term “voyeur”, which I also ironically used in “Finding Words for Dance from a Choreological Perspective” to describe this “empathic handicap” which some spectators might have when attending a performance which contains a certain kind of vocabulary they are not accustomed to. It is a lack of commitment to something “new” that is being presented to them, as a result of poor cultural experience. At the same time, if that work contains valuable material of any kind, excellence will always be responded to, even if it comes through shapes people are not accustomed to. In this case, what Hayden is referring to is something different: he misses the *transactional* aspect of that artistic event.

When it comes to creating a new work, I always describe my intention as an aspiration to make something that I would like to see myself, as a spectator. Each time I come up with an idea, I almost instinctively ask myself what kind of impression that idea will be making on future viewers, based on my own *impression* towards it. “Impression is the constant dual channel of receiving and giving information through our senses (...), a duality which shapes and defines the identity of the dance event.”³⁵ An intention that is clear will always transform into a clear impression for the receptors and, therefore, they will be able to make an *interpretation* based on their level of understating. No matter how rich their experience is as art consumers, people organically have the need to understand what they see, so that they can get this sense of involvement in the process: “I appreciate things that I'm allowed to understand and I think I struggle with things that stay in this mysterious place of contemporary art. And sometimes I feel like it's purposefully mysterious because maybe it's irrelevant. Or, you know (*laughing*), it's purposefully mysterious because maybe it's not actually about what it says it's about. It's difficult to make work that is really about something and it's really difficult to make work that is clear to the audience, because as soon as you are clear to the audience, you need to know what you're doing and, again, it takes time to know what you're doing. So, I think it really is the high art to make work that allows the audience to understand it.”, as Langolf formulated. These words remind me of the poor reputation contemporary dance works sometimes have in the eyes of Romanian art

³⁵ Valerie Preston-Dunlop and Ana Sanchez-Colberg, *Dance and the performative. A Choreological Perspective*, 2.2 *A triadic perspective: creating, performing, appreciating processes*, 16.

consumers, an aspect which I already debated, but this time, I would like to point out another reason for this, which does not concern the spectator's capacity of appreciation anymore, but the capacity of the creator to be accessible through his or her work. This urge of creating something new, something obviously far away and, sometimes, even against classical vocabulary, seems like it makes them purposefully fight against communication of meaning, also, at a certain level. Or, they sometimes start the process by experimenting a certain concept which does have meaning to them, but, when shown to an outsider, it becomes impossible to read because there are no clues given to indicate what that process is about. And even if they do offer some clues and the spectators observe them (or read in a program note), they can never truly engage in this "intimate" act, which they did not witness from its initial intention. Regarding this issue, Langolf said: "I don't see that process as an audience. I can imagine it and some people might like it because they feel that this art has processes that they can admire, but, kind of knowing what an artist's process is, I feel like: 'Are you gonna let me in or are you just gonna rely on the fact that I admire you from the distance thinking: Wow, they're so brave having that process!', but I don't feel it, it doesn't *touch* me, I'm not allowed in. So, I love work that allows me in, It doesn't have to spoon feed me, it doesn't need to be obvious, but I want to go on a journey with them..."

In conclusion, I would say that this "journey" everybody would so much like to go in means, essentially, *transaction*, "a process in which the spectator constructs the meaning for himself, making use of what is presented to him, taking in whatever his roving attention alights upon, over time, and meshing it with his own memory, experience, knowledge, expectation and culture."³⁶ For the artists to achieve the transactional process with the audience they show themselves to, they don't necessarily have to make use of referential or narrative content to be clear. Clarity in perception is a result of clarity in intention, no matter how specific the artist's idea is: personal, intimate, cultural, or, a phenomenon in its own right.

³⁶ Valerie Preston-Dunlop and Ana Sanchez-Colberg, *Dance and the performative. A Choreological Perspective*, 2.2 "A triadic perspective: creating, performing, appreciating processes.", 17

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