

Audience experiences of interactive dance performances

Masters arts education research paper
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Abstract

The aim of this explorative research was to understand in which ways audience interaction influences the audience's experience of a dance performance. In particular this research focused on the processes of audience participation, affect, aesthetic distance and kinaesthetic empathy. To this end it investigated the views of choreographers with experience in audience participation. Three performances were chosen, displaying a range of interactive opportunities for the public. The information gathered from the interviews suggests that audience participation and heightened affect are connected. Interaction helps the audience to become more motivated and attentive in their choices, arouses their emotions and generates energy. In turn a welcoming and safe atmosphere stimulates audience interaction, especially if the dancers are open and willing to share with the public in a non-judgemental way. For some audience members the interactive performance is an immersive experience. For others their emotional involvement can act as a springboard for eventual aesthetic distancing. Kinaesthetic empathy was observed as a mirroring of the dancers' behaviour on the part of the audience. It also appears to function as a means of reading and communicating affect. In addition it has the capacity to evoke affect. As a result of the intense relationship engendered between audience and performers, audience participation has the potential to manipulate an audience into undertaking actions they would not normally consider. In the field of art education interactive dance performances contribute the notions of *edutainment* and *immersive learning*.

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Chapter 1

Introduction

As a dancer and choreographer myself I am always looking for ways to communicate with my audiences. In the last few years I have performed in interactive dance pieces, and as a choreographer I have experimented with audience participation. I hoped this would enhance the public's performance experience although I wondered if participation, however special, would hinder or help their understanding of the dance piece. As a dance teacher I have watched my students and noticed how their understanding of a choreography was enhanced when they danced it themselves and had time to explore it. This experience of teaching dance, performing and choreographing, have spurred me on to undertake this research into audience participation at dance performances and find out more about the processes at work.

1.1 Situation

Though the trend is now being stemmed, audiences in Holland for the performing arts (dance, theatre, opera and concerts other than pop) have for many years been decreasing. In his book "Van hoge kunst naar nieuwe kunst" (2009) the economist and art sociologist Abbing attributes this phenomenon to the changes that our society is undergoing. Audiences, he claims, want to interact with performers, but this is usually not possible in "high" art. This desire to interact is encouraged by society already in childhood. Unlike fifty years ago, children nowadays learn that it is good to show their feelings and that negotiating about rules is allowed. Learning to make responsible choices is replacing the importance attached to learning obedience.¹ This shift in expectations is also reflected in the classroom. New teaching styles introduced into schools demand a more active participation from students, challenging them to choose, research and plan their subject matters themselves. The shift can also be observed at pop concerts. Here people no longer refrain from physical self-expression, nor do they hold back their emotional impulses. Musicians and audience communicate much more with each other, as do audience members between themselves.²

Studies have indeed revealed the desire amongst young people for a participatory element in the arts. Ranshuysen (2008)³ notes that VMBO students enjoy going to the theatre when the show offers a varied package and the opportunity for the students to interact with the performers. Young people attach importance to participation because "of a need for fun", but this interactive element can also be applied to a broader range of audience,⁴ such as individuals with little cultural competence (Jackson (1999)).⁵ In his "PopArt Oration" in 2005 the composer Merlijn Twaalfhoven has suggested that a "host" or "facilitator" be

¹ "Het leren verantwoordelijke keuzes te maken is in de plaats gekomen van het leren gehoorzamen." (p 77) Abbing, H. (2009). *Van hoge kunst naar nieuwe kunst*. S.I.: Historische Uitgeverij.

² "Bij het popconcert worden de lichamelijke en emotionele impulsen niet voortdurend ingehouden en is er meer communicatie tussen musici en publiek, en ook tussen de bezoekers onderling. Het publiek participeert." (p 73) Abbing, H. (2009). *Van hoge kunst naar nieuwe kunst*. S.I.: Historische Uitgeverij.

³ Ranshuysen, L. (2008). Jong publiek voor opera. *Cultuur + Educatie*, 22, 32-50. p 35

⁴ P50 FreshMinds. (2007). *Culture on demand : ways to engage a broader audience*. London : DCMS.

⁵ Jackson, A. (2007). *Theatre, education and the making of meanings*. Manchester : Manchester University Press.

used to guide the audience and encourage them to take part in the performance⁶.

An analysis of why participation is a powerful tool in persuading people into the arts reveals a number of reasons. One of them is relevance. Coughlan (2002) puts it succinctly : "For young people to be interested in attending an arts venue or opting for arts subjects in school they have to see its relevance to their own lives. Active experience in making art increases one's sense of this relevance."⁷ Indeed, audiences attending a performance of the "high" arts need to feel that the experience resonates with their own personal or cultural identity.⁸ Instead they fear not understanding the arts and feel excluded by the unfamiliar codes of dress and behaviour (The arts debate, 2007)⁹. A second reason why participation is popular is the sense of sharing that it brings. Researchers in England organised twenty discussion groups and questioned a sample of 170 members of the general public. They concluded that people derive pleasure from feeling "at one" with each other¹⁰. In their book "Culture on Demand"¹¹ FreshMinds cite the "Family Friendly Report" (2001)¹². This report suggests that when a family had interacted together they derived greater levels of enjoyment as a result of the experience having been shared. Also in the performing arts, an important influence affecting enjoyment is the creation of a "shared" experience or sense of occasion.¹³ "The museum, gallery, country park or theatre is a public space in which the *potential to socialise* may be as important to the potential audience as the content of the facility or institution itself."¹⁴ Of course, passive viewing entails a degree of sharing as well, as the audience reacts, laughs and claps, or watches in silent concentration. However, set upon a sliding scale of shared experience, passive viewing can be found nearer one end whilst participatory viewing would be found closer to the other. One last clue to explain the desirability of participation may be found in the book "The Experience Economy" by Pine and Gilmore (1999)¹⁵. The writers conjecture that society is thirsting for emotional experiences. This need, they claim, is so great that businesses which exploit it with their marketing techniques have the opportunity to expand greatly.

In short, our society is becoming less happy with passive viewing. Audiences enjoy actively participating in cultural events rather than just sitting back and

⁶ Twaalhoven, M. (2005). *Oratie PopKunst, uitgesproken op 23 september 2005 in Schouwburg Odeon, Zwolle*. Zwolle : s.n.

⁷ Coughlan, M. (2004). *The participation of young people in the arts in Ireland : a proposed policy and action plan for the period of the Third Plan*. Dublin : The Arts Council. p14

⁸ FreshMinds. (2007). *Culture on demand : ways to engage a broader audience*. London : DCMS. p65

⁹ Creative Research.(2007).*The arts debate findings of research among the general public*. London : Creative Research. p52

¹⁰ Creative Research.(2007).*The arts debate findings of research among the general public*. London : Creative Research. p 78

¹¹ FreshMinds. (2007). *Culture on demand : ways to engage a broader audience*. London : DCMS. p61

¹² Morris Hargreaves McIntyre, (2005). *Visitor Insight Digest: to Inform West Midlands Hub business planning*. Manchester : Renaissance West Midlands.

¹³ FreshMinds. (2007). *Culture on demand : ways to engage a broader audience*. London : DCMS. p61

¹⁴ "This view appears to be corroborated by survey data. Data from Morris, Hargreaves, McIntyre (2005) identify a *social* motivation – the perception of the institution as a place for entertainment, 'somewhere to go out', to see and do, and to interact socially – as being the chief driver of attendance for 48% of museum visitors and 29% of visitors to art galleries, in a sample which included 25 large institutions across the UK."

FreshMinds. (2007). *Culture on demand : ways to engage a broader audience*. London : DCMS.P61

¹⁵ Pine II, B.J., & Gilmore, J. H. (1999). *The Experience Economy*. Boston : Harvard Business School.

enjoying the event at a distance. Participation helps people find the relevance of a performance to their own lives. The sense of communal sharing and the heightened experience that taking part brings are possible reasons for the power of interactive events.

1.2 Problem definition

The need for participation in the arts has attracted a lot of attention in the last decade as the arts struggle to create new young audiences. The relevance that audiences look for in performances suggests that a degree of *aesthetic distancing* may be taking place in the audience's mind. Aesthetic distancing is a process by which the spectator sees the performance from a new perspective, in this case registering the similarity to their own lives. Indeed, Jackson (2007) has surveyed the literature on audience participation in the field of drama, exploring the issue of aesthetic distance both in the theatre and in drama education. In the field of dance, research has concentrated mostly on passive viewing with studies such as that of Reason and Reynolds' (2010). They interviewed spectators of various types of dance performances and found that audience members displayed a wide range of emotions, or *affect*. They also observed that many spectators appeared to be experiencing the dancers' movements in their mind whilst the dancers were moving. These audience members were empathising with the dancers at a physical, or kinesthetic, level. This process, called *kinaesthetic empathy*, was found by the researchers to be closely tied to the viewers' emotional reactions. The notion of kinaesthetic empathy has been enriched by the discovery in the 1990s of mirror neurons in the brain. These neurons not only fire when we undertake a movement action; more importantly in the context of this research, they fire when we see another person moving.

In looking at audience participation in dance performances, this paper is covering a wide terrain. This research explores the notion of audience participation as well as the processes of affect, aesthetic distance and kinaesthetic empathy. It also attempts to discover if these processes are hampered or aided by audience participation. Although research exists in each of these respective areas, research connecting all of these areas is sparse – especially in the area of dance. By exploring the links between them this research hopes to make a modest contribution to finding out about an audience's experience when they are given the opportunity to participate in dance performances.

1.3 goal and research questions

The research carried out here is explorative. Its aim is to investigate the views of choreographers with experience in audience participation in order to establish a greater understanding of the processes at work during such performances. It sees its purpose as providing a springboard in the field of dance for future studies, both practical and theoretical, to further delve into the processes at work during interactive performances.

General problem statement :

In which ways does audience interaction influence the audience's experience of the dance performance?

1.4 Subquestions

- What is the relationship in dance performances between heightened affect and audience participation?
- In which ways can aesthetic distance and engagement coexist in interactive dance performances?
- Since kinaesthetic empathy helps us in our understanding of dance when we watch it, we would like to investigate its role when the audience is interacting with the dance. What is the role of kinaesthetic empathy during interactive performances?

1.5 Defining key terms

The term *audience participation* is used interchangeably with *audience interaction* in this research. It covers the freedom an audience has to walk around in the performance space, approach the dancers and even touch them. It can also refer to the audience dancing or moving with the performers. The term *dance performance* indicates in the context of this paper a situation in which movement is carried out as a public function involving an element of fiction. *Affect* describes the associations and emotions evoked in the audience members or the dancers during the performance. *Aesthetic distance* denotes the figurative distance taken by an audience as it mentally pulls away from the performance situation, thus allowing the audience to form judgments based on aesthetic criteria. These criteria refer to the performance or the concept underlying the performance. *Kinaesthetic empathy* is the process of experiencing in one's imagination perceived movements performed by another person.

1.6 Outline

Chapter two looks at the literature concerning the respective concepts of audience participation, affect, aesthetic distance and kinaesthetic empathy. These are the processes that occupy this research's concerns. Chapter three is divided into two halves. The first half sketches the *links* between the processes of affect, aesthetic distance and affect. The second half examines the respective processes of affect, aesthetic distance and kinaesthetic empathy when placed in the context of audience participation. Chapter four outlines the methodology of the research undertaken here. Chapter five lists the research results with regard to heightened affect and audience participation. Chapter six does the same with regard to aesthetic distance. Chapter seven considers the role of kinaesthetic empathy during interactive performances. Chapter eight discusses the results, giving special attention to the conclusions to be drawn with regard to dance education. It also considers the manipulative power of interactive dance performances and the possible future of such events.

Chapter 2

Processes at work at an interactive dance performance

The introduction touched on the notions of audience participation, affect, aesthetic distance and kinaesthetic empathy. These concepts are important elements when considering the audience's experience of a dance performance. Chapter two examines these different concepts in more detail. It looks at the research in the respective fields and draws conclusions about the role of each of these concepts during a dance performance.

2.1 Audience participation

After a period of focusing on *art for art's sake* in the 1980s, interest in audience participation re-emerged in the 1990s. In the last decade, the values of respect, empathy, trust and sharing have become important in the participatory arts. Art has focused its interest on the place of the individual vis-à-vis the collective. Major cultural organisations and "successful" artists have also been discovering a new interest in participatory cultural events, as they turn their attention onto the notion of audience engagement. Clements (2011) sees this current interest as a continuation of the ideas stemming from the 1960s counterculture. He identifies three agendas : "firstly, an aspiration to create active subjects out of passive audiences thereby encouraging dialogue; secondly, a shift of emphasis onto co-authorship with artists ceding control; and thirdly, the need to re-focus on local diversity and collective responsibility."¹⁶ Indeed, the choreographer Jérôme Bel has spoken about his desire to create "a situation in which the audience starts to feel jointly responsible for what is happening on the stage. Not in the sense of those "Publikumsbeschimpfungen" of the seventies but much more that anything can fall apart".¹⁷ His interviewer comments on how his audience in *The show must go on* jumped onto the stage and danced along. Bel also states, in true postmodern terms, that there is no such thing as originality.¹⁸ Indeed, by stressing individual creative production we are fetishising art, says Clements, adding that this is recognised by supporters of the participatory arts. He sees the focus on individual creativity as part of a "masculinised field of competing artists" and contrasts it with the "reflexive, less egocentric and "feminine" notion of responsive art...where artists can re-engage with art and audiences outside the gallery system".

If one takes these ideas into the field of dance, one sees that it presents a range of options to involve the audience more actively into the performance. However, for audience participation to occur the audience needs to have the freedom to exercise a degree of choice other than looking or not looking as in a conventional performance. In performances in which the audience can walk around the performance space, the audience is able to make choices about what to see and

¹⁶ Clements, P. (2011). The recuperation of participatory arts practices. *The international journal of art & design education*, 30 (1),18-30. P20

¹⁷ Smeets, G. & Ritsema, J. (2002). *Why all these questions?: the Mouson-Springdance, dialogue Frankfurt*. Amsterdam : Theater Instituut Nederland. Pp112 - 113

¹⁸ Dries, van den, L. (2002). *Bodycheck : relocating the body in contemporary performing art*. Amsterdam : Rodopi. P274

how close they want to approach the performer. The more choice given, the more actively the audience can participate. Thus the audience may also have the choice to touch the performers. Chapter one referred to the audience's desire for relevance. Indeed, audience participation in this context means that people are able to take the decision about what interests them personally. There are also performances which encourage the audience to dance by offering them the choice to take part in movement tasks. In this way the audience is integrated into the performance. The degree to which the audience becomes a co-author in the performance varies, but their freedom to decide whether to participate and to what extent is implicit in the concept of audience participation. Thus a performer forcing the audience into becoming part of the performance is not encouraging audience participation. This only occurs if the audience has actively chosen to be part of the performance.

2.2 Affect

The word "affect" stems from the fourteenth century Middle English word *affectus*, meaning a mental or emotional state. In the context of this paper "affect" describes the experience of emotion or feeling. In order to discover how dance can create emotion in the viewer this paper shall refer to the study of Reason and Reynolds (2010), alluded to in the earlier section on kinaesthetic empathy. That section described how viewers watching dance experienced varying degrees of kinaesthetic empathy. This section will look at how the dance performances elicited emotional reactions in the viewers.¹⁹

One of the reactions was of a fantasized identification with the dancer and this gave rise to a great deal of pleasure for the spectator. The viewer imagined they had the skills and strength to perform possessed by the dancer on stage. Indeed, various participants commented on how the perceived effortlessness and beauty of the movements made them "feel good". Both experienced and inexperienced spectators were amazed at the postures managed by the dancers. The virtuosity displayed by the dancers aroused their admiration, and the sense of being unable to execute such difficult dance movements was experienced as exciting by spectators.

"Rajni, an experienced spectator of bharatanatyam without significant dance training and who had never been to a live ballet performance before, was amazed by the technical prowess she observed during Birmingham Royal Ballet's (BRB) performance of Giselle, which focused her attention on speculating whether she could do it herself:

I was thrilled by seeing someone dancing, doing all these movements with standing on their toes, and, to be honest, I was more in awe [of] the way they were balancing and the grace of the dancer rather than what the storyline . . . Seeing them dance on their toes and things, you feel like, can your legs do it, will you be able to do it, and that kind of feeling, probably in your legs as well, and that's how I felt . . . can I do it? Can I balance my whole body on my toes? Can I do this when I jump?"²⁰

¹⁹ Reason, M. & Reynolds, D. (2010). Kinesthesia, empathy, and related pleasures: an inquiry into audience experiences of watching dance. *Dance Research Journal*, 42(2), 49-75.

²⁰ Reason, M. & Reynolds, D. (2010). Kinesthesia, empathy, and related pleasures: an inquiry into audience experiences of watching dance. *Dance Research Journal*, 42(2), 49-75. P61

Not all spectators were uplifted or excited by the dance performances. Some reported an inability to connect with the movements performance. One performance, *The Porcelain Project* by Needcompany, used a series of "unbeautiful" movements which had the effect of discomforting the viewers. As Reason and Reynolds explain :

"These "unbeautiful" gestures produced responses of feeling uncomfortable, disturbed, and unhappy. Interestingly, while spectators watching ballet were comfortable with articulating how graceful or elegant movements made them feel glad or uplifted, the emotional responses produced by these "unbeautiful" movements were harder to articulate, as if the spectators were seeking to keep them at a distance rather than internalize them. Indeed, at times they found it difficult to even speak of those emotions."

Noticeable was the difference in motivation expressed by frequent classical ballet spectators and by spectators of other forms of dance (including ballet) - but especially of contemporary dance. The classical ballet spectators wanted distance and escapism. The spectator of other forms of dance looked for "a visceral response to intimacy and intensity". They liked having their senses assaulted, hearing the dancers' breathing and witnessing the effort involved in dancing. The array of reactions, sometimes idiosyncratic, were influenced by their prior experience and expectations attached to dance, resulting in what we call "taste". The construction of taste is dependent on a person's *habitus*. This is a term used by the sociologist Pierre Bourdieu in the 1980s to describe the process by which social and economic conditions inculcate and embody unconscious predispositions in an individual, which in turn influence the individual's cultural and consumer choices. A clear example in the Reason and Reynolds' study is the case of Rosemary, a frequent ballet watcher, who expressed her love of ballet, but was completely unmoved by a performance of bharatanatyam dance. Similarly, Andy felt quite "numb" watching a ballet performance although he is a keen spectator of bharatanatyam. The Bourdieu maxim, "the capacity to see is a function of knowledge" was clearly at work here in an extreme fashion.

2.3 Aesthetic distance

The Encyclopedia Britannica defines "aesthetic distance" as "the frame of reference that an artist creates by the use of technical devices in and around the work of art to differentiate it psychologically from reality."²¹ However, before delving deeper into the notion of aesthetic distance, it is worth considering the concept of "aesthetic space". Augusto Boal, the experimental director and founder of the Theatre of the Oppressed in the 1970s, wrote about this term. The aesthetic space was an area of performance where the action was most intense and where "objects no longer carry only their usual daily signification."²² Indeed, the sociologist Erving Goffman envisaged the proscenium arch as a boundary line that artists deliberately draw around a piece of experience that they want to highlight, a line which could be rendered visible or invisible. Such frames, he claimed, also help us decipher codes of behaviour as we encounter them in our daily lives in the shape of a classroom, a church or a conference. In fact these

²¹ www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/7465/aesthetic_distance.

²² This quote and the information that ensues has been retrieved from the following book : Jackson, A. (2007). *Theatre, education and the making of meanings*. Manchester : Manchester University Press. P153

frames help to give meaning to our social encounters. Turning back to the performing arts and dance in particular, one can define the term aesthetic space in terms of the spatial positioning of the audience. This involves not only the position of the audience in relation to the performers, but also the spatial groupings of the performers and the set and location of the performance. These elements "frame" the performance experience and enrich it with new meanings.

Alongside these "external" factors there is the internal device of the metaphor, which identifies the situation at hand with another imaginary situation. The metaphor is used very often in dance, where movements are permeated with symbolic or dramatic significance. Both external and internal devices are attempting to remove the audience's associations with the here-and-now and fire their imaginations. With the creation of an aesthetic space a performer acting out pedestrian movements is transformed to become more than just an individual carrying out everyday actions. The spectator has, as it were, taken a certain distance from the scene at hand in order to see it from a "clearer" perspective and imbue it with a new understanding. The spectator has been pulled away from his or her old associations to a situation in order to experience the situation with "fresh eyes".

2.4 Kinaesthetic empathy

In order to understand the term kinaesthetic empathy an exploration of the concept of kinaesthesia is first needed. The word "kinaesthesia" is derived from the Greek "kinein", meaning to move, and "aisthesis", meaning sensation.²³ In short it refers to the sensation of the position and movement in the body. It involves both proprioception, the stimuli from inside the organism such as sensory organs in the muscles and joints, as well as exteroception, the stimuli received from outside the organism. Perception involves actively extracting information as opposed to simply passively receiving this information. In the last two decades much research has been undertaken after the discovery of a new type of brain cell in the cortex, the so-called mirror neuron. This neuron fires when a person sees another person moving. In fact the perceiver's brain is responding by rehearsing the movement observed. No visible movement occurs in the perceiver's body, although a postural change in the muscles may be detected. In other words perception is a simulation of action. Berthoz claimed that as we watch we anticipate : "Thus the cat could catch the mouse, anticipating its future position."²⁴ This embodied anticipation occurs not only while observing goal-oriented movements, but when we watch art movements that are seemingly goalless. When we see dance, we are constantly anticipating possible postural changes in the dancer's body and in effect dancing along. Berthoz believes in the active role of the perceiver, but he goes further. The process of rehearsal yielding multiple possibilities of movement is dependent on the perceiver's personal history or *habitus*. A trained dancer will rehearse many more possibilities watching a dancer on stage jump and fall to the ground than a young man who plays rugby every Saturday. Sheets-Johnson (1999)²⁵ makes the point that we all share a common fundamental kinetic repertory for we are all the

²³ Reason, M. & Reynolds, D. (2010). Kinesthesia, empathy, and related pleasures: an inquiry into audience experiences of watching dance. *Dance Research Journal*, 42(2), 49-75. P52

²⁴ Foster, S.L. (2011). *Choreographing empathy : kinesthesia in performance*. Milton Park : Routledge. P123

²⁵ Parviainen, J. (2002). Bodily Knowledge : Epistemological reflections on dance. *Dance Research Journal*, 34 (1), 11-26. P24

same kind of animate form, but within those confines we evolve our own personal movement repertoires. Taking the example of a trained dancer and a rugby player, one can surmise that since they are constantly active in their mode of perception, their process of internal rehearsal will also differ despite their common kinetic repertory.

In a study undertaken by Reason and Reynolds (2010), the researchers interviewed audience members with a wide variety of backgrounds after they had seen a dance performance. The reaction of one audience member to a ballet corroborates the concept of kinaesthetic empathy :

"Rosemary, in response to ballet: "I'm doing it, I'm doing it. I can feel it in my muscles . . . if she lifts, I feel I want, you know . . . I'm just with it."²⁶

The researchers noted that the degree of kinaesthetic empathy described by the audience members varied according to their motor familiarity with the movement, but also to their level of fitness, body image and gender. Trained dancers for example were more precise in imagining details and movements, and their reactions were more intense. Reason and Reynolds explain this phenomenon thus :

"Recent studies...indicate that motor familiarity with the movement being watched seems to be the key factor in activation of the mirror neuron system, and also that mirror system activity depends on possessing the motor representation for an observed action and cannot be based on visual knowledge alone."²⁷

Movement skills can disappear as a result of an accident or the aging process.

However, Parviainen (2002) comments that aging or injured dancers still have "their corporeal schema to comprehend movements in their own bodies"²⁸. She makes the point that through kinaesthetic empathy they also display a profound knowledge of other people's bodies, despite their diminished motor skills.

2.5 Summary

A conventional performance differs from a participatory one because in the latter the audience is offered choices, deciding whether and how to interact. However in both types of performance the audience may experience a number of processes. One of these processes is that of affect. This means that the performance arouses feelings or emotions in the viewers. Another process is that of aesthetic distance : the performance acquires a degree of theatricality which enables audience members to imbue the performance with a richer meaning. Finally a process of kinaesthetic empathy is usually also released. As a result of

²⁶ Reason, M. & Reynolds, D. (2010). Kinesthesia, empathy, and related pleasures: an inquiry into audience experiences of watching dance. *Dance Research Journal*, 42(2), 49-75. P60

²⁷ Reason, M. & Reynolds, D. (2010). Kinesthesia, empathy, and related pleasures: an inquiry into audience experiences of watching dance. *Dance Research Journal*, 42(2), 49-75. P72

²⁸ Parviainen, J. (2002). Bodily Knowledge : Epistemological reflections on dance. *Dance Research Journal*, 34 (1), 11-26. P20

this process of kinaesthetic empathy audience members experience to a greater or lesser extent some of the movements they are seeing. The degree to which all three processes are unleashed depends on the experiences and tastes of the audience, built over a lifetime. The second half of the next chapter will consider in what ways these processes of affect, aesthetic distance and kinaesthetic empathy are influenced by participation.

Chapter 3

The connections between affect, aesthetic distance, kinaesthetic empathy and audience participation

Chapter two looked at the respective processes of audience participation, affect, aesthetic distance and kinaesthetic empathy. This chapter goes further. The first half sketches the *links* between the processes of affect, aesthetic distance and kinaesthetic empathy. Thus a section is devoted to each of the following relationships :

- aesthetic distance and affect
- kinaesthetic empathy and aesthetic distance
- kinaesthetic empathy and affect

The second half of the chapter examines the respective processes of affect, aesthetic distance and kinaesthetic empathy when placed in the context of audience participation.

3.1 The links between affect, aesthetic distance and kinaesthetic empathy

3.1.1 Aesthetic distance and affect

Under the heading *aesthetic distance*, chapter two attempted to define this concept and in so doing noted its function in “framing” or highlighting particular performance elements. Chapter two also defined *affect* as the experience of emotion or feeling. This section will delve deeper into the notions of aesthetic distance and affect to discover if and how they are connected.

In her article *Kiezen of delen: de toepasbaarheid van inhoudelijke subsidiecriteria op niet-westerse dans en fusievormen* (2002)²⁹, the researcher Laurien Saraber claims that aesthetic distance - in her opinion a concept that is over-rated in Western cultural circles - encourages a cool and rational consideration of the performance at hand and a passive uninvolved attitude in the audience. With this point of view she stands in sharp contrast to the playwright and director Berthold Brecht. He believed that aesthetic distance would render his audiences less passive. He exploited a device, which he called the *Verfremdungseffekt*, to increase the effect of aesthetic distance. This term denotes the distortion of reality in order to understand reality better. “Reality...has to be altered by turning it into art, so that it can be seen to be alterable and be treated as such”, he wrote³⁰. He did not like his audiences to become sucked into empathising with the plays’ characters because this empathy would render the spectators passive. He wanted his audiences to take a critical stance and activate their minds and intentions. If he could succeed in that, his audiences would be empowered to take action and bear upon the world. Similarly, Augusto Boal saw how spectators paralysed themselves by empathising with a character. He too wanted to activate

²⁹ Saraber, L. (2003). *Kiezen of delen : de toepasbaarheid van inhoudelijke subsidiecriteria op niet-westerse dans en fusievormen*. Rotterdam : RKS.

³⁰ Jackson, A. (2007). *Theatre, education and the making of meanings*. Manchester : Manchester University Press. P141

his audiences so they would think for themselves : "What changes is the attitude of the spectator, of not being only consumer, but someone who questions."³¹ One of his devices was an approach to theatre called *forum theatre*. This method involved setting up situations in which spectators shared stories of unresolved political or social problems. A smaller group of spectators then created a theatrical scene in which the problem was enacted with a possible solution. By framing the problem into a theatrical context, the viewers were taking distance from the unresolved situation. They could then chose to halt the action, come onstage and take the scene into a new direction, offering another solution to the problem.

One might wonder what aesthetic distance has to do with affect. Surely it is the audience's cognition of a situation that is influenced by aesthetic distance, not their affect? However, in his book *Theatre, education and the making of meanings* (2007), Jackson suggests that aesthetic distance plays a crucial role in enabling the audience to experience emotion. In particular it enables catharsis to occur. Catharsis is the release of pent-up emotion, providing a healthy and even revitalizing outlet for an audience's feelings.³² According to Jackson, catharsis can only take place when "unresolved distress is reawakened in a properly distanced context"³³. Too little aesthetic distance creates an unsafe situation in which distress can be overwhelming. In this he is supported by the theatre writer Daphne Ben Chaim, who has proposed that aesthetic distance has a protective function for the audience³⁴. By drawing a dividing line between reality and fiction it avoids the audience becoming confused or panicky. Unlike Saraber, Ben Chaim considers that our involvement in the stage action where aesthetic distancing is at work can be intense. According to Ben Chaim this is happening, paradoxically, as a consequence of aesthetic distance and its protective quality towards the viewer. Indeed, looking back at the study of Reason and Reynolds and the reactions of participants to dance performances, one finds that some viewers did need a greater degree of aesthetic distance in order to feel safe. For some participants, "it seems that a degree of distance, facilitated by the music, is necessary for a kind of empathetic engagement, which involves a suspension of reality."³⁵ One viewer explained, "a feeling of tension existed which made me feel rather un-relaxed – almost the audience became part of the dance experience due to the close proximity."

Nevertheless, Jackson points out that we should be wary of over-distancing. Too much aesthetic distance hampers the cathartic experience. Recognising a situation is not enough; we need to care about what is happening, without falling into the empathy trap. The choreographer Stefan Kaegi³⁶ talks about the need for "fragility" and "vulnerability" in a performance and warns against performers becoming virtuoso members of a "bodybuilding machine", without any emotional chink in their armour. Indeed, some participants in the Reason and Reynolds

³¹ Frye Burnham, L., Durland, S., Newton, R. (1998). *The Citizen Artist : 20 years of art in the public arena*. New York : Critical Press. P119

³² The Concise Oxford Dictionary defines it as an "outlet of emotion afforded by drama".

³³ Jackson, A. (2007). *Theatre, education and the making of meanings*. Manchester : Manchester University Press. P144

³⁴ Jackson, A. (2007). *Theatre, education and the making of meanings*. Manchester : Manchester University Press. P140

³⁵ Reason, M. & Reynolds, D. (2010). Kinesthesia, empathy, and related pleasures: an inquiry into audience experiences of watching dance. *Dance Research Journal*, 42(2), 49-75. P70

³⁶ Smeets, G. & Ritsema, J. (2002). *Why all these questions?: the Mouson-Springdance, dialogue Frankfurt*. Amsterdam : Theater Instituut Nederland. P113

study were happy to experience the “sense of closeness and awareness of the dancers’ physicality and effort.”³⁷ In fact, aesthetic distance should be seen on a sliding scale : with too much distance, the audience leans back and watches passively; with too little distance, some audience members are rendered uneasy, which can hamper their receptivity to the performance. This section ends then by throwing a spanner in the works : the best strategy for a choreographer may not be to search for the correct level of aesthetic distance in a piece, fine-tune it and then hold it at precisely that level – even if all audience members required the same level of aesthetic distance as each other. Jackson advises that it is by generating sudden changes in distancing levels that the most powerful moments are created.³⁸

3.1.2 Kinaesthetic empathy and aesthetic distance

As noted earlier, aesthetic distance describes the psychological distancing necessary to experience a performance situation in a critical and fresh way. Kinaesthetic empathy is a process by which the viewer “climbs into” the dancer’s movements and imitates them on an intimate level. At first glance these two processes seem at odds with each other, the one demanding distance whilst the other zooms in on the movements of the dancer. But the difference may only be apparent. In order to take aesthetic distance, it is necessary to understand the medium within which it is operating. Thus, in the course of watching a play, one has to grasp the concept of “theatre”. Similarly, an individual may need to understand the “code” of dance in order to be able to take aesthetic distance from it. But how does one decode dance?

This last question will be dealt with later, but this section will first take a look at some participants in the Reason and Reynolds study who watched a series of “unbeautiful” movements from *The Porcelain Project* by Needcompany. The researchers suggest that the participants were not open to internalizing the movements. Nor were they capable of articulating an emotional response :

“Mark: It just sort of sucked you in and took you somewhere that you didn’t think

you were going to go, and to do that with physical movement and very little . . .
Karen: I agree. It was just so powerful that you felt those things, and it was just so powerful that you felt . . . those things.”³⁹

These participants speak about “being sucked in” and of being overwhelmed. This would indicate that they were unable to take aesthetic distance from the movements - just as they were incapable of experiencing kinaesthetic empathy with the dancers. Here, at any rate, there occurred neither aesthetic distance nor kinaesthetic empathy.

This reaction stands in contrast to that of Alisha, a trained bharatanatyam dancer who watched an English National Ballet performance of *Giselle*. It was the first

³⁷ Reason, M. & Reynolds, D. (2010). Kinesthesia, empathy, and related pleasures: an inquiry into audience experiences of watching dance. *Dance Research Journal*, 42(2), 49-75. P66

³⁸ Jackson, A. (2007). *Theatre, education and the making of meanings*. Manchester : Manchester University Press. P144

³⁹ Reason, M. & Reynolds, D. (2010). Kinesthesia, empathy, and related pleasures: an inquiry into audience experiences of watching dance. *Dance Research Journal*, 42(2), 49-75. P68

time she saw ballet, and it astounded her. Her reaction however shows a degree of aesthetic distance as well as of kinaesthetic empathy :

"It looks like their limbs are always stretched out to the limits in all of their movements, like their arms are really stretched out, their legs are stretched out and I mean that's such a contrast to bharatanatyam because in bharatanatyam everything is in one confined space, all the movements, the legs and everything...that's what made it so dramatic for me, along with the emotions."⁴⁰

Alisha reveals her aesthetic distancing by contrasting the spatial use and shape of the two forms of dance, bharatanatyam and ballet. Her kinaesthetic empathy is betrayed by the words "stretched out to the limits". She is feeling the dancer's muscular tension needed to make long lines in space with her limbs. She has experienced both aesthetic distance and kinaesthetic empathy.

Another example is the reaction of Fleur. She describes her response to what she calls "abstract" dance:

"you can breathe with it, your heart can race with it, your eyes can go wider with it, it's hard to explain, but you know when it happens, you know when you're engaged with it, you know when it's communicating with you and when actually the energy, or the sensitivity or the planning of it or something that's so precise that that's what you focus in on, and you home in on."⁴¹

Fleur is obviously kinaesthetically engaged with the dance – she breathes *with* it and her heart races *with* it – but she is also aware of the structure and detail of the piece. She too has experienced both aesthetic distance and kinaesthetic empathy. Is there a correlation between the two processes? It is possible that both Alisha and Fleur can take aesthetic distance *because* they are empathising kinaesthetically with the dance. In other words, their embodied sensitivity to the movements has enabled them to understand more deeply the choreography of the dance. As a result of this deeper grasp, they have the competence to take aesthetic distance.

Diedre Sklar examined in detail the types of movements used during religious worship. She found them to be imbued with patterns of symbolic meaning. As the dance researcher Susan Foster explains, these patterns constituted "a form of embodied knowledge in which "are stored intertwined corporeal, emotional and conceptual memories.""⁴² For Sklar, "kinesthetic analysis entails attending to the qualitative dimensions of movement, the kind of flow, tension and timing of any given action as well as the ways in which any person's movement interacts with objects, events and other people". If Sklar is correct, then a profound experience of kinaesthetic empathy during a dance performance will also yield an appreciation of its choreographic structure – and help decode it. Foster herself sees choreography as a "theorization of identity – corporeal, individual and social."⁴³ Far from being simply "a kind of spectacle without a history or

⁴⁰ Reason, M. & Reynolds, D. (2010). Kinesthesia, empathy, and related pleasures: an inquiry into audience experiences of watching dance. *Dance Research Journal*, 42(2), 49-75. P59

⁴¹ Reason, M. & Reynolds, D. (2010). Kinesthesia, empathy, and related pleasures: an inquiry into audience experiences of watching dance. *Dance Research Journal*, 42(2), 49-75. P64

⁴² Foster, S.L. (2011). *Choreographing empathy : kinesthesia in performance*. Milton Park : Routledge. P8

⁴³ Foster, S.L. (2011). *Choreographing empathy : kinesthesia in performance*. Milton Park : Routledge. P4

methodology for engaging with the physical”, Foster envisages choreography “as the product of choices, inherited, invented or selected.” These choices articulate “a slowly challenging constellation of representational conventions.” They hold within them social, aesthetic and political values. In essence they present a “structuring of deep and enduring cultural values”.⁴⁴ It has already been noted how motor familiarity with movement, level of fitness, body image and gender regulate the degree of kinaesthetic empathy experienced in a dance performance (see *Kinaesthetic empathy*). These factors also enable the viewer to understand and interpret the values embedded in a dance piece. In fact the key to aesthetic distance lies in the viewer’s own body – and of course in the interpretative strategies that the viewer is prepared to adopt. As the study of Reason and Reynolds made clear, not all viewers were equally receptive to new impressions, whatever their experience of dance.⁴⁵

3.1.3 Kinaesthetic empathy and affect

Under the heading *affect*, chapter two discovered how watching a dance performance can stir an emotion, positive or negative, in the spectator. This present section will examine how affect may be connected to kinaesthetic empathy. It begins with an interview from the study of Reason and Reynolds after a performance of Russell Maliphant’s *Broken Fall* : ⁴⁶

“Interviewer: How did it make you feel?

Matthew: I suppose slightly breathless and tends to respond in your breathing I suppose in a way, that echoes the movement, so, as the position, line is held, you tend to kind of hold yourself as well in that respect, waiting for the next thing to happen almost if you like. It’s a sense of anticipation, a sense of expectation,

I’m trying to think of words to describe that sense of slightly being suspended but with quite a degree of physical, emotional tautness, not tension, tension’s the wrong word ‘cuz it suggests stress, but tautness, but with a very, a very kind of breathlessly excited . . .”

The spectator, Matthew, is explaining how his own breathing and posture are echoing the movement quality of the dance. At the same time he is experiencing an “emotional tautness”. Kinaesthetic empathy and affect appear here to be connected. This positive excited reaction to dance contrasts sharply with the experience of audience members after the performance of *The Porcelain Project* by Needcompany (see also section *Affect*). The performance displayed “unbeautiful gestures” and the audience’s reactions to these movements was of feeling disturbed and unhappy. Looking at the explanation for this provided by the researchers Reason and Reynolds, one discovers once again a link made between kinaesthetic empathy and affect : “as if the spectators were seeking to keep them [the unbeautiful movements] at a distance rather than internalize them”.⁴⁷ In fact, the connection between kinaesthetic empathy and affect was

⁴⁴ Foster, S.L. (2011). *Choreographing empathy : kinesthesia in performance*. Milton Park : Routledge. P5

⁴⁵ Reason, M. & Reynolds, D. (2010). Kinesthesia, empathy, and related pleasures: an inquiry into audience experiences of watching dance. *Dance Research Journal*, 42(2), 49-75. P70

⁴⁶ Reason, M. & Reynolds, D. (2010). Kinesthesia, empathy, and related pleasures: an inquiry into audience experiences of watching dance. *Dance Research Journal*, 42(2), 49-75. P65

⁴⁷ Reason, M. & Reynolds, D. (2010). Kinesthesia, empathy, and related pleasures: an inquiry into audience experiences of watching dance. *Dance Research Journal*, 42(2), 49-75. P68

made already in the 1930s by John Martin.⁴⁸ Martin associated the phenomenon of kinaesthetic empathy with an active response. In this regard kinaesthetic empathy is quite different from the empathy experienced for a dramatic character. Kinaesthetic empathy is a spontaneous reaction that is translated into a person's *physical* feeling. However a spectator's empathy for a character has no connection to the spectator's body. Thus the active response that Martin connected to kinaesthetic empathy according is a quite different phenomenon from the passive response that Brecht connected to dramatic empathy. In the light of Martin's suggestion it is interesting to read Fleur's account of her experience as a spectator. She was a participant in the Reason and Reynolds study, as well as an ex-professional contemporary dancer. In the interview she explained that when dance "works" for her, "it's like one of the best things in the world because you feel, you know, you feel satisfied, you feel excited, I feel, inspired to dance again."⁴⁹

The German philosopher Theodor Lipps introduced the concept of *Einfühlung*, a process of empathy by which "one observes a gesture of another, imitates it, calls out through the imitation a previously experienced feeling, and then projects that feeling onto the other"⁵⁰. A similar view was expressed by the writer Edith Stein. As the dance researcher Parviainen puts it:

"Association is typically experienced as "something reminding me of something". For example, the sight of the table corner reminds me I once bumped myself on it. Another's expression reminds me of one of my own, so that I ascribe to his expression its usual meaning for me... Association does not mediate our understanding of the expression of the other's inner condition. To be sure, association has a role in an empathic act. Association by similarity may turn out to be the comprehension of a single instance of a familiar type."

In other words, we ascribe to a movement the association that we have already previously constructed.

As noted in the section entitled *Kinaesthetic empathy*, the process of watching dance initiates, to a greater or lesser extent, a physical reaction in the viewer. Kinaesthetic empathy in turn stimulates the individual's associations and emotions. If one subscribes to Bourdieu's concept of *habitus*, a process of building unconscious embodied predispositions, then one will agree that the feelings aroused will vary from person to person, depending on their personal history. It will also depend on the interpretative strategies employed by the individuals. In the Reason and Reynolds study, some spectators remained receptive to the performance at hand, despite their lack of knowledge concerning the dance form. Other spectators dismissed unfamiliar art forms as "boring". The link between kinaesthetic empathy and affect is for Reason and Reynolds undeniable. We end this section with their unambiguous conclusion : "Whether sympathetic, empathetic, or contagious, the kinesthetic experience can be described as an affect."⁵¹

⁴⁸ Foster, S.L. (2011). *Choreographing empathy : kinesthesia in performance*. Milton Park : Routledge. P7

⁴⁹ Reason, M. & Reynolds, D. (2010). Kinesthesia, empathy, and related pleasures: an inquiry into audience experiences of watching dance. *Dance Research Journal*, 42(2), 49-75. P62

⁵⁰ Parviainen, J. (2003). Kinaesthetic empathy. *Dialogue and Universalism*, 11, 151-162. P1

⁵¹ Reason, M. & Reynolds, D. (2010). Kinesthesia, empathy, and related pleasures: an inquiry into audience experiences of watching dance. *Dance Research Journal*, 42(2), 49-75. P72

3.2 Audience experiences in participatory dance performances

3.2.1 Affect and interaction

In a study in which participants were free to tour the dance performance space, Fenemore writes of the pleasure felt by the viewers.⁵² In contrast to the tension felt by some of the participants in the Reason and Reynolds study⁵³ (see section *The link between Aesthetic Distance and Affect*), this pleasurable sensation was induced by the very proximity of the performers. Sometimes the spectators were not able to see a performer, hidden behind other spectators, but they nevertheless felt and were "engaged" by this invisible presence. The spectators became both object and subject, an experience also rated as enjoyable. The increased engagement of the audience was evident by their taking more responsibility for their perceptual choices, "unmarked by familiarity and conditioning". This stood in contrast to the spectators in the study watching the performance from a fixed point who made "a conscious and intentional choice to obey" about where and how to look. Fenemore writes of the "ontological gaze", a concept put forward by Jay (1993), whereby "the viewer is situated within a visual field, not outside it; his horizon is limited by what he can see around him. Moreover, his relation to the context in which he is embedded is nurturant, not controlling."⁵⁴ As a result, says Fenemore, spectators "experience situation and momentum".⁵⁵

However, interaction is not always comfortable for an audience. Hrvatin (2001) goes so far as to state, "The ever-present paradox of the contemporary participatory spectator lies in the fact that theatre rarely produces...a situation inducing no discomfort in the participatory spectator."⁵⁶ He describes attending a performance, interacting with a performer and finding to his dismay that his behaviour was considered inappropriate by the performer.⁵⁷ No doubt this was the source of his discomfort! The choreographer Jérôme Bel complains that audiences want to be told what to do⁵⁸, but the "rules" have to be clear so that the audience can feel comfortable when entering into a relationship with the performance. The instigator of *happenings*, Allan Kaprow, also commented on the need for a common understanding between audience and performer.⁵⁹ In the book "The ecology of games", Katie Salen looks at computer game play and the interaction between game and game user. "To play a game is, in many ways, an act of faith", she writes.⁶⁰ To be motivated to play, a person needs to build up trust in the belief that the game will show them how to play by gradually

⁵² Fenemore, A. (2008). The pleasure of objectification : a spectator's guide. *Performance Research*, 12 (4), 4-13.

⁵³ Reason, M. & Reynolds, D. (2010). Kinesthesia, empathy, and related pleasures: an inquiry into audience experiences of watching dance. *Dance Research Journal*, 42(2), 49-75. P70

⁵⁴ Fenemore, A. (2008). The pleasure of objectification : a spectator's guide. *Performance Research*, 12 (4), 4-13. P12

⁵⁵ Fenemore, A. (2008). The pleasure of objectification : a spectator's guide. *Performance Research*, 12 (4), 4-13. P12

⁵⁶ Hrvatin, E. (2001). Terminal spectator and other strategies. *Performance, transformance, informance*. Rotterdam : CFK. P5

⁵⁷ Hrvatin, E. (2001). Terminal spectator and other strategies. *Performance, transformance, informance*. Rotterdam : CFK. P5

⁵⁸ Dries, van den, L. (2002). *Bodycheck : relocating the body in contemporary performing art*. Amsterdam : Rodopi. P274

⁵⁹ Kaprow, A. (1993). *Essays on the blurring of art and life*. Los Angeles : University of California Press. P185

⁶⁰ Salen, K. (2008). *The ecology of games : connecting youth games and learning*. Cambridge : MIT. P9

initiating them into the rules. In some ways interactive performances can be compared to games. In fact, Saraber quotes a Kenyan dancer explaining how the African concept of theatre – African theatre is interactive – resembles that of a game.⁶¹ In the game that is interactive dance performance, the audience needs to trust that it will be initiated into the rules, just as in a computer game. The viewers are then in a position to take on the “stance of playfulness” that Kalen claims is needed to play a computer game.⁶² This stance need not diminish the feeling that emerges from interactive dance. We can look towards African dance, whose aim it is to get the audience to participate as well. Ultimately a performance in Africa is deemed successful when the participating audience has reached together a point of communal feeling of spirituality.⁶³

3.2.2 Aesthetic distance and interaction

“Audience participation, in seeming to provide a way of drawing nearer to the theatrical event, in fact abolishes it”. These were the words of David Cole, the American theatre theoretician, written in 1975.⁶⁴ According to him, the “theatrical event” is transformed through interaction into an acting class or round-table discussion. The essential ingredient of a true theatre event is Missing : aesthetic distance. Thirty years later, Jackson provides an alternative view in his book “Theatre, education and the making of meanings”:

“Audience participation and aesthetic distance do not have to be mutually exclusive. Audiences can be actively engaged in ways that retain a degree of aesthetic distance, even if the nature of that “distance” may appear to be a markedly different kind from that found in conventional theatre practice”.⁶⁵

Underlying Cole’s words was the Cartesian concept of the body being opposed to the mind. Aesthetic understanding is cognitive. Culture is an extension of our mental concepts.⁶⁶ However, as noted above (see the section *the link between kinaesthetic empathy and aesthetic distance*), an audience is able to reach a deeper understanding of the social, aesthetic and political values structured within a choreography through the process of kinaesthetic empathy⁶⁷ - through the audience’s bodies. The effect of interaction has already been observed to further enhance the process of kinaesthetic empathy in the audience, which in turn further embeds their aesthetic understanding of the choreography. In addition, an audience free to move around is more likely to be emotionally engaged. If the audience feels they can trust the interactive set-up, then this emotional engagement can be reinforced. Salen points out that individuals store information more deeply when this information has an emotional charge.⁶⁸ Affect

⁶¹ “The Swahili word for theatre is also used for a football match and denotes active engagement.” P66 Saraber, L. (2003). *Kiezen of delen : de toepasbaarheid van inhoudelijke subsidiecriteria op niet-westerse dans en fusievormen*. Rotterdam : RKS.

⁶² Salen, K. (2008). *The ecology of games : connecting youth games and learning*. Cambridge : MIT. P9

⁶³ Saraber, L. (2003). *Kiezen of delen : de toepasbaarheid van inhoudelijke subsidiecriteria op niet-westerse dans en fusievormen*. Rotterdam : RKS. P70

⁶⁴ Jackson, A. (2007). *Theatre, education and the making of meanings*. Manchester : Manchester University Press. P138

⁶⁵ Jackson, A. (2007). *Theatre, education and the making of meanings*. Manchester : Manchester University Press. P140

⁶⁶ Clements, P. (2011). The recuperation of participatory arts practices. *The international journal of art & design education*, 30 (1),18-30. P21

⁶⁷ Foster, S.L. (2011). *Choreographing empathy : kinesthesia in performance*. Milton Park : Routledge.

⁶⁸ Salen, K. (2008). *The ecology of games : connecting youth games and learning*. Cambridge : MIT. P35

also aids in the evaluation of information. In fact, emotion appears to be a key source of motivation for driving thinking. This would suggest that interaction exerts a double influence on an audience's aesthetic understanding of a choreography, firstly through the enhanced embodiment of the dance's meanings and secondly because the increased pleasurable engagement motivates the audience to consider those meanings.

However, interactive dance works not only on the individual, but on the informal community circulating around that is audience and performers. An embodied sharing of impressions, physical, emotional and cognitive, takes place, generating its own group dynamics. Interaction offers the opportunity to experience the culturally encrypted values of a choreography together, so that the audience and performers transform themselves into a community of sentient members. Indeed, as already observed in the setting of African participatory dance, interactive dance can be a force for profound collective sharing.

3.2.3 Kinaesthetic empathy and interaction

According to O'Donovan-Anderson (1997), much of our knowledge is gained in the course of "our bodily negotiations" with the world. Through our physical actions we absorb knowledge about our surroundings and learn to become physically sensitive and responsive to them.⁶⁹ Sheets-Johnstone (1999) suggested that through moving we also understand dynamics and the way our surroundings change as we move.⁷⁰ In the process we build up knowledge about our own proprioception and motility, storing this knowledge into the "living body"⁷¹. This last term denotes an individual's understanding and perception of his body, its way of moving and its relationship with the outside world, an understanding that is built up over the individual's lifetime. The concept of the "living body" was first identified as *Leib* by Husserl, who distinguished it from the matter of the body or *Körper*.⁷² A new physical skill becomes integrated into the body's vocabulary, along with the tacit physical knowledge surrounding it. The tacit knowledge involves the intention and quality of the movement. Thus, if a person learns a pirouette they are also gaining the tacit knowledge of circular movement and balance.⁷³ As already noted (see section 2.4 on kinaesthetic empathy), the greater an individual's movement experience, the more opportunity the person has to experience kinaesthetic empathy when he sees movement. In this way a continuous circle is forged : movement helps create kinaesthetic empathy which in turn aids the acquisition of new movement skills. The new skills in turn promote kinaesthetic empathy. If in addition to moving, an individual is surrounded by other people, the information the individual receives from the many bodies causes him to consider his own movements from the perspective of the other people. Merleau-Ponty called this phenomenon *reiterated empathy*.⁷⁴ We become aware of ourselves as bodies not only through

⁶⁹ Parviainen, J. (2002). Bodily knowledge : epistemological reflections on dance. *Dance Research Journal*, 34,1, 11-26. P6

⁷⁰ Parviainen, J. (2002). Bodily knowledge : epistemological reflections on dance. *Dance Research Journal*, 34,1, 11-26. P5

⁷¹ Parviainen, J. (2002). Bodily knowledge : epistemological reflections on dance. *Dance Research Journal*, 34,1, 11-26. P10

⁷² Parviainen, J. (2002). Bodily knowledge : epistemological reflections on dance. *Dance Research Journal*, 34,1, 11-26. P5

⁷³ Parviainen, J. (2002). Bodily knowledge : epistemological reflections on dance. *Dance Research Journal*, 34,1, 11-26. P10

⁷⁴ Parviainen, J. (2003). Kinaesthetic empathy. *Dialogue and Universalism*, 11, 151-162. P10

reflections in mirrors, but also through the look of others seeing us.⁷⁵ In other words, while an individual is moving the presence of other people will help increase his bodily knowledge.

When an audience is watching dance in the conventional way, they are sitting in their seats with very little opportunity to move. However, in an interactive performance the audience is free to move. They may be allowed to move in between the dancers and come close to them, providing them with the opportunity to look at the dancers from different angles and sometimes even touch them. In this way the audience is receiving a great deal more "bodily" information as it negotiates its way around the space. In interactive performances in which the audience also dances, the audience members can recycle the information they are receiving, reinforcing the new information into their bodies. When other people are also moving or even reacting to them in movement, the "bodily" information each individual audience member is receiving is still greater. Thus, an interactive performance can be said to have an educative effect on its audience since it has the potential to increase the audience members' "bodily" knowledge and as a result, their kinaesthetic empathy for movement. This acquired knowledge will help them in their understanding of movement the next time they see a dance piece. In so doing, it is contributing to the process of building unconscious embodied predispositions or *habitus* – which, as noted in the section *kinaesthetic empathy and affect*, underlies the perceptual and cultural strategies viewers employ when watching dance performances.

3.3 Summary

Aesthetic distance has been used in the past by Brecht and Boal to activate the audience's intentions and help the audience take a critical stance towards society. Sarraber however believes that its contemporary use during dance performances renders audiences passive. Jackson suggests that aesthetic

distance should be seen on a sliding scale : with too much distance, the audience becomes passive; with too little distance, some audience members feel too unsafe to experience the affect evoked by a performance. An individual also needs to understand the medium of dance in order to be able to take aesthetic distance from it. *Kinaesthetic empathy* with the dance movements enables a spectator to "decode" dance. Sklar maintains that in so doing the spectator understands the choreographic structure of the dance more deeply. Foster goes further, envisaging choreography as a reflection of deep and enduring cultural values, communicated by the use of kinaesthetic empathy. The study by Reason and Reynolds appears to confirm that *kinaesthetic empathy* and *affect* are connected. We ascribe to a movement the association that we have already previously constructed. The emotions aroused in a person depend on the individual's personal history as well as their interpretative strategies.

In a study by Fenemore in which participants were free to tour the dance performance space the spectators manifested increased enjoyment and responsibility for their perceptual choices. However Hrvatin points out that

⁷⁵ Bleker, M. (2002). Disorders that consciousness can produce : bodies seeing bodies on stage. *Bodycheck : relocating the body in contemporary performing art*. Amsterdam : Rodopi. P145

interaction is not always comfortable for an audience because they are unsure about how they are expected to react. In some ways interactive performances can be compared to games, and as such, they need to instil the audience with the trust that the public will be initiated into the rules of the game. Interaction exerts a double influence on an audience's aesthetic understanding of a choreography: participation helps embody the dance's meanings and the increased pleasurable engagement motivates the audience to consider those meanings. In addition an interactive dance performance can act as a force for profound collective sharing. Such performances aid in the acquisition of new movement skills by providing more "bodily" information. Kinaesthetic empathy is promoted, in turn improving movement skills. The information an individual receives from the many bodies surrounding him acts as a mirror and further enhances the individual's bodily knowledge. This contributes to the person's habitus and perceptual strategies.

Chapter 4

Research methodology

This chapter describes the structure and execution of the research, including the process of sample selection and the sample's background. The method and topics involved in gathering information are also listed. The chapter ends by setting out the coding system for analysing the research material.

4.1 Research structure

The research conducted was a qualitative survey using a (reasoned) select sample (Baarda, De Goede en Teunissen, 2005). It was mainly descriptive in nature, but owing to the lack of research in this area, also explorative.

4.2 Execution

4.2.1 Sample selection

Three choreographers were chosen to be interviewed: Sanne Verkaaik, Nita Liem from *Don't Hit Mama* and Ina Stockem from *People on the Move* (Ina Stockem's colleague Gilberto Perotti was also interviewed since he was closely involved in the performances of *Body Lounge*). Sanne Verkaaik is a freelance choreographer and Nita Liem and Ina Stockem are the artistic directors of their own respective organisations. Each of these choreographers has created an interactive movement performance in the last year : *Involt* (Sanne Verkaaik), *Full Circle* (Nita Liem) and *Body Lounge* (Ina Stockem). Unlike *Involt* and *Full Circle* the goals of *Body Lounge* are both artistic and educational.

Trustworthiness : To ensure trustworthiness, a dvd of *Involt* was played and referred to during the interview with Sanne Verkaaik. The researcher saw the performance of *Full Circle* live and took notes. She also went to *Body Lounge* as a participant and watched a dvd about *Body Lounge* after the interview.

Validity : This research is a small explorative study researching the ideas of the various choreographers involved. It does not claim that the choreographers' opinions are justified. Its purpose is rather to offer a theoretical framework acting as a springboard for further research. It is hoped that the conclusions drawn as a result of this research will be tested subsequently in further studies. Such studies might include the reactions of the visiting public, detailed film archives of interactive performances or careful observation of performers and public in such types of performances.

Representation : The three performances were chosen for the following reasons:

- This research is interested in performances in which audience participation occurs. Performances claiming to be interactive because they involve interaction on the part of the performers were not considered suitable for this research. In such performances the audience is not allowed any say in the interaction.
- The study is investigating whether kinaesthetic empathy is enhanced by interaction. The choreographers who were interviewed were basing their

comments about kinaesthetic empathy largely on the manifestation of kinaesthetic empathy that they observed. For this reason the public's interaction involved movement, such that the public could interact by walking, moving or dancing. Thus performances in which an audience remains still and seated, interacting verbally, were not considered.

- The study wants to explore as wide a range of interaction as possible. The three performances chosen for this study display this broad range. One can place the performances on a sliding scale indicating the degree of audience interaction, with limited interaction at one end and continuous interaction at the other. *Involt* stands at one end with a limited degree of audience interaction : visitors could walk around the dancers, come very close to them and touch them. The audience did not participate in any dance activity with the performers. *Full Circle* stands in the middle of the sliding scale : audience members and performers could walk around as they chose in the performance space. At regular intervals activities were organised during which the audience interacted with the performers, and these structured interactions became steadily longer. *Body Lounge* stands at the other end of the sliding scale : the audience is constantly moving with the performer in a one-to-one improvised performance. The contact between the two is very close because the audience member relies on his sense of touch for information about the performer.

A scheme representing these differences is indicated below (figure 1). In addition it shows the difference in performance goals and the means by which the audience could gather its information about the performance.

PERFORMANCE	INVOLT	FULL CIRCLE	BODY LOUNGE
freedom of movement	yes	yes	yes
participatory activity	no	yes	yes
public's means of information gathering	eyes/limited touch/ears	eyes/limited touch/ears	touch /all senses/no eyes
goal	artistic	artistic	artistic/educational

Figure 1. Performance goals and interactive means

4.2.2 Background to performances

Sanne Verkaaik : *Involt*

Involt was a performance lasting ten minutes that took place in November 2011 during the *Amsterdam Museum Night* at the Oude Kerk in Amsterdam, Holland. It was performed three times that night, by fourteen performers. The dancers were attached to the rafters of the church with cables, as though connected to an energy source above. The piece began with them standing in sculptural foetal-like positions, moving very slowly. Their movements became gradually sharper and more sudden. They then moved out into the public, walking long lines, stopping and executing short fragments of dance. Finally they walked circles which became steadily larger, driving the public aside with their energy and fierceness. The performance referred to God as a connecting force for our society being replaced by computers, cell phones and the social media.

Nita Liem : *Full Circle*

Together with Bart Deuss (co-artistic director of Don't Hit Mama), Nita Liem creates work based on Afro-American dance and music. *Full Circle* was a dance club event that toured Holland in 2011. It was inspired by a trip Nita Liem made ten years ago to New York, the city where hiphop began. The event, built as an installation of film and dance and lasting an hour, transports the audience to the city of New York and takes the audience on a journey back in time to the source of hiphop with interviews and dance fragments caught on film. The club concept has a core team of four or five dancers, a couple of guest dancers, a group of local dance amateurs and an actress who functions as storyteller and presentator. The dancers begin on raised platforms and then mingle in the crowd of audience members, inviting them to dance with them in organised group structures such as the *soul train*. This is an alleyway along which people walk in twos and dance together. The local dance lovers, who have rehearsed only briefly with the company, create tableaux and landscapes of movement. As the piece progresses the audience gradually joins the landscapes shifting past each other across the space.

Ina Stockem : *Body Lounge*

Body Lounge is a performance experience. It begins in the waiting-room where participants are free to taste specially prepared snacks. They are then taken to the *check-in zone* where they are blindfolded, after which they are introduced to their *host*. This person is usually a physiotherapist, dancer or yoga teacher with an extensive physical training that includes contact improvisation. The host takes the participant to the *play zone* where they embark on a movement improvisation that plays with fiction and the imagination. It is conducted largely by means of touch since the participant can't see. The host often introduces objects to stimulate the participant's senses. After twenty minutes the participant is taken to the *chill zone*, a separate area, where the blindfold is taken off. The intention is that the participant will interact with other participants here. The goal of *Body Lounge* is to engage in a physical dialogue and in so doing acquire bodily experience and self-awareness.

4.3 Information gathering

Interviews were conducted with Sanne Verkaaik (*Involt*), Nita Liem (*Full Circle*), Ina Stockem (*Body Lounge*) and Gilberto Perotti, a host at *Body Lounge*. The interviews lasted between 1 hour and 20 minutes and 1 hour and 50 minutes and were taped.

4.4 Interview guide

A number of topics were used while conducting the interviews :

- general performance description
 - concept
 - background
 - description
 - goals

- public
 - description
 - motivation for coming
 - effect of age on involvement
- interaction
 - choreographer's motives for interaction
 - choreographer's motives for the particular form of interaction
 - methods of inducing interaction
 - audience and dancer's interactions
- affect
 - affect manifested by the public
 - choreographer's opinion about the connection of interaction to affect and examples
- engagement
 - physical engagement observed in the public
 - connection kinaesthetic empathy and affect
- kinaesthetic embodiment / empathy
 - physical imitation occurring between public and dancers
 - energy changes
 - effect of proximity to dancers
 - role of touch
- aesthetic distance / understanding
 - effect of interaction on public's understanding of concept and artistic choices
- educative impact
 - performance's educational value

4.5 Labelling system

The interviews were coded as fragments of sentences, but included also whole sentences. An open coding system was applied. Labels for the fragments were established and axially coded into themes and core themes according to the fragments' shared traits. General concepts were formulated and finally related to the main issues of:

- participation
- affect
- affect influencing participation
- participation influencing affect
- aesthetic distance
- kinaesthetic empathy
- education
- non-participatory performances

For a fuller description see Appendix II. This includes labelling examples of fragments and sentences.



Photo taken of *Involt* choreographed by Sanne Verkaaik
© Rose Akras and Dirk Jan Jager



Photo taken of *Involt* choreographed by Sanne Verkaaik
© Rose Akras and Dirk Jan Jager



Photo taken of *Full Circle* choreographed by Nita Liem
Photographer : Jean van Lingen
The public is participating in a group dance led by the performers.



Photo taken of *Full Circle* choreographed by Nita Liem

Photographer : Jean van Lingen



Photo taken of *Body Lounge*
Artistic director : Ina Stockem
The photo shows the blindfolded participant dancing with two hosts



Photo taken of *Body Lounge*

Artistic director : Ina Stockem

The photo shows participants dancing together in the chill zone. One of the participants is still blindfolded.

Chapter 5

Study results : participation and affect

This chapter begins with an analysis of interactive behaviours as observed by the individuals interviewed. It then describes the affect ascribed to the dancers and public by these individuals. There follows an investigation into the connection between audience participation and the affect of the dancers and the public. The chapter ends with a summary and discussion points. The list of the people interviewed and the performances is as follows :

- Sanne Verkaaik : *Involt*
- Nita Liem : *Full Circle*
- Ina Stockem and Gilberto Perotti : *Body Lounge*

5.1 Types of audience participation

See appendix II "participation" for coding

Sometimes the dancers interacted with the public without this becoming a true dialogue between both parties. At other times the public took the initiative by undertaking an action without the direct encouragement of the dancers. There were also periods when interaction occurred as a shared action between the dancers and the public. Interaction happened too between members of the public. The behaviour of dancers and public are described below, categorized accordingly.

The dancers take the initiative to interact with the audience :

In *Involt* and *Full Circle* the dancers shifted from their contained performance area out into the space occupied by the public, moving amidst the audience. The dancers in *Involt* and sometimes those in *Full Circle* sought eye contact with the audience. In *Full Circle* the dancers adapted their choreographed movements according to the space available and sometimes melted into the audience, losing their role as performers and becoming observers. In *Body Lounge* the hosts massaged their participants and manipulated their bodies by lifting them up, holding them or compressing them. They also used bondage sadomasochistic techniques when they felt the participants needed this.

The public takes the initiative to interact :

In *Involt*, the audience manifested very different types of interactive behaviour. Some audience members came very close to the performers – in one case as close as thirty centimeters – and even touched the performers carefully. Other people were not so sensitive. Their actions included waving a hand in front of a dancer's eyes, pushing dancers so they fell, and pinching their behinds. One spectator noticed a plug and on seeing the dancers attached to cables, tried to "switch" one of the dancers on. When the performers strode out into the audience space, some spectators walked with them. In *Body Lounge* participants occasionally became hyperactive, running across the space, heedless to their

host. Male participants can also take sexual advantage of their blindfolded fellow performers by secretly checking them out and then touching them up.

A shared action between the dancers and the public :

There are many examples of this happening in *Full Circle*. The audience was asked to move with the performers, which entailed the simple movement of “bouncing” together (bending the knees to the rhythm of the music) in a choreography that gradually became more sophisticated. Shortly after, the performers layed out a white pathway and invited the audience to take part in the *soul train*, an American television concept from the 1970s. The performers took somebody from the audience and together they danced along the alley as a duet. If the audience member did not know how to react, they copied the performer. They could of course also refuse to take part. A call-and-response chant was later initiated by a performer. Again the audience had the option to take part. Towards the end of the performance the public joined a structured landscape of shifting groups of dancers, like shoals of fish swimming past each other in the sea. According to Nita Liem eighty to ninety percent of the audience usually ends up taking part in the performance. Nita Liem : “Some audience members just want to move all the time.” In *Body Lounge* the shared action between the participant and host took the form of a movement improvisation (not to be confused with contact improvisation). This could become quite theatrical according to host Gilberto Perotti : “As a public you make the story.”

Interaction between members of the public :

At *Body Lounge* participants ended their stay in a separate space called the *chill zone*. Here the hosts relinquished their role as guides and the participants were left to interact in an improvised performance with other participants. Sometimes the hosts also took part, not as guides anymore but as fellow participants.

5.2 Types of heightened affect

See appendix II “affect” for coding

When the public comes to a performance they often have their expectations and motives for doing so. These are listed below, followed by a general examination of the types of affect ascribed to the public.

5.2.1 Audience affect before the performance

The performance of *Involt* took place during the *Amsterdam Museum Night* at the Oude Kerk in Amsterdam. Visitors wandered in, often with only vague expectations about the various artistic works they would see – one of which was *Involt*. The situation at *Body Lounge* was quite different. They came with particular motives : loneliness, but also the desire to be stimulated :

“Men tend more to look for stimulation” (Ina Stockem)

“Loneliness. They actually secretly they want to be touched and they want touch. And they do it in this safe atmosphere” (Gilberto Perotti)

“There are expectations of wanting to be entertained, wanting to be stimulated, wanting to undergo an experience” (Ina Stockem)

"They want to experience and learn something about how they will relate in a situation where they are dependent on somebody. They want to have, not a confrontation, but a dialogue with themselves" (Ina Stockem)

"A huge motivation is also sensation. I mean people say "oh this is kinky, sexy or very new, innovative" (Ina Stockem)

Some people returned repeatedly, looking for a special type of experience. This search can border on a therapeutic need :

"They come back because they got a glimpse of something about themselves that they want to experience more. They are often disappointed because they experience a new performance, so they come back and back and back" (Ina Stockem)

"We do have fans who come back and back. Actually that's a real problem because then we get into therapy if they come back too often" (Ina Stockem)

Most people were very excited or nervous. Some were fearful of being touched or of not being able to dance well enough. Some people felt ashamed because they were overweight.

5.2.2 Audience affect during the performance

According to Sanne Verkaaik, the affect elicited by *Involt* was shock, curiosity, amazement, wonder, uncertainty and fun. She also mentioned a territorial animal desire in some young people to disturb the performers and a wish to challenge the rules. Nita Liem mentioned excitement, awe, feeling vulnerable and slightly intimidated, and a sense of fun, of sharing, of celebration. At the end of the show, some young people hung around : "If they don't speak then you see a certain glow in the eyes, and I go oh!" The audience had been through an intense experience : "Some people experience it as a journey, that they really go through something and come out differently." Ina Stockem and Gilberto Perotti from *Body Lounge* reported the most extreme and varied reactions. Some people experience relief at being able to be guided and held, "you feel confirmed and heard". Other people became very passive. Still other people felt overwhelmed, experiencing intense excitement. Gilberto Perotti provided the following anecdote: "The lady, she was sixty years old...and I saw her moving, flying and, well that was a kind of sex experience for her. She was crying after that." In general people experienced an intense sense of well-being : "You have this adrenalin shot when you feel really high." This can even feel like being "in love". Gilberto Perotti explained :

"What I notice is the difference between the people coming in, blindfolded and completely paralysed, and one hour later in the chill space, moving like crazy, talking to everybody and hanging on everybody, you see people changing really, you see people changing."

The result is that at the end, participants were often loathe to take off their blindfold, "because people don't want to wake up out of their *blur*".

5.3 The link between audience participation and affect

See appendix II "The connection between participation and affect" for coding

This section will attempt to tease out what the relationship is between audience participation and affect. Nita Liem talked of "sharing the same floor" and of "connecting with different people" when interaction took place; indeed the words *sharing* and *connecting* suggest a link between interaction and affect. Two themes will be explored: whether audience participation encourages affect and whether affect encourages audience participation.

5.3.1 The influence of audience participation on affect

Proximity :

Sanne Verkaaik described the shock that people at *Involt* felt when they realised they were standing close to the performers,⁷⁶ but also the total concentration and pleasure the audience felt by coming very near to a performer.⁷⁷ The dancer's proximity to the audience makes the performance experience more real and evokes a sense of sharing, as both share the same environment, or as Sanne Verkaaik put it, they smell the same smells⁷⁸. Indeed, Nita Liem also noticed the special influence that physical closeness exerts on the feelings of the audience. "My intuition says, that you...being closer to dance, you take something more than observing from a distance." She defined it as an unconscious exchange of energy, a sense of excitement and "electricity" experienced by an audience even if you know the performer well. Nita Liem talked about walking around the space during a performance and coming close to a performer : "it was really exciting when he was dancing close to me. And I thought "hey this is a nice surprise to me although I know him fifteen years."" Nita Liem likened it to an experience as a child:

"I also had a different feeling when my schoolteacher came close to me to correct me. Suddenly there's this authority that is bending over me which is so different from when he's in front of the class. Already that energy is there."

She described the affect as feeling "very much exposed". She also explained that the status of the performer felt enhanced as a result of the close proximity :

"The transformation. The...what is funny is that you accept immediately a role. As soon as I was not a director, but I was stepping in as an audience, I became an audience and then the dancers had got authority. Not like pop stars, but it felt a little bit like "ooh, he's moving close to me. Wow! " "

It is also worth remarking on the affect experienced by the performers. Nita Liem told how the performers "feel the energy more" when they could be close to their audience. Gilberto Perotti told how as a host "you get really touched. Really emotionally touched" after an interactive performance at *Body Lounge*.

⁷⁶ "Ze hadden vaak helemaal niet door dat die dansers daar stonden. Sommige mensen die schokken daarvan, sommige mensen die bleven heel geïnteriseerd kijken van "wat gebeurt daar?" "

⁷⁷ "Ik heb ook verstilling gezien of berusting van die mensen die heel dichtbij die dansers stonden. En ook wel plezier."

⁷⁸ "die kan bij wijze van spreken mee ruiken met wat jij ook ruikt, of delen ook."

Touch :

At *Body Lounge* the participation of the participant was implicit in the performance and the participants performed on a one-to-one basis with their hosts. Their proximity was so close that *touch* became an essential ingredient in the interaction. This type of interaction evoked a powerful affect, or in the words of Gilberto Perotti, "You get high by touching".⁷⁹ In particular touch is considered as a tool to *open* people up, breaking down their sense of shame, giving them energy, enabling them to rid themselves of pent up emotions and feel safe. Touch is also seen as a way of evoking memories and associations.

The audience's freedom to walk around :

When the audience first entered the interactive performance space it did not know where to look and felt uncertain and nervous, according to Sanne Verkaaik.⁸⁰ The initial reaction of an audience, she said, was to keep a safe distance from the performers. However, the possibility to move around encouraged the making of choices. Nita Liem put it this way :

"You make choices and you swop either being a spectator or I move from this side to that side. I can sit on the floor, I can stand up. I can move my butt with it. So there are more choices. Whereas if I'm in my seat [in a theatre] I can close my eyes, which I don't do, so there are less choices."

As a result the spectator is more motivated in his choices, "trying to see everything" (Nita Liem) and the experience of watching is more intense : "you're less distracted. 'Cos I've noticed if I want to watch this person I'm gonna watch this person" (Nita Liem). In *Full Circle* the experience of moving contributed to the feeling of going on a journey : "the landscapes are always changing. It's either because they move or because the dancers move."

Physical movement :

The audience in *Full Circle* was encouraged to move together and react together. Nita Liem explained, describing the affect produced : "usually in the *Full Circle* we take them in a sort of bounce... Very simple movements. But you can break it down and make a simple movement very sophisticated. It's also that you contribute something to the energy." Gilberto Perotti from *Body Lounge* had also commented on the power of movement : "You get high by touching, by moving". He explained it in this way :

"Motion is you move people through the space. And it's kind of very dark, because it's something you don't know. By motion, by moving outside, there comes this moment where...I cannot explain it. Motion is everything happening outside your body, so moving in the space. And emotion is everything that is happening inside your body. But they are connected to each other, by moving

⁷⁹ Ina Stockem has remarked on the power of touch to elicit affect even in people in the last stages of dementia. "They have reactions on their skin, they respond to pressure, they have a smile, a laughter...these people don't respond to anything anymore. Actually they are lying in their beds, imagine this place, it has a coloured wall, music 24 hours a day to stimulate people, but it doesn't greet them. Whereas skin touch... really addresses them."

⁸⁰ "Ik heb onzekerheid gezien. "Waar kijk ik naar? Oh, kan ik hier staan? Mag ik hier staan? Waar moet ik staan?" Dus in die onzekerheid ook een soort ...nervositeit."

you create, you get emotions. I touch you or move you very fast in the space and you get scared or you get excited. And it's something inside. And suddenly you remember when you were a child and you were skiing with your father or you were biking with your father. Or you were falling, something happens. Suddenly you have these links, what Proust would call his *madeleine* which he put in his tea, this temps perdu, this place inside of you."

In other words, motion was connected to affect, creating fear or excitement, and it could also call up memories.

Physical manipulative techniques :

At *Body Lounge* hosts occasionally used bondage sadomasochistic techniques on the participants. It is debatable whether this falls into the category of interaction because the participants were not the agents. However they were giving their tacit agreement since they could stop it at any moment. That is why it is being listed here. It was used, with the participants' consent, on people when they were very hyperactive and it helped to calm them down.

"Ugly" interaction :

During the performance of *Involt* some audience members behaved in an unfriendly way to the dancers. The dancers were not allowed to react back, but were shocked by these actions.

5.3.2 The influence of affect on audience participation

The public's curiosity :

An effective emotion propelling audience members into action is their curiosity. The desire to see everything that is going on obliges a person to walk around the performance space : "I would go from there to there. Trying to see everything" (Nita Liem). The consequences of a curious public can be unforeseen and even annoying. Sanne Verkaaik cited the motive for the person pulling out a light plug as being curiosity.⁸¹

The public's desire to trigger a reaction :

In *Involt* some participants waved a hand close to a performer's eyes, trying to produce a reaction from the performer. Sanne Verkaaik suggested that this may even have been done by an individuals out of an animal to assert their own territory.

The public's disruptive urge :

Younger audiences were more likely to want to test the "rules" of a performance. Indeed some audience members went further than waving a hand close to a performer's eyes by pushing or pinching a dancer. Sanne Verkaaik put this behaviour down to a straightforward desire to disrupt the performance.

The public's desire to be teased :

A common impulse amongst *Body Lounge* participants was the desire to be teased and stimulated. Ina Stockem explained how this affect could be so

⁸¹ "Op een gegeven moment trok iemand een kabel er uit waarvan zij dachten dat die verbonden was aan een danser, maar het was daadwerkelijk verbonden aan het licht. Dus die trok de kabel uit...Dus ik liep er naar toe, "waarom doet u dat?". "Oh!", en die ging schokken heel erg, hij was gewoon benieuwd of die gewoon aan of uit zou gaan. Dus het was gewoon nieuwsgierigheid."

powerful that it sometimes propelled people into explosive movement. This explosive unleashing of energy was not considered by the hosts to be truly interactive because the participant was not interested in a dialogue, only in discharging their energy. As the process of interaction gradually became established, the desire to be teased could lead to an unusual improvised movement play.

The dancers' non-judgemental attitude :

Sanne Verkaaik explained that the very slow-moving bodies of her performers looked like sculptures. They exuded such a sense of open, non-judgemental vulnerability that audience members felt an almost physical need to touch them.

The dancers' open attitude :

The hosts at *Body Lounge* were very open to the needs and desires of the participants. "We say "just let go, just give yourself over"", said Ina Stockem. Gilberto Perotti explained how the hosts followed those needs : "If I am quite open and you just show me that you want... And then I pick it up". Thus, interaction between host and participant was set in motion.

The dancers' desire to share :

Nita Liem described repeatedly how her carefully selected dancers encouraged audience interaction because they enjoyed sharing the dance with the public : "They're very open-hearted as well, and they like people, and they like making connections with people." The dancers "also have an attitude of "come, you can come and dance with me"." As a result "you feel invited to be part of their world", says Nita Liem.

The dancers' assertive attitude :

The attitude of the dancers in *Involt* was not always conducive to audience participation. Towards the end of the piece the dancers strode out into the space, looking straight into the eyes of the audience. As a result of this determined assertivity, the audience stepped back and became passive.⁸²

A welcoming atmosphere :

In *Full Circle* the audience was explicitly made to feel welcome with a presentator who reassured the public and explained the club event set-up :

"there's someone who says "ok, you are welcome. You can do anything that you want, but you don't have to." If that's the code and they understand it, then at least it's comfortable. I believe very much, if you're comfortable, then you have much more freedom in your mind and your body. That there's a chance that you will join." ⁸³

A safe atmosphere :

⁸² "Ik denk dat het publiek op dat moment zelf kwetsbaarder wordt want voorheen kon jij de danser benaderen en nu benadert de danser jou...En daarna heeft die danser een hele eigen wil."

⁸³ Sanne Verkaaik too mentions the importance of welcoming the public. She explains how the audience in her performance *Grof Geschud* behaved in an ever more extreme way as a result of the comfortable atmosphere she had built up with them.

Sanne Verkaaik remarked that the public felt safe at the beginning of *Involt* because her dancers were not reacting to them. This feeling of safety was one of the reasons why they were prepared to approach the dancers. Ina Stockem and Gilberto Perotti also believed that an atmosphere that feels safe was essential for audience participation. They used the term *trust*. Gilberto Perotti explained :

"you touch them and you feel these bodies closing, just closing. Like a tortoise. They are beautiful, and you come close by and they just close... We have to gain trust, because if you gain trust then they open."

To help this process they provided music "for people to feel comfortable" and a blindfold. The blindfold had the effect of shutting out rational and critical thoughts and enabled the participants to participate more freely in the movement performance with their host : "all the shame is away and they can act and they can be whatever they want. When it becomes visual again they become rational and they close also" (Gilberto Perotti). To help create a safe atmosphere they played music. Music was also an important element at the performance of *Full Circle*. It helped make the atmosphere less intimidating and get the public dancing : "A very good dj, make sure he has the right music. That's the task of djs, they know how to make crowds move."

5.4 Summary

One of the questions this research asked was : what is the relationship in dance performances between heightened affect and audience participation? The information gathered from the interviews suggests that audience participation and heightened affect are connected. It would seem that the freedom to walk around a performance space and approach a dancer stimulates the audience to become more motivated and attentive in their choices. (This supports Fenemore's (2008) conclusion that an interactive performance leads to the audience's increased engagement and to their taking more responsibility.) Touch and movement appear to stimulate energy and arouse powerful emotions. Proximity to a performer makes a performance feel more real and exciting (once again supporting Fenemore's (2008) observation that close proximity to a performer can enhance the watching experience). However, the use of close proximity needs to be handled wisely. Although Nita Liem commented on the heightened status a performer is attributed when passing nearby, the hapless performers in *Involt* were accorded little respect when they were pushed and pinched by some of the public. Affect also seems to exert its influence on participation. In particular a welcoming and safe atmosphere helps create audience interaction, especially if the dancers are open and willing to share with the public in a non-judgemental way. An intimidating performance can exert its influence in the opposite direction, pushing the audience back into a passive spectator's role.

5.5 Discussion points

Hrvatin (2001) wrote of the discomfort interaction brings with it for the audience because the audience does not know the interactive code. However, Nita Liem and *Body Lounge* have shown that there are ways to reduce this discomfort. During Nita Liem's *Full Circle* the audience was instructed by the club presentator

as to what was expected of them.⁸⁴ At *Body Lounge* the instruction was given before any interaction occurred in a fashion that is near-ritualised.⁸⁵ In this way the choreographer could avoid the situation in which Hrvatin found himself, interacting in a manner that was considered inappropriate by the performer. This notion of instructing the *game rules* tallies with the way people are initiated into computer games (Salen, 2009). Ina Stockem and Gilberto Perotti mentioned that people often remained passive in the *chill zone*, when they no longer had the guidance of a host. It is conceivable that the participants no longer knew what was expected of them at this point.

Salen also mentions the importance of building trust to ensure that a person keeps playing their computer game. Instigating trust between host and participant is certainly a concept central to the philosophy and methods of *Body Lounge*. All the interviewees suggested that creating a sense of well-being is an excellent way of inducing interaction from the audience. In fact its effect could be extremely powerful, luring the participants into waters they would normally never dare enter. Sanne Verkaaik commented on how old-aged pensioners were induced by her to throw fireworks at her in her solo performance *Grof Geschud*. It would seem that a skilled choreographer can create the right affect to encourage interaction – which in turn can promote affect. Thus the two processes keep feeding each other. The result can be a performance that feels exciting and special.

⁸⁴ "At some points we ask them to move with us, that helps as well, so that breaks the ice. So the audience knows the code, "oh, I can walk around". 'Cos not everybody understands it immediately."

⁸⁵ Audience members are greeted and taken to a check-in space where they take off their shoes and are instructed about what will happen. Here the participant can also ask any questions. Only after this is the participant blindfolded and taken into the *play zone*.

Chapter 6

Study results : aesthetic distance

See appendix II "aesthetic distance" for coding

An interactive dance performance can be an intense and enjoyable experience. But does aesthetic distance have any place in this process? In chapter two aesthetic distance was described as the figurative distance a person takes from a performance; the process of aesthetic distance removing the audience from the here-and-now and imbuing the performance with a richer meaning bestowed on it by the audience's imagination. This chapter will attempt to find out if aesthetic distance and engagement can coexist in interactive dance performances – engagement referring to the affect, kinaesthetic empathy and interaction of the audience. In the course of examining this relationship it will investigate the phenomenon of immersion and explore the ways in which affect, choice, touch and framing were connected in this research in this research to aesthetic distance. The chapter ends with a summary and discussion points. The list of the people interviewed and the performances is as follows :

- Sanne Verkaaik : *Involt*
- Nita Liem : *Full Circle*
- Ina Stockem and Gilberto Perotti : *Body Lounge*

6.1 Aesthetic distance and immersion

Right from the start, Nita Liem saw the audience as "part of the composition". The performers wove in and out of the audience, "following their own journey", fulfilling their role as guides and taking "the people on a journey" as well. Their skills as dancers and performers enabled them to communicate "in space with their bodies. So they know how to create sculptures in space." Nita Liem talked about the interacting audience becoming "accomplices" in the creation of the piece.

"If you started moving, the dancers feel you much better. And it adds to the collective body. That's what social dance is about. You dance with everybody and if the audience is more there, more present, the dancers perform better."⁸⁶

In essence what one is witnessing here is an experience of sharing movement, meeting other people in dance and connecting with them; it can also be described as a process of immersion induced by means of kinaesthetic empathy. During this process the audience watched, picked up on the performers' movements, copied them and then became a part of the performance. Nita Liem spoke about this subconscious process, referring to her immersive experience in Asia. As a result of this visit to the East she found she had adapted her norms concerning facial features. She gave another example of the power of immersive experiences. During *Full Circle* the audience sometimes danced with African American hiphop dancers:

⁸⁶ Indeed the call-and-response chant grew out of the interactive process between the dancers and the audience taking place over many performances.

"if you've only seen these kinds of dance on television, and have a certain opinion, "but ok, black people know how to dance or this is a black person and I'm never gonna get in touch with a black person" ...by seeing this person so close, maybe it's, they probably don't do it consciously, but maybe years later when they see a black person they probably deal or work differently with this person." (Nita Liem)

The immersive interactive experience is very different from the experience of sitting in a theatre seat. In Nita Liem's interactive performances the audience members were located in the performance and doing the performance. Even if the audience could not articulate the feelings and thoughts passing through them, by stepping into the choreographer's world and sharing it, the performance imprinted itself physically and maybe even emotionally on the participant. As a result a form of intuitive absorption or learning was taking place. Nita Liem put it this way :

"It's not that you say "oh I've learnt so much about the hip-hop culture". I think you take a certain energy with you, you take all the information with you. If you are touched by one of the dancers you take that with you...it means they put a stamp on you."

The hosts at *Body Lounge* also provided an immersive experience with their careful guidance. After an interactive experience with a host, "practically eighty percent of all people want to stay blindfolded", said Ina Stockem, "and stay in their own *blur*". She recounted how "especially non-movers are completely overwhelmed". Clearly the experience of *Body Lounge* was very powerful. "It's just addictive. I mean it's wonderful to do, it's the most pure contact" (Ina Stockem). The hosts created an atmosphere of trust through the empathic kinaesthesia of touch, guiding their participants around the space and stimulating their senses with music and objects as varied as teddy bears and ice cubes. Hyperactive participants were helped to calm down using bondage sadomasochistic techniques. People who needed to be teased were teased, people who needed to be held were hugged. Affect and kinaesthetic empathy worked their magic to create an atmosphere in which the participants unfolded and opened under the guidance of the hosts.

This immersive atmosphere is not immediately conducive to aesthetic distancing. Only when the participants can detach themselves from their subjective experience and impart it with a richer meaning do they acquire aesthetic distance. The next three headings will explore how this process can take place.

6.2 Aesthetic distance and affect

Chapter six described the connection between interaction and affect. Proximity to the performers seemed to arouse pleasure and excitement, and sharpen concentration. Touch had the power to open people up and evoke memories and associations. Movement in the space seemed to focus the audience's attention and stimulate emotions such as fear and excitement, as well as stirring up memories. In short interaction directed focus, kindled emotions and awakened memories. Sanne Verkaaik valued this emotional involvement greatly. She tried to use interaction as a means of starting a dialogue with the audience, but this was only possible when an audience felt emotionally connected to the

performance. She described an audience's reaction with a piece she made on the theme of memory and nostalgia in which audience members were invited to take part in an intimate one-to-one relationship with her.⁸⁷ Those participants were deeply moved, some of them even cried. Later she adapted the piece for the stage. The audience considered it a nice piece, but they were not moved in the same way.⁸⁸ In her pieces she was looking for a sense of communal sharing, a process of feeling *and* thinking together.⁸⁹ This process, she warned, is only achievable when interaction plays an integral part in the performance and is not just exploited as a gimmick.⁹⁰ It is difficult to say whether the audience was able to take aesthetic distance at this point; they may have been so emotionally involved in the performance that aesthetic distance was not possible during the performance. However if interaction was used well, audience members will have talked about the performance experience to their friends and in so doing, have reflected possibly upon the concept behind the performance.⁹¹ In that case aesthetic distancing was happening after the performance. Nita Liem phrased this process of using emotional involvement as a springboard for further reflection :

First you think "oh this is fun, it's just a party, but wait a minute, that girl is really trying to say something. And why am I here? Oh wait a minute it's a landscape" and then it's linked to the quotes on the video. And maybe people get interested and go and google "who is Lenny Harris?"

6.3 Aesthetic distance and choice

Sanne Verkaaik contrasted a conventional performance and a participatory performance. In a conventional performance, the audience knows where to sit and look. They simply follow what is expected of them.⁹² In her performance *Involt* however, the audience entered the space uncertain about what to do and what to expect. They had to figure out for themselves what the framework of the performance was. Because they could not see everything all at once, they made

⁸⁷ "...ik wilde mensen laten voelen of deel laten nemen aan het feit dat zij de wereld heel snel ziet veranderen en dat zij zo een heimwee kan hebben naar vroeger. Naar hele simpele dingen als een potje groente, waar je met elkaar de groenten in stopte. En toen dacht ik, kan...ik kan dat...er kwamen allemaal mensen kijken, ik dacht toen, ik kan ze allemaal aanspreken en dat potje als verhaal vertellen. Dan sla ik de plank mis want dan gaan ze dat niet voelen, gaan ze horen."

⁸⁸ "Ik heb het uiteindelijk nog gedaan op een andere locatie voor een groot publiek. En dan zat ik op een podium, en mensen vonden het gewoon mooi, mensen stonden wijn te drinken. Terwijl ik heb mensen met tranen gehad toen ik één op één met ze zat."

⁸⁹ "...vind ik het belangrijk om dat in het theater te laten voelen, hoe mooi dat is, hoe toereikend dat kan zijn. Om samen na te denken, om samen te lachen, om samen te huilen, om samen de mening te vormen, of juist niet."

⁹⁰ "Daarom zeg ik interactie moet kloppen en passen met wat je doet zodat het uitnodigt, zodat het er niet bovenop ligt. Ik denk dat als je als theatermaker je daarover ook vragen over stelt en daar bevlogen of betrokken in bent, dat je dat kan bereiken. Ik denk dat het concept daarom...interactie mag geen toevoeging zijn op het concept, het moet het uitgangspunt zijn. Je mag interactie vind ik niet gebruiken omdat jezelf wil beogen mensen te raken of onze...omdat je een reactie wil bij je publiek."

⁹¹ "In eerste instantie je gaat praten over je eigen ervaring. Ik denk dat als jongeren met elkaar meemaken dat je zo dicht er op staat en dat je dan in eerste instantie überhaupt erover gaat praten want dat "nou, dat vond ik gewoon heel raar" en dat je dan...stel je zou dat coachen, dat je dan vraagt "waarom was dat raar?"

⁹² Sanne Verkaaik : "Nou, op het moment dat je weet "over 5 minuten gaat er een voorstelling beginnen" en daar mag je gaan zitten om te kijken en daar kijk je naar, dan ben je, op de een of andere manier, misschien niet zo zeer meer betrokken, of je bent geprogrammeerd betrokken (lacht), dat betekent niet dat je geestelijk betrokken bent, maar je weet waar je aan toe bent, dus je doet het. En dan hoeft je helemaal niet betrokken te zijn want je kan het alsnog niet interessant vinden en te kijken, maar je doet het gewoon."

choices, walking around and approaching the performers.⁹³ Making these choices motivates the public and intensifies the experience (as noted in chapter five see section 5.3.1 *the influence of audience participation on affect*). The process of making choices, said Sanne Verkaaik, is one whereby the audience is constantly assessing its own position vis-à-vis the performer. People ask themselves whether they want to see what is going on and whether they want to make the effort to continue looking. If they decide to look, they ask themselves how close to the performance they want to stand, what part of the performance they want to see and how long they want to watch. In so doing they are evaluating how the performance is affecting them and searching out the parts of the performance that have relevance to them.⁹⁴ Sanne Verkaaik believed that an audience is also evaluating its own role in the performance : do I belong here, am I part of the performance, which part do I fit in, how can I contribute? As a result of this self-questioning, they are more likely to consider the relevance of the piece to their own beliefs.⁹⁵ The process of looking for the piece's relevance involves taking distance from it in order to confer a personal meaning to it, and therefore fits the notion of taking aesthetic distance from the performance.

Sanne Verkaaik cited an example of a performance by Boukje Schweigman where the public was forced into an interaction without having chosen to do so. In that performance dancers came to the audience and without asking, sat on the laps of the spectators.⁹⁶ Not every spectator was happy about this. More importantly however, being forced into this situation meant that the audience was not afforded the time to ponder on the relevance of the interactive experience to their own past and present situations. This meant that the audience very possibly missed the point of the interaction. Nita Liem supported Sanne Verkaaik's emphasis on the importance of choice, pointing out that the freedom to choose helps acquire information about a performance. She cited the example of standing close to an actor : "I can smell his costume, or I can feel and smell his breath in what he's saying, I get more information than when it's much more from a distance." The information acquired helps the spectator weigh up the relevance of the performance, thus contributing to the public's aesthetic understanding, and to the distancing that may ensue.

⁹³ "Je ziet mensen daadwerkelijk nadenken "ben ik nou, ga ik nou stoer zijn en nou heel dichtbij staan, of ga ik nou...ik wil eigenlijk wel daar naartoe, maar ik doe het niet". Die afweging. Of "ik wil eigenlijk cola gaan halen bij de bar, maar er gebeurt volgens mij iets en gaat er iets nou gebeuren?" "

⁹⁴ "ik denk... dat je je vragen gaat stellen over toenadering tot andere begrenzing, hoe verhoud je je tot dingen, waar sta ik als mens, wat vind ik hiervan, want dat moet je wel."

⁹⁵ Sanne Verkaaik talks about another performance she made, *Gustaf*. The audience was enjoying the show and taking part in the commando games with the performers : "Daar moesten mensen heel hard om lachen, maar je trekt dat dan uit de context om er daarna een tekst overheen te gooien die puur ging over "als je zou moeten kiezen, je zusje dood laten schieten of je broertje dood laten schieten, wie kies je dan?" En mensen vonden dat, ja, je voelde heel erg reactie, het gaat over hen zelf."

⁹⁶ "Boukje Schweigman heeft dat ook gedaan, en dat vond ik heel mooi, en tegelijkertijd deed zij het wel dwingend bij *Between*. Hadden de dansers de hele tijd aan het podium gestaan en aan het einde gaan de dansers bij mensen in het publiek op schoot liggen en dat had best wel de zelfde energie als hoe mijn dansers begonnen. Maar daarin maakte zij dus de keuze om dat af te dwingen, dus de dansers nemen de keuze om bij jou te komen liggen. Ik vond dat heel fijn, maar ik had ook collega's gehoord of vriendinnen die zeiden "ik vond het helemaal niet fijn, ik heb niet de keuze, er komt iemand gewoon boven op me liggen. "Dus in mijn geval kies ik dan liever voor de foetus die je zelf mag benaderen en eventueel zelf op schoot mag nemen als je wil, maar dan moet jezelf veel meer initiatief nemen."

6.4 Aesthetic distance and touch

Body Lounge did not want to just immerse people (one participant described the experience as being back in the “womb”). *Body Lounge* wanted people to take responsibility for themselves, to become “active” as they put it. It communicated this by means of touch (“we very tenderly and softly, and with a lot of patience, try to educate people”, Gilberto Perotti). Ultimately the blindfold was taken off the participants and they were encouraged to continue the physical dialogue. This happened in the *chill zone* without the guidance of the host.

Interviewer : In this chill zone, people do come out of their passivity, they do become more active?

Gilberto Perotti : Theoretically.

Interviewer : Do they?

Gilberto Perotti : Yes, yes, most of them, yes.

Gilberto Perotti explained :

“What I notice is the difference between the people coming in, blindfolded and completely paralysed, and one hour later in the chill space, moving like crazy, talking to everybody and hanging on everybody, you see people changing really, you see people changing.”

Body Lounge strived to help participants achieve greater self-awareness, both emotional and kinaesthetic, so they could engage in a physical dialogue. This self-awareness, or active attitude, is one in which the participant no longer only experienced; the participant became cognizant of his experience. This “behaviour” was one of distancing. Since the *artistic* goals of *Body Lounge* were to instil self-awareness, the distancing process can be described as *aesthetic* distancing.

6.5 Aesthetic distance and “framing”

At *Body Lounge* host and participant decided “together what is the point” or the intention of the interactive performance. This could be “really extreme”, according to Gilberto Perotti. Fiction upon fiction was piled one on top of the other, as memories and associations were fired, enriching the improvisation :

Gilberto Perotti : In my mind... I’m playing with you like you were my...yeah, maybe my puppet. And then I make you a character of my story and this is very playful. I do it like children will do it.

Interviewer : If you’re my host...so in a way I become a performer in your mind.

Gilberto Perotti : Yes, in my mind. I put you, yes, absolutely.

Interviewer : So it does become a performance.

Gilberto Perotti : It does become a performance.

Interviewer : Only the person who is the performer is maybe not aware of the fact...?

Gilberto Perotti : Or maybe he is...

Interviewer : You don’t know if they’re aware.

Gilberto Perotti : Yeah, it’s an improvised performance actually. Yeah, *Body Lounge* is an improvised performance you make actively with your participants.

Interviewer : Is the person aware, do you think, that they're in a performance?
Gilberto Perotti : I think it is.

Not all participants were able to see this improvisation for what it was : fiction. This is where the concept of *framing* becomes useful, a term borrowed from Goffman (see chapter two, section 2.3 *aesthetic distance*). Framing advances aesthetic distance in interactive dance performances by indicating the boundary between fiction and reality. Ina Stockem described the need to take aesthetic distance :

"It's our duty to remind them [the participants] that it stays a performance. Because there's a moment...for example, that's how we developed the goodbye ritual. It's very important to, when you say goodbye in the play zone, and we have 5 to 7 goodbye rituals, that you really make clear "this concept wasn't meant to be personal. It's not because I love you, although we had a loving connection. This is a performance and it's over now."

The goodbye ritual usually worked. "But sometimes you have to be consistent. Because people, then people are lonely, or people feel like they're in love after *Body Lounge*"(Ina Stockem).

The goodbye ritual was not the only way that *Body Lounge* framed the interactive experience. The introductory instruction was also ritualised, following a set order – the participants were brought into a special room, initiated into the game rules, handed a blindfold, introduced to their individual host and taken into a special room where they would improvise. After the performance the participants were moved into a third area, the *chill zone*. Moving to another space provided yet again a frame for the intense one-to-one improvisation just experienced. The very fact of naming the different spaces *check-in zone*, *play zone* and *chill zone* was a theatricalisation of the experience, and therefore a means towards aesthetic distancing. Indeed taking aesthetic distance was not always easy, even for the hosts. The experience could be so powerful that even they had to learn to detach themselves from the interactive experience:

"Gilberto Perotti : I've learned that it's better to put a kind of "ok, I know that you can go till 10, but we stop at 5. Because..."

Interviewer : Because otherwise it no longer is a performance, it becomes too...

Gilberto Perotti : That's one...

Interviewer : Am I right?

Gilberto Perotti : Yes, otherwise it becomes too personal. Too close."

Involt and *Full Circle* also used the device of framing to point out the boundary between reality and fiction. *Involt* provided as frame a theatrical setting : lighting, set (cables to the church's rafters) and costumes. *Full Circle* placed the audience in an installation of lit platforms and film.

6.6 Summary

This chapter has looked at the role of aesthetic distance (or the lack of it) during the interactive experience of an audience. Some audience members had a great time watching and dancing all evening ("Some people see just dance and just

want to move all the time, and they just can't stop", Nita Liem). In this case one can speak of immersion. Kinaesthetic empathy and affect were stimulated, the affect being one of general well-being ("oh this is fun", Nita Liem). For some audience members however the interactive experience was emotionally more profound. Sometimes it was so intense that it was difficult to climb out of this experience. This phenomenon occurred at *Body Lounge* where participants sometimes felt overwhelmed. It was brought about by the sensitive and empathic use of touch and by the non-judgemental attitude of the hosts. Again the term immersion is applicable. In neither case does immersion involve aesthetic distance. According to Sanne Verkaaik however, the emotional involvement of an audience in a performance can be used to instigate a shared process of feeling and thinking. She warned that this can only happen when interaction plays an integral part in the performance and reflects its concept. The public's emotional attachment to the performance can act as a springboard for aesthetic distancing occurring even after the piece is over. Interactive pieces oblige audiences to make choices about where to stand and what to do. In making these choices the public is evaluating the performance's relevance to their own situation as well as taking a degree of aesthetic distance from the piece. *Body Lounge* strove to help participants become cognizant of their experiences – a form of aesthetic distancing – and once again used touch, this time to induce self-awareness. It employed various techniques to frame or theatricalise the interactive dance experience (such as ritualised instruction). In this way it indicated the fictional quality of the interaction and introduced aesthetic distance into the participants' experience.

6.7 Discussion points

Earlier on, this chapter described the process of immersion as a physical and emotional imprinting of the performance on the participant. The question can be posed as to whether this amounts to an imprinting of the performance *concept*. Chapter three considered the opinions of Sklar (?) and Foster (2010) that the identity and values of a dance piece lie embedded in its choreography. In that case immersion may indeed be said to result in an imprinting of the concept. At this point it is worth remembering Sanne Verkaaik's warning that interaction should play an essential and integral part in the performance in order to reflect the piece's concept.⁹⁷ Indeed the dancers at the beginning of *Involt* portraying the vulnerability of an emerging human being were confirmed in their vulnerability by the audience's freedom to approach them – and bully them if they so wished. The concept behind *Full Circle* was that of peer education underlying the hiphop clubbing scene. Interaction during the piece was used to help dancers and audience meet and exchange ideas. In this way it was embodying the peer education concept of the piece, and of the hiphopping scene. The principles of responsibility and sensitivity underlay the *Body Lounge* concept and these were communicated in the course of the interaction between host and participant. In fact the more these principles were implemented, the richer the interactive dialogue that emerged. In this way concept and interaction were also interwoven at *Body Lounge*.

⁹⁷ "Interactie mag geen toevoeging zijn op het concept, het moet het uitgangspunt zijn."

If some members of the public allowed themselves to become immersed in the performance atmosphere, there were other audience members who were active and conscious about exercising their choices. This self-awareness was encouraged at *Body Lounge*. As a result of these choices individuals find their own personal meanings to the performance. They are moved without being completely overwhelmed. Sanne Verkaaik believed this process of finding an emotional meaning is much more likely to lead to reflection, or aesthetic distance. Her belief in the connection between emotion and cognition supports Salen's (2008) assertion that affect is a key motivator to evaluate information and drive thinking.

Thus affect helps cognition, but cognition also aids in the channelling of affect. Chapter three (see section 3.1.1 *aesthetic distance and affect*) noted the observation by Jackson (2007) that aesthetic distance plays a crucial role in enabling the audience to experience emotion. Too little aesthetic distance creates an unsafe situation in which distress can be overwhelming. This suggests that whilst an audience is searching for the personal relevance of a performance to its own situation it is also, paradoxically, freed from anxiety when the performance is clearly fiction. At *Body Lounge* fiction – with its theatrical accompaniments of ropes and teddy bears (and so on) – played a large role in the improvisations between host and participant, functioning as an outlet for the powerful emotions aroused by touch.

In concluding this chapter it is worth considering the relationship of aesthetic distance and interactive dance in the light of the playwright Berthold Brecht's views on aesthetic distance (see chapter three, section 3.1.1 *aesthetic distance and affect*). Brecht searched for a way to activate the minds of his audience and to prevent them from wallowing in empathy for his dramatic characters. The hosts at *Body Lounge* had similar goals : to educate the participants to take responsibility during their interactions and not to simply submit themselves to their paralysing emotions. Sanne Verkaaik talked about the "click"⁹⁸ that audiences need to make during her performances so that they can find their own meaning for the pieces. The fact that interaction offers its audiences choice increases the chance that this audience will see the relevance of the piece to its own situation and ask itself questions. It is true that in the process of finding the relevance and of interacting with the dancers powerful emotions are aroused. The question is, does this affect hinder or support the process of aesthetic distance (as Sanne Verkaaik and Nita Liem believe)? Of course emotion that is overwhelming is not immediately conducive to aesthetic distance. However in the long run it may act as a powerful shock, acting to awaken new insights in an individual. One might wonder if this is more likely to occur when it is the observed relevance to an individual's own situation that creates the heightened affect. One might also wonder if the process of experiencing profound emotion does not ultimately provoke a more penetrating aesthetic insight into the performance than if affect is largely passed over.

⁹⁸ "Daarna zag je ze de kwinkslag maken van "maar ik heb net vuurwerk staan te gooien naar iemand". Dus je zag ze ook tegelijkertijd denken "he?!" "

Chapter 7

Study results : kinaesthetic empathy

See appendix II "kinaesthetic empathy" for coding

Kinaesthetic empathy is the active and spontaneous act of perceiving movement (see section 2.4 *kinaesthetic empathy*). The act of perception is brought about when the mirror neurons in the perceiver's brain respond to observed movement by firing. As a result the brain "rehearses" the perceived movement, simulating and even anticipating it. Of course it is not possible to look into the brains of the public and the dancers in order to see if kinaesthetic empathy was occurring during the performances. In this research however kinaesthetic empathy has been surmised when people were observed to spontaneously adopt similar physical attitudes whilst looking at each other. It has also been surmised from observations of interactive exchanges taking place between the dancers and the public. Using these observations made by Sanne Verkaaik, Nita Liem, Ina Stockem and Gilberto Perotti, this chapter will explore under which circumstances kinaesthetic empathy occurred during the research sample performances. It will also consider the relationship of kinaesthetic empathy and affect. The chapter ends with a summary and discussion points in which questions are asked that have arisen in the course of the research. The list of the people interviewed and the performances is as follows :

- Sanne Verkaaik : *Involt*
- Nita Liem : *Full Circle*
- Ina Stockem and Gilberto Perotti : *Body Lounge*

7.1 Tools for kinaesthetic empathy

At the beginning of the interview Nita Liem explained her fascination with club dance in America : "It's not the fantastic dancer, but also the way they teach themselves. It's by watching each other or correcting each other. So it's a system of peer education basically." In effect she was describing a process of kinaesthetic empathy taking place not in a theatre, but in a club where everybody was milling around and interacting with each other. Whereas in *Full Circle* and *Involt* the audience could look around and pick up information with their eyes, in *Body Lounge* this was not possible. During most of the interaction, the participants had a blindfold on so as to become more sensitive to their own kinesthesia. Words were hardly used during the interaction. The main means of communicating was through touch. Touch, said Ina Stockem and Gilberto Perotti, is a neglected sense that can nevertheless be a powerful tool for communicating: "sometimes you can say much more than with words" (Ina Stockem).

The hosts were not blindfolded so that they could "scan" the bodies of the participants.

"It's very important that they see with very good light any reaction on skin. We do have special tests for people with injuries. So they really have to scan this person, it asks a lot of concentration from them to see very very sharp." (Ina Stockem)

The fact that the hosts could use their eyes as well as their sense of touch, meant that they had a two-fold method of acquiring kinaesthetic empathy.

7.2 Kinaesthetic empathy and mirroring

Sanne Verkaaik described the behaviour of visitors drawn to the still figures of the dancers in *Involt*. As they stood observing the dancers the audience members adopted the same slow contemplative way of moving as the performers. One couple was so entranced that they came as close as thirty centimeters to a performer.⁹⁹ After a while the dancers began to walk, marking long lines across the space. Visitors walked with them, still mirroring their movement. Sometimes a performer went up to a spectator and danced in front of them. The audience member would then unconsciously take on a physical attitude in some way similar to the performer's.¹⁰⁰

7.3 Kinaesthetic empathy and affect

Kinaesthetic empathy was often found in this research to be coupled to affect. During the piece *Involt*, the vulnerable foetus-like figures of performers drew the attention of visitors who then came near to examine them. Mirroring subsequently occurred, as explained above. It is unclear whether the fascination took place before or after mirroring. It is possible that it was a simultaneous process, as Reason and Reynolds have postulated (2010). There may have been a continuous process of interaction followed by mirroring and affect, followed once again by interaction, explaining why one couple landed up standing motionless at thirty cm from the performer (figure 2).

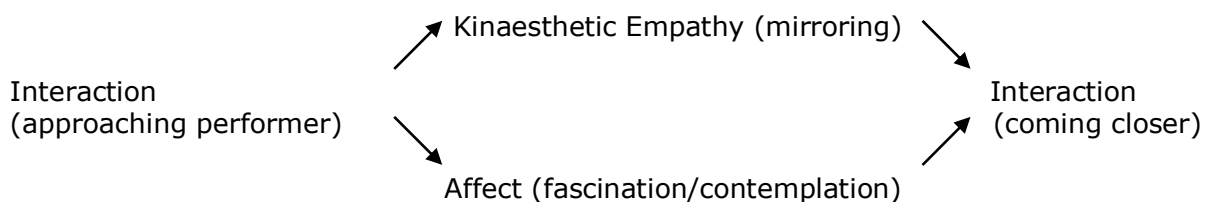


Figure 2. The relationship between interaction, mirroring and affect at *Involt*

Affect was also allied to kinaesthetic empathy in *Full Circle*. Here the dancers used the affect in the audience, one of which was "energy". This is a term frequently mentioned by Nita Liem. The *energy* was presumably read by the dancers using the process of kinaesthetic empathy and helped the dancers to dance better :

⁹⁹ "Het was een hele zachte fysieke benadering, heel ontspannen, heel erg in het zijn zeg maar. De mensen die daar naar stonden te kijken, dat was heel mooi, ik heb een aantal een beetje geobserveerd, zag je...als ze de tijd voor namen want heel veel mensen zijn toch maar bezig met van A naar B, dat ze ook die ontspannenheid overnamen. Dat ze stonden, en dat ze heel rustig stonden te kijken naar die mensen, met de zelfde langzaamheid, mee stonden te kijken naar...soms helemaal doodstil, helemaal doodstil. Ik weet, ik had een vrouw en een man, ik denk van een jaar of veertig, die stonden vrij dicht bij een danser en die stonden alleen maar te kijken."

¹⁰⁰ "Op het moment dat ze lijnen begonnen te lopen werd er nog steeds gespiegeld, want er waren mensen die stukjes meeliepen of die...de dansers gingen soms daadwerkelijk naar iemand toe en gingen dan bewegen voor iemand. En dan zag je iemand op de zelfde manier, zonder dat ze het zelf door hadden mee kijken."

Interviewer : Why did you get them [the audience] to do that bounce? Why did you get your audience to do that?

Nita Liem : So then they give the energy to the dancers. If you have an audience like this [sits back], you only absorb. And if you started moving, the dancers feel you much better. And it adds to the collective body. That's what social dance is about. You dance with everybody and if the audience is more there, more present, the dancers perform better.

Affect was understood by means of kinaesthetic empathy and generated interaction, and this in turn generated affect. This process was constantly set in motion and might be described as "an exchange of energy". When the audience had *energy*, the dancers read that and performed with more spirit, bringing themselves "to another limit". The audience read this and as a result became fired up with excitement triggering interaction on their part. This process is implicit in Nita Liem's explanation of why communication with an audience is easier when the audience is very close :

Interviewer : And what does that mean, "communicate better"?

Nita Liem : You feel them. You feel them more than when you're doing it on stage and in Carré.

Interviewer : You're saying that there is much more chance of a dialogue.

Nita Liem : Yeah.

Interviewer : Between the dancers and the audience.

The close relationship between affect and kinaesthetic empathy was also involved when the dancers approached the participants to dance with them. Nita Liem explained : "The dancers I select are very good at knowing where the borders are. You can feel if somebody wants to dance." In other words, the dancers were scanning the participants' bodies for information about their emotional readiness to dance. The dancers were combining their own kinaesthetic or bodily knowledge to empathise with the participants.

Kinaesthetic empathy is also capable of evoking affect. The dancer's movement skills, read as the dancer moves close by, arouses a sense of awe : "Because he's moving differently, I give him higher status. He moves better than I do, so I look more at him as a bigger brother in the space." The dancer's abilities further instil a sense of well-being : "It's very comforting that you have people around you that know what they're doing, that are in control."

At *Body Lounge* the careful empathic guidance of the hosts also succeeded in opening the participants up to their emotions, memories and associations. Indeed chapter six (section 5.2 *types of heightened affect*) commented on the powerful affect that was often unleashed. Gilberto Perotti explained the process :

"We decide together what is the point. You can be really extreme...What I've learnt is as a host I've a lot of power. I can really open your border. I can really gain so much trust from you that I can really make you do things that you would never think about doing."

The hosts touched their participants (interaction), were able to instil a feeling of trust through their touch (affect), an interaction occurred as a result and emotions were released, conducive to a new bout of interaction (figure 3):

Figure 3. Processes of interaction, kinaesthetic empathy and affect at *Body Lounge*

7.4 Summary

7.5 Discussion points

The last section on kinaesthetic empathy and affect commented on the ability of the dancers or hosts to use their skills of kinaesthetic empathy in order to communicate affect to the audience as well as read the audience's affect. It is tempting to speculate on what this skill involves. Nita Liem emphasized the fact that not all dancers are suitable. Communication with the audience was made possible because the dancers were "open-hearted" :

Ina Stockem and Gilberto Perotti observed that a host needs to feel a "personal connection" with their participant. If necessary "you can also exchange a person. But that's very rare. It doesn't happen so often." The host also has to remain unprejudiced in his dealings with the participant. That was not always easy :

"We did have the tendency to project on a person that's moving as a block "oh that person doesn't open". Whereas afterwards of course we did a lot of reflection and we interviewed our public , we do have a guest book too, but we asked them and they were completely overwhelmed. So the challenge as a host is to stay with that person and not to do all your tricks and your technique, but to really be with this person and not to project." (Ina Stockem)

In *Full Circle* and *Body Lounge* the performers were actively attempting to communicate with their audiences. However in *Involt* the dancers had a different brief and this may have caused the audience to misunderstand the dancers' body language. At the beginning of the piece the dancers were hardly empathising kinaesthetically with the audience. In fact kinaesthetic empathy was occurring to a greater degree from the audience. Sanne Verkaaik suggested that some audience members behaved in an unfriendly way because they wanted the dancers to react to them (see section 5.3.2 *the influence of affect on audience participation*). Once again this raises the question of what affect people attach to body language. It is possible that the limited kinaesthetic empathy on the part of the dancers was interpreted by some people as confusing and even hostile. After all, in daily life people do react to each other when they are being deliberately approached!

The connection between kinaesthetic empathy and affect raises other questions. What are the processes by which kinaesthetic empathy stimulates affect in the viewer? Lipps' theory of *Einfühlung* suggested that an individual sees another person's gesture, imitates the movement in the imagination, calls out through the imitation a previously experienced feeling, and then projects that feeling onto the other person. This might explain why the hosts misjudged the affect of some of their participants. Watching the participants they were projecting their own memories and experience of stiffness. As trained movers the hosts probably rarely move "as a block" themselves, which is why they interpreted the stiff movements of some participants wrongly. Another question is how the dancers in *Full Circle* were able to communicate an open welcoming attitude to their audience. A careful analysis of their body language might have revealed clues in their posture and facial expressions.

Until now the discussion has examined kinaesthetic empathy as a means of evoking audience participation. However there was one situation where it hindered interaction. Towards the end of *Involt*, as part of the piece's concept depicting the hardening attitudes of our society, the performers began carving out big circular pathways through the audience. At this point the audience stepped out of the way.¹⁰¹ It gradually became impossible to come close because of the cables attached to the performers sweeping back and forth in the air. As

¹⁰¹ "Wij hadden ook een code met de dansers afgesproken van "als je nou die cirkel gaat lopen en ze gaan niet aan de kant, dan mag je van mij op een gegeven moment zeggen 'make space' ". Het was niet nodig. Geen enkel iemand heeft gevoeld dat ze konden blijven staan."

the performers strode out towards the audience, the audience stopped mirroring the performers. One might have expected the audience to adopt the body language of the dancers as they did when the performers walked up to the spectators earlier on. They did not however. Instead the public took on the role of passive spectator watching a show. Sanne Verkaaik contrasted the confrontational and dominating behaviour of the dancers at the end of the performance with the soft non-judgemental attitude they emanated at the beginning.¹⁰² When the dancers strode out towards the audience their deliberately dramatic body language no longer encouraged the audience to feel safe and comfortable. As a result the public stopped interacting.

7.5.2 Kinaesthetic empathy and affect : a straightforward relationship?

The previous section has discussed how kinaesthetic empathy can stimulate affect through past associations and memories connected to perceived movement. The question then arises about whether augmenting kinaesthetic empathy will also heighten the affect associated to the kinaesthetic empathy. To put it very simply one can take the example of a dancer kinaesthetically empathising with a perceived dance performance. Will this audience member experience greater affect than an audience member with little experience of dance who is less capable of empathising kinaesthetically with the dance performance? Chapter three (section 3.1.3 *kinaesthetic empathy and affect*) suggested that the affect aroused by kinaesthetic empathy is also dependent on an individual's interpretative strategies when they see dance. This would indicate that the relationship between kinaesthetic empathy and affect is at any rate not straightforward. Another question that arises is whether it is possible for *affect* to generate kinaesthetic empathy, and under which circumstances this might happen. One can imagine two parties so intensely focused on each other – a couple in love maybe, a mother and her child, or performers and their audience – that the process of kinaesthetic empathy is triggered between them.

7.5.3 Touch as a means of inducing kinaesthetic empathy

At the beginning of this chapter kinaesthetic empathy was defined as the active and spontaneous act of perceiving movement. Touch too is a method of perception which can be trained to become a sensitive tool, as indicated by the participants' behaviour at *Body Lounge*. However one might question at this point whether touch can really bring about kinaesthetic empathy and if so, how this process works. This calls for an analysis of the brain's workings in order to understand questions such as whether the brain rehearses movement in a similar way to when a person sees movement. How do visually impaired people perceive movement? Recalling O'Donovan-Anderson's (1997) observation that much of our knowledge is gained in the course of "our bodily negotiations" with the world¹⁰³, the question arises as to whether a person's visual perception is

¹⁰² Nita Liem spoke about how status plays a role in the audience's reaction to a performer (see previous chapter). In *Involt*, when the dancers strode out in a confrontational way into the audience they were asserting their high status using their body language. Indeed it is possible that the audience read the situation in this way and backed away into passivity because they were not prepared for the challenge.

¹⁰³ P6 Parviainen, J. (2002). Bodily knowledge : epistemological reflections on dance. *Dance Research Journal*, 34,1, 11-26

connected to their tactile sense, and if so, how? Finally, is affect evoked in the same way as when a person sees movement? Ina Stockem and Gilberto Perotti remarked that touch was very successful at awakening memories and associations. Ina Stockem even commented on this (limited) capacity when patients are in the last stages of dementia and no other form of stimulation appears to work.

Chapter 8

Study conclusions

The aim of this research has been to investigate the views of choreographers with experience in audience participation in order to establish a greater understanding of the processes at work during such performances. In particular this research asked three questions :

- What is the relationship in dance performances between heightened affect and audience participation?
- In which ways can aesthetic distance and engagement coexist in interactive dance performances?
- What is the role of kinaesthetic empathy during interactive performances?

8.1 Heightened affect and audience participation

Unlike in a conventional dance performance, the audience in the three sample performances was free to move around the performers, approach them and even dance with them. In the process emotions (affect) were aroused, the public behaving in ways sometimes unforeseen. Indeed the observations of the individuals interviewed suggest that heightened affect and audience participation are connected. Although the behaviour of some young people was at times disruptive, the freedom to walk around a performance space and approach a dancer also encouraged the audience to become more motivated and attentive in their choices. The act of moving in space (as opposed to just walking) gives the audience energy, and awakens emotions and associations. Proximity to a performer can feel shocking and exposing, but it makes a performance feel more real and exciting. Close proximity in the form of continued touch with no accompanying visual sense, breaks down pent-up emotions and even makes people feel "high". In turn, affect stimulates interaction. Curiosity and the need to be acknowledged can result in surprising and even unsociable behaviour. The desire to be teased can express itself in explosive and hyperactive movement. However it is also possible to stimulate a positive form of audience participation by creating a welcoming and safe atmosphere. If the dancers are open and willing to share with the public in a non-judgemental way a relationship of trust builds up between the public and the performers, strengthening the sense of well-being. An astute choice of music contributes to this affect. The initial discomfort an audience feels because it is not acquainted with the interactive code can be reduced by providing instruction of the "game rules". When a suitable affect is created in this way, boosting a positive audience interaction, affect and interaction keep feeding each other. The consequences of this process can be very powerful. A skilled choreographer can coax an audience to undertake actions it would normally never consider. An overly assertive performance on the other hand can exert its influence in the opposite direction, intimidating the audience and pushing it back into a passive spectator's role.

8.2 Aesthetic distance coexisting with engagement

Aesthetic distance is the figurative distance a person takes from a performance; the process of aesthetic distance removing the audience from the here-and-now and imbuing the performance with a richer meaning bestowed on it by the audience's imagination. Engagement refers to the affect, kinaesthetic empathy and interaction of the audience.

During an interactive dance performance such as that of *Full Circle* the audience watches, picks up on the performers' movements, copies them and then becomes a part of the performance. This is a very different experience from watching a performance from one's theatre seat because here the audience is making the performance. The audience and performers are sharing movements and connecting emotionally to each other. As they do so they are reading each other's body language. This research proposes that the sharing of movement between audience and dancers may be inducing a process of immersion. The audience is not always capable of articulating their thoughts and feelings – and these are sometimes overwhelming. However by stepping into the choreographer's world and sharing it, it is possible that the performance is imprinting itself physically and sometimes emotionally on the participant. This intuitive absorption by means of immersion may amount to an imprinting of the performance *concept*. Immersion does not involve aesthetic distancing since by its very nature immersion implies being *in* the experience as opposed to taking distance from it. Only when the participants can detach themselves from their subjective experience and impart it with a richer meaning can the interactive experience acquire aesthetic distance.

If some members of the public allow themselves to become immersed in the performance atmosphere, there are other audience members who are active and conscious about exercising their choices. Indeed an audience at an interactive dance performance has more freedom to exercise choice than at a conventional dance piece. Individuals can choose what to see and how to see. As a result they are more likely to question and discover the relevance to their own situation of what they are choosing to see. In the process of looking for the piece's relevance and interacting with the dancers they find a personal and emotional meaning for the performance. If this is powerful it might act in the long run as an impulse to reflect on the piece and take aesthetic distance from it. However in order for this to happen, the interactive aspect of the performance needs to be fully incorporated into the piece. In this way the audience has the time to discover meaning as they interact. Aesthetic distance requires that the audience ultimately becomes cognizant of their experience. This self-awareness can be stimulated by theatricalising the interactive experience, thereby shifting the experience out of the realm of reality. This was especially important in the intense one-to-one interaction at *Body Lounge* to ensure that the public was not too overwhelmed by their experience when they left.

8.3 Kinaesthetic empathy and audience participation

Kinaesthetic empathy is the active and spontaneous act of perceiving movement. The brain does this by simulating and even anticipating the movement that it sees. In this research kinaesthetic empathy was surmised from observations by the interviewees of interactive exchanges taking place between the dancers and the public. In *Involt* it was observed as a physical mirroring of the dancers' attitude on the part of the audience. Kinaesthetic empathy occurred apparently through the mediation of the visual and tactile senses and was often found to be coupled to affect. The ability of the dancers or hosts to use their skills of kinaesthetic empathy helped communicate affect to the audience as well as read the audience's affect. Likewise the audience was successful at reading the dancers' welcoming affect in their body language. In the case of *Body Lounge* the hosts' touch was capable of instilling trust in the participants, unleashing powerful emotions in the participant and enabling sometimes extreme forms of interaction to take place. However kinaesthetic empathy as a means of reading affect remains an unreliable tool as people project their personal associations onto perceived movement, and these projections may not always be correct. It also remains debatable as to how touch as used in *Body Lounge* triggers kinaesthetic empathy, if indeed it really does in the strict sense of the word.

8.4 General problem statement : In which ways does audience interaction influence the audience's experience of the dance performance?

Nita Liem mentioned that ninety percent of the public participated by the end of the performance. Since only a limited number of individuals interacted at the start of the club events, this means that the dancers were successful at involving the public. Indeed a skilled choreographer can intensify the audience's experience of a dance performance by means of audience interaction (figure 4). An inviting atmosphere, dancers whose body language express openness and friendliness, the "right" kind of music and clear game rules which allow for freedom of choice contribute to a pervasive sense of well-being and a motivated audience. If the atmosphere is friendly and open the audience will walk around and start to take part in the performance. The impulse to move and participate is helped by the audience's kinaesthetic empathy with the dancers whose talent inspires excitement and even awe in the audience. Once interaction takes place, it acts in itself as a stimulant for affect, thereby adding to the audience's already heightened affect. In *Full Circle* the dancers used their kinaesthetic empathy to read the audience's excitement and, according to Nita Liem, dance better. The improved level of dance also adds to the audience's heightened affect. This augmented affect triggers an increase in interaction. Interaction and affect feed each other and a mounting spiral of growing affect and interaction is set off to create a vivid and intense experience.

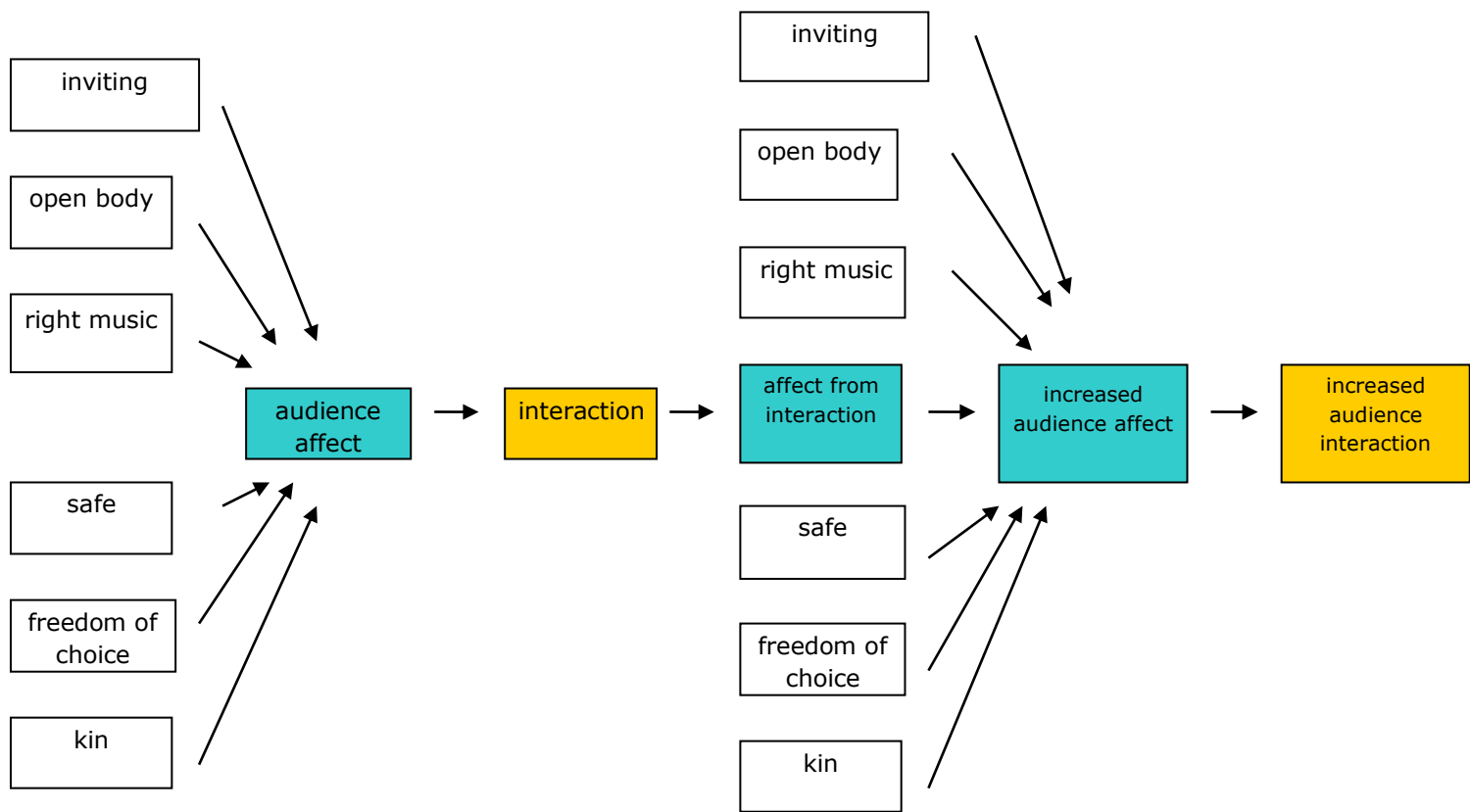


Figure 4. Causal analysis of the process whereby affect and interaction increase during a performance

Chapter 9

Discussion

This chapter first considers the results of the research in the context of dance education. It explores the concept of *edutainment*, compares the educative benefits of a dance class versus those of an interactive dance performance, and goes on to talk about the phenomenon of *immersive learning*. It also puts forward practical suggestions for the dance teacher who is looking for ways to increase student involvement. The chapter then moves on to a consideration of the opportunities and dilemmas that audience participation offers the choreographer. It describes its manipulative potential and it attempts to define the “successful” interactive performance. It further examines the limitations set by audience participation on the choreographer, including that on authorship. The chapter finishes with suggestions concerning the methodology of a future study and with a list of possible research topics arising from this paper.

9.1 Consequences for education

See appendix II “education” for coding

9.1.1 Participatory dance performances as *edutainment*

It appears from this research that audience interaction can greatly enhance the experience of the audience. Chapter eight described by what means heightened affect and interaction can be triggered to keep feeding each other. Such performances are certainly entertaining. However they can also be termed “educative”. As a result of their immersion audience members become better acquainted with the possibly unfamiliar style of choreography performed by the dancers. Parviainen (2003) described how an individual moving amidst many other moving bodies considers his own movements from the perspective of the other people.¹⁰⁴ This phenomenon of *reiterated empathy* increases the individual’s bodily knowledge. Indeed one of the goals of *Body Lounge* was to teach body awareness, and in particular kinaesthetic sensitivity. Reason and Reynolds (2010) described how the embodied sensitivity to dance movements of audience members actually enabled them to take aesthetic distance from the dance.¹⁰⁵ Interactive performances are educative in another way. By offering choice they help the audience see the relevance of the performance to their lives. The audience is then more motivated to reflect upon the performance. In fact interactive dance can be seen as a form of *edutainment*. Packaged as a “club event” or an innovative experience such performances lure people to come to dance performances, and after enjoying the experience, to visit dance performances more often, thus broadening their knowledge of dance.

¹⁰⁴ P10 Parviainen, J. (2003). Kinaesthetic empathy. *Dialogue and Universalism*, 11, 151-162.

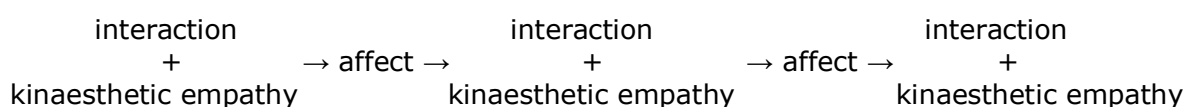
¹⁰⁵ P59 Reason, M. & Reynolds, D. (2010). Kinesthesia, empathy, and related pleasures: an inquiry into audience experiences of watching dance. *Dance Research Journal*, 42(2), 49-75

9.1.2 Dance class or interactive dance performance?

A teacher who wishes to interest their students in dance may say, "I shall simply encourage *active* dance participation. I shall welcome a dance teacher into the school and allow the students to participate in a dance class. That is the most straightforward way of understanding what dance is about. Why bother with interactive dance performances?" Indeed, taking part in a dance class does enable the students to experience the sensation of dance movement. Furthermore, whilst the students rehearse the dancer's movements they are exercising their powers of kinaesthetic empathy with the dancer. Some students may even become excited about moving, since movement encourages affect. Some students however may not. They may not like doing all the movements, or find parts of the dance too difficult, too fast, too dull... The teacher who denies the students the experience of an interactive dance performance is misunderstanding the strength of participatory dance performances : that of offering the audience the choice to see and do what specifically interests them. Section 9.1.1. remarked on how this freedom increases the motivation of the audience to reflect on the dance. Unlike the audience members however, the students who take part in a dance class cannot pick and choose which movements they will execute. Moreover the students are missing out on the rich imaginative context that the interactive performance is providing. After all, interactive performances, like all performances, embed the dance into a theatrical "context" inspired by the underlying artistic concept. Lights, music, set, film, theatrical attributes and atmosphere conspire to fire the audience's imagination, helping them attach meaning to the dance.

9.1.3 Immersive learning as a teaching tool

The power of affect can also be harnessed and incorporated into the teaching of dance. Indeed Nita Lime criticized professional dance schools for being too academic : "You first give the steps, and all the thoughts and then analyse." Instead, a lesson immersing the student in a pleasurable dance experience might be beneficial. Nita Liem stated "I think one hour dancing with a good salsa dancer in the salsa space...teaches you more than ten classes here in a school one hour a week, counting five, six, seven, eight." The circumstances of dancing with a really good salsa teacher might be described as an example of immersive learning. The experience of *Full Circle* can be taken as another example : the audience member is excited and motivated, becomes more alert and can kinaesthetically empathise better with the dancer. As a result learning is improved. One can also think back to the processes at work at Body Lounge :



The extreme situation of *Body Lounge* also serves to show how affect can play a crucial role in stimulating further interaction and kinaesthetic empathy. This is not to deny that an analytical approach to learning dance also has its place, as Nita Liem herself pointed out : "If I really want to study a Cunningham choreography, then I'd better focus and concentrate on what's happening there". However immersive learning deserves to be taken seriously and given a place in the process of teaching dance.

9.1.4 Lessons for the classroom

The research done in this paper looked at dance performances, but information derived from the research also offers some practical insights for teaching dance. Nita Liem commented on the passive resistance sometimes encountered at the beginning of her performances of *Full Circle*. At *Body Lounge* participants occasionally exhibited extreme passivity, allowing themselves to be moved around as though they were “dead bodies”. Yet both *Full Circle* and *Body Lounge* managed with great success to coax their visitors into participating in the dance. Some of the methods used by the three performances *Involt*, *Full Circle* and *Body Lounge* are applicable to dance pedagogy. These methods are described in the following paragraph, followed by a list of suggested adaptations for the class situation.

The degree of openness manifested by the dancers towards the public determined the atmosphere. A non-judgemental attitude from the dancers, and their sincere desire to communicate and share, created an atmosphere of well-being in which audience members felt safe enough to participate. The choice of music also helped (*Full Circle* and *Body Lounge*) – Ina Stockem pointing out that music with a strong rhythm tends to hinder a true physical experience. The freedom given to the public to make their own choices enabled them at least in theory to become more alert to what they chose to see and to discover the relevance to their own lives. At *Body Lounge* moving through the performance space evoked strong emotions of excitement (and fear) in the participants. In *Involt* and *Full Circle* the proximity of dancers as audience members approached them, or were approached by them, inspired fascination, a sense of sharing and a heightened sense of relevance. In all three performances it enhanced communication between the dancers and the public. This can be largely explained by the process of kinaesthetic empathy, enabling the dancers and the public to “read” each others’ bodies more easily when they are closer. Kinaesthetic empathy further explains Nita Liem’s observation that the energy of the public influenced the performance level of the dancers. At *Body Lounge* the absence of vision combined with the use of touch aroused a wide range of powerful emotions in the public as well as associations and memories in the hosts. It also developed the participants’ kinaesthetic sensitivity.

These observations can be adapted to teaching. Taking each point noted above one by one, the following practices might encourage students to participate and learn more :

- a non-judgemental attitude : the teacher creates an atmosphere in which students are allowed to make mistakes.
- a desire to communicate : the teacher is open and genuine about communicating information to students.
- a desire to share : the atmosphere in the class is one of sharing rather than of competition. Students share their knowledge with each other, for example in the form of peer coaching.
- the choice of music : rhythmical music can be chosen to create affect, but during explorative research of movement, the music is more challenging (avoiding familiar pop hits or finding music that is less obviously rhythmical).

- the freedom to make choices : the students are involved in making choices. In building a choreography, students are asked to reflect and make choices concerning any aspect of the choreography, including its meaning.
- moving : of course a precise analysis of movement is sometimes necessary, but the students also have the opportunity to move in the space, allowing their affect to take over, even when their movements are not yet precise.
- proximity : the teacher does not stand at the front all the time when explaining and showing movement, but moves amongst the students, coming close to them sometimes.
- kinaesthetic empathy and energy : provided the atmosphere in the class is safe and pleasant, the energy communicated by the teacher's body can give students energy.
- the absence of vision : the teacher chooses to work without mirrors and encourages students to close their eyes in order to experience their kinaesthetic sensations more intensely and to become more aware of their imaginative reactions to movement.
- the use of touch : students are taught to use touch sensitively and to guide their peers through touch. In this way both guide and follower develop their kinaesthetic sensitivity, necessary when learning a choreography.

9.2 Opportunities and dilemmas for the interactive choreographer

9.2.1 The power of interaction

The experiences of Ina Stockem, Gilberto Perotti and Sanne Verkaaik¹⁰⁶ have made it clear that interaction can push an audience very far. If approached skilfully, the audience can be manipulated like putty in the hands of a choreographer or director. The power of interactive performances is impressive, and just a little frightening. The ramifications are also intriguing. It would, for example, be interesting to examine if and how interactive techniques are used in other areas where audiences assemble : pop concerts spring immediately to mind, but political rallies or religious conventions offer exciting possibilities for research too. Since interaction in a suitable context is so powerful and manipulative, specialised research might focus on brainwashing techniques to find out whether they too incorporate interactive strategies. The prospect of such manipulation emphasizes how important it is to encourage a degree of aesthetic distancing in the audience. In the process of creating this aesthetic distance, a choreographer who wants to challenge his audiences might be tempted to reach for provocative exchanges between the audience and the performers. The performance has been cited earlier in which performers came and sat on the laps of the spectators. Nevertheless the choreographer should bear in mind that such confrontations can bring about too much aesthetic distancing. The confrontational attitude of the dancers towards the end of *Involt* resulted in the audience becoming less engaged and more passive, allowing themselves to *be* entertained instead of actively entertaining themselves. In making choices concerning interaction and aesthetic distancing, a choreographer might also bear in mind the type of public coming to the performance. Sanne Verkaaik indicated that younger audiences were more explorative in their interactions, touching and

¹⁰⁶ With her piece *Grof Geschud*.

picking things up and even challenging the rules.¹⁰⁷ Older audiences were more reserved and less likely to interact, as well as being more reflective and self-conscious. She also observed that audience members with little experience of art were more intuitive and direct in their approach to interactive performances. Experienced theatre-goers were more inhibited as a result of their preformed opinions. If these differences exist across other performances too, a choreographer interested in evoking an interactive response from the public might devise strategies to embrace different types of audiences. A performance might challenge and stimulate a curious young audience ready for action and coax an older art-loving audience into discovering new experiences by participating.

If interactive performances become more popular, as they seem to be doing¹⁰⁸, one may wonder about the direction dance performances will be taking in the future. Ina Stockem speculated on this issue : "I think this idea of going to the Stadsschouwburg, to see dance far away, which never makes me connect with what I see, is old-fashioned and will disappear. I'm quite convinced of that." With a school system that is steadily more constructivist, demanding more involvement from its students, young people are emerging from education with a desire to be involved in performances as well. If this wish is taken seriously by artistic organisations it means that choreographers may be relinquishing some of their authorship in the choreography of pieces. *Body Lounge* took this to an extreme since the visitor became an integral part of the performance. Indeed one might envisage the role of the audience becoming so important that it requires the intimacy of a small and select group of audience members in order to do justice to the participants' needs. In that case, the performer becomes the coach and the participants the novices in a situation that is a half-way house between a performance and an educational workshop. It can however cover territory that ranges between therapy at one extreme and play at the other depending on the intentions of the choreographer and on how profoundly affect is evoked. Such an intensive relationship in which an audience can be manipulated to go "really really really far"¹⁰⁹ requires a strong ethical code on the part of the choreographer and performers so as not to exploit the participants' vulnerability. In the case of *Body Lounge* this code was clearly established.¹¹⁰ It remains to be seen how far other performances will go in their manipulation of the public, and if they too will adhere to an ethical code. One might also ponder on the precepts that such a code would entail in a society whose norms are constantly transforming themselves.

9.2.2 Defining a successful interactive performance

Having established the potential power of interactive performances, the question arises : how does one measure the success of such a performance? One might

¹⁰⁷ The fact that some young people attempted to disturb the performers suggests that they were actually involved in the performance, if only mildly. It would be challenging to establish where this involvement lay in order to engage them in a more constructive way.

¹⁰⁸ In London interactive theatre has become a rage with shows by Bum Bum Train, Duckie, Punchdrunk and Pixel Rosso.

¹⁰⁹ Words spoken by Gilberto Perotti at *Body Lounge*.

¹¹⁰ Ina Stockem and Gilberto Perotti repeatedly emphasized the responsibility carried by hosts for the physical and emotional welfare of the participants. Ina Stockem also functions as a *joker* or supervisory eye watching over participants' welfare in the three spaces occupied during a *Body Lounge* evening.

look for an answer to Nita Liem's performance *Full Circle* and point to the overwhelming increase in audience participation during the course of the club evening event. As already observed, ninety percent of an initially hesitant and apprehensive audience usually participated by the end of the evening.¹¹¹ Of course this success in persuading the audience to participate is impressive, but this high participation rate is not in itself proof of success. A more fundamental question has to be answered before deciding on the success of an interactive performance, namely *to what extent did the interactive element contribute to achieving the choreographers' goals for the performance*? Nita Liem emphasized the value of communal sharing underlying the hiphop culture. This experience of communal sharing is what she wanted to communicate to her audience, as well as providing her audience with an entertaining show. Indeed she recounts how the audience gradually experiences this sense of sharing in the course of the evening. Moreover the audience's experience of sharing clearly derives from the interactive element of the show. The theme of sharing also underscores the goal of *Body Lounge*. Ina Stockem and Gilberto Perotti wish their public to engage in a physical dialogue with the host and in so doing to acquire bodily experience and self-awareness.¹¹² The interaction that occurs between participant and host is the means by which the public is encouraged to experience the goals set by *Body Lounge*. The participant and host touch each other and it is this interaction that triggers the experiences of sharing, increased bodily knowledge and self-awareness.

Audience interaction as a tool for audiences to experience issues central to a performance need not be limited to dance performances. Indeed Sanne Verkaaik has brought her conviction that interaction should constitute an integral part of the performance, to the theatre as well as to dance. In *Grof Geschud* audience members were afforded an insight into the piece's theme – individual responsibility in the face of aggression – because they themselves had been enthusiastically supporting acts of violence during the course of the theatre piece. With the PeerGroup the audience was encouraged to recount and relive their personal memories, thereby exploring the performance's theme of nostalgia. One might similarly envisage music groups using audience interaction to explore compositional or rhythmical themes. Interaction similar to that occurring in Sanne Verkaaik's dance piece *Involt* would also help the public to experience more intimately the qualities of particular types of instruments.¹¹³

9.2.3 A sense of well-being : asset or bane?

The possibilities offered by audience participation to explore the themes of a performance have been stated in the paragraph above. This study's findings concerning the means of engendering participation have also been described : audiences are more likely to participate when "a welcoming and safe atmosphere" is created in the course of the performance, "especially if the

¹¹¹ This phenomenon has been witnessed by the paper's author herself during her visit of the show.

¹¹² The term "self-awareness" denotes the participants' emotional awareness as well as their willingness to take responsibility for themselves during the evening.

¹¹³ Certainly the phenomenon of sing-along concerts creating a sense of well-being in the audience is on the rise in concert halls. One example (out of many) is the visit in 2012 of the Kwazulu-Natal Philharmonic Orchestra featuring star soloists as well as a traditional sing-along with the audience. However the possibilities for an astute producer to create more sophisticated interactive concerts are much greater than these straightforward sing-alongs.

dancers are open and willing to share with the public in a non-judgemental way.”¹¹⁴ In other words a sense of well-being promotes audience participation. But how safe is “safe” ? And does building this sense of well-being come at a cost to the choreographer? Section 9.2.1 has noted the manipulative power that choreographers can exert on their audience once this sense of well-being has been established, but are there really no downsides for the choreographer?

Sanne Verkaaik noted that audiences differ according to age and cultural competence in their attitude to participation. The implication is that younger more adventurous audiences who enjoy and have experience of participatory pieces will probably feel more at ease in an interactive environment than older audiences who are used to remaining in their seats at a “safe” distance from the performance at hand. The motivation of audiences may also differ : some may be looking for an entertaining night out, whilst others may want to be moved on an emotional level. Still others may wish to be intellectually stimulated, preferring to keep their aesthetic distance during the whole performance. Choreographers will need to work very hard if the latter audience is to relinquish the safety of their intellectual ivory towers for the uncertain and unfamiliar grounds of audience interaction. However in all cases the choreographer has to remain intensely sensitive to the needs and reactions of the audience if they wish to engage their audience in an interaction. Choreographer and audience need to “speak the same language”, as it were, for the audience to feel comfortable with the performance and relate personally to it. Some choreographers however may feel artistically restricted if they are obliged to stay finely tuned to their audience’s needs and reactions. They may prefer to explore artistic avenues that challenge the intellect and emotions of their audiences, making the public feel *uncomfortable* rather than building a relationship of trust with their audience. In short they may be prepared to sacrifice their audience’s goodwill for the sake of chartering new artistic grounds.¹¹⁵

9.2.4 The paradox of authorship

Audience participation requires the choreographer to surrender a level of authorship in the making of the dance piece. The three different performances examined in the course of this research have demonstrated however that authorship can be surrendered to varying degrees. In *Involt* Sanne Verkaaik held authorship over the content of the piece, but allowed the public to decide their position vis-à-vis the dancers. In Nita Liem’s *Full Circle* the public was free furthermore to chose when and what they viewed, since film, theatre and dance were often simultaneously ongoing. The dancers were also obliged to adapt their movements according to where and how the audience moved; a physical dialogue, though confined to a preset structure, taking place between audience and performers. In *Body Lounge* the participant was free throughout to influence the content of the performance. In fact *Body Lounge* shows up the paradox that lies at the heart of audience participation. The more trust a choreographer is able to build between performers and public (through interaction), the more the

¹¹⁴ Quoted from chapter 5 *Study results : participation and affect*, section 5.4.

¹¹⁵ An example of such a performance is *The Porcelain Project* by Needcompany which used a series of “unbeautiful” movements. These movements had the effect of discomforting the viewers. Reason, M. & Reynolds, D. (2010). Kinesthesia, empathy, and related pleasures: an inquiry into audience experiences of watching dance. *Dance Research Journal*, 42(2), 49-75. P61

public will be prepared to surrender to the manipulative power of the performers. As mentioned earlier, the hosts in *Body Lounge* exerted great influence on the participants. This was a consequence of the trust the hosts had created between themselves and the participants, emerging *as a result* of the hosts' sensitivity to the participants and the hosts' willingness to adapt their own behaviour. Might this manipulative power not be regarded as a form of authorship? Choreographers may not have complete authorship over the content of their dance pieces, but they are more likely to influence the public's hearts and minds.

The thoughtful choreographer knows their artistic goals and determines the form of authorship they are seeking accordingly. A choreographer seeking to communicate the visual aesthetics of a dance piece will make different choices concerning the extent and type of audience interaction from the choreographer who wishes to evoke the audience's personal memories or instil a sense of communal sharing in the public. For example, the first choreographer may chose to determine the audience's position vis-à-vis the dancers, but allow the audience the freedom to dance. The second choreographer might engage the audience in a one-to-one intimate dance with a performer in an imaginative setting that invites the audience to explore the space. The third choreographer might limit the type of movement executed by the audience, but encourage the audience to enter the performance space and become part of a group performance. The thoughtful choreographer takes audience interaction seriously, using the opportunities it offers to influence the audience in a direction that the choreographer has chosen. In other words, integrating audience interaction into a dance performance obliges conceptual clarity on the part of the choreographer. Whilst surrendering some authorship over the content or execution of the dance piece, the choreographer needs to hold complete authorship over the concept.

9.3 Research suggestions

9.3.1 Methodology

As was made clear in chapter five, this research rested on the opinions of a select sample of experienced choreographers. It has pulled together the various research lines of audience participation, affect, aesthetic distance and kinaesthetic empathy and connected them to the field of dance. In so doing this small-scale study has attempted to lay a theoretical groundwork for future studies. The fact that this research has rested on the subjective observations of individuals closely involved in the field of interactive dance performances has meant that the research conclusions have not been muted. The very subjectivity of the observations has thrown up a number of straightforward conclusions that are now ready to be tested objectively. The next step is to discover directly how the public reacts to such performances and why they behave as they do. Suggestions for a further study are as follows :

- The public's reactions are observed by researchers present during repeated performances of the same dance piece.
- The dancers' behaviour and expressions are screened in order to find out what and how they are communicating.
- Audience members and performers are interviewed straight after the performances – and even beforehand to explore how their expectations have coloured the experience or have been transformed.

- The interactive performances are filmed to show both audience and performers.

Thus a system of triangulation is being operated, using observations, interviews and video material to explore the reactions of the public and the processes that have worked to create these reactions.

Further research could study interactive dance performances from countries such as Germany, France and the United Kingdom. These countries each have their own theatrical traditions and outlooks (the United Kingdom is a pioneer in the field of audience participation), yet they are similar enough in their way of thinking about theatre and dance to The Netherlands to bear comparison with the Dutch interactive dance scene.

9.3.2 Research questions

The broad terrain covered by this research has thrown up a number of questions:

The process of audience participation and its consequences

- Section 8.4 suggested a model for the process of increasing affect and interaction. This can be challenged with further studies.
- Research into the reactions of different age groups during interactive dance performances can explore the attitude differences between the generations. As a consequence it might yield more appropriate strategies for involving different sections of the population, finding various ways to reward and interest the teenager at school as well as the more experienced theatre-goer.
- Nita Liem raised the issue of the performers' status when commenting on her personal feelings in an interactive performance. Stefan Kaegi made a plea for more vulnerability on the part of performers (see section 3.1.1 *aesthetic distance and affect*). Ina Stockem and Gilberto Perotti commented on the passive status participants adopt when they are guided by their host. What role does status play during the process of interaction?
- In chapter three (section 3.2.1 *affect and interaction*) the comparison was made between interactive dance performances and interactive computerised games, currently very popular amongst young people. Indeed *Body Lounge* was alluded to by Gilberto Perotti as a "game". The goals of computerised games and their strategies to win the trust of the players and enhance their pleasure can be compared and contrasted to the goals and strategies of interactive choreographers.
- Research can also focus on events such as pop concerts, political rallies and religious conventions to find out whether interactive techniques are used in these situations.
- In some cases interactive performances lay the audience open to manipulation. Research can investigate the types of ethical codes implicit in current interactive performances and attempt to draw up guidelines for such a code.

Aesthetic distance and immersion

- In interactive dance performances audience members have the choice to walk around the space and decide what to see. Do the (artistic) insights resulting from interactive performances differ in nature from those at a conventional dance performance?

- Chapter six (see section 6.1 *aesthetic distance and immersion*) proposed that audience members are sometimes involved in a process of immersion during interactive dance performances. Does this immersive atmosphere offer the opportunity to absorb kinaesthetic skills?

Kinaesthetic empathy

- There are still questions to be explored about the relationship between kinaesthetic empathy and affect. In particular, under which circumstances does kinaesthetic empathy stimulate affect in the viewer? Moreover, does increased kinaesthetic empathy lead to heightened affect, and if so, under what circumstances? Are there circumstances in which affect can stimulate kinaesthetic empathy? Examples of affect in this last case might be the state of “being inlove” or that of acute alertness.
- Chapter two (see section 2.4 *kinaesthetic empathy*) described the process of kinaesthetic empathy as being active and dependent on an individual’s *habitus*. However what are these factors that stimulate kinaesthetic empathy? In what ways can this knowledge be used when teaching dance?
- Kinaesthetic empathy is a process determined by the viewer’s movement experience, physical condition and *habitus*. Does this imply that kinaesthetic empathy is an unconscious process, or can the viewer exercise a degree of control over the process (by focusing their concentration on “feeling” the movement they are watching, for example)?
- At *Body Lounge* touch is employed as a means of communication between host and participant. Does an individual’s tactile sense act as a stimulus for kinaesthetic empathy? If so, by what means? One might envisage a form of visual mapping, or is the process quite different from when a person perceives movement?

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APPENDIX I : INTERVIEWS

Interview Sanne Verkaaik : *Involt*

19th March 2012

Amsterdam

S= Sanne Verkaaik

L= Leah Jacob (interviewer)

L: De mensen die konden wel dichtbij komen? en ze konden jullie ook, they could touch you?

S: Ja, ja ja. Dat stuk was ...Het waren 14 dansers en ze stonden allemaal door de Oude Kerk heen, aan electriciteitskabels die 20m hoog het plafond ingingen. En die dansers die stonden daar een half uur ongeveer. Voordat dat stuk begon, en een half uur heel erg in de ... hoe noem ik dat altijd...awareness exposure.

L: En wat betekent dat?

S: Exposure betekent eigenlijk de kinetische gevoeligheid voor heel je lichaam wat helemaal verbonden is met de ruimte. Dus dat alles daadwerkelijk aanwezig is in de ruimte. Dat iedere transitie, dat daar ontzettend veel fysieke gevoeligheid inzit.

L: Wanneer is er dan een transitie?

S: Zij staan in die ruimte en zij vormen zich als het ware heel langzaam een stukje naar de ruimte en op het moment dat ze het gevoel hebben "daar zou die kunnen vallen, daar zou die stil kunnen gaan staan", daar zoeken ze een nieuw plekje in de ruimte of iemand die op dat moment daar aanwezig is, dan groeien ze als het ware daar naar toe. Maar er zijn wel regels, dus dat je je ofwel vormt naar de ruimte, dat die transitie voort komt uit het feit dat alles constant in beweging is ook als je een tijdje stil staat, dan ben je altijd heel minimaal... Maar ze mochten ook reageren op mensen die voorbij komen. Dus als er iemand voorbij komt tsjk dat je eventjes tk tk versneld in een transitie gaat, of een klein stukje van die energie meeneemt en dan weer in die melanchomale kerk, zeg maar.

L: dus ze vormen zich...ze gebruiken hun ogen, of welke zintuigen gebruiken ze?

S: Ze gebruiken de huid denk ik meer. De ogen signaleren, maar ze zijn nooit de leidende draad. Het is niet oog en dan vormt. Maar de ogen blijven altijd in het midden van de oogbol. Dus op het moment bijvoorbeeld dat ze naar boven kijken, dan vormt het lijf zich naar boven, dan blijven de ogen zich alsnog in het midden van de oogbol om vervolgens de lengte te maken en de blik omhoog te vormen.

L: Maar waarom ...wat is het impuls om te gaan bewegen? Wat geeft de impuls om te gaan bewegen? Misschien ook de oren, dat je iets hoort? Of een beetje wind?

S: Ja. Ja.

L: welke zintuigen gebruik je?

S: Neus, oren, huid, het is heel zintuiglijk in zijn geheel. Daarin ben ik niet zo leidend. Dus ik laat ze kennismaken. Iedereen zal wel een voorkeur in hebben, als danser. Ik ben als mens best wel van de neus, dus op het moment dat er

iemand bij mij zou komen waarvan ik de geur iets met mij fysiek doet, dan zou ik dat gebruiken. Dat een ander veel meer de kou van de grond voelt en daarin iets vindt. Dus het is wel heel intens, maar tegelijk heel open. Het is geen lucht..., geen bubbel waar je inzit.

L: En ze mochten hun eigen tempo bepalen?

S: Ja.

L: Het stuk heette...?

S: Involt.

L: En het werd gedanst door hoeveel dansers?

S: Ja, uit mijn hoofd 14.

L: Waar heeft het plaatsgevonden?

S: De Oude Kerk, hier in Amsterdam.

L: Wat voor mensen waren dat? Waren het geschoolde dansers?

S: Ik denk 70% geschoolde dansers en nog 30% van de ALO.

L: En de ALO is...?

S: De docenten gympleiding voor lichamelijke opvoeding.

L: Dus het waren eigenlijk geen dansers dan? Maar waarom heb je ze dan gevraagd om mee te doen?

S: De jongens van de ALO vind ik heel puur in hun lijf.

L: En wat bedoel je daarmee?

S: Daarmee bedoel ik dat zij vrij weinig aangeleerd zijn om vanuit schoonheid te denken. Ze zijn heel fysiek, want het zijn gymdocenten. Ze zijn absoluut gewend om het uiterste van hun lijf te vergen, maar ze hebben nooit voor een spiegel getraind, ze hebben nooit moeten trainen omdat het er mooi moet uitzien, omdat het er überhaupt moet uitzien als interessant.

L: Dus als ik je goed begrijp dan zijn ze heel bewust van hun zintuigen, van wat ze voelen?

S: Nee, ze zijn oprechter. Ze zijn niet zo overbewust als dansers en daarom zijn ze voor mij interessanter om naar te kijken. Ze zijn niet de denkende danser, ze zijn de bewegende mens.

L: Maar in hoever zijn ze gevoelig voor wat er in hun lijf gebeurt?

S: Ze zijn heel gevoelig voor wat er in hun lijf gebeurt, en ze zijn er verwonderd over. Het klinkt misschien gek om te zeggen, maar ik vind ze gevoeliger dan dansers omdat ze reageren vanuit een verwondering of vanuit een nieuwigheid...hoe zeg je dat? (Lacht) Ze snappen soms geen ene donder van mijn opdracht, dan geef ik ze les en hebben ze iets van "wat is dit vaag!". Dan moet ik helemaal teruggaan naar de kern gewoon, in plaats van in de academische taal te praten. En dan zijn ze oprecht verrast door iets wat ze ervaren. En dan zie je dat heel veel leven in zo een lijf. Dat vind ik heel mooi. Dat is eigenlijk hetzelfde als Jeugdtheaterleerlingen, die zijn vaak ook heel oprecht in wat ze meemaken in hun lijf.

L: En wanneer heb je dat stuk gemaakt?

S: Ik heb dat stuk in september gemaakt, en de Museum Nacht...oh in november, dus september oktober heb ik met ze gerepeteerd. Heel kort. Ze hadden al eerder met mij gewerkt in het Bos Stuk, dus ze waren gewend aan mijn taal en waar ik op zoek ben.

L: Zullen we naar een stukje kijken? (Kijken naar dvd van de Amsterdam Museum Nacht in de Oude Kerk, begin november.)

S: Dit zijn de led lichtjes op hun lijf en hier ben ik ze aan het bevestigen in de kerk, en ze waren dan in "slaapstand".

L: "Slaapstand" betekent...?

S: Dat ze uitstonden. Dus op het moment dat ik ze tsjk d'er in trok dan kwam er langzaam weer energie in hun lijf.

L: Dus ze hangen daar?

S: Ja, die kabel die heeft wat speling, zeg maar.

L: Ze hebben wel hun voeten op de grond. Maar waarom hebben zij die kabel, wat doet die kabel?

S: Ze zijn verbonden met het gewelf van de kerk. De kabel loopt helemaal naar het plafond. Het ging eigenlijk over de gedeelde energie die mensen met elkaar hebben. En de overweight(?) aan impulsen die we tegenwoordig krijgen, zeg maar. In de kerk kwam je voorheen om je geestelijk op te laden en tegenwoordig lijkt het alsof we allemaal verbonden moeten zijn aan social media om geestelijk opgeladen te kunnen zijn. We zijn een soort van afhankelijk van, zeg maar.

L: Je zegt dat we wel afhankelijk van elkaar zijn, of voelen we ons onder druk om dat te worden?

S: Wij staan allemaal met elkaar verbonden via social media, daar putten we heel veel energie uit.

L: Mijn vraag was ook met deze lijn, of ze ook hieraan kunnen hangen?

S: Nee.

L: Dus het is puur visueel.

S: De kabel die remt ze wel. Ze gaan straks cirkels lopen, dan beperkt die kabel wel hun bewegingsmogelijkheid, maar we mochten er niet aan hangen, want dat wilde ik heel graag, maar de balken in de kerk waren niet sterk genoeg.

L: En hier in de achtergrond zie je ook mensen dansen.

S: Dat zijn andere performances.

L: Dus er waren andere performances in de kerk?

S: Ja het was gevuld met kunst en met videokunst.

L: Jij vertelde dat we verbonden zijn aan elkaar door social media...

S: Vroeger had je God, zeg maar, en die was als het ware een verbindende media voor mensen, een overkoepelend orgaan. Hierin hebben we al de kabels naar de hemel getrokken, maar hebben we meer geplaatst dat daar tegenwoordig de techniek zit.

L: Dus in plaats van een soort God, dat dat de techniek is.

S: Ja, zien wij de techniek als een soort Zijn Heiligheid, zeg maar. De social media en het verbonden willen zijn aan elkaar, dit soort tunes en bellen en gebeld worden, we zijn constant met elkaar in verbinding, maar niet meer via de kerk maar via de drang tot gehoord te worden en allerlei impulsen te krijgen. We hebben ons vrij gemaakt van de kerk, maar tegelijkertijd zitten we alsnog vast aan iets nieuws.

L: Ik zie dat de dansers heel strak door de ruimte lopen. Zit er dan een concept daar achter? Of is het puur ruimtelijk of...?

S: Het concept is eigenlijk als het ware hoe je eerst uitstaat, dan opgeladen raakt, dan geprogrammeerd bent en op hol kan slaan, zeg maar.

L: Dus door het feit dat wij opgeladen worden gaan wij lopen en kunnen wij dingen doen, maar op een gegeven moment wordt het te veel voor ons en dan krijgen wij die elektrische schokken.

S: Ja.

L: Dit is nu afgelopen? Want ik hoorde net applaus.

S: Ja. Het speelde 3 keer op een avond. Het duurde 10 minuten.

L: dan wil ik je vragen in hoe ver... there was interaction with the public? Hoe ging dat?

S: Het was wel grappig. Mensen reageerden heel verschillend op die mensen in de ruimte. Mensen komen de kerk in, de Museumnacht is gewoon openbaar voor iedereen. Ze komen niet specifiek naar Involt. Dus ze hadden vaak helemaal niet door dat die dansers daar stonden. Sommige mensen die schokken daarvan, sommige mensen die bleven heel geïntregeerd kijken van "wat gebeurt daar?", en onder dat genoeg snap je, want normaal ga je naar een voorstelling en wil je dat er iets gaat gebeuren, deze mensen die stonden daar te kijken naar die langzame beweging, zeg maar dit is waar ik nu naar sta te kijken. En op een gegeven moment heb je ook te dealen met mensen die alle een borrel op hebben en die een beetje komen om te klieren. Dansers zijn ook wel omgeduwd, die hebben soms een schop gekregen of mensen die zo (zwaait) voor ze gingen staan. En dat was wel grappig. De dansers waren de eerste keer niet zo op voorbereid. Ik had het wel gezegd, maar ze waren wel een beetje gesjokkeerd. Op een gegeven moment sloot ik ze aan. Dus ik zet de dansers, die stonden daar al naast de kabels, en liepen we langs en deden we "klik" en dan deden we ze aan. En sommige dansers die stonden daar al een tijdje, en dan waren we aan de andere kant een andere dansersaan te klikken, en dan was er gewoon publiek wat dacht "oh daar hangt een stopcontact, oh daar zit een stekker en die gingen proberen een danser aan te zetten. En omgekeerd zijn er ook mensen die geprobeerd hebben om de stekker er uit te halen. Wat er dan gebeurde is heel interessant. Achteraf denk ik, nou daar hadden we nog veel meer mee kunnen doen. Weet je, dat je als publiek zelf je eigen danser aan zou kunnen zetten.

L: Jij zei dat er mensen waren die bijvoorbeeld voor het gezicht van de dansers gingen zwaaien om te kijken of ze zouden reageren. Waarom denk je dat ze dat deden?

S: Ik denk enerzijds omdat het altijd fascinerend is om te zien of iemand die zo zijn eigen dingen doet op jou reageert. Omdat de dansers zo een eigen idioom hadden qua doen dat het publiek ook...het was heel oordeelloos. Dus de dansers stonden daar heel oordeelloos waardoor het publiek zich ook vrij voelde om vrij dichtbij te komen, dus als je in het museum een "sculpture" hebt en er is geen hekje omheen dan zal een mens heel graag zo een sculptuur aan gaan raken om te voelen. En dat was bij de dansers ook zo, en zo oordeelloos in die ruimte en zo rustig, en zo bijna een sculptuur, ze gingen heel erg mee in de energie van de kerk in plaats van dat ze een performance waren. Dus blijkbaar kregen mensen, dat wist ik ook niet, de neiging om ze als een sculptuur te behandelen. "Zijn ze wel echt?"

L: Dus de mensen hebben ze echt aangeraakt? En hoe deden ze dat, op wat voor manier? Was het heel voorzichtig?

S: Bij sommige was dat heel voorzichtig, bij andere was het een hele voorzichtige toenadering, en op het moment dat ze merkten "we krijgen geen reactie", dan werd het dit (zwaait) of ze probeerden een kabel uit te trekken.

L: Dus eigenlijk werd hun reactie dan heftiger want...? Wat denk je dat er dan gebeurde?

S: Dat is een goede vraag. Ik denk...misschien het feit dat er geen reactie kwam enigszins opwekt dat men behoefte kreeg aan reactie, behoefte kreeg om iets teweeg te brengen. Mensen die getrild of (...?) willen worden en op zoek gaan naar kunst of naar vermaak, als dat niet genoeg is behoefte hebben om röhring ook, want dat is namelijk echt een grens waar je over gaat. Ik denk ook gewoon puur nieuwsgierigheid...

L: Nieuwsgierig naar?

S: Nou ik heb letterlijk iemand aangesproken. Op een gegeven moment trok iemand een kabel er uit waarvan zij dachten dat die verbonden was aan een

danser, maar het was daadwerkelijk verbonden aan het licht. Dus die trok de kabel eruit waarvan ik zag "nou, dat kan helemaal niet". Dus ik liep er naar toe, "waarom doet u dat?". "Oh!", en die ging schokken heel erg, hij was gewoon benieuwd of die gewoon aan of uit zou gaan. Dus het was gewoon nieuwsgierigheid, en hier en daar ook een klein beetje klieren.

L: Je zegt een klein beetje, dus het was zeker niet altijd het geval. Als je het in percentages zou zetten, hoe vaak was het klieren en hoe vaak niet.

S: Ik denk dat het 40-35% klieren was en de rest was het oprechte verwondering, nieuwsgierigheid en de behoefte iets te begrijpen. En dat vond ik heel mooi.

L: Maar klieren, wat zegt dat over...? Dat is ook een reactie?

S: Ja, met klieren bedoel ik dat het de intentie had om de boel te verstoren, maar dan niet vanuit de intentie nieuwsgierigheid, maar vanuit de intentie verstoren. Dat zat hem erin dat dansers soms een duw kregen en omvielen, en dat er dan om gelachen werd. Of dat een van de dansers in haar billen geknepen werd als ze bezig was.

L: Ik vraag mij af hoe de dansers reageerden. Jij zegt dat zij helemaal niet reageerden.

S:Nee, nee, en dat vonden ze heel moeilijk soms.

L:Dus ook geen oogcontact?

S:Nee. Mijn opdracht was, je horizon ligt altijd verder dan datgene wat er voor je is. Dus je ogen reiken altijd voorbij, eigenlijk ook de dichtbijste punt.

L: Dan wil ik je vragen, jij hebt duidelijk gekozen om het publiek...to allow the public to interact with the dancers. Anders had je de dansers op een podium geplaatst. Dat heb je niet gedaan. Waarom?

S:Omdat het gebouw zich daar niet toe leent. Ik heb geprobeerd in dat gebouw in eerste instantie een podium te creëren. Het deed het gebouw af, het deed de performance af, en het deed het feit dat de Museumnacht toegankelijk is voor zo'n grote en diverse publiek, daaraan deed het dat concept ook af. Daarnaast vind ik dat de spanning die je opbouwt op het moment dat je gelijkvloers bent met de dansers en dat je zelf mag bepalen waar je staat, er omheen mag lopen, dichtbij, veraf, dat dat de dansers heel veel gaf, veel meer dan op een podium staan. Dat dat het thema voelbaarder maakt, van dat wij zitten er allemaal middenin en ik wilde heel graag beweging in die kerk brengen. Dus je hebt die drom mensen, op het hoogtepunt waren er 3200 mensen in de kerk, dat is echt heel veel. Pin me er niet op vast! En de mensen zouden de neiging hebben een podium op te gaan zoeken, te gaan staan, passief eigenlijk, en te watch en te weten waar ze aan toe zijn. Maar omdat de dansers zo verspreid stonden dat je ze niet tegelijkertijd kon zien, je moest door het gebouw heen, bracht dat mensen in beweging en konden wij mensen manipuleren. Dus ze stonden stil en op een gegeven moment gaat die muziek en dan gaat ze die lijn lopen en dan force je, of breng je mensen op een andere manier in de ruimte, en toen gingen ze draaien, dus moesten mensen daar weg, en toen hadden mensen daar niet genoeg plek, dus die kerk die ging helemaal daardoor in beweging, zeg maar.

L: Vond jij dat belangrijk dat het publiek gedwongen werd in de kerk te bewegen?

S:Om iets mee te krijgen of iets te voelen van die beweging of de energie die die dansers hebben. Dus op het moment dat die dansers zo in hun fysiekaliteit aan het stuwen zijn, zij zitten zo in hun energie dat een mens daar niet meer tegenop kan ...wij hadden ook een code met de dansers afgesproken van "als je nou die cirkel gaat lopen en ze gaan niet aan de kant, dan mag je van mij op een gegeven moment zeggen 'make space' ". Het was niet nodig. Geen enkel iemand

heeft gevoeld dat ze konden blijven staan. Dat je dat teweeg kan brengen met je lichaam door gewoon een ontzettend presence te hebben zoals je ook in de stad kan lopen. Op het moment dat je zo loopt gaan mensen niet aan de kant, op het moment dat je ze recht aankijkt en gaat, want daarna mochten ze ze recht aankijken, die dominantie laten voelen van "pam! Wij zijn een übermensch bijna", dat is heel interessant.

L: Had het ook met je concept te maken, dat je mensen door de ruimte wilde laten bewegen?

S: Ja, als locatie theatermaakster vind ik, dat is niet inhoudelijk, maar gewoon mijn visie, vind ik dat je niet een tribune mag bouwen of een podium.

L: Jouw concept was dat mensen aan elkaar verbonden zijn... ik zou mij kunnen voorstellen dat dit een metafoor was voor hoe wij aan elkaar verbonden zijn. Dus als je dansers door de ruimte bewegen en wij met elkaar verbonden zijn, gaat het publiek mee bewegen.

S: Dat heb ik zo niet bedacht. Ik heb gewoon beoogd en gewild dat je middenin die maatschappij mocht staan en dan niet naar hoefde te kijken allemaal van een afstand. Er zit ook een soort gekte in. Enerzijds zit er een foetus in, de zachtheid van een foetus in in het begin, daarna zit er een opgroei in want je ziet er dat de dansers daadwerkelijk van een bijna onopgeladen foetus opgroeien tot mensen die opstaan in de wereld, tot mensen die zich voortbewegen in de wereld tot mensen die zich overladen van prikkels of van impulsen of van het moeten, het willen. Ik denk dat dat veel meer aankomt op het moment dat je voelt hoe afstandelijk dat is. Dus hoe dichtbij je bij de foetus kan komen, hoe open en onbeoordeeld dat is, hoe dwangmatig een opgroeiend mens dat kan worden.

L: Wil je dat nog een keer uitleggen?

S: De foetus is onbeoordeeld, het doet, het beweegt, je mag dichtbij komen. Je kinesthetisch is heel dichtbij, een baby mag je aanraken, een baby heb je graag dichtbij. Een opgroeiend mens heeft vaak fysiek, behalve diegene die de liefde heeft of een partner, steeds meer fysieke afstand van mensen en nog meer op het moment dat een mens dwangmatig gevangen zit in social media. En die koers van "ik ga vooruit, ik ben ambitieus, dat maakt hoe ambitieuzer hoe harder je in de wereld staat, dat je meer afstand ook creëert.

L: En dat zag je ook in het stuk omdat...?

S: Omdat zij heel toenaderbaar zijn voor het publiek, maar op een gegeven moment gaan ze lopen, ze gaan in cirkels lopen, en die cirkels worden steeds wijder en het publiek wordt aan de kant geduwd en moet afstand nemen. Dan dansen ze hier wel, maar dan hebben ze geen toenadering meer van mensen. Ze zijn zo druk met zichzelf bezig en ik denk dat dat tegenwoordig is wat mensen doen. We zijn zo met onszelf bezig en zo bezig met ambities, met ruimte maken dat wij heel weinig toenadering krijgen of toelaten zoals we dat vroeger deden, als baby, als kind omdat we dit (gebaar) doen.

L: Merkte je ook dat mensen meer toenadering zochten als de dansers foetussen waren?

S: Op het moment dat de dansers foetussen waren, waren ze zelf kwetsbaarder, dat ze heel klein in hun beweging, heel erg op hun plek waren, denk ik hoor, dat vul ik misschien in. Maar er zat nergens de scherpste in van iets scherp in de beweging. Dus het was een hele zachte fysieke benadering, heel ontspannen, heel erg in het zijn zeg maar. De mensen die daar naar stonden te kijken, dat was heel mooi, ik heb een aantal een beetje geobserveerd, zag je... als ze de tijd voor namen want heel veel mensen zijn toch maar bezig met van A naar B, dat ze ook die ontspannenheid overnamen. Dat ze stonden, en dat ze heel rustig stonden te kijken naar die mensen, met de zelfde langzaamheid, mee stonden te

kijken naar...soms helemaal doodstil, helemaal doodstil. Ik weet, ik had een vrouw en een man, ik denk van een jaar of veertig, die stonden vrij dicht bij een danser en die stonden alleen maar te kijken. Maar wel van zo een stuk afstand, want normaal...

L: Dat is hoeveel? 20cm of 30cm?

S: 30.

L: Allebei? 30cm van de danser?

S: Ja.

L: Zou je kunnen zeggen dat zij de danser aan het spiegelen waren?

S: Ja, in hun geval wel.

L: En dat spiegelen, dat heb je bij een aantal mensen gezien. Op welke punt in het stuk was het minder te bespeuren in het publiek?

S: Op het moment dat ze lijnen begonnen te lopen werd er nog steeds gespiegeld, want er waren mensen die stukjes meeliepen of die...de dansers gingen soms daadwerkelijk naar iemand toe en gingen dan bewegen voor iemand. En dan zag je iemand op de zelfde manier, zonder dat ze het zelf door hadden mee kijken, van "wat gebeurt hier?". Maar op het moment dat de dansers eigenlijk het roer zelf overnamen ...

L: Wat bedoel je daarmee?

S: Daarmee bedoel ik dat...eerst zijn ze afhankelijk, ja dat zit wel in het concept, eerst zijn ze afhankelijk van de elektrische kabels zeg maar, ik noem het een placenta eigenlijk van waarin je je energie heel zachtjes krijgt, en daarna zet die energie door en groeien ze op en worden ze voortgestuwd. Al die kabels...ze krijgen het gevoel, ik krijg er energie van maar ik kan ze ook gebruiken.

Waardoor ze een autonomie of zelfstandigheid krijgen waarop je dan als publiek een stap naar achter doet en toekijkt. Van "ok, dat is dus wat je aan het doen bent."

L: Omdat?

S: Ik denk dat dat puur een energiewisseling is.

L: Dus heeft het iets te maken met hun ogen, met hun oog contact?

S: Ja. Ze zijn dan heel fel met hun oogcontact, veel veel feller de wereld in en veel directer dan daarvoor. Daarvoor kijken ze doorheen, daarna mochten ze voor mij gewoon mensen aankijken, weliswaar er nog doorheen, maar je signaleert de mensen wel.

L: Waarom denk je dat het publiek dan niet dichterbij komt? En hen niet zo veel gaat spiegelen op dat moment?

S: Ik denk dat het publiek op dat moment zelf kwetsbaarder wordt want voorheen kon jij de danser benaderen en nu benadert de danser jou. Voorheen mag jij beslissen of jij dichterbij gaat en merk je dat er geen reactie op komt, dat is veel veiliger. En daarna heeft die danser een hele eigen wil, dus die gaat op zijn eigen manier en die komt jou wel tegemoet. En dan ben jij zelf kwetsbaarder ook. Dus je hebt een veel directere confrontatie met de danser. De dansers zijn doelmotiverd en het publiek, moet ik heel eerlijk zeggen, wordt ook meer vermaakt daarna. Dus in eerste instantie ga je daarheen en als je wil - een aantal mensen wil dat, een aantal mensen niet - dan ga je naar de danser toe om te zorgen dat je dan vermaakt wordt. Maar zij staan daar niet om JOU te vermaken. Ze zijn puur met zichzelf bezig en daarna zijn de dansers, en dat weten ze ook, veel meer de performers. Ze zijn veel meer bezig met fysieke bezig en ook een beetje imponeren. Ze hebben niet voor niets bewegingen getraind en op het moment dat een publiek dan meer vermaakt wordt, heeft het denk ik ook minder behoefte om toenadering te zoeken. Het wordt gewoon makkelijker en kan je gewoon kijken.

L: Dus je zegt dat ze dan passiever worden.?

S: Ja. Een beetje "overwhelmed", passiever, kwetsbaarder – vind ik echt – zeker omdat het gelijkvloers is, zeker omdat de dansers gewoon enorm de ruimte innemen en dynamisch gewoon door de ruimte heen snijden ook.

L: Dus gingen de dansers met opzet nog door het publiek heen? Of gebeurde dat steeds minder, op dat moment?

S: Nee, dat kon op een gegeven moment niet meer, want als je het publiek had staan... ik teken het even. Je had die kabel hangen, die had een klein beetje meer extra ruimte waardoor die danser die cirkel steeds groter kon maken. En op een gegeven moment stond die helemaal strak en dan konden wel lopen, maar ze konden dan niet meer verder. En dat was dan ook de grens waarop het publiek zag, "de danser kan dan niet verder, maar ik wil er ook niet tussen staan want dan krijg ik een kabel tegen mijn kop". Want de kabel sneed zo als het ware door de ruimte heen. Die draaide zo, swsj...

L: Dus als ik je goed begrijp, het publiek kon ook niet meer door de dansers heen.

S: Nee. Je creëert heel bewust een afstand omdat die kabel als een soort zweep, zeg maar, de danser in die cirkel houdt, zeg maar.

L: Dan wil ik je vragen of je denkt dat ...in hoever je denkt dat interactie de emoties van het publiek heeft beïnvloed? Denk je dat zij iets anders hebben gevoeld doordat zij dichtbij de dansers konden komen, ze konden aanraken, de stekken hebben uitgehaald? Of denk je dat het weinig verschil heeft gemaakt?

S: Nou ja, ik denk dat het veel verschil heeft gemaakt want je bent je ontzettend bewust op zo'n moment, als toeschouwer, maar ook als danser, maar ook als choreograaf over grenzen. De grenzen tussen toeschouwer en performer. Ik denk dat de toeschouwer zich ook bewuster is van zijn eigen zijn in die ruimte omdat je bewust moet gaan nadenken "hoe verhoud ik mij tot de danser".

L: Eigenlijk zeg ik, wat voor emoties denk je dat er opgeroepen werden? Doordat dat zij...

S: Ik denk dat zij ...Ik vind het heel moeilijk om dat te gaan invullen. Wat ik gezien heb is nieuwsgierigheid, is kinderlijke verwondering die ook de neiging had tot het willen verstoren. Dus misschien een dierlijke territorium drang. Ik heb onzekerheid gezien. "Waar kijk ik naar? Oh, kan ik hier staan? Mag ik hier staan? Waar moet ik staan?" Dus in die onzekerheid ook een soort ...nerveusiteit. Ik heb ook verstilling gezien of berusting van die mensen die heel dichtbij die dansers stonden. En ook wel plezier.

L: En in hoever denk je dat die emoties hebben bijgedragen aan hun kijkplezier of het feit ...Zijn ze daardoor meer geëngageerd of minder geëngageerd in het stuk? Hun engagement, is het versterkt of minder geworden?

S: em...

L: Doordat zij konden "interact" met de dansers?

S: In eerste instantie is het minder, omdat je...maar het heeft ook met de vorm te maken. Je bent je namelijk niet bewust van waar je naar kijkt, je bent je niet bewust van een geheel, dat je weet "dit is een voorstelling met een begin, midden en eind. Ik ga zitten, ik ben toeschouwer en ik kijk. En voor de rest ben ik gewoon inderdaad passief". Daarin houden mensen gewoon, misschien uit zelfbescherming of omdat men graag wil weten waar men aan toe is, houdt graag meer afstand. Of maakte bewuste keuze moet gemaakt worden om toenadering te zoeken.

L: Ik snap dat niet. Nog een keer.

S: Nou, op het moment dat je weet "over 5 minuten gaat er een voorstelling beginnen" en daar mag je gaan zitten om te kijken en daar kijk je naar, dan ben

je, op de een of andere manier, misschien niet zo zeer meer betrokken, of je bent geprogrammeerd betrokken (lacht), dat betekent niet dat je geestelijker betrokken bent, maar je weet waar je aan toe bent, dus je doet het. En dan hoeft je helemaal niet betrokken te zijn want je kan het alsnog niet interessant vinden en te kijken, maar je doet het gewoon. Terwijl in deze vorm weten mensen niet zo goed waar ze aan toe zijn en zijn ze daardoor mentaal betrokkener omdat ze heel erg goed in de gaten moeten houden wat er gebeurt, ze weten niet waar ze aan toe zijn, maar ze zijn ook...

L: Dus ze zijn alerter.

Terwijl in deze vorm weten mensen niet zo goed waar ze aan toe zijn en zijn ze daardoor mentaal betrokkener omdat ze heel erg goed in de gaten moeten houden wat er gebeurt, ze weten niet waar ze aan toe zijn,

L: Dus als ik je goed begrijp, je moet mij weer corrigeren, emotioneel ben je eigenlijk meer betrokken.

S: Ja, want het gaat veel meer over jezelf. Hoe verhoud ik mij daartoe? En, dat vind ik ook belangrijk om te zeggen : als ik voorstellingen maak, dan ben ik er nooit op uit om interactie aan te zetten om het interactie-aanzetten, snap je?

L: Ja.

S: Want dat vind ik niet zo interessant en dat vind ik zelf heel irritant. Als ik zelf naar een voorstelling kijk en ik heb het gevoel dat ik mee moet doen, dat vind ik niet fijn. Soms wel, maar meestal niet zo. Ik probeer altijd voorstellingen te maken waarin ik mensen uitnodig, ofwel door ze zelf de keuze te laten maken en er middenin te gaan staan, maar je mag dan echt de keuze hebben om gewoon naar die bar te lopen en weg te gaan. Ofwel door, in een voorstelling, mensen direct in een zaal wel aan te spreken, maar ze uit te nodigen. Door zelf te werken en ze daardoor mee te laten werken, maar niet te zeggen "jullie moeten gaan werken".

L: Dus jij wil dat ze altijd de vrijheid hebben om te kiezen of ze wel of niet meewerken.

S: Ja, want dan heb je ze echt. Als ze dan geraakt zijn, dan heb je mensen echt.

L: En door dat zij dat mochten doen, denk je dat een aantal mensen meer betrokken zijn dan wanneer ze naar de dansers van een afstand mochten kijken?

S: Ja, want je bent onderdeel van datgene geweest. Dus je hebt daarin zelf ook keuzes mogen maken en je...ik heb van sommige mensen ook gehoord dat ze het jammer vonden ze niet alles konden overzien. Ze hadden ook graag iedereen willen zien, maar dat is soms ook de keuze. Soms waren ze zo gefascineerd door één iemand dat ze niet meer konden rondlopen want je kon de hele tijd rondlopen. Maar soms ben je geraakt door één iemand en dan wil je niet meer rondlopen.

L: En als zij meer afstand hadden mogen nemen, dat ze passiever hadden mogen kijken, zoals naar een gewone voorstelling, denk je dat hun fascinatie minder was geweest?

S: Nee. Maar ik denk dat ze daar minder bewust van waren geweest. Ja, ja. Ik denk dat je dezelfde fascinatie kan hebben als je gewoon in de zaal zit en je kijkt naar het theater, maar ik denk dat je dan veel minder nadenkt over jouw eigen aandeel of jouw eigen aanwezigheid op dat moment. Je schakelt als het ware jezelf even uit en je bent gewoon gefascineerd aan het kijken. En nu ondervind je zelf nog meer die fascinatie en hoop ik, of veronderstel ik, dat mensen dan meer nadenken over niet zo zeer, misschien niet eens zo zeer het thema, van dat je daadwerkelijk daar tussen stond en onderdeel bent van die social media maatschappij, maar dat je wel onderdeel was van die performance en dat je daarin bijna letterlijk geraakt bent of had kunnen worden ook.

L:Dus wat jij zegt is, dat betekent niet dat zij het concept beter begrijpen. Doordat zij dichtbij konden komen.

S:Ik hoop, maar dat weet ik echt niet Leah, ik hoop dat ik het concept voelbaarder heb kunnen maken. Het concept, dat je voelt, en nu dat ik het uitleg vind ik het ook helderder, dat je dus dichtbij iemand kan komen op het moment dat diegene heel erg zichzelf zijn zijn is, dat je dichtbij die zachtheid mag komen, bij die openheid, bij die oordeelloosheid, en dat je ook voelt wat het doet. Op het moment dat mensen gaan staan en als een soort rechtlijnigheid door de wereld heen banieren als het ware. Zich niet bewust van wie of wat, zich niet bewust van je eigen snelheid of je eigen kracht waarmee je anderen gewoon daadwerkelijk wegdrijft of omverloopt bij wijze van spreken. Maar dat hoop ik.

L:Ja, maar dat gaat het ook om. Inderdaad.

S: Boukje Schweigman heeft dat ook gedaan, en dat vond ik heel mooi, en tegelijkertijd deed zij het wel dwingender bij Between. Hadden de dansers de hele tijd aan het podium gestaan en aan het einde gaan de dansers bij mensen in het publiek op schoot liggen en dat had best wel de zelfde energie als hoe mijn dansers begonnen. Maar daarin maakte zij dus de keuze om dat af te dwingen, dus de dansers nemen de keuze om bij jou te komen liggen. Ik vond dat heel fijn, maar ik had ook collega's gehoord of vriendinnen die zeiden "ik vond het helemaal niet fijn, ik heb niet de keuze, er komt iemand gewoon boven op me liggen. "Dus in mijn geval kies ik dan liever voor de foetus die je zelf mag benaderen en eventueel zelf op schoot mag nemen als je wil, maar dan moet jezelf veel meer initiatief nemen, zeg maar. Het zijn wel twee interessante, wat dat betreft.

L:Dus eigenlijk zeg je : door interactie heeft het publiek misschien geen...their cognitive understanding of the piece is not greater. Dus met hun verstand hebben ze het misschien niet beter kunnen begrijpen...

S:Ja

L:...maar wel met hun gevoel.

S:Mag ik een voorbeeld geven van Grof Geschud want daar zit het zo ontzettend duidelijk in, daarom vind ik het ook wel leuk om iets heel korts over te vertellen wat er gebeurde. Ik had daar een publiekje en ik heb hem nou tien keer gespeeld, een publiek van twintig man ongeveer. En die mensen, die nodigde ik uit om hun armen omhoog te steken als ze mij goed vonden marcheren, of als ze mij overtuigend genoeg vonden wegduiken en verdwijnen, dan mochten ze hun arm op zo (gebaar). Dus ik dook als een malle in de bosjes en dan gingen mensen heel hard lachen en hun armen omhoog steken. Een kinderlijke energie van "ja, ja (lacht), dit vinden we leuk". En op een gegeven moment heb je ze dus. Op een gegeven moment gaan ze hun arm omhoog doen of gaan ze het niet doen, of heb je dat spel. Maar het is leuk, het is leuk, het zijn leuke dingen die ik doe. Daarna zet ik een emmer water neer. En dan zeg ik "als ik gepakt wordt door de geheime dienst, dan willen ze informatie van mij. Dan willen ze misschien informatie over jou, waardoor jij ook opgepakt wordt. Dus ik moet mij kunnen redden door de ergste "torture" of de uitdaging heen. " Dus ik zet die emmer water neer en ik wijs iemand aan, "wil je mij even helpen?" En diegene die staat naast me en ik zeg "ok, wat ik zo ga doen, jij legt je hand op mijn hoofd, ik ga met mijn hoofd in die emmer, en ik moet zo lang mogelijk onder water blijven. Goed duwen! En je ziet iemand naast je, zie je van "oh, ik moet dat gaan doen! " En het publiek die heeft iets van "zij moet het gaan doen". En omdat ik zo duidelijk zeg van "maar je moet het echt doen, want ik ga jullie beschermen straks. Dus je moet vertrouwen hebben dat ik betrouwbaar ben. " En zo iemand doet het. Dus zo iemand legt zijn hand op mijn hoofd en die drukt

mijn hoofd in die emmer. Dus je pakt ineens de grens van, wat je met een mens doet draai je om. Dat was heel mooi want de ene groep publiek deed heel snel zijn hand omhoog, zo van "nou dan is het snel klaar" en dan werd ik aan mijn haar omhoog getrokken. Dat was de afspraak. Als alle handen omhoog zijn dan was het soms al na vijf seconden, dan zei ik "jongens, dat geloof je toch zelf niet. Je moet harder duwen. En mensen gaan dat doen. Ze gaan langer wachten, mensen gaan harder duwen. Omdat je ze uitnodigt dat met je te doen. De laatste test daarin gaf ik iedereen rotjes. Rotjes, vuurpijltjes, dat soort dingen. Dan zei ik "nou, de laatste test hierin moet ik over dat prikkeldraad heen gaan springen, en ik moet om kunnen gaan met crisis situaties. Dus gooi dat vuurwerk maar naar mij toe en dan ga ik ontsnappen." Dus ik ging verderop achter ze staan en ik liet ze allemaal positie innemen dus in het gras en ze stonden klaar met die rotjes, stonden aan te steken, als een soort frontlinie. Dan rende ik doorheen en dan begonnen mensen gewoon rotjes tegen me aan te gooien en vuurpijlen op af te schieten. En dan sprong ik er overheen en dan begon ik terug te schieten op ze, zeg maar. Daarin zag je heel duidelijk dat ik het voor mekaar kreeg om mensen op te juttten om vuurwerk tegen een andere mens aan te gooien. Want het was lachen. Dus de grens tussen wat je mag doen en hoe het hoort en het gevaar, dat verdween daar opeens. En mensen waren helemaal uitgelaten daarna, mensen hadden iets van huh! Want ik vroeg daarna "ben ik nu geschikt in het militair?" en dan gingen ze allemaal juichen "jaaa!" Maar daarna zag je ze de kwinkslag maken van "maar ik heb net vuurwerk staan te gooien naar iemand". Dus je zag ze ook tegelijkertijd denken "he?!" en dat vond ik heel heel interessant want wat je daar zag, dat mensen dus fysiek ineens mee willen gaan doen omdat ze enthousiast zijn over jouw, na ja daadkracht, of de dingen die je doet. En je ze heel langzaam daarin likt, als het ware. "Doe maar mee, het is leuk, het is lachen, het is gezellig, kom maar, la la la." En ik werp mezelf voor hen neer, "ik maak me kwetsbaar, maar ik kan het" en dat ze daarna dus gewoon volop! Er waren bejaarde mannen bij, die als een soort van jongetjes van zeven stonden te schreeuwen en te gooien en te "jaaa, pak d'r!" tegen elkaar.

L:Dus er was echt een verschil tussen hun gevoel en hun verstand.

S:Heel duidelijk, heel duidelijk. Het waren gewoon grote kinderen.

L:Ik ga je even vragen wat voor publiek je had.

S:In de kerk had ik heel divers publiek, van een jaar of 17 tot 65+ want de Museumnacht is voor iedereen. Over het algemeen vrij gemêleerd ook qua afkomst, ik denk wel dat het veel kunstliefhebbers zijn. Dus het is niet zo zeer het huis- tuin- en keukenpubliek, hoe wel daarin ook wel mensen gewoon die normaliter heen voor een schilderijtje of voor een feestje op de Museumnacht wel een keekje kregen in dans of theater. En Grof Geschud, dat waren allemaal bezoekers voor het festival op Soesteberg, en dat waren veel oud militairen, veel veteranen met kinderen, met kleinkinderen. De jongste daar was een baby, die is huilend met moeder weggegaan want ik had bommen, ik had heel veel lawaai daarbij, maar er waren kinderen van zeven erbij. Dus die heb ik ook rotjes gegeven.

L:Denk je dat mensen anders reageren, afhankelijk van hun leeftijd? Of, heb je daar een verschil gezien, in leeftijd of in soort mens?

S:Jongeren zijn toch meer bezig met het aftasten van grenzen. Ouderen zijn meer bezig met "wat vinden ze van mij?"

L:Interaction. Wat voor mensen gingen meer daarvoor?

S: Jongere mensen gingen meer de grenzen aftasten van "wat kan ik doen?". Dus met billen knijpen en met stekkers aan de gang of dit (zwaait) of een beetje "teasen". En oudere mensen die zijn meer bezig met "wat zie ik? Wat ervaar ik?"

L: Did they also interact, oudere mensen? Of waren ze minder bezig met interaction, om dichtbij te komen en aan te raken?

S: Nee, dat viel wel mee. Ouderen zijn wel aangepaster, dus die houden wel langer afstand. Er zijn maar weinig mensen die daar durfden doorheen te breken. Terwijl jongere mensen, die zijn toch minder aangepast, wat dat betreft.

L: En waarom?

S: Ik denk dat jongere mensen nog veel meer onderzoeken met hun lijven en hun zintuigen en met een ding vast willen pakken en dat oudere mensen al veel meer cognitief in hun hoofd zitten. Ze zullen veel meer denken. "Wat vind ik ervan, wat zullen anderen daarvan vinden. Wat eh..."

L: Waarom denk je dat oudere mensen dat doen?

S: Nou, aanpassingsnormen, denk ik.

L: Ze zijn zo opgegroeid of dat het gewoon een normale ontwikkeling is. Dat je meer...met de tijd meer met je verstand bezig bent?

S: Ik denk dat dat een redelijk normale gevolg is van je opgroeï, zeg maar. Ik denk dat het toch ook met je opvoeding te maken heeft. Als ik kijk naar bepaalde soort...soms ook met alcohol ...mensen die heel weinig kunst zien, die soms uit een milieu komen waar je veel minder kunst ziet, die reageren net als die ALO jongens, directer en veel intuïtiever op kunst. Terwijl mensen die opgegroeïd zijn met kunst, mensen die opgegroeïd zijn met hoe je je hoort te verhouden tot kunst, die zijn daar veel geblokkeerder daarin.

L: Dan vraag ik mij af of interactieve dansvoorstellingen een bijdrage kunnen hebben om mensen uit te nodigen om naar voorstellingen te komen. Dat mensen op die manier meer betrokken kunnen worden. Is interaction a means of reaching people who would normally not look at dance?

S: Poe...so, dat is een goede vraag. Nou ik weet het niet Leah, want ik vond het best wel ...in die zin, het is wel misschien meer een ervaring, het is misschien minder vaag daardoor...nee, weet ik even niet.

L: interaction: is dat "educational"? Of puur vermaak?

S: Ik denk dat het zeker "educational" is, ja. En niet eens zo zeer dat we het uit hoeven te kunnen leggen, maar ik denk dat het feit dat je je vragen gaat stellen over toenadering tot andere begrenzing, hoe verhoudt je je tot dingen, waar sta ik als mens, wat vind ik hiervan, want dat moet je wel. Dat vind ik, dat gaat heel erg over leren ook.

L: Is het leren over kunst? Of over je mening over kunst? Of puur leren over jezelf. Dus is het "personally educational" of "educational about art"?

S: Ik denk beide. Ik denk dat het makkelijker het gesprek opent over...Dus ik denk dat, in eerste instantie je gaat praten over je eigen ervaring. Ik denk dat als jongeren met elkaar meemaken dat je zo dicht er op staat en dat je dan in eerste instantie überhaupt erover gaat praten want dat "nou, dat vond ik gewoon heel raar" en dat je dan...stel je zou dat coachen, dat je dan vraagt "waarom was dat raar?" Maar ik denk dat als je dat gesprek niet hebt dat je a) om meer uitgenodigd wordt te denken ...ik denk dat je ook, je leert in die zin ook kunst opnieuw een plek te geven. Voorheen kon je het plaatsen ...

L: En je plaatste het waar?

S: In een theatre, met een podium en met stoelen...

L: En nu?

S: ...je staat er op te dansen met muziek. Waar hoor ik erbij? Ben ik er zelf onderdeel van? Hoor ik erbij? Is dit de nieuwe kunst? Kan ik misschien zelf daar

aan mee doen? Dat is ook interessant, in het geval van Grof Geschud deed je er zelf aan mee. Dat is lekker en leuk en leerzaam. In het geval van de kerk deed je minder mee, maar was je wel zeker een onderdeel. Of je maakt de voorstelling ook.

L:Hoezo?

S:Ik denk (?) dat mensen daar bewust van zijn. Door zo gedreven te worden en afstand te nemen. De dansers maken een reflectie van de mensen die ze tegenkomen ook.

L:Denk je dat sommige mensen dat gevoeld hebben, of zelfs begrepen hebben met hun verstand, wie weet?

S:I hope so (lacht). (stilte) Ik heb veel reacties gehad dat het heel erg tof was, maar daar ontleen je niet uit of je door had waar je naar keek.

L:Mijn laatste vraag is, ga je "interaction" gebruiken in de toekomst? En waarom of waarom niet?

S:Ja, zeker, zeker. Ik heb twee keer gewerkt bij de Peer Groep, een theatergroep van het gezelschap, maar ook een kenniscentrum voor het locatietheater en die gebruiken bij uitstek interactie tussen agrarische cultuurlandschap en tussen mensen, het gaat heel erg over mensen. Ik heb gemerkt dat, voor mij is het belangrijk juist in deze maatschappij op de tijd waarin we leven waarin ik het gevoel heb dat we bijna onszelf ontleren om interactie te hebben, op een diepgaande of een langere manier dan korte flitsen of dan korte tikken van smsen of het tikken van berichten. Vind ik het belangrijk om dat in het theater te laten voelen, hoe mooi dat is, hoe toereikend dat kan zijn. Om samen na te denken, om samen te lachen, om samen te huilen, om samen de mening te vormen, of juist niet. Om te voelen wat de menigte teweeg kan brengen of om te voelen hoe jezelf in de wereld staat. Gustav, een andere voorstelling die ik gemaakt heb, die ging over ...het gaat mij vaak over grensgebieden. Dus het grens tussen spelletjes en geweld, en Grof Geschud was dat ook. Daarin reageerden mensen heel erg over teksten en op beweging die daar inzate. Het was gewoon een stukje dans of commando pingelen, het spelletje dat wij kennen (tikt met vingers op tafel als uitleg). Het was een commando spelletje zoals je met dans bij opwarming gebruikt, maar dan met hele bizarre commando's. Daar moesten mensen heel hard om lachen, maar je trekt dat dan uit de context om er daarna een tekst overheen te gooien die puur ging over "als je zou moeten kiezen, je zusje dood laten schieten of je broertje dood laten schieten, wie kies je dan?" En mensen vonden dat, ja, je voelde heel erge reactie, het gaat over hen zelf, en ik vind dat dat, dat is theater voor mij.

L:Als ik je goed begrijp, jij zegt dat interactie uiteindelijk betekent dat mensen zich daardoor vragen stellen. Klopt dat of niet?

S:Ja.

L: Of dat je ze zover kan brengen...

S:Dat ze zich betrokken voelen ook. Betrokken voelen, zich vragen stellen, hardop mogen lachen of huilen om dingen. In gesprek zijn. Of dat nou lichamelijk is of met tekst. Ik denk dat je lichamelijk ook in gesprek kan zijn over, op de toenadering die je zoekt, aanraking of dat je meevoelt met iemand. Ik vind het interessant, of, wat je zegt over spiegelen of dat iemand bijstaat en die kan bij wijze van spreken mee ruiken met wat jij ook ruikt, of delen ook.

L: I'm going to make a statement, and I'm interested in what your reaction is. What if I say to you, "because I am interacting I have less understanding of the concept of the piece, of the artistic concept of the piece, less understanding of the spatial design, why a choice was made for "decor".

S:Nee, helemaal niet. Absoluut niet. Nee, ja juist niet. Maar ik denk dat je daarin... ik vind dat interactie mag nooit een truc worden en dat zie ik bij veel theatermakers veelvuldig gebeuren. Daarom zeg ik interactie moet kloppen en passen met wat je doet zodat het uitnodigt, zodat het er niet bovenop ligt. Ik denk dat als je als theatermaker je daarover ook vragen over stelt en daar bevlogen of betrokken in bent, dat je dat kan bereiken. Ik denk dat het concept daarom...interactie mag geen toevoeging zijn op het concept, het moet het uitgangspunt zijn. Je mag interactie vind ik niet gebruiken omdat jezelf wil beogen mensen te raken of onze...omdat je een reactie wil bij je publiek. Ik denk dat je als maker, als je niet die reactie zonder interactie kan krijgen door gewoon puur wat je doet, dan gebruik je, of misbruik je interactie vind ik altijd. En ik vind dat op het moment dat je interactie daarin zuiver gebruikt omdat de vorm of de locatie of het thema zich daartoe dient en het daar van het zelfsprekend in is, dat dat dan vaak veel beter klopt ook. Dus nee, ik vind niet...Ik denk dat je concept ontzettend versterkt door interactie kan worden juist. Ja. En het ook andere dingen aan gaat spreken dat wat theater... wat wij ook gewend zijn. En ik denk dat dat ook heel mooi is. Alleen wij gebruiken het zo vaak op een provocerende manier nog. Om duidelijk te maken dat wij willen ontdekken, terwijl het ook gewoon heel erg duidelijk maken dat we gewoon samen allemaal op de zelfde plek zijn, maar dat daarin dynamiek verschillen zijn. Of dat we iets kunnen vertellen door iets door te geven en je daar bij welkom bent als toeschouwer. Weet je, er zijn ook dansers of makers die het dan als uitgangspunt nemen inderdaad om door een ruimte in je blootje te rennen en steeds op mensen in te botsen. Dat is heel interessant in wezen, wat er dan gebeurt met mensen, en dat is ook goed om je af te vragen en tegelijkertijd vraag ik mijzelf dan af: moet je dat zo letterlijk doen? En bereik je dan wat je wil? Of kan je dat ook naakter en kwetsbaarder maken door juist niet die mensen aan te raken?

L:Want uiteindelijk stoot je mensen misschien af, dat ze heel erg van schikken en dat ze juist zich afsluiten. Is dat wat je bedoelt?

S:Ja...of dat het mensen of de één of andere manier alleen dan fysiek raakt omdat ze zich afsluiten of omdat het gewoon iets wat het ...is. Je hebt dan niet tijd om na te denken of te voelen of om je vragen af te stellen bijna omdat het zo direct is, terwijl als je het hebt over zintuigen of diepere lagen of ervaringen die mee kan voelen, mee kan zinnen of mee kan krijgen, dan denk ik persoonlijk dat dat net wat meer ruimte nodig heeft ook.

L:Dus jij wil "interaction" gebruiken om mensen meer open te stellen?

S:Of mensen heel letterlijk te laten verplaatsen in een wereld die je schept als maker. Soms is het heel erg mooi om mensen mee te nemen in...schiet ik weer heel even naar een andere voorstelling, kort voorbeeldje, in. Ik heb vorig jaar een korte solo gemaakt over een vrouw in het verzorgingstehuis waar ik elke dag op de koffie ging en daar wilde ik over vertellen, ik wilde mensen laten voelen of deel laten nemen aan het feit dat zij de wereld heel snel ziet veranderen en dat zij zo een heimwee kan hebben naar vroeger. Naar hele simpele dingen als een potje groente, waar je met elkaar de groenten in stopte. En toen dacht ik, kan...ik kan dat...er kwamen allemaal mensen kijken, ik dacht toen, ik kan ze allemaal aanspreken en dat potje als verhaal vertellen. Dan sla ik de plank mis want dan gaan ze dat niet voelen, gaan ze horen. Toen heb ik steeds dus dat publiek, dat ging rond, heb ik aan één iemand gevraagd "heb je misschien zin om met mij mee te gaan?". Dan nam ik één iemand mee en dan zaten we tegenover elkaar en dan zei ik in eerste instantie alleen maar "hoe was je dag?", en dan zei ik niks meer. En dan gingen we aardappels schillen met z'n tweeën.

Begon iemand soms te vertellen en soms dus helemaal niet. En dan was het stil, en dan ben je dus letterlijk met elkaar in een ruimte. En dan gingen we het hebben over dingen die je in zo'n potje zou willen stoppen van dingen die jij mist of die jij nog eens terug zou willen zien. En er kwamen hele mooie verhalen uit, en toen vroeg ik "als het potje vol is met groenten zou je dat in de kast weg willen zetten bij de andere potjes. Dan moet je wel even de deur achter je dicht doen want anders glipt de kat naar buiten. En mensen, die zaten zo in die atmosfeer, we zaten in een kleine ruimttertje, dat ze gingen helemaal mee en ik had een kast, een inloopkast die ik helemaal vol had gezet met kaarsjes, dus die kast was heel warm geworden met allemaal tekstjes en dingetjes. Dus mensen die deden de deur open en die hadden iets van "woh!". Maar de deur moest achter ze dicht, dus ze stonden ineens in een hele warme ruimte met hele mooie en subtiele zachte teksten met zichzelf en met dat potje en kwamen echt heel ontroerd daaruit. En dat was de ontroering die ik overbrengen wilde van die Roevige Trip heette ze. Ze was zo'n warme vrouw. Ik mocht daar altijd bij haar binnenkomen en ik mocht daar aan tafel en dan praatten we. Ze had een soort warmte van "je bent welkom". Maar die warmte zit achter een gesloten deur want iedereen is met zichzelf bezig, dus bij zo'n oude vrouw in een verzorgingstehuis langs gaan, wie denkt daaraan om dat zomaar te doen? En dat had ik niet kunnen bereiken als ik op een podium moet, want dat ik later op een podium gedaan en dat heb ik niet meer kunnen voelen, wat dat was. Ik heb dat zo gevoeld. Mensen vonden het alsnog mooi.

L: Je bedoelt, het publiek kon het niet zo voelen.

S:Nee, ik heb het uiteindelijk nog gedaan op een andere locatie voor een groot publiek. En dan zat ik op een podium, en mensen vonden het gewoon mooi, mensen stonden wijn te drinken. Terwijl ik heb mensen met tranen gehad toen ik één op één met ze zat. Het was weer een uitnodiging, het was weer niet "je moet nu ontroerd zijn, of je moet nu...". Ik liet mensen daar iets vertellen over.

L:Ik ga het gesprek nu afsluiten. Ik wil je graag bedanken.

S:Nou, je had die vraag al gesteld want je zei "denk je dat het toegankelijker is voor een publiek die weinig in aanraking met kunst komt?". Ja, als je ze van tevoren al betrokken hebt en ze het gevoel hebben "dit gaat over mij, dit zou over mij kunnen gaan of hierin heb ik een waardig aandeel. Dan zijn mensen denk ik veel betrokkener. Maar wat je ook zei, en ik denk dat dat waar is, dat als dat niet het geval is, dat het ook juist afschrikkend kan werken op mensen die niet met kunst in aanraking komen omdat ze dan denken "wat is dit nou weer? Waar ben ik in beland?" Dan kan het te abstract zijn. Op het moment dat mensen het gevoel hebben, juist ook mensen die inderdaad niet naar kunst gaan, "oh, dit gaat over mij of hier mag ik aan mee doen of ik voel me op m'n gemak", dat het dan een hele goede vorm is. (Over Don't Hit Mama:) De jongeren die naar toe gaan kijken, die bij die Lounge daar bij mogen zitten, zijn volgens mij ontzettend aangeraakt door het feit dat ze welkom zijn in de kunst, dat ze welkom zijn in wat er gebeurt. In plaats van dat zij op een stoel weggezet worden in het donker als publiek, want het leeft.

L:Dat is inderdaad mijn uitgangspunt. Jongeren willen een andere soort theater.

Interview Nita Liem : Full Circle

12th April 2012

Amsterdam

N= Nita Liem

L= Leah Jacob (interviewer)

L: Could you explain to me the concept behind "Full Circle"?

N: In a nutshell, Don't Hit Mama in 2010 celebrated their anniversary. We were 10 years Don't Hit Mama. In 1999/2000 I got a scholarship to do my research, so I was again hanging out in clubs and those were the underground clubs. It's an underground club because that's really where people go for the dance. Not so much for the famous Puff Daddy who opens the clubs etc ,etc. So it's not commercial and that has inspired me a lot, to understand about club culture, hip hop culture, how and why people were dancing. So when I was observing the clubs I saw people, you know it's like a physical mental need that they religiously go clubbing. To release the stress of the weekly work stress or it's like mental cleansing when they were...you know...and the friends that I have gained throughout the years most of them they don't do, not all of them do drugs, not all of them drink, they drink water. They don't have much money, just enough to pay the entrance and just dance from 10 to 6 in the morning. Which I think is like, it's an amazing phenomenon.

L: I saw the dvd of Archie Burnett.

N: He became my friend, mentor and guide. Always, throughout these years, whenever I came to New York I hung out with him. He's the one who's not so drunk and not so into drugs.

L: He looked like he was completely clean.

N: Oh he is. And through him and his partner, specifically, I started really appreciating this whole scene and why dance is a support for him. For him it's really a medicine. I also know his background, his father was a priest and he was not allowed to dance. So to conquer this field of dancing and to be your own teacher in dance which you are if you club dance. You don't go to class to learn to dance.

L: Oh you don't go to classes?

N: Not at all. You go to the clubs, and it's the dj who guides you, it's the music of the dj. And the peers. So there were a lot of elements that were inspiring to me in club dance. It's not the fantastic dancer, but also the way the teach themselves. It's by watching each other or correcting each other. So it's a system of peer education basically. And Archie is now seen as one of the pioneers in his field, but also one of the mentors because a lot of people stopped dancing, but he still keeps on going. So the younger generation really looks up to him. And therefore a good club atmosphere is also an education in life. I mean, you learn to respect the space, you learn to respect the others, you also know the history of the people who are there, in dance. So that was all inspiring to me, so when we founded Don't Hit Mama in 2000 that information was always at the back of my mind. And it started, this whole concept of club started when I was asked to do the after-parties...I was asked to workshop for 2 days and then put it in the after-party, and then we called it Club Don't Hit Mama. So that's how we developed it since 2004, this concept. And then in 2007 I was really using it as a tool, also, to go into different cities in the Netherlands. What I wanted is not to do just shows, but to also have an interaction with an audience. Or if you come

to a place, that you also know what the place is like. Instead of touring, you go from one hotel to another and you do a show...

L: So it was really also for the dancers.

N: No, it's also for me. The place. If I go to Den Haag, I want to know "what is Den Haag like". Who are the people there? Instead of, I'm touring with my group and with my production. The only thing you see is maybe a hotel, maybe the black box that you're in and that's it. You go in and out. There's no contact with my audience. So for me to, in 2007, when we wanted to build a relationship with theatres and cities, and also to select dancers, I thought that this was a great tool. 'Cos the club concept is that you work, you don't have many rehearsals, usually you take maybe 40, 50 hours. Maybe, like, 10 days spread over 2 weeks or whatever. With a core group of people.

L: And this is your club concept?

N: Yeah, yeah, yeah. When I talk about a club concept it's what I and Bart – 'cos Bart is the artistic partner here – what we developed in DON'T HIT MAMA, I mean there are several clubs, but our club concept is that you take a core team of people who are familiar, or coming out of, the club scene. Either hiphop or house.

L: Can I interrupt you here? You mean that your dancers are not trained at a dance school?

N: Not at all. Maybe 2%, because sometimes I do deliberately find some contrast. No, most of the club dancers, hiphop dancers have all trained by themselves.

L: You have a core, and they've taught themselves, so they're always the same dancers for a show?

N: No. I select always per project a group of dancers. In the club concept, it has always a core team. Usually these are 4 or 5. And next to them there's usually guest dancers. Guest dancers can be dancers with specific skills, either tap dancers or an African dancer. Once I had Kenzo Kusuda...

L: So they really are trained...

N: Not always. He was the only one, that's what I meant. He was the 1%, at a more academic background. 'Cos most of the dance styles I can work with are all Afro-American based, or are linked to it, or are percussive. That's my palet.

L: And you don't really find that at the academic schools?

N: No. I mean nowadays, since the last 5 years, because hiphop – commercial hiphop and tv hiphop and musical hiphop – is starting to become bigger and bigger and the schools have some bits. Like we have used in the old days, there was a little bit of jazz ballet in every school – that was your black dance education – there was it. No, it's not something...because it's a social dance form. Like in academies, you don't find salsa in the dance schools, not even real flamenco. And maybe in some schools, and some conservatoriums do flamenco guitar, but it's a niche. So there's a core team and then we edit with guest dancers and then per city we integrate local dancers. Or dance lovers, they do it for the love of it, but not to make a living.

L: Yeah, 'cos in the show that I saw there was a group of young dancers from Tilburg, Fontys, so they were like good amateurs, they were studying to become professionals.

N: Sometimes it's very hard to find dancers in a city that you don't know. And sometimes a school asks us too so they can do it as a "stage". And that's fine, because they are in their development of being, so they are the young dancers from the city.

L: Yeah, it's a way of spreading the word.

N: Yeah, so the concept always has 3 layers. Like the professional dancers, of being professional, of being paid, is a core team of 4 or 5 dancers. They make the structure, that we worked on for 2 weeks, the structure. Guest dancers come in to give a juxtaposition to the core team and it's also more interesting in the interaction.

L: And how do they do a juxtaposition, are they...do you talk it over with them and give them a structure or do they come in with their own ideas?

N: No I always give the structure or I ask, I also discuss a lot with them so they can make, it's a combination. I always go in a dialogue with them and you give them roles. Like the core team, usually are the main characters. Like the ones that you see in "Full Circle", there were 4 and they looked different 'cos they had their style. You're stylising their costumes a bit. And so there were 4 characters, each of them also had an interaction with the actor, the spoken word woman. So they had more time to develop a little bit of their own solo.

L: So that's their own material presumably.

N: Yeah yeah, it's all their own material. I never give any dance steps. That's not for me.

L: So you don't give them even any kind of inspiration, that you say "I'd like you to take your inspiration from this". It's really completely from themselves?

N: No no, the dance is from them. The concept is mine. I explain "why do we do "Full Circle", why is it called "Full Circle". That's because of my journey 10 years ago from Amsterdam to New York. That's why I definitely wanted an Afro-American actor or spoken word person in it. Of course that's mine and...but the physicality, how they express themselves, that's theirs. I build the concepts and I give them directions, so I ask them to do something. I give them little assignments and then together with Bart I'm making the "montage".

L: That's what I meant. So you do give them assignments.

N: Sure.

L: What sort of assignments would you give them? Would they be spatial assignments or ...?

N: Spatial only when it's necessary. Usually it's about them : where are you, what do you want to develop? How did I start "Full Circle"? I want them all four almost representing a different area of the city. And each of them had already a different spot in space like there's Brooklyn Bridge, there's a park. In every big city you have a map and that's also what we put in the design, so when you travel either in a big city – Amsterdam is not so big – but in New York if you, like in London, if you take a subway you jump in here, you go to the other end of the city. It's a completely different world. So all these different atmospheres I was exploring with them. I wanted everybody to have their own territory. So one was more on a platform where trains would pass by. The other was in a park. The other was one a bridge and the other had a mobile house.

L: So you were asking them to use their imagination when they created their own solos.

N: Very much, their imagination linked to their own story we could develop. And they all had their own assignment for themselves. I remember the girl on the stairs, it was to explore two sides of her which you find interesting. One was the rough aggressiveness of her movements against more the feminine side. The other one on the platform was trying to work from the inside out, and something had to come out. The tall one on the small block he was more trying to take his space, and to fly out. Ray in the park, he wanted to dance for 5 minutes, to really push him to keep on going, particularly for a breakdancer, 5 minutes is long. Instead of the 30 minutes. So definitely, and most of them like working

this way because it's also their personal journey. It's very close to them, but that's very hiphop. Hiphop is one on one. You're not pretending you're a character, you enhance...

L: You always work from yourself.

N: Yeah, you enhance certain elements of yourself and that's what you portray. Hiphop culture is very autobiographical. If you listen to all the raps, it's always me...

L: I don't quite understand the connection between...the spatial connection about being in the city and their own personal journey. So somebody for example is in the park and also working from the feminine or masculine side of their character.

N: They don't relate to the place at all. That's for later. You always work very much in layers, and for them it's not really a bridge. But I thought "ok, maybe find movements that connect, if you're on a bridge. It's very much ad rem what I throw at them, if they catch something, "hey, that's interesting" and then build further.

L: But there was this concept of a city.

N: There still is.

L: There is, yeah. The woman, the actress was also talking about being in New York, and getting lost.

N: Yes, 'cos I use the map and then the theatre is an installation. And people go through it, and you want to give people the sensation as if they are also on a journey. And that the landscapes are always changing. It's either because they move or because the dancers move. So that's what happens when you're in a big city. And in a big city you have these different characters, but these characters are, they almost look like you and me. That's why I don't use the abstraction of putting them in leotards. That's a choice. I mean the language where they come from, it's a vernacular way of moving.

L: But they were on an elevation. Which made them special.

N: And that's where the theatre comes in. It is a marriage between a club and theatre. And it also enhances their movements and it gives the audience a different position. And I can paint more in an installation and having more depth, and it was practical. People could see. Otherwise if it's all on the flat floor...we do that too, but then you have a different dynamic.

L: I have to say, to come in and to see these dancers, it was really amazing. It was very beautiful to see them.

N: On the stage?

L: Yeah, when you see them on these elevations and they do this fantastic dancing. What I'm trying to say is, they really don't feel like you and me. They feel very special, very dramatic.

N: Yeah when they dance. But when they're just standing next to you and not dancing...They don't use make-up like in the opera, in that sense.

L: Maybe we can now go onto the theme of interaction. You have a lot of moments of interaction with the audience. Can you explain how that came about because you have...first of all the audience is allowed to walk around wherever they like. I'd be interested to know why you wanted to have that.

N: Well first of all, you want to know your audience. You don't put them far away in the dark and sitting in chairs. And then if you take a club concept, in clubs the border between audience and performers, there is none. You know you and me are on the same... sometimes you perform or I perform. So you already break that barrier. Although if you're not an excellent dancer that doesn't matter.

You're part of the space, so all the audience are already...the minute you walk in you're already a participant. There's already audience participation because the

audience is directing the space where the dancers can work. There's a different dynamics when all the people are here, or when they are spread. So they already are part of the composition.

L: The landscape.

N: The landscape, that's already one.

L: But the dancers had already decided where they were going to dance, hadn't they?

N: Yeah, that's the structure so that they can follow their own journey. It's only that they adapt. And the energy is different. If you dance towards somebody's back, or have eye contact. So it's an exciting journey. As soon as the audience comes in you have to choose in the moment where you direct your dance, that's already different.

L: So how does that affect their dance then?

N: Eh...

L: The fact that they have more contact. 'Cos you're saying, are you saying they have more contact with their audience?

N: They feel the energy more. They communicate better than when the audience is much further.

L: And what does that mean, "communicate better"?

N: You feel them. You feel them more than when you're doing it on stage and in Carré.

L: You're saying that there is much more chance of a dialogue.

N: Yeah.

L: Between the dancers and the audience.

N: Yeah and they also have to be aware that there is an audience. If it's very full, you know. I can't just hit your head, so it's already, you have to move around it or particularly if we do the floor patterns...not so much when they're on stage, when they're on stage that's more a performative place. And that's also part of it 'cos these are the elements that they've been working on. But if they walk through the space then there is a lot of interaction. And they also have to deal with an audience that don't want to see them. 'Cos sometimes you have school audiences, like waasj, they don't care.

L: And they don't move away, they don't move aside for the dancers?

N: No, and that's fun for me to see how they solve the thing.

L: So how do they solve that?

N: If you want to go like this, they go like this.

L: They go, they just go...

N: They always solve it. Or they make a different movement or ...yeah, that's what you do in life. So they always deal with things. And they're very good at it, that's why they are...

L: And do they deliberately seek eye contact with their audience?

N: Some of them. Some of them need that. That's a choice.

L: So you don't...

N: And they also flip from sometimes being an observer and sometimes being a dancer. So to come back to your question, as soon as the audience comes in there's an interaction. And then at some points we ask them to move with us, that helps as well, so that breaks the ice. So the audience knows the code, "oh, I can walk around". 'Cos not everybody understands it immediately. Or if we did – usually in the "Full Circle" we take them in a sort of bounce. In this bouncing mode people can move with them.

L: Very simple movements.

N:Very simple movements. But you can break it down and make a simple movement very sophisticated. It's also that you contribute something to the energy.

L:Why did you get them to do that bounce? Why did you get your audience to do that?

N:So then they give the energy to the dancers. If you have an audience like this (sits back), you only absorb. And if you started moving, the dancers feel you much better. And it adds to the collective body. That's what social dance is about. You dance with everybody and if the audience is more there, more present, the dancers perform better.

L:I see. But is it also that you ultimately want the audience to get something in return? If the dancers dance better.

N:It's for both. Then the audience have something nicer to see and the dancer dances also, I mean brings himself to another limit.

L:What I thought was very interesting, you have at a certain moment a cakewalk, like in the 20's and the 30's and the 40's when they had...

N:You mean the "soul train".

L:I suppose so. They had this long alley.

N:Yeah yeah. It's more a soul train than a cakewalk. A cakewalk is the 20's version of black people imitating white people.

L:Oh really?

N:Yeah, it's the very beginning of black American dance.

L:So can you just explain that concept of the soul train?

N:The soul train is something that was, when did we have soul train? It's from American television...

L:The 70's?

N:The 70's, yeah. Disco. A party line, you know, 2 people, 2 lines and then everybody walks as a duet in between the lines, trying the best moves. Because it was on television you could, you know, get your seconds of fame. And a lot of steps are coming out from soul train, you copy them.

L:Because what happened on the day when I watched was there was always a dancer accompanying one of the people from the audience. So the person from the audience, usually they just copied what the dancer was doing. Did you ask the dancers to do that?

N:I asked the dancers to take the people on a journey, and not everybody, particularly in the Netherlands, particularly if you go outside the big cities, knows what a soul train is. So if you join them it's a funkier version than a "polonaise". And you have more interaction. So the dancer takes somebody from the audience and you just go and that's a very, it's a natural law. When a person doesn't know what to do you start copying. But if they're familiar, you can also say, if you are familiar with dance they just go and give the dancer something.

L:Right, and then the dancer can react in turn, along the soul train.

N:Sure.

L:What happens then with school kids?

N:They join usually.

L:And they copy or do their own thing, or does it just depend?

N:No it's exactly the same as with adults, there's no difference. Maybe they giggle a bit more, and some of them are very shy and behaving as though they're very sturdy. Something like that. And usually we will, except for exceptionally big groups who really don't want to do it, most of them join.

L:And if they really don't want to do it?

N:Then they don't do it. That's also...the dancers I select are very good at knowing where the borders are. You can feel if somebody wants to dance.

L:And there was also chanting, there was a call-and-response chant.

N:I can't remember that one. Maybe completely at the end when they make these dance islands. But the call-and-response is a very African, a very American thing, call-and-response. That's just a game, it's not directed. If it happened it's not directed if the dancers are doing call-and-response. The only thing I specifically directed are the people on the mikes, that was only the actors.

L:That was just the dancers' own initiative to do a call-and-response chant, oh right, I see. Was there any kind of story that the audience was supposed to take part in or was it really just creating an atmosphere?

N:Both. It depends. On the first level some people experience this, "oh this is fun", it's not directed, it's for the atmosphere. And some people experience it as a journey, that they really go through something and come out differently, in the sense that "first I'm a spectator here, I'm a participant and oh I've learnt something about the dancers. I got to know them a bit more". Or "it was interesting to listen to some of the knowledge of the hip-hop people", that was on the video. Some people experience like a collage of a city or something, that they're in. So it depends on what kind of audience you are. Some people see it almost like an education-emotion.

L:Could you explain that? That's an aspect that I'm really interested in.

N:It's Edu-tainment. First you think "oh this is fun, it's just a party, but wait a minute, that girl is really trying to say something. And why am I here? Oh wait a minute it's a landscape" and then it's linked to the quotes on the video. And maybe people get interested and go and google "who is Lenny Harris?" Archie Burnett was also on the screen.

L:You've heard that from people, that those were their reactions? That they get intrigued by the ...

N: Yeah. And also sometimes "oh I thought hip-hop was just entertainment, but it's much more, it's a whole culture, it's eh... and people from that scene, they have knowledge. Some people see just dance and just want to move all the time, and they just can't stop.

L:But do you think, the fact that there's interaction, do you think that encourages people, do you think that makes a difference? Is there more chance that they're going to look on google and find out about these people?

N:That I don't know. I mean maybe if you have an interesting show nowadays maybe you're gonna google anyway. (Interruption from outside.) That I don't know, I've never done research. I do believe that, my intuition says, that you... being closer to dance, you take something more than observing from a distance. If you watch dance on youtube you get a different feeling from this dance on youtube or when you're sitting in Carré than when you're really dancing with this person. The exchange...

L:What is this difference?

N:I'm not a scientist, but there is, there's definitely a difference in... I don't know, in energy, you exchange a different energy. And also I think if I move this way a lot in this space, for example if I do this for hundreds of hours in this space I walk out. I still believe that if somebody walks in they can feel that something has happened in this space and I think you feel that much more when you're very close to this person. And unconsciously, I think there are a lot of things happening unconsciously.

L:And what sort of things do you think are happening unconsciously?

N:What I heard from dancers who did more "stage" performances and then doing this at the eh...the change of perspectives. It probably teaches your brain to switch much more quickly : "oh now I'm an observer, oh now I can be this, I can be that". In a very short space of time. Than when you say, "ok I'm sitting here". It's much more passive, and there's a Shakespeare show happening (unintelligible). But if this Shakespeare person, I can smell his costume, or I can feel and smell his breath in what he's saying, I get more information than when it's much more from a distance. With actors I don't know, but with dance I'm sure there must be a frequency in the air that you touch when you're in it and that we're all not conscious about.

L:So when you're interacting as an audience then you're receiving more information than when you're just sitting passively, is that what you're saying?

N:Yeah, yeah, in dance. I have no idea when you're...

L:No I'm interested in dance.

N:In this kind of dance, in social dance. Probably not if I really want to study a Cunningham choreography, then I'd better focus and concentrate on what's happening there than on moving with Merce or whoever. But with this specific dance yes. I think you learn also quicker.

L:And why do you think you learn quicker?

N:Because you don't think. If you see somebody dance, that's why we ask the audience "look and come". And not say "ok, we're first going to do this and that and then try it". That's what's usually done in an academy. You first give the steps, and all the thoughts and then analyze, and then just do. It's like, it takes too long. It's better, if you learn salsa, you just put on the music and you make sure you dance with the best salsa dancer and then you follow him. Then you gain, I think 1 hour dancing with a good salsa dancer in the salsa space, in that context, teaches you more than 10 classes here in a school 1 hour a week, counting 5 6 7 8. It's a helpful tool, if you don't have the access, but I believe it's different. And the dancers that you (?) they're from the scene. It's not in the studio, what they do.

L:How do you encourage the audience to participate? I mean they're standing there, and some people were really dying to dance before the event had even started. But there were 2 boys, of 14 years old, you could see they were dying to dance, but they didn't quite dare. What are the ways that you use to help the audience to get over their inhibitions?

N:Some of them, I don't do that deliberately, it's up to them. If they really wanted, they would jump on there. Or they feel they should respect a certain space for the other, which is also good. First you start with a good dj. So the music unconsciously does something, 'cos you're not thinking "oh I wanna dance", oh you feel "hmm, this is nice, ohhh this is sugar for my brain. A very good dj, make sure he has the right music. That's the task of djs, they know how to make crowds move. And select dancers who are very open, and not self-egoists who dance for themselves.

L:What do you mean by open?

N:That when they dance they communicate, they're not just dancing, "I'm dancing, whatever I do".

L:So they're looking out towards the audience?

N:And even if they don't look out, they're really communicating in space with their bodies. So they know how to create sculptures in space. Drawing Chinese signs, but they use bodies in space. And they're very open-hearted as well, and they like people, and they like making connections with people. Not all dancers like that. But the dancers that I work with, they have all those capacities. And

they're usually very natural good peers , without any education, and they are willing and prepared to embrace people in space with their dance. They're very generous people, those ones I select. And then if you have that in a very good dj, then already, wherever your audience, they should not feel very intimidated although you think that's a fantastic dancer, but it's not like that. Are they really better than me? No, they can be in the same space. So if you have a really good dj, there are dancers who are very inviting and also have an attitude of "come, you can come and dance with me".

L:They even say that. At some point there was ...I can't remember the words, but the feeling was that you were invited, you can feel comfortable there, walk wherever you like, you don't have to do anything.

N:And you use the first 10 minutes to give the audience time to "god, where am I? Oh, there are no chairs ." And then there's someone who says, "ok, you are welcome. You can do anything that you want, but you don't have to." If that's the code and they understand it, then at least it's comfortable. I believe very much, if you're comfortable, then you have much more freedom in your mind and your body. That there's a chance that you will join. You don't have to, but that's how you prepare I think.

L:Of your audiences, what percentage usually joins, do you know?

N:In the bits you can join, usually 80-90. You're sticking out more if you don't join.

L:That's what I noticed when I was there.

N:And even people said, "oh, I didn't like to join", some older friends of mine. She said, "I didn't feel excluded, then I was watching a ritual or a culture that I am not familiar with, but that was fine too."

L:At a certain point, your dancers...there was a theme of touch. They started to touch each other and, in passing, touch the audience. I was curious about that. Why that happened?

N:Was that in the audience?

L:Yeah. It was just a passing touch, a very light touch.

N:I didn't direct that one. Probably it just happened. Probably one of those freestyle moments. There were moments that they made this little journey and sometimes they just go through the audience and sometimes...oh yes, and sometimes they just move their arm away from the audience to make their own landscapes probably. But that probably just happened or developed throughout the show. And these are little presents if you...'cos this show develops while doing it. You can't really study everything in the studio because you need at least 40 people in the space.

L:Did you find that people very naturally adopt the same style of movements as your dancers?

N:Not in one session, no. Probably if they come 50 times. 'Cos the movements they do, they're all pretty natural. Yeah I think definitely, but maybe people adopted, like if there are children, I hear sometimes from parents that , a week later they see the children doing something, trying to do things. So in that sense...that's why I thought, this has many more consequences than people think. Like with children, if you put children somewhere they start copying, but you don't know when they observe.

L:And what sort of consequences do you think it has for a more adult audience?

N:Adults are more stiff. I think for young people they store it in their brains and it comes out or it doesn't. Adults, I don't know. But it should be the same, I mean...unconsciously, you know for example: if you've only seen these kinds of dance on television, and have a certain opinion, but "ok, black people know how

to dance or this is a black person and I'm never gonna get in touch with a black person. " By seeing this person so close, maybe it's, they probably don't do it consciously, but maybe years later when they see a black person they probably deal or work differently with this person. Not work...

L: Because they were so close to the person...has it got to do with being very close to the person?

N: And also with the whole energy. For example, I've never been to China. I went there for the first time in 2009. It did something, it meant something really to me physically, that I wasn't the only Chinese in this big space and seeing always, only Chinese faces around me. I don't know why that has as an effect, but I know it has an effect on me. And when I came back, I wondered why I only discovered now how, that it's ok not to have a big nose. It was a huge change in my perspective. I always thought living here that the only nose, it's best to have a bigger nose. Going to China, and of course I can rationalise about it, I mean I'm old enough to know that it's not so important. But after travelling in Asia and coming back, then I thought, you know, I could let go of this whole concept of the aesthetic of a nose should be like that.

L: Because you were immersed in another society.

N: Yes, that the perspective was different. A perfect nose. So it's that I trained myself. You know, being here, being 5 years old and only seeing white faces around me. So that's the norm. So every time you look in the mirror, "this is not right". Coming to a place, you know Shanghai has over a million Chinese faces, I thought "oh! It's different!" So, I'm not sticking out and I'm also part of them, so in that respect, on that level. So I really do believe it's definitely different if you've, yeah if you have danced. 'Cos the reason why I think that is because, in a good club or a good party it doesn't matter. Whether you're rich or you're poor, or whether you're black or you're white, people dance with each other.

L: Do you think that by getting the audience to interact they also understood the concept better?

N: I don't know. Maybe. Sometimes, from a conceptual point of view maybe you see it better when you're more at a distance, enjoying the landscapes. I don't know 'cos me myself I'm hardly in it, 'cos I'm always directing, I'm on the side at the dj booth. Only once, 'cos I finally could let it go because they were more experienced and then I was walking. And then I thought "oh this is a nice concept." I was walking through it. Then I felt it is really different although...I really became an audience which I was quite surprised after seeing the show 10 times. For example, one of the dancers I know very well and it was really exciting when he was dancing close to me. And I thought "hey this is a nice surprise to me although I know him 15 years", but...

L: So what was the difference for you? What was happening with you?

N: The transformation. The...what is funny is that you accept immediately a role. As soon as I was not a director, but I was stepping in as an audience, I became an audience and then the dancers had got authority. Not like pop stars, but it felt a little bit like "ooh, he's moving close to me. Wow!" Because he's not using the same moves as me.

L: But the fact that he's moving really close to you...

N: He was just passing. I thought "ho, this is a dancer just passing. Ah, I'm part of his story"

L: His world.

N: Or his world.

L: So how is that different as an experience from when you're sitting in a chair?

N: Same as if you're watching Michael Jackson from a distance and MJ is passing you and if you're a big fan of his. There's a certain electricity. You're like (gesture of excitement). I think it's that. It's also sometimes that, sometimes you don't feel like having an audience participation if I go out. Me myself personally. And then you end up sitting in a modern theatre piece and suddenly they put the lights on the audience. If you don't feel like it, and you hate that the spotlight is on you 'cos you know ok you're part of the story, you're the subject of this person. But if it's all the time there and you're already part of it, I think it's a bit different. It has also the same effect as soon as you're either forced or...you're in a different bubble. It has to do with status, it has to do with sudden role-play and I think we...as human beings we're constantly doing role-play.

L: So the role-play is different when you're sitting in the chair, because then you're really a spectator...

N: Yeah. Your role is very clear.

L: And when you're very close to a dancer, what is your role then?

N: You're already a "medeplichtige" I think.

L: Oh yeah, you're a peer.

N: You're a peer. You're on the same level.

L: So does that do something to you, the fact that you're on the same level? Does that give you the permission to react?

N: Yeah. You could react. But what I noticed when I was there: because he's moving differently, I give him higher status. He moves better than I do, so I look more at him as a bigger brother in the space. Or as a leader that are walking in a class.

L: Does that make you more alert to him? The fact that he's close?

N: Yeah, yeah, definitely. You feel that he's there. It's almost as though you see groups of children with a schoolmistress or -master. I also had a different feeling when my schoolteacher came close to me to correct me. Suddenly there's this authority that is bending over me which is so different from when he's in front of the class. Already that energy is there, and of course in the school there's definitely clear rules. And he knows a bit more than I do. So I felt a little bit like if you have really fantastic dancers around you then, oh they're the guides. They know something that I don't know.

L: What do you think that does to the audience then?

N: I don't know, to me it's comforting. It's very comforting that you have people around you that know what they're doing, that are in control, so it gives me focus in that space.

L: As a spectator?

N: Yeah.

L: So it means you're more focused in the way you're looking, you're more alert?

N: Yeah, 'cos...and at the same time it depends 'cos if somebody is doing something I wanna watch that person. If the light is there, I'm gonna go there. But if I'm bored I could also do something else. I can even maybe walk to the bathroom or get a drink.

L: So you have more choice?

N: I think so, yeah.

L: But when you do chose to look at a dancer then you are more engaged. Is that what you're saying ?

N: Eh...I think so.

L: Because they're very close to you?

N: Yeah, I think so, 'cos you're less distracted. 'cos I've noticed if I want to watch this person I'm gonna watch this person. And I don't mind that there's something

else happening. If I would be in the audience I would go from there to there. Trying to see everything. That's what I notice, when I'm sitting and I'm watching a show - Alain Platel also has thousands of things happening - I'm looking there and there. If I'm in a big space I have to make certain choices. you're less distracted. 'cos I've noticed if I want to watch this person I'm gonna watch this person. And I don't mind that there's something else happening. If I would be in the audience I would go from there to there. Trying to see everything.

L: So your concentration is greater when you are closer to the performer and...

N: I don't think it's greater or bigger or more. It's just different. The biggest difference is that you swop constantly. You make choices and you swop either being a spectator or I move from this side to that side. I can sit on the floor, I can stand up. I can move my but with it. So there are more choices. Whereas if I'm in my seat I can close my eyes, which I don't do, so there are less choices. But I can also be very concentrated if there's a monologue on stage. And if that monologue is in a club...

L: Yeah, but you said that if a teacher comes very close to you, then it does something to you. The fact that the teacher is very close to you. So in a performance if a performer comes very close to you and starts to do these amazing moves and he's guiding you, so what does that do to you? What does that do to the audience?

N: Yeah, what I think happens is that you feel very much exposed, you feel invited to be part of their world. And at the same time it's also maybe a little scary, 'cos I remember when I was younger, when a performer comes very close and they suddenly put a mike in your face, I would go "oh, I don't want to say anything", because then I'm part of the show or thousands of people hear what I'm saying.

L: Does it matter if people find it scary?

N: No. No, that's part of meeting, it's a confrontation. I can get annoyed when people suddenly push a mike in my face and it's my choice to either say nothing or turn my head or... But it's a confrontation, or if I'm in a bad mood then I go like (sound), you know. But it evokes an emotion.

L: So when a performer comes close to you then it does evoke an emotion.

N: Yeah, it does.

L: And when you're allowed to dance with the performer, does that also evoke an emotion?

N: Yeah, 'cos you express this emotion through the movement or if you move with this person, you say "yes". If I'm asked to join the catwalk or the soul train, if I say "yes" then I'm saying "ok, you guide me and I go with you". And I think automatically if somebody does this (gesture) then I go like this (gesture) too.

L: So that's different from if you're just watching, you're not participating.

N: Yeah.

L: In what way is that different? 'cos you're saying now when I'm participating then somehow my emotions are involved.

N: Yeah, when people are so close. And when I'm watching them, then my emotions are also evoked, but in a different way.

L: So in what way is it different?

N: I'm more in a spectator's (role). Maybe I'm very moved by the composition that I see on stage.

L: So it's more abstract.

N: Maybe.

L: So you're more aware of...

N: Or I'm touched by the story if I'm watching a play. Or I can identify with the actor or actress, so I'm moved constantly, but I think in a different way than if a dancer takes my hand. Then it's not the story or the actor who takes my hand, it's different. It's the physicality of it, it's much more physical.

L: It's much more physical. And also the fact that you are taking part, I mean even if the performer doesn't come close to you, would it still be different?

N: Yeah, it's also different when it's close or not so close.

L: Just the fact that you're taking part in the movement?

N: I don't know. I've never thought about these things so much.

L: No.

N: I'm just thinking out loud now, what does it mean? What I can say is it's definitely different when I see somebody perform at this distance than when he's 30m away. Both will evoke emotions, but different ones.

L: And I wonder, do you think participation is in anyway educational? Or is it just "puur vermaak"?

N: It's both. I think it's edu-tain-tional. But people can see it as entertainment. Why do people move or jog? Maybe it's for health reasons, but it's also getting the serotine working and they have a good time. And for other people moving or dancing is a very spiritual thing. I think it's all very different. But your question was...

L: Do you think it's educational or is it "puur vermaak"?

N: I think it's both. It can be still "vermaak", but in "vermaak" there can be something educational, in the sense of not really a moral educational thing, but you've learned something, you've picked up something.

L: And what have you learnt?

N: You've picked up something...

L: What have you learnt from "Full Circle"?

N: It's not that you say "oh I've learnt so much about the hiphop culture". I think you take a certain energy with you, you take all the information with you. If you are touched by one of the dancers you take that with you. I don't know what that means, it means they put a stamp on you or... I think you take it with you. I mean I remember some pop concert. It was very full to get in and there were really nasty guys who were touching me all the time. You take that also with you. I felt like "ah!". When I got home I really wanted to shower. And that's not a nice example, but then people are... In a club if people do it gently then it probably also does something to you.

L: The audience has experienced the energy of the dancers. So do you think in a way they've also understood the concept? Something about the concept?

N: Maybe some. I think people understand the concept when they are experienced theatre observers. I've noticed that people who study theatre they can understand why I talk about installation. The hiphop dance itself I don't have to explain that I'm building an installation, that people will feel (sound of indifference), they're very young dancers. So some people will understand the concept, some people really like what is happening in the shows. A lot of programmers really like what we do with new audiences, what they call new audiences. They like the accessibility of this thing, their first steps in theatre. We also see it as a first step for people who like social dance to say "what can I do more with it?"

L: So what you're saying is, by getting people to participate, it's a first step towards understanding theatre? Or towards going into a theatre? What is it?

N: If you talk about education or learning about something, it's that it lures them or it's challenging to see dance in a different context. 'Cos some experienced

dancers – I recently spoke to someone who came from Lucia Marthas – she said, “oh wow, it’s very special!” to do it this way. Which in a way I think it’s still not so much done because there’s a lot of site-specific theatre done, like Dog Troup, but these are areas that people don’t go to so often.

L: So the person from Lucia Marthas, what did she learn then?

N: That you can also put dance into this kind of context. And not in the context that she probably knows, which is I don’t know, shows, musical...

L: And do you think VMBOers for example, do you think, do they come to your events?

N: Yeah.

L: Do you think it’s a first step for them to go into theatres?

N: Usually if we see them it’s in school options or they come from ROC. ROC is different because that’s already an education, usually in dance. If they come from a school, I think it’s maybe the first time that they are in a theatre, so that’s already an education. To be in a space, that you share the same floor with different peoples than you know. In that sense it’s an education.

L: In what sense?

N: That you share, that you meet other people in this theatre.

L: That you meet dancers.

N: But also audience. My surname(?) is a neighbour whom you would never meet if you would not come to the same show. Even in that sense. Or there’s a chance that you connect with different people, meaning also connecting with different worlds. You would never...maybe in the metro I would bump into you. In that sense for me theatre is still enlarging daily life.

L: So it’s really like a social getting to know each other.

N: In a way. It’s even interesting to see different groups of people dancing the same rhythm or dancing together.

L: It’s like a communal sharing almost.

N: Yeah, so the club has a strong communal base of course, and then what we do is we start it up in a more theatrical way.

L: But is that also what you’d like, that they have this sense of sharing with each other?

N: It’s not my goal, but it’s a nice by-product.

L: And you think it does happen?

N: It does happen.

L: I think I’ve finished. I don’t know if you have any questions?

N: No, it’s more like “Hmm, interesting questions that I’ve never thought of”.

Audience participation. I never thought of it so consciously, and it became now a part of an instrument. For me the audience is important, otherwise you cannot have a club. My first, or the very basic needs of a “theatremaker”. You can’t make anything as a theatre director if there is no audience.

L: I think it’s very interesting ‘cos in the past “theatremakers” said you can’t take part in a piece because then you’re not taking any distance. And then you can’t appreciate the piece for what it is. If you get too involved in it then you can’t appreciate the concept. I think with dance at least, if you take part in the dance, first of all you need to be invited, you need to feel comfortable to take part. But if you do take part that often, it might be a way for you, you kind of...There’s this theory about mirroring of neurons, that we mirror each other, that we even mirror our surroundings. And that possibly we are mirroring the dancer in some way - a real dancer will mirror more than somebody who knows nothing about dance - and that by doing that, in a way you are embedding the concept of the piece in your body. And so although you may not be understanding the piece

with your mind necessarily, you might be actually physically feeling the piece better than if you're sitting in a chair far away. So it's a completely different experience, it's not so much a mind experience, but possibly a kinaesthetic and even an emotional experience.

N: That's interesting. You say it even better than I do. This thing of mirroring. I think so too. Yeah, because I don't believe that you have to lose sight of the concept if you're in it. I think it's also culturally related : I think if I would be in Indonesia or Africa, people would never make these things so separate. So if you're in it, "I can't understand it".

L: Well that's exactly what's happened.

N: 'Cos it's one on one.

L: Saraber made a study of African dance and Dutch dance and she said "in African dance, social dance is completely the norm. Whereas in Holland social dance is considered not really art. And why is that." And I think also that possibly there's a difference between theatre and dance. With dance, because we do mirror each others' movements we are maybe able to carry the concept of the dance inside our bodies.

N: What I find interesting is I work at the Dance School Dansdocent, and sometimes I bring these hiphoppers and if you say "ok, can you improvise", they're very comfortable in who they are and what they express and who they are and what they express is usually one-on-one. Whilst some of the students who have maybe a ballet background, they get really confused if you ask them "can you express yourself?". They need to think, they need time to make something. They first have to think what they are gonna make and then express it. And it's less strong than one of the hiphoppers, they don't think so much, they just put on the music and then ok... And it's interesting, those confrontations.

L: I think there's a really big shift happening in dance. It was very much about steps, it was very visual. And the great dancers were able to translate the visual steps and so on into their bodies, the really good dancers. Whereas I think dance is now becoming much more "just what does my body feel like?" It's now much more kinaesthetic in a way. And I think that's maybe where they're getting confused. 'Cos they haven't made the link between the visual and their own physicality. Whereas the hiphoppers, they never thought about the visual side of it. They're just physical.

N: That's true. There's less burden and more freedom. I'm not saying one is better, it's just different. And what you say is true. It also depends on what you want to say. For Brecht, if you want to make a statement. Or for example if I want to see a politician or watch the news. But to say it instead of dancing it. It's a different medium. I can understand particularly if it's Brecht wanting to empower the people that you have to be a bit cold-headed to understand the situation. Sometimes it helps to take a bit of distance. While with the dance... what I do want is to make people move mentally or physically. Just to keep things moving. One thing that I do believe is that people are very stagnant. Then I do get a bit afraid. Then I also believe that a state of mind can be very stagnant.

L: What you're saying is if you can get them to physically move, maybe their mind will also move?

N: Well yes, generally. If we as human beings don't move we get sick, gradually. I get more injuries on the computer than when you cycle and move. Already in that sense. And you're much more open to changes. You can find more ways I think to relieve stress if you know how to move. If you don't... I think it's very

extreme what I'm saying, but in general I think it's very healthy to move. And it also helps probably 'cos it has an effect on the mind.

L:And what effect does it have on the mind?

N:If you have a flexible mind it would be in balance if you have a flexible body. And the other way around.

L:So what you're saying is that dancers and athletes are probably more mentally flexible or...?

N:Hopefully. Of focused or stronger. Or they can at least shift their concentration. I've never worked with athletes. I think it's also pretty dependent on how you use it, and it depends on how you move and what you move.

L:But what you're saying is, in your club event you do want people to move because you think it's good for their mental state or their emotional state.

N:Not particularly in this club event. I think in general. No, no, in a club event what I want to do is that people enjoy in different layers what is happening on the floor and whether it's entertaining or that it's an educational thing or it's maybe a way of thinking "hey, this is an interesting...let them surprise... Hey something happening". I like to surprise. And I do really like it when people melt 'cos I also sometimes have colleagues "oh I never like to go, participation, yuk". And then "ok, I'll come because it's your show". And then you see ah! We got you in an hour. That's really fun. And even technicians, 'cos usually technicians are very sceptical. You see them enjoying themselves. Yeah the clubs is really a celebration. I like the essence that you celebrate life in a lot of aspects and that you find different shapes and forms.

L:You know you really did. The atmosphere by the end of that show was just fantastic and afterwards people were also jamming. There was a jam that happened afterwards...?

N:Yeah some of the people hang around. If they don't speak then you see a certain glow in the eyes, and then I go "oh!". As soon as you come to a city people are a bit sceptical or they're a bit tired, and then they get energy from it. It makes sense.

Interview with Ina Stockem and Gilberto Perotti : *Body Lounge*

19th April 2012

Amsterdam

I= Ina Stockem

G= Gilberto Perotti

L= Leah Jacob (interviewer)

L: So we were just talking about how you select the people in your...

I: The hosts, yeah. They're called hosts, firstly because they have different backgrounds. It ranges from body therapists to actors, dancers, physiotherapists, yoga teachers.

L: And the actors have physical experience?

I: Yes, always.

L: A physical training?

I: Yes. That's the background. And preferably in contact improvisation .

L: They have to have contact, or...?

I: Yes, preferably, I think everybody has.

G: Yes, there were maybe a couple of hosts not really at... I mean I personally had no experience with contact dance, but it's interesting when starting working with BL, you work with blindfolded people and they need to be guided. That means you have to touch them. You have to move them in space. The question is how you move people in the space.

I: And how do you move in your space.

L: What do you mean there?

I: That's what we train. There are 2 motions. Of course you touch people, you guide people through space. But you also guide people through inner space. Because it's also a power situation where specially... you know that BL consists of 3 spaces? The check-in, the play zone and the chill zone. But in the play zone we guarantee that we guide people. So we also touch their inner space. It sounds very complicated, but very basically, because we blindfold them. So you are thrown back to your own self and it moves people from the inside.

L: So if I understand you correctly what you're saying is people become more aware of their own kinaesthetic...

I: Exactly.

L: ...feedback.

I: Their emotions, their feelings, their state of being.

L: But also their physical...

I: Very much, yeah.

L: ...how they physically feel. Their physical experience.

I: That's why I found it very interesting to do BL for "non-movers". Because sometimes miracles are happening. So that they really feel that their body after a long time. They really get thrown back to other senses because the visual sense is excluded. And as you know that's the most thorough sense of ours, I mean the other sense that's very close to us. But that's also a sense that always takes us away from our own selves.

L: What is the management structure of BL? So you are the artistic director and is there anybody else involved as an artistic director or you do it on your own?

I: I'm the only artistic director in the sense that I take responsibility for the circumstances and the situation in which BL is happening. It also means the organisation, the production. On the other side, there are lots of co-artistic directors because... to start with, I don't call the performers "performers", but "hosts" because they are not seen, they don't get any applause. It requires

different techniques from them. They have applause from something else. Because Body Lounge is a one-on-one experience, I need very self responsible hosts that also take their own responsibility and as an artistic director, I facilitate. So I call myself an artistic facilitator because I open up a space where very artistic hosts direct people through the performance.

L: So how long is a performance?

I: That's technically, you have the check-in space, what you also went through, where we explain some rules of the performance, where you take your shoes off and also make contact for the first time and where we blindfold you.

L: 'Cos you make contact, from what I can remember, I didn't actually meet my host until I was blindfolded.

I: Exactly. That's very important because otherwise, not only that the eyes are the most thorough sense, but the eyes also judge all the time. Then you want a funny example : we always get asked by men, "will I be touched by a woman? I don't want to be touched by men because I'm a homosexual." We say don't worry, you will get touched by a human...by a host. Because it doesn't matter actually, because you are touched by a human being. So we want to exclude all these judgements.

L: So what is your role during the evening?

I: During the evening...so I'm the overall eye, I'm the only one who actually checks. And BL has a maximum of 3 hours, but in the 3 hours I check all 3 spaces. I'm also a joker in the play zone.

L: Can I just stop you there. So what do you check for?

I: I check for...BL, it's also a very technical question, but since it's a one-on-one experience , we have, as you can imagine, first a lot of people in the check-in zone – say like max 10. These people get guided through the play zone and at the end everybody ends up in the chill zone.

L: The chill zone means that you can take your blindfold off, is that correct ?

I: Yes you can, you do have the option and...

L: So you don't have to take your blindfold off?

I: No.

G: You are guided, for...this is technically...we have a time, we have a watch inside. Of course you are blindfolded so you don't see it, but we have a watch. Ina is our supervisor, she's checking of course that we...because we have 10-15 minutes.

I: In the play zone.

G: That's the appointment we make, because we have a lot of people waiting, or because we are so few. 10 minutes can also be 20 minutes, it depends on how many people are waiting outside. But after 15-20 minutes you take your guest to the chill space and you tell this person that the guided journey is over. You can stay blindfolded if you want. You can take it off. You put them in a comfortable situation and you explain to them that this is a space where there are other people lying down, or people moving, you give a kind of map of the space. And then just leave them there. Of course one of us has to stay there as a check because inside, in the play zone, they are guided. But there they are just by themselves. And by experience, because what we are telling now is after 6 years' experience. By experience ...

L: You exist 6 years?

I: Since 2004. 8 years.

G : By experience we can tell that most of the time men, they just take advantage of the situation, sexually. Body Lounge...

L: In the chill?

G: In the chill. That means that they touch, they just take off the blindfold and check around and say "oh I like this girl" and just put this blindfold on again. They go and touch them. It's kind of also... And now I'm coming also to the question about BL as a performance and the interaction with the public. If it happens, we need to be there and just keep it safe. From these people taking advantage, but also they are blindfolded, and most of them when they come from the play zone you're very excited and you don't want to take your blindfold off.

I: You want to stay blindfolded actually.

G: Yeah, you have this adrenalin shot where you really feel high, almost.

I: You feel made whole. Especially for big people – you have small people who are kids – for grown-ups it's such a relief to just be guided and be held.

They're... especially non-movers are completely overwhelmed. Technically speaking, they... in chill zone, although we have a... we call that a magical sentence, that's a very important sentence that we tell them "you are now self-responsible. You have 2 options, take your blindfold on or off." But still they just run and we really, by touch methods, we let them experience "now you are on your own again". But you can imagine that 90% of people are like blaghhh! and they run against the wall. It's again my role, so it shifts from lots of people in check-in and lots of people in play zone, and then at the end everybody stays in play zone. Most of the time nobody wants to leave, but if the chill zone is very full, I have the right as an artistic facilitator to ask more hosts into the chill zone. Normally we really don't guide people anymore, but we watch the guidance process of the interacting participants.

L: I'm going to ask you more questions later about what you just told me, but I just want to keep a little bit structured. You act as a joker, so what is that role?

I: So Body Lounge is a one-on-one experience, but we always have one back-up person, a free person that can – if we don't have a dj – change the music. Can exchange – that's also very practical – function...

G: Yes, clean up the space...

I: Yes, we work with ice cubes or rearrange the stuff, or for example back-up a situation that is unsafe. Physically unsafe or emotionally unsafe. But the joker is also there to – you're a dancer yourself – to do more fun stuff with people : lift them up or compress them or extend physical space or whatever. Do massage, the two of us, this is the fun part. A practical job.

L: Can I ask you what are the goals of BL? If you would describe Body Lounge what would you say your goals are?

I: What are the goals of Body Lounge, that's a good question.

G: We had 8 years ago, after performing a few times BL, we had this woman complaining that somebody was touching her breasts. And I said, "why didn't you say anything?". "Because I thought it was a performance." "Right, but you didn't feel comfortable, why didn't you say anything?" The question is, afterwards, is Body Lounge a performance? What is Body Lounge? Of course we guide them, but then there is this play zone where we guide them. And then there is this chill place, where it's free-style. Then they are just free to be together and of course we check and we keep it safe. But the question is, and we say it in Body Lounge at first before you get blindfolded, at every moment you can stop it or you can tell that you're not comfortable. You can say it physically, or if it's not enough, verbally : you want to stop, you want to change. But why did it not happen?

I: We want to remind people about being self-responsible. Being clear with borders. That's one goal of it. And the second goal is very simple. My foundation

is called "People On The Move". I want to move people in the brightest sense of the word. And yes, that's a long story. But I'm educated myself as a dancer, being on stage and getting applause. And I got stuck with this idea quite soon in my study already, because I first of all felt quite lonely on stage. I was more interested in my public : so why do you go and see dance? And I researched for myself that it's, when I see a good dance performance, I am kinaesthetically moved. Then I thought so how can I combine my...

L:Can I just stop you for a second there. 'Cos that's one of the subjects of my research. So what do you mean by, can you define what you mean by "kinaesthetically moved" ? Because I don't want to put words in your mouth in my piece.

I:So it's...I realise how I'm sitting at the moment. I'm very interested in this interview, so I'm sitting on the edge of my chair, the movement in my body is towards you, as you would be the performer on stage. Really physically engaged. And I realised that in a good dance performance people live with the performance.

L:That they almost copy the movement?

I:Yes, for example. Actually in a good dance performance you get "chicken skin", so you feel the dance movement. So the only step that I had to take in my choreographic career was to move my audience. It was more or less logical for me.

L:And you mean move both emotionally and physically.

I:So I thought also, and especially for non-movers, it's just great to dance, I love to dance, so how can I transmit this experience towards people who don't get in touch with dance and movement on a daily basis? Then I thought – I'm very interested in sensual work – touching, the senses. I'm working with demented people at the moment. But I was curious how can I give them an experience of a dance performance through their skin. To exclude the eyes because they always judge, because as you can imagine non-movers – so people with office jobs or not educated dancers – they of course say I cannot dance. That's what they also say in Body Lounge, and we say "just let go, just give yourself over, because you have a blindfold and you are moved".

L:Do they actually say that, the word dance? So they feel they have to dance?

I:Yes if they come in, if they take off their jackets, but at the beginning talk I have a host who's also educated in being the front woman, the hostess. She immediately turns around the words, and she speaks about "movement" and "let yourself be guided by movement" and "please respond via movement".

L:So she takes the emphasis away from dance.

I:Exactly.

L:So what you're saying is, the people do not feel under an obligation to perform.

I:Exactly. Although they do perform...People ardently want to see what Body Lounge looks like. We always say... they're very disappointed when they see the physical space without the blindfold because it's so different from what you imagined. And now we come to the word "fiction" which is Gilberto's speciality. I have a trailer where we try to capture what we feel, but it's also just hard work.

G:What's the goal? We realised immediately, because we are all movers, and rehearsing and experimenting with Body Lounge, how to do it. Touching each other all the time, and touching and touching and touching. And suddenly you have this public and you touch them and you feel these bodies closing, just closing. Like a tortoise. They are beautiful, and you come close by and they just close. The thing is, we need to find a way because you think it's easy. You just

go to somebody and you hug him and he should be very happy. It's not like this. We are in Holland. That's also something that we have to really think about. People don't touch each other, I mean you do it with your boyfriend, your girlfriend, your mother sometimes. But you just go there, you touch them, you hug them, you move them and they are happy. It's something you have to build up, trust. And that's the first thing we learn with Body Lounge. We have to gain trust, because if you gain trust then they open. Then it's just one-one.

L:But how do you do that?

G:What we actually have been focused on a lot is what we call "body conversation". That means that I'm, as a host, I look at you and I just try to feel what you need. Do you want to be teased, be comforted ? And I just slowly try to come into contact with you, like in a normal conversation. You just start with hey, hallo, how are you? And it's the same with...we don't use it verbally, but physically we need to do this.

I:And that's – sorry to interrupt – but that's why I call the dancers hosts because it's very easy, especially because we have most of the time more of a dance background than the audience, but to put your dance vocabulary on somebody. We really took lots of rehearsals, also with guinea pigs, with...

L:Can you just explain what you mean by that?

I:That what Gilberto explains with body conversation, that you don't put your ambitions, your motivations, your idea of what somebody needs on the person. But we developed tools to always check, is it about me or is it about the other person? Or, for example to start, we have a systematic procedure that we go through, how you make contact, for example we would never right away touch somebody's face. But we have muscle and bone structure, first move people through space, that's a general rule. So first through space, then through inner space.

G:Then you respect also, I mean there is a man and I'm a man, a man touching a man, a woman touching a woman or a man touching a woman. And you have to be aware about it because if I touch another man and in a very sensual way, it can be very challenging for the other person. That's something you have to be aware of. We try to learn how to make contact with a person. And then every person is different. And then every person is different. It's not a choreography you just make up, it's a filling.

L:So let's say I'm a person who wants to be teased.

I:Challenged.

L:So teased and challenged. At what point do you feel "ok, I've really reached this person? I've really done what this person needs?"

G: We decide together what is the point. You can be really extreme. What I've learnt is as a host I've a lot of power. And I know myself...In my own experience I am a teaser. I can really bring you...I can really open your border. I can really gain so much trust from you that I can really make you do things that you would never think about doing.

I:Gilberto can get very close, and one little addition : I also take care of the group that provides all genders, so sometimes I as a facilitator, as a joker, we have sign language. So when for example Gilberto touches a man and Gilberto cannot tease this man because he feels a man is touching me, we can always exchange persons. Although the idea is that in "play" you stay as one-on-one contact with one person all the time.

G:Yeah, we know each other and sometimes you have to consider "ok, you don't need me now, because I know she can go closer to you than I can". And then we change.

L:And you just feel that or...how do you...?

G:Yeah, we feel it.

L:Do you ever have people whom you really can't open?

I:How would you measure that, that's a very interesting question. We did have the tendency to project on a person that's moving as a block "oh that person doesn't open". Whereas afterwards of course we did a lot of reflection and we interviewed our public, we do have a guest book too, but we asked them and they were completely overwhelmed. I remember one, actually that was a dancer, who really just wanted to be held in the play zone, and to be honest it's a bit boring as a host, and you think "am I doing it well?". This dancer actually afterwards told that she was completely overwhelmed and she cried and she was so thankful. So the challenge as a host is to stay with that person and not to do all your tricks and your technique, but to really be with this person and not to project.

L:So let's say you get somebody, now let's go to the absolutely other extreme, somebody who really wants to be challenged and who wants to be thrown around all over the place.

I:We have them all the time.

L:So then you do that?

G:Yes, we do that. What I do is...when you talk about extreme I mean that people can really want to be tied up. I can start, just proposing something.

I:We use BDSM techniques.

G:Bondage sadomasochism.

L:Oh you do that too?

I:Yeah, with some people, with some hosts who know what they're doing, yes.

L:And they say in advance that that's what they like, or you feel...

G>You feel it. If I am quite open and you just show me that you want... And then I pick it up and I show you, and I spank you, and I see that you are completely ok with it. And then you spank me and then it goes further. I show you this and then I tie you up, I tie your wrists, and it goes further and further. It's something you build, it's a conversation.

I:And also this BDSM technique is a very good example, if you ask the question "what do we do with people that really want to be teased?". There are 2 methods. One is to save them up and let them be alone.

L:You mean to make them safe?

I:Yes, because physically we are protecting them so they can bump. So we don't touch them, but we let them just explode. And the other technique is what Gilberto describes, is restriction. So BDSM is one tool of restricting people. Because we realise that people who are very "ljljlj", shaking out and being everywhere in the air, want to be held and restricted, to get back to themselves. That's one technique of restricting people.

L:Can you explain that, "to get back to yourself" ?

G:BL explores the space around you, but also the inner space. And there are people, when they are blindfolded, they just go out, they want to explore what they don't see. Instead of going back in themselves and explore the inner space. So maybe they don't know, or maybe it's too challenging to go inside.

L:Are you saying that everybody does that or...?

G:No, some people just come and explode outside.

I:Most of the time dancers, to be very practical.

G:Because they are very comfortable with themselves and their body, they trust easily.

I: But that was my point also, feeling lonely on stage. That's very much extravert, to the outside. But it's first of all something that you know already as a dancer. To expand movements to the outside. With these dancers we do very little things also, to connect to inner space, movement inside of you, so that can be really overwhelming sometimes. And it's a bit of a cliché, but with people who are not used to "contact" and to movement, we always encourage them to explore the outer space.

L: So people who are not experienced...

I: There are two categories of public. The movers and the non-movers.

G: In other words, what's important, there are passive and active. Many people they just come inside and they are blindfolded and we use this idea that you are guided. This means for them "just do whatever you want". They're just like dead bodies and this is passive. And that means that you can just leave them there and you can do everything that you want, because they're just, you know, dead.

L: And they're usually non-dancers?

G: No, you can't...

L: You can't categorise.

G: No, it's just two kinds of people. And there are hyperactive, that's only move. You just touch their head and they start jumping. And it's hyperactive because you don't need to move so much. You're not reacting on what I'm doing, you just want to move.

I: You're on your own trip. That's how I felt as a dancer on stage. It wasn't connected to whom I'm addressing my movement to, to the audience. So that was the missing link that I tried and the blindfold is just a tool to take away the space in between me and the performer.

G: And the people that are very passive, we try to get them a bit more active. And the way, if there is somebody so passive, you just leave them alone. If I leave you there and I don't touch you, there is a moment that you will think, "why is nobody touching me?" and you start moving. And you become active, suddenly. Or these hyperactive, we constrict them.

L: But why do you want to get them to be more active, and why do you want them to become less hyperactive?

G: Because it's a body conversation. And ok, it's one-one. If you're too passive, then it just becomes my monologue.

L: Ok.

G: And if you're too active it's your monologue.

L: So that is really one of the goals, to have a dialogue.

G: Yes, to have a dialogue, it's very important. And to be connected with yourself and with the other person, in the space. That means that you are running through the space. You have to be aware that there are other people around, you can go against the wall. And to think that you are of course guided, but be responsible, for yourself as well.

L: So that's another goal.

G: This is another goal.

I: It's not only a dialogue, but actually we very tenderly and softly, and with a lot of patience, try to educate people. Try to have...you wrote down "integrity" and "care". But to, in play zone, to learn to be in dialogue with another person. In chill zone you give this experience to somebody else, not to a host, but to another participant of the performance. We don't say "public", but "participants". So hosts are dancers and public are participants.

L: So how would you give it in the chill zone to another participant?

I: We hope, I mean this is a very idealistic goal, but we hope that through this very respectful and careful body conversation, that people in chill zone they are left on their own, that they give this experience further to another participant, so not to the host. Because with the host you build up trust, but you build up this trust in a power situation, because you do think that Gilberto as a host has more experience than you. So in chill zone we want really to make people active.

L: So the idea is that people actually continue the experience, and they do that, do they?

G: Yes, and that's actually the goal in the chill zone is for the joker or for us to get them into this play, to just convince them all, just give them the trust "you can do it, just do it. You are there sitting and looking, we see that you are very curious, but you don't dare to do something". And then we come to you with a blindfold and we say "ok, take care of this person. Like I took care of you when you were there. It's kind of, I give you the trust, I give you the responsibility to do it."

L: So what you want is that they then carry on a dialogue, a physical dialogue with another participant.

I: Yes. And I have to admit that also in chill zone there are at least 2 hosts present because people have the tendency to stay passive, because they don't want to wake up out of their "blur". It was so nice to be held, to be touched. One participant described it as the very first experience in the womb, being an embryo. But we do want people to get active, to take care of other people. So how do we do that? We develop some tools, but for example I send Gilberto as a host, blindfolded to the chill zone, but he's active as a blindfolded person. Let's say around 80% of all people, although they know they can take the blindfold off, they leave it on because they want to be passive and to be held. But then we do have tools to connect blindfolded people. As hosts in chill zone we have a system, you know that as a dancer, a peripheral view, but we connect people. Actually we again teach touch, and especially with men to have a dialogue with two blindfolded people via touch. And it's funny, when I hear myself talking, you think of injuries, accidents! But it doesn't happen. That's very beautiful about Body Lounge.

L: I really want to get on to the subject of a performance 'cos that is really important. So just to start really with facts. It's an improvisation that the hosts do?

I: No, it's a structured improvisation.

L: Oh really.

I: We have these 20 minutes, but these 20 minutes have a very clear structure. Let's say the first 10 minutes are very structured, and the last 10 minutes, each host, they're very individual, has their own personal repertoire. So for example Gilberto has, we call that, theatrical experience, and another host, Marjolein, who's a great technical dancer, she dances for example for somebody to make him feel her body. And we have also singers, so people that use voice a lot. They guide people with their voice through the space. Make other people use their voice. And we also do have, in the last 10 minutes of play zone, tools. So by tools we describe sensual elements like wool, wood. We have liquids, hot water, ice blocks. We do have smells, we have of course a lot of red Body Lounge pillows, mattresses, so we have different stimulating...

G: Blankets.

I: we call them tools that stimulate touch and this is also an option to use in the play.

G: Ropes.

I: Teddy bears.

L: 'Cos I wanted to ask you about that. You don't use lighting, do you?

I: We do use lighting in the chill zone, yeah. So sometimes we use a dj so that can really end up as a club night like Raddraaier or Biodanza. That's really more designed, but in play zone we always . We use quite bright lights. As you can imagine, the hosts need to see for 2 people, so they really need to check with the peripheral view the whole space, they have to zoom in on the host. It's very important that they see with very good light any reaction on skin. We do have special tests for people with injuries. So they really have to scan this person, it asks a lot of concentration from them to see very very sharp. So we use normal light.

L: And music?

I: Yes, we had in these 8 years – what a time! – we had a lot of light musicians, we had fixed dj's. But we were lucky that for some years we even had musicians who are physical enough to be hosts. That was great.

L: So like they were singing?

I: They were singing, playing instruments.

G: There was this clarinet player and he was playing and he was touching you. I can touch you with my instrument and play, and then you will feel it. And I can hold my instrument with one hand and put my instrument for a second down and then be. It's very interesting, in a way he was moving and playing an instrument and staying with his instrument. And he was making music. And because also it's not, we say it's one-on-one, but actually if I'm with you and you're blindfolded and at the same time my colleagues are with others, and if I scream...

I: Yeah, we use the voice a lot.

G: If you scream or if you laugh and I laugh, everybody will hear you. That means that we are actually – and this is something that we had to learn and understand how it works – if we are running in the space and someone else is hugging and is very soft, we have to take care of it, we have to respect the group. You have a relation one-on-one, but as host you have also this overview of the whole group. And we have that moment when the whole group is together.

I: We do have sign language also, we use very simple sign language. I have to add something about the music : we do have our fixed BL composer Kort Linker (?). So he provided a soundscape...

L: On a tape?

I: Yeah, yeah. Sometimes he is performing live for us, but most of the time we have Body Lounge tracks, and that's also my role as a joker, that provide again comfort or challenge. But this music tape is always a base for people to feel comfortable because we realise that coming blindfolded into a space where there is silence, it's unbearable for participants, especially in the beginning. And this track, there are options for the chill zone, but it can go on in the chill zone. We have a club version with a dj in the chill zone and in the play zone we can add musicians. But there's always a base of a soundscape by Kort (?). Out of his own music, classical music, we never use voice, we never use pop songs.

L: Because of the rhythm.

I: Yes, right. There's actually no rhythm. If there's a rhythm we actually interrupt the rhythm, because as you know it's very easy to go with the rhythm of the flow, but then you don't experience something, but you only trip.

L: And what are the artistic goals of your performances? 'Cos you call them performances, so yeah. It's not just a means of communicating with the person, but it's also that it's a performance.

I:Yes for sure.

G:I wouldn't call Body Lounge a performance. And when you say "the artistic goals of Body Lounge"...

I:It's a movement.

G:It's not a performance.

I:It's a social happening.

G:It's a social happening. We're giving tools. We live in a society where people don't touch each other or they don't know the difference between sensual and sexual. And most people understand touch as sexual. "I touch you, I like you, I want to fuck you". And that's what you feel : he touches me, he wants to fuck me. And that's difficult. We had to really fight...

I:Re-educate.

G:Re-educate people to understand touching is not only...it's sensual. Of course you communicate emotions through touch. The way I touch you, you feel. And it's very difficult to call it performance because performance is something artificial, you make with a structure or with an improvisation, and it has a beginning and an end. There is a story or there is something, like a red line. But Body Lounge is not this, and people really...as a public you make the story, you give your trust and you make something and you learn and every time it's different and...

I:For each participant and you can come back and it's a completely different story.

L:'Cos you say it is a performance.

I:For me it is a performance. But it's good to hear, because I facilitate Body Lounge, but my hosts are doing Body Lounge, and of course I'm a host sometimes myself. So after my research in interacting with the audience, I extended my research to movement and society. In the meantime I'm busy in community arts, and as I mentioned I do Body Lounge with demented people for example, where I don't use a blindfold because it's not necessary. But other senses are "uitgeschakeld" with demented people. But my artistic research is to get people on the move, I want to move people. And the further I go into community arts, the more I let go of any form to reach that. So can you make a performance with demented people in elderly places? Yes, I think so. So this is my research, also with Body Lounge. Yeah it's a playground.

G:But what is the artistic goal? Because in a way you have artistic goal, and I cannot link this with BL. It's not something I want...Yeah, what's artistic goal?

I:To transmit, to make a dance performance on the skin of the public. What we call participant. Since we reorganised, redefined the word "dancers" to "hosts", and the word "public" to "participants", we should redefine the word "performance" and "artistic goals". For me it's – I do a lot of interviews for Body Lounge – but it's a social movement and in the meanwhile, diving deeper into community arts, I love to do it for people who are non-movers, because I think that they really can learn and have a benefit out of the performance on their skin.

L:Yeah, in a way you said it before didn't, because you said "I like to communicate to non-dancers the same, in a way sensual, or kinaesthetic excitement that I experience when I see dance".

I:Or when I dance, when I dance myself.

G:I remember this story of a...it was a friend of a friend of mine. The lady, she was 60 years old, a bit overweight, she was a beautiful woman in the past, but she had not really kept an intimate relationship with a man or with a woman maybe for 20 years. And then she arrived at Body Lounge. She was blindfolded

and she was guided inside the space and I saw her coming scared. Two colleagues of mine, women, took her and she was flying in the space. And I saw her, you have this the first time with overweight people, when you try to lift them they say "oh no no, I'm too heavy for it". They just feel, they feel ashamed, not because they feel scared, "my god, I'm so heavy, I mean I will break him". They feel shame. This is something as a participant or as a host, you will have to deal with it. People are ashamed. Because you go really in their clothes, and you smell them, they smell you, you touch them, they are sweaty, and they are heavy and they are not dancers. And you break this. And I saw her moving, flying and, well that was a kind of sex experience for her. She was crying after that. She said, "I missed this. I mean nobody touched me like this for years."

L: Was it a sexual experience or was it...?

I: Intimate.

G: It's very difficult, because then you have your own experience. What's for you, what's for me? What is the difference between sexual and sensual? I think it's sensual and you think it's sexual. I touch you in a sensual way and you think it's sexual. It's a very difficult border.

I: And that's another goal of Body Lounge, to teach touch. I think, I have quite a strong statement about the fact that not only in Holland, but in the whole of the Western world, we don't touch people. Only kids. And wherever I would work in the community arts, people just scream for touch, they want to be touched.

But...

G: There is all this hugging for free...

I: Yes, all this is a terrible (?) movement...

G: We all want to be touched.

I: So we give people a warm bath of touch. And actually there's one set way to be touched while being in a relationship. But we also live in a society where people are very singulised, so we actually, I would hope that people after Body Lounge, because they do come back, but that they start touching people more.

L: Why do you think that's important?

I: Because I think it reconfirms people as being human. I think sometimes it's...and meanwhile I'm very specialised in non-verbal language, working with demented people, but I think sometimes you can say much more with touch than with words.

L: So you're saying that you use touch because it's an important way of communicating.

I: Very much. And it's completely underestimated.

G: And it's one of the senses. We've become too verbal.

I: Mental, yes.

G: We communicate only through words. What we understand from each other, it's nothing actually. We don't touch each other, we don't smell each other, we don't...all the different ways to communicate that animals have, and we don't because we...learned to be disattached from this animal side, this sensuous side, smelling, touching.

L: 'Cos I would like to put forward another theory, and I wonder if you also think this. 'Cos I wonder if touch also stimulates the nervous system, so that you actually get more energy from it.

G: Sure.

L: I found... 'Cos you just now said that especially dancers, when they get touched they get a lot of energy, and that really happens to me.

G:I remember a speech, I don't remember the person – I can find it out – this speech was the theory that's actually if you touch somebody his body will automatically create enzymes that will pull him out of depression. And the way to create enough, hugging 8 people...I will send it to you.

I:it's also very direct communication, and there I see my dance technique as a tool to bring it over to other people in society. I think that's a real...I think dance as an art form is quite isolated because most of the time that's where my loneliness came from being a dancer in a dance repertoire piece. But they actually don't understand what it is about. But if you let people feel what it is about, you involve them. I mean there's this educational system that you...teaching people "frontaal". It doesn't reach people. Whereas if you involve people... The blindfold is just a tool to exclude, to switch off judgemental thoughts. It's just a tool. It's not the goal of the performance to blindfold people. And that's why the chill zone is very important. To turn around the roles, to also empower the participant. You see for me the chill zone is much more important than the play zone. And that's where we decided – as you can imagine people want to stay in the play zone forever, because it's quite easy, but it's passive. So we really wanted to encourage people to find a way to integrate it in daily contact with other people, with strangers. 'Cos the only possible people you touch are your friends and your dear ones and your family. But you imagine, do you remember a conversation, and of course in ? too, in which the end of the conversation was via a firm handshake or where you actually touch somebody on the shoulder and say like "I hear what you say". And you feel much more confirmed and heard.

L:But you're still talking about how touch is a way of communicating and I'm wondering if it's also a way of getting the person's energy...of getting the person energised. But that doesn't sound to me like your goal, so I don't want to put words in your mouth.

G:You know, sometimes you do the right thing for the wrong reason. Maybe it happens, maybe we energise people by touching, but we're not aware of it. We never thought about "I give you energy". But I know and I hope...

I:Letting people feel alive, yeah.

G:...that we give people tools. I hope in the chill space you will use this, maybe not here, but I hope that this vibe, this openness, this trust, that you take it home with you and that you use it. What I notice is the difference between the people coming in, blindfolded and completely paralysed, and one hour later in the chill space, moving like crazy, talking to everybody and hanging on everybody, you see people changing really, you see people changing. And then maybe you're right, of course we energise people. After BL, and we really ask people, we don't want drunk people, we don't want people on drugs, we had bad experiences...

I:But you get on your own drugs. People are drugged afterwards.

G:The BL really, in my own experience, you get high. You get high by touching, by moving, yes probably you're right. This substance is oxytocin. (Shows book : Paul Zak "Trust, morality and oxytocin"). It's very interesting. "It calls oxytocin the moral molecule, responsible for trust, empathy and other feelings that help build a stable society." It's connected with what you said, touch also gives energy.

L:So we've very largely touched on this, about the fact that people either become much looser...So what you're saying is that their emotions are also, they become much more engaged.

I: We divided them into motion and emotion. We rehearse quite a lot and we warm up together and we cool down. But we actually spread the word motion and emotion, so these are two topics we can work on. And actually motion is related to outer space and emotion is related to inner space.

L: So can you just explain that a little bit more?

G: Motion is you move people through the space. And it's kind of very dark, because it's something you don't know. By motion, by moving outside, there comes this moment where... I cannot explain it. Motion is everything happening outside your body, so moving in the space. And emotion is everything that is happening inside your body. But they are connected to each other, by moving you create, you get emotions. I touch you or move you very fast in the space and you get scared or you get excited. And it's something inside. And suddenly you remember when you were a child and you were skiing with your father or you were biking with your father. Or you were falling, something happens. Suddenly you have these links, what Proust would call his Madeleine which he put in his tea, this *temps perdu*, this place inside of you.

L: So memories are locked within movement in a way. Maybe in the brain there's a close connection...

I: Yes, that's what I experienced with demented people, for example.

L: Can you just explain that a little bit more, about demented people.

I: That's the huge advantage when communicating, when dealing with demented people. I decided to work with demented people as an artist, so I didn't deepen myself in the physioneurological process of dementia. I have an idea of what happens to your brain, that it gets damaged, and it has an effect on your memory, but I did have an artistic research question working with BL (?) with demented people. I do believe and I do experience that demented people – in short you have 4 phases : one phase leads towards the other. I'm working with dying people. I work with people who are stuck on a bed and cannot be reached by words. So all their senses are excluded. What I do is, I again make a performance on their skin and I am convinced that talking about memories and personality, that their personality is still present. And that's a huge problem for example for family members because they cannot, for them, they cannot talk with them and I try to, that's my goal, to make a connection towards their memory, their personality, by touching skin and again emotion and committing that towards dear ones. It's a very complex thing because they do get touched, but you have a functional touch. And my speciality is a non-functional touch, it includes always intimacy.

L: So what you're saying is you think that by being touched memories are also being stimulated.

I: Yes.

L: Ok, and that's why their personality is allowed to come out.

I: Yeah and maybe you say energised.

L: But that's what you mean when you say personality? Through their memories we can see their personality emerge.

I: Yes because the huge problem talking about memory is that this target group doesn't recognise for example their family. They don't show any action if you call them by their own name, so that causes a lot of frustration because you address memories that they actually don't have any more. But I am convinced through my work that they are still there, you know, because people react.

L: And how do people react?

I:Very little. Especially this last phase of dying people. So this is the Body Lounge technique of addressing inner space. They have reactions on their skin, they respond to pressure, they have a smile, a laughter.

L:And that's how you can see that their memory is being triggered ?

I:Yes, of course they won't respond to their own name anymore.

L:No, but the fact that there is a response means that there is a memory ?

I:Yes, because these people don't respond to anything anymore. Actually they are lying in their beds, imagine this place, it has a coloured wall, music 24 hours a day to stimulate people, but it doesn't greet them. Whereas skin touch, in that sense, so that's the emotion again, really addresses them to show out to movement (?).

G:But Body Lounge is not to, I don't want to, it's not important that you come and touch with your memories.

L:No no, I understand that.

G:It's to get, and to be aware that, by touching, you get in contact with memories. That means if I touch you and suddenly you get this memory, that means that you will touch me. I will get in contact probably with one memory, which one is not important. But that you become aware that every time you touch me, the type of energy or the quality of touch will make the difference, will change something in me. This awareness which we don't have, or we have but we don't dare, because sometimes we have this awareness that if I touch you, you will really get something. But it's ok, there is nothing, there is no shame. Shame. I think in our society there is too much...maybe in Holland more, because there are protestants, Calvinists, there is a lot of shame. By touching, touching is not good, you don't touch people.

L:Can I ask you, so in this chill zone, people do come out of their passivity, they do become more active?

G:Theoretically.

L:Do they?

G:Yes, yes, most of them, yes. We respect this, we don't force them to become active if they don't want to.

I:Also to add that for me, active behaviour also means to show where the border is. Practically 80% of all people want to stay blindfolded, but then as hosts we challenge them to show borders, for me this is active behaviour. And this is for me a beautiful goal of Body Lounge.

L:I have a question about when the blindfold is taken off, so is there a difference in people's behaviour when their blindfold is taken off, in the chill zone?

G:Of course. The problem is, the moment they get the blindfold off, they become rational again. It's like the hand of this trip. For us it's a very important moment.

L:The hand of this what?

G:The hand of this trip, where everything can happen, where they have no control of it, it's kind of a very passive or very mysterious world where all the shame is away and they can act and they can be whatever they want. When it becomes visual again they become rational and they close also. This is a very delicate moment and you, we don't just take the blindfold off, woosh, in one second. We prepare the people. We do it only in a very extreme situation where there is somebody...

L:'Cos usually people do it themselves.

G:Most of the time yes, but sometimes in the end we do it. Or when we feel that there are 20 people and they're all blindfolded and we need much more...

I:For safety reasons. But we also do have the right to – so in that sense it does stay a performance – to decide on our own and that's due to a lot of experiments

to, but that's an extreme case, to take a blindfold off from somebody. That's also if somebody could... because the borders are quite open as you maybe experienced yourself, but that people really start to go on their own trip. For example what we do is not to throw people out, we sit them in a corner, we prepare them to take the blindfold off, we always say "leave your eyes closed for a bit", and then we just check that they're ok, give them a glass of water and then they can put it off again. But sometimes you just need to, now we come to reality and fiction, but to understand this is still a performance, I mean this is...

G: That's why I cannot call it performance because the moment you take off the blindfold and I'm saying to you "ok, you had this trip, only through the senses, no visual, only touch and now I challenge you to do the same. To experience, to just keep what you experienced. And I'm just adding something more : your eyes." It's very difficult, it's a very difficult...it's... I mean for us, we've been doing it all the time. We move people and we touch, we are very sensitive. But for somebody who has no experience who has eyes, the judging eyes, and the shame and the people who are looking at me and what I'm doing and what I'm...I'm touching this person in a sensual way, then you get discharged. But what we actually...this is the goal, that afterwards without your blindfold you can be sensual as well. And touch people in the same sensual way as we did with you, or you did when you were blindfolded.

L: I just question...it's just interesting, what is a performance in the end? You can also hear music, you don't need to see it, music. And you know you are creating a performance because you are encouraging people through their senses to experience another reality. Or a more intense reality.

I: I totally agree with you.

L: What is performance and what is not performance? I think we are also redefining what performances are nowadays.

I: For sure, for sure.

G: It's very difficult. I see also technically how difficult it is to propose Body Lounge as a performance when we propose it to festivals.

I: But it has never been called anything other than a "performance". Body Lounge is a performance based on the senses. It's funny. But maybe it's the inside experience, because performance maybe, I understand Gilberto, is something that is being put on you, whereas we take all our information from the participants. Actually I realise myself going to performances that I want somebody to do something with me. But I don't want to be active myself, so this is the most common of people, like "guide me, throw me, manipulate me".

G: Yeah, performance, it's something safe. When you hear this story about this woman being touched, this woman said "I thought it was a performance and you were touching my breasts and I trusted you". And I said "oh my god! I could have tied you up and killed you and then it was ok." How far you can go with it!

L: What do you think is the motivation of people who come to Body Lounge?

I: Very different. And we can categorize people into first ones, but we do have fans who come back and back. Actually that's a real problem because then we get into therapy if they come back too often. But there are, and I want to add something, to the question before, because we did Body Lounge in different cultures and it's very interesting to see reactions in Estonia, which is even more Northern, or in Italy, which is a very conservative country (laughs). That teaches us a lot about why people go to Body Lounge. This is a very specific question. You can analyse it from gender, even between heterosexual or homosexual. But men and women have different goals in Body Lounge.

L: What are their goals?

I:Men – it's a bit of a cliché – but men tend more to look for stimulation...

G:I think both men and women...

I:Yeah, we do have discussions about this!

G:I don't think it's...people, you know...loneliness. They actually secretly they want to be touched and they want touch. And they do it in this safe atmosphere and it's just called "performance" and it's Body Lounge. You are there, you are allowed to be touched and to touch, in this safe situation and it's ok and it's fun.

L:Is that for everybody?

G:You know I had this one time, it was this girl and after 3 seconds I was guiding her and she was blindfolded, and maybe after 2 minutes she decided she wanted to leave. It was too much for her.

L:Is the motivation loneliness in every case?

I:No. That's maybe what you touch as a host in Body Lounge with these people. But I think there are expectations of wanting to be entertained, wanting to be stimulated, wanting to undergo an experience.

L:Can you explain that 'cos that is one of my themes.

I:Yeah. That also relates to my idea of setting up Body Lounge. For me it's so clear, how can I explain it? They want to experience and learn something about how they will relate in a situation where they are dependent on somebody. They want to have, not a confrontation, but a dialogue with themselves. That goes back to my observation that 90% of all new people who come to BL are really excited/nervous.

L:During the process?

I:No, before. When they enter. No actually, in all cases, it immediately disappears. Because – I'm also just reading the guest book quotes – but they experience trust, and that's something that they come back for actually.

L (turning to G): So that's quite close to what you're saying.

I:Yeah. A huge motivation is also sensation. I mean people say "oh this is kinky, sexy or very new, innovative".

L:So it's stimulating.

I:Yes it's very stimulating.

L:They want to be stimulated.

I:Yes. When people come back they tend to slip into more therapeutic questions.

L:I wanted to ask you about that. So what do you mean by therapeutic? What is the difference?

I:They come back because they got a glimpse of something about themselves that they want to experience more. They are often disappointed because they experience a new performance, so they come back and back and back. We do have relationships that develop, which is not the goal of BL. This is free to happen in the chill zone, but not in the Body Lounge itself.

G:We don't have any sexual contact with...

L:No. But in a way it's like a drug then, it becomes like a drug.

I:Yeah it's very "drugging", both for host and for...

L:Oh really, also for the host? In what way?

I:It's just addictive. I mean it's wonderful to do, it's the most pure contact. Everything that's in the way to meet a person is just gone in Body Lounge. I mean you have the pure...how can I explain it, it's very pure, it's very honest, fragile, but very overwhelming, both as a host. We do have a ritual to open up, and to close down in a performance because otherwise...

L:For the host?

I:As a host you expand your borders a lot. Of course we are all movers, professional movers, but we all have days when we don't want to touch people.

But we have techniques to, just to...And of course in a performance there are participants you don't want to touch. And I encourage the hosts to use the tools that we've developed, but if it really doesn't work out, because there's always a personal connection, you can also exchange a person. But that's very rare. It doesn't happen so often, no.

G:I experienced this only once. We performed for Inc. Woman...

I:Woman Inc.

G:Woman Inc. It was this big event for women in Amsterdam, de Beurs, Berlage.

I:We've done it at so many places.

G:And then we did a workshop. You can imagine in this space there were maybe 3,000 women, so many women at the same time in space. The workshop was for 20 people and they were all women, most of them lesbian. And I experienced this, I mean they didn't want to be touched by me, because in that moment they felt I was a man and they were blindfolded, and they didn't want...which I respect. And of course the gender thing is a kind of issue because not every person is open or ready for it. I mean some men are most of the time not open or not really, they cannot really be completely open if I touch them because they feel I'm a man. I have to be...there are borders that you have to respect.

L:Yeah, right.

G:But in the end, why do people come to Body Lounge?

I:I mean let's – I'm also cultural manager – we did Body Lounge even as a corporate eh, we called it Left Lounge. We did it for managers as an event thing. So I would say Body Lounge can be really "toegepast" to the type of group and that's also how they feed back Body Lounge. We can really also design Body Lounge. As hosts we can develop a Body Lounge where we just...it's a bit more superficial.

G:Actually no I think...it's very interesting what you saying because...this question...we sent this email to all our mailing list "what do you think you learned from Body Lounge? Why did you come to Body Lounge? Why do you think you came to Body Lounge?"

I:Now to analyze it, because I'm also arranging the ticketing, you have to schedule the people, but most of the time it's because people heard "via via" that it's great and overwhelming. If we do several nights in a row people tend to come back or more people are coming...I think it's mainly...

G:The thing is why do people come the second time? You know the first time you come to Body Lounge is because somebody invited you to a performance in which you are blindfolded and can be...finally it's different.

I:Can I ask you about the ages that come?

G:I remember we had...

I:We do it even for children! Yeah, a lovely one, yeah we did it a lot for children.

G:The oldest person I've seen was this old woman, maybe a woman of ninety.

I:I mean we do have a limit. They should be at least 16. Otherwise we call it the Children's Lounge (?). We do have family versions also. I have an Estonian producer who developed a family performance also in Estonia. So it's very flexible, but we do differentiate between children and adults. We do have pregnant, handicapped persons.

L:You mean it's only for handicapped people?

I:No, no, no. With blind persons. All ages and all kinds of...

L:And how does it differ between children and adults?

I:Oh a lot. Children actually, you can skip the play zone. Children immediately want to be hosts. Of course there's a check-in zone, but with children – there's a difference between the family version and the children's version – but in the

children's version , most of the time children by themselves are very active, so you more or less... And with children – the beach versions – you can never expect them to leave the blindfold on all the time. Do you know that very young children, that's due to your state of development, they play hide-and-seek by going (covers eyes) "I'm gone", (uncovers eyes) "I'm there". We don't work with such young children, for example Wonderland does that. But mainly we work with children from 6 till 12, 13. Yes, and they have a shorter tolerance...

L:Attention...

I:Yes, attention and tolerance with the blindfold and we leave it free for them to put it on and off, but they are much more playful with it. So adult people if they put it off the magic is gone – I love this discussion about fiction! – and it's hard for them to go back into it, whereas children can easily swap.

L:I see. As far as I'm concerned we've more or less finished, so maybe you'd just like to tell me about "fiction". I keep hearing this word.

I(addressing Gilberto): Is this important for you?

G:Fiction and reality.

L:I'd really like to hear it.

I (laughs): For me it's really a question about therapy.

G:It brings me totally back to therapy, because what I do in Body Lounge often, I put people in...suddenly I...when I come in contact, I feel, I put them in a story.

L:So for you they're in a story.

G:Yes, it suddenly just pops up in my mind and it's physical. I believe, and I experience, that if I put you in a position and I leave you in this position, suddenly something happens. And maybe a memory, maybe it's an image. And I feel it. I dunno, it's a story coming out and I dress you up like a princess and...

L:In your mind?

G:In my mind, yes. And I'm playing with you like you were my...yeah, maybe my puppet. And then I make you a character of my story and this is very playful. I do it like children will do it.

L:If you're my host...so in a way I become a performer in your mind.

G:Yes, in my mind. I put you, yes, absolutely.

L:So it does become a performance.

G:It does become a performance.

L:Only the person who is the performer is maybe not aware of the fact...

G:Or maybe he is...

L:You don't know if they're aware.

G:Yeah, it's an improvised performance actually. Yeah, Body Lounge is an improvised performance you make actively with your participants.

L:Is the person aware, do you think, that they're in a performance?

G:I think it is. That's why there's a difference with kids, you don't need to force it. Because they do it by themselves, they play all the time, it's very playful..

I:But it's our duty to remind them that it stays a performance. Because there's a moment...for example, that 's how we developed the goodbye ritual. It's very important to, when you say goodbye in the play zone, and we have 5 to 7 goodbye rituals, that you really make clear "this concept wasn't meant to be personal. It's not because I love you, although we had a loving connection. This is a performance and it's over now." It's very important, most of the time a typical reaction is "who was my host?" and we always say "it doesn't matter. It is completely random because this is fiction. This is performance. And this was not a personal love declaration."

L:And do people understand that?

I:Yes.

L:They do understand that.

I:But sometimes you have to be consistent. Because people, then people are lonely, or people feel like they're in love after Body Lounge. And I do have the same experience when I do Body Lounge still. We rehearse on each other a lot.

L:It's a bit like the psychologist or the psychoanalyst. The person falls in love with their own psychoanalyst.

G:Yeah, I think it happens many times, yeah, it happens all the time I think.

L:It's projection.

G:You have a very...in this story...I work a lot with fiction. I put them in my story or I follow their stories because suddenly if I dressed you like a princess and you start screaming or singing a song, suddenly you are also making part of a story, you know.

L:And that's ok for you, so then I become part of your story?

G:Sure, it's a conversation.

L:So it's a conversation.

G:I spank you and you spank me, or I become your horse. And it's fine, it's ok, it's play, and we actually, we challenge each others' borders. I mean most of the time I challenge their borders and it's a fiction. And I decide when it's the end. About borders. I can really go, really really really you know, extreme because I feel that this person is very open to it. But I decide all the time, I've learned that it's better to put a kind of "ok, I know that you can go till 10, but we stop at 5. Because...".

L:Because otherwise it no longer is a performance, it becomes too...

G:That's one...

L:Am I right?

G:Yes, otherwise it becomes too personal. Too close. And sometimes I let it go, I let it happen, and it's ok, but I experience also that when you are blindfolded, when you take off your blindfold you get really rational. Sometimes you get kind of...not more comfortable with what happened. That you say "oh my god, I mean all this and...".

L:Because in a way you went across taboos.

G:Yes.

L:You suddenly realise. Against social taboos.

G:That's why I sometimes have problems with the word "performance". Because I have the feeling that it sometimes goes a little bit further.

L:Than a performance.

G:Yes, I mean with some people, sometimes really, you get really touched. Really emotionally touched. There is something more, where you cannot really, yeah you have to be...

L:As a host or as a participant?

G:As a host, yeah, as a host.

I:You asked me about the artistic goals. For me it's bringing people back into their body. It's a physical experience of the participant. And, because the normal...I mean that goes back to theatre history, it's about the 4th wall, that I wanted to interrupt, that's what I tried to describe with being a performer on stage. I think the idea of a stage is so old-fashioned, that goes back to art and society as community art, so where you use art as a tool and not as a goal. I mean my stage is society, I work with refugees, I work with homeless people, I work with prostitutes. So I think this idea of going to the Stadsschouwburg, to see dance far away, which never makes me connect with what I see, is old-fashioned and will disappear. I'm quite convinced of that. I think it's really time

for...and I also think, no wonder that dance as an art form most of the time doesn't get understood by the public because it doesn't involve the public. So that was my whole research question. Like, how can I involve the public? How can I transmit my bodily experience towards the skin of the public that is then a participant?

L:And why do you think that's so old-fashioned exactly? When you watch something from a stage?

I:Because I think that the role of theatre really needs to be redefined in a society of nowadays. I mean it's very personal, but I do think I'm living my own film each day, you know. I think it's very complex, but we live in a global digitalised society. People...the need to get entertained, which for me is connected to the idea of the 4th wall, is not valid anymore. There are different reasons and motivations to go and see a theatre performance. And I'm very convinced that people go to the theatre because of the experience that they miss. And the more direct, the better.

L:So people are looking for an experience. And you don't think that's why people used to go to the theatre? 50 years ago.

I:Yes but I think, more than ever, this need for this experience is physical. I'm quite convinced. Because this society is getting more and more "headish" and...ask me, I'm a choreographer, but I sit, 90% of my work is in front of a computer.

L:If I speak to my mother she tells me that many years ago, when she was a really small child, people used to entertain each other by visiting each other, playing the piano, singing together, it was all much more...

I:Personal.

L:Much more personal, more intense in a way, much more sensuous and now we just watch tv, or not even. Even that is going now. We don't even watch tv together. We sit behind our own computers.

G:That's why I said, "one of the reasons is loneliness". And it's ok, there is nothing wrong with it, that I'm feeling something that I need.

Appendix II

Labelling taxonomies

The labelling systems appear over the following pages as tables for the core themes :

- Participation
- Affect
- The connection between participation and affect
- Aesthetic distance
- Kinaesthetic empathy
- Education
- Non participatory performances
- Artistic categorization of Body Lounge

The labels are colour-coded (see legends at the bottom of each table) :

- Green words apply to *Involt*
- Purple words apply to *Full Circle*
- Blue words apply to *Body Lounge*
- Some words have more than one colour signifying that the label applies to more than one performance.

Participation

PARTICIPATION		
by public/dancers	organised tasks	bouncing
		soul train
		landscapes
		chanting
	improvised	moving in space
		movement improvisation
by public	presence audience	standing in performance space
	ugly	pushing/waving
		plug in/out
		bothering women
	interested	careful approach
		walking with dancers
	level of participation	90%
	type of audience	young + reasons
by dancers	techniques	eye contact
		into public's space x2
		adapting movement
		becoming observer
		BDSM
		let feel dancing body
		massage
Involt		
Full Circle		
Body Lounge		

Affect

AFFECT		
public	motives for coming	loneliness
		want stimulation
		search for self
	expectations	vague
	initial feelings	fear
		shame
		excitement
		nervousness
	range of affect	shock
		nervous uncertainty
		enthusiasm
		desire to disrupt
		wanting reaction
		territorial assertion
		desire to understand
		profound stillness
		awe
		intense experience
		focus
		vulnerability
		at ease
		excited
		energised x2
		overwhelmed
		curious x2
		enjoyment x3
		free
		healed
		disappointed
		passive
		irresponsible
	reasons for returning	therapy
dancers	range of affect	openness
		overwhelmed
		touched
		distaste
		playfulness
		boredom
		no connection(rare)
LEGEND:		
Involt		
Full Circle		
Body Lounge		

The connection between participation and affect

AFFECT→PARTICIPATION			
public	types of affect	has energy	→dancers dance better
		curiosity	→public walks around
			→public pulls out plug
		wants reaction	→public waving hand before dancer
		disruptive urge	→public pushing/pinching dancer
		wants to be teased	→public's explosive discharge of energy
			→improvised movement-play dialogue
dancers	amiable attitude	non-judgemental	→public approaches close
		open	→public begins to move
		will to share	→public dances
	intimidating attitude	asserting status	→audience steps back/just watches
atmosphere	of well-being	welcoming	→public dances
		safe x2	→public approach dancers
			→public enters physical dialogue
		enjoyable music	→public dances
			→public enters physical dialogue
PARTICIPATION→AFFECT			
actions by public/dancers	done together	"bounce" movement	→everybody gets energy
actions by public	individual behaviour	walking thru space	→motivated/focus/intense experience
		ugly participation	→dancers upset
	towards dancers	presence public in space	→dancers get energy
		proximity	public→more real/fascination/ sense of sharing
actions by dancers	towards public	proximity	public→ better communication
			public→ feels awe (status dancer ↑)
			public→ feels exposed
		touch	public→opening/energy/shame goes/ memories/catharsis/feeling safe
		moving public thru space	public→fear/excitement/get "high"
			associations/memories
		restricting (BDSM)	public→calming down

LEGEND:

Involvement

Full Circle

Body Lounge

→leads to

↑ increases

Aesthetic distance

AESTHETIC DISTANCE		
	description	understanding form/concept x3
		"active" responsible attitude of public
		personal search for relevance
	public	theatre people have it
rel to participation	good use of part	part is central to concept
		part → concept stronger
	bad use of part	part as gimmick
	immersion	→ physical effects
		more powerful than rationalization
		→ affect "overwhelming
	touch	quality of touch → understanding (kinaesthetic empathy)
	choices	part = choosing
		importance of choice
		choice → relevance
		choice → self-awareness
		choice → information
	reflection	part gives time to think
		part invites reflection
		part teaches
	affect	affect → dialogue with audience
		enjoyment → curiosity → reflection
	"framing" performance	theatrical naming of spaces
		ritualised initiation of participant
		explanation by host : "not real"
LEGEND		
Involt		
Full Circle		
Body Lounge		
rel = relationship		
part = participation		
→ = leads to		

Kinaesthetic empathy

KINAESTHETIC EMPATHY		
	description	as energy exchange
		as communication
		link with affect
from public	lack of	senses unused ≠ vision
		explode in space
		incapable of dialogue
	physical tools	eyes
		touch
	behaviour	mirroring foetuses + walk of dancers
	consequence	influenced dancers' energy
		feels awe at dancers' talent
		powerful affect
		can enter "dialogue"
		increases kinaesthetic awareness
from dancers	physical tools	body control
		eyes
		touch
	consequence	influenced public's energy
		reading "needs" of public
LEGEND		
Involt		
Full Circle		
Body Lounge		

Education

EDUCATION			
-			
role affect			
	teacher	open attitude	non-judgemental
			will to share
			will to communicate
	atmosphere	of well-being	tolerant x3
			safe x2
			sharing x2
			energy
			trusting
		music	enjoyable
			subtle rhythm
role participation			
	students	making choices	→more alert/feels more real
		moving	students affect→energy
	teacher	proximity	students→more real/fascination/ sense of sharing
			→ better communication
kin sensitivity			
	students	touch/eyes closed	students affect→opening/energy
			students get associations
	teacher	energy	passive students get energy
-			
types of learning	academic	analytical	learning Cunningham dance
	social	affect + KE	learning salsa dance
	edutainment	affect + KE + ?KD	Full Circle performance
			Body Lounge
LEGEND:			
Involt			
Full Circle			
Body Lounge			
→leads to			
KE = Kinaesthetic	empathy		
? KD = sometimes			
Kinaesthetic	distance		

Non participatory performances / artistic categorization of Body Lounge

NON-PARTICIPATORY PERFORMANCES		
audience	role	clear
	affect	less
		passive x3
	process of watching	less reflection
		few choices
	relevance	not physical enough
		old-fashioned
BODY LOUNGE : ARTISTIC CATEGORIZATION		
BL as play	reason	statement by BL
BL as performance	reason	statement by BL
		involves element of fiction
		performance "framed"
		initiatory code provided
		use of objects
LEGEND		
BL = Body Lounge		
Involt		
Full Circle		
Body Lounge		

Appendix III

Labelling examples

The labelling example that follows is that of the core theme *affect* (taken from *Appendix II : labelling taxonomies*). *Affect* had two themes : *affect of public* and *affect of dancers*. The example shows only the labelling that was applied to the theme *affect of public* (and not that of *affect of dancers*). This theme had five labels, some of which were further subdivided into categories. The example below shows one or two quotation fragments per category. Following each fragment is a reference to the performance from which the quotation came. In the case of *Body Lounge* the quotation is preceded by an I (for Ina Stockem) or a G (for Gilberto Perotti). The quotations from *Involt* are in Dutch.

Core theme

Affect

Themes

Affect of public

Affect of dancers

Labels : affect of public

1. Motives for coming
2. Expectations
3. Initial feelings
4. Range of affect during performance
5. Reasons for returning

Quotations

1. Motives for coming

Loneliness

G : loneliness. They actually secretly they want to be touched and they want touch. And they do it in this safe atmosphere (*Body Lounge*)

Wanting stimulation

I : men tend more to look for stimulation (*Body Lounge*)

I : there are expectations of wanting to be entertained, wanting to be stimulated, wanting to undergo an experience. (*Body Lounge*)

I : A huge motivation is also sensation. I mean people say "oh this is kinky, sexy or very new, innovative". (*Body Lounge*)

I : wanting to undergo an experience (*Body Lounge*)

Searching for "self"

I : They want to experience and learn something about how they will relate in a situation where they are dependent on somebody. They want to have, not a confrontation, but a dialogue with themselves. (*Body Lounge*)

2. Expectations

Vague

De Museumnacht is gewoon openbaar voor iedereen. Ze komen niet specifiek naar Involt. Dus ze hadden vaak helemaal niet door dat die dansers daar stonden. (Involt)

3. Initial feelings

Fear

G : suddenly you have this public and you touch them and you feel these bodies closing, just closing. Like a tortoise... you come close by and they just close (Body Lounge)

G : I saw her coming scared (Body Lounge)

Shame

G : you have this the first time with overweight people...They just feel, they feel ashamed (Body Lounge)

Excitement

I : 90% of all new people who come to BL are really excited/nervous (Body Lounge)

Nervousness

G : they didn't want to be touched by me, because in that moment they felt I was a man and they were blindfolded (Body Lounge)

G : I mean some men are most of the time not open or not really, they cannot really be completely open if I touch them because they feel I'm a man (Body Lounge)

4. Range of affect during performance

Shock

Sommige mensen die schokken daarvan (Involt)

Nervous uncertainty

Ik heb onzekerheid gezien. "Waar kijk ik naar? Oh, kan ik hier staan? Mag ik hier staan? Waar moet ik staan?"...in die onzekerheid ook een soort ...nerveusiteit (Involt)

Enthusiasm

Mensen dus fysiek ineens mee willen gaan doen omdat ze enthousiast zijn (Involt)

Desire to disrupt

Op een gegeven moment heb je ook te dealen met mensen die alle een borrel op hebben en die een beetje komen om te klieren (Involt)

Wanting reaction

Misschien het feit dat er geen reactie kwam enigszins opwekt dat men behoefte kreeg aan reactie, behoefte kreeg om iets teweeg te brengen (Involt)

Territorial assertion

Wat ik gezien heb is nieuwsgierigheid, is kinderlijke verwondering die ook de neiging had tot het willen verstoren. Dus misschien een dierlijke territorium drang (Involt)

Desire to understand

de rest was het ...de behoefte iets te begrijpen (Involt)

Profound stillness

Ik heb ook verstilling gezien of berusting van die mensen die heel dichtbij die dansers stonden.

Awe

de rest was het oprechte verwondering, nieuwsgierigheid (Involt)

Intense experience

Some people experience it as a journey, that they really go through something and come out differently (Full Circle)

Focus

you're less distracted (Full Circle)

Vulnerability

what I think happens is that you feel very much exposed (Full Circle)

At ease

at some points we ask them to move with us, that helps as well, so that breaks the ice (Full Circle)

Excited

G : most of them when they come from the play zone you're very excited

Energised

As soon as you come to a city people are a bit sceptical or they're a bit tired, and then they get energy from it (Full Circle)

If they don't speak then you see a certain glow in the eyes (Full Circle)

G : we energise people (Body Lounge)

G : What I notice is the difference between the people coming in, blindfolded and completely paralysed, and one hour later in the chill space, moving like crazy, talking to everybody and hanging on everybody, you see people changing really, you see people changing (Body Lounge)

Overwhelmed

I : especially non-movers are completely overwhelmed (Body Lounge)

curious

Ik denk ook gewoon puur nieuwsgierigheid...(Involt)

I : ...People ardently want to see what Body Lounge looks like (Body Lounge)

enjoyment

En ook wel plezier (Involt)

You see them enjoying themselves (Full Circle)

I : Most of the time nobody wants to leave <chill zone>(Body Lounge)

Free

It's kind of a very passive or very mysterious world where all the shame is away and they can act and they can be whatever they want (Body Lounge)

Healed

I : You feel made whole (Body Lounge)

Disappointed

I : they're very disappointed when they see the physical space without the blindfold because it's so different from what you imagined (Body Lounge)

Passive

I : in chill zone there are at least 2 hosts present because people have the tendency to stay passive, because they don't want to wake up out of their "blur" (Body Lounge)

Irresponsible

I : still they just run

6. Reasons for returning

I : we do have fans who come back and back. Actually that's a real problem because then we get into therapy if they come back too often (Body Lounge)

Appendix IV

Figures and photos

Figures

Figure 1. Performance goals and interactive means p31

Figure 2. The relationship between interaction, mirroring and affect at *Involt* p59

Figure 3. Processes of interaction, kinaesthetic empathy and affect at *Body Lounge* p61

Figure 4. Causal analysis of the process whereby affect and interaction increase during a performance p68

Photos

Photo taken of *Involt* choreographed by Sanne Verkaaik p34
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Photo taken of *Involt* choreographed by Sanne Verkaaik p35
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Photo taken of *Full Circle* choreographed by Nita Liem p36
Photographer : Jean van Lingen
The public is participating in a group dance led by the performers

Photo taken of *Full Circle* choreographed by Nita Liem p37
Photographer : Jean van Lingen
A member of the public is dancing with a performer along the *soul train*

Photo taken of *Body Lounge* p38
Artistic director : Ina Stockem
The photo shows the blindfolded participant dancing with two hosts

Photo taken of *Body Lounge* p39
Artistic director : Ina Stockem
The photo shows participants dancing together in the chill zone. One of the participants is still blindfolded.

