

ETHICS AND POLITICS EMBODIED IN DANCE 9. – 12.12.2004

International Dance Conference for Practitioners and Scholars

Background and Vision Statement

Ethical and political questions have become an apparent concern of public discussion in various fields during the past decades. This discussion reflects current change in society as well as the consequent political fluctuation regarding e.g. multicultural, ecological, technological, and economic issues. In relation to the arts these issues have been increasingly discussed in the fields of aesthetics, social sciences, and cultural studies. However, the ethical and political dimensions of daily practices in artistic, educational, and institutional contexts of dance have been less discussed. Yet it is evident, that the related issues of truth, value, morality, and freedom are important concerns of the practices of dance art.

This international conference will examine ethical and political issues embodied in the lives of dancers, choreographers, dance teachers, students, and scholars as they practice their art within dance. The conference will focus on the everyday reality of dance as work. The conference will also encourage relating these issues to theories that connect dance to the larger socio-political world.

This conference culminates a three-year effort funded by The Academy of Finland. The research project *Making a Difference in Dance* has brought together a team of researchers from Finland, Sweden, U.K., and USA working on their own projects and sharing them with each other in a spirit of rigorous inquiry and collegial support. As the organizers of *Ethics and Politics Embodied in Dance*, they hope that the conference will continue this spirit as the boundaries are extended, opening spaces for encounters between individuals and ideas, for deconstructing and reconstructing life and work in the world of dance artists, educators, students, and scholars.

Participants and conference venue

The conference invites practitioners, scholars, and researchers working with dance and the other arts or human sciences as well as graduate students from Finland and abroad to join discussions and workshops investigating the social world within dance art.

The conference will be held at The Theatre Academy of Finland, Haapaniemenkatu 6, Helsinki.

Conference organizers

Senior researchers:

Maija Lehtovaara, Ph.D., University of Tampere, Department of Education, Finland
Professor Sue Stinson University of North Carolina at Greensboro, Dance Department, USA,
Helena Wulff, Ph.D., Stockholm University, Social Anthropology, Sweden
Ana Sanchez-Colberg, Ph.D., Laban Centre, England

Other researchers:

Soili Hämäläinen, Ph.D., Head of the project, Theatre Academy, Finland

Eeva Anttila, Ph.D., Theatre Academy, Finland
Teija Löytönen, EdM, Theatre Academy, Finland
Leena Rouhiainen, Ph.D., Theatre Academy, Finland

Program

Thursday 9.12.2004

11.00 – 13.00 Registration
13.00 – 13.30 Opening

13.30 – 16.30 Theme Afternoon:
Choreography as a means of
expanding and transgressing cultural
boundaries

16.30 Reception

Friday 10.12.2004

9.30 – 10.45 Plenary Session
10.45 – 11.00 Coffee
11.00 – 12.30 Working groups
(Presentations/Performances/
Discussions)
12.30 – 14.00 Lunch
14.00 – 16.00 Theme Afternoon: Critical Views on
Dance Education
Part I: Docile bodies: A threat or a
necessity in educating dancers
16.00 – 16.15 Coffee
16.15 – 18.15 Part II: Thoughtful motion: The role
of choice-making, critical
consciousness and emancipation in
dance education
18.15 Social Program

Saturday 11.12.2004

9.30 – 10.45 Plenary Session
10.45 – 11.00 Coffee
11.00 – 12.30 Working groups
(Presentations/ Performances/
Discussions)
12.30 – 14.00 Lunch
14.00 – 17.00 Theme Afternoon:
Creativity and management in dance
institutions – A moral dilemma?
17.00 Social Program

Sunday 12.12.2004

9.30 – 10.45 Plenary Session
10.45 – 11.00 Coffee
11.00 – 12.30 Working groups
(Presentations/ Performances/
Discussions)
12.30 – 14.00 Lunch
14.00 – 15.00 Closing panel
(Presentations/Performances/Panels)

The plenary sessions present central issues related to the themes of the conference by invited speakers. The working groups are open sessions for dance and art students and professionals to present their work. The theme afternoon of each day continues to address the themes of the

conference from various perspectives through alternative forms of presentation by invited speakers and performers.

Plenary Session speakers are: Ana Sanchez-Colberg, Sue Stinson, and Helena Wulff.

Other speakers include: Eeva Anttila, Karen Bond, Ann Cooper Albright, Betsy Fischer, Jill Green, Sara Houston, Soili Hämäläinen, Susan Koff, Susan Kozel, Kai Lehtikainen, Efva Lilja, Teija Löytönen, Isabel Marquez, Susan Melrose, Anna Pakes, Jaana Parviainen, Leena Rouhiainen, and Paula Salosaari.

WORKING GROUPS

In the working group sessions conference participants will discuss particular issues related to the general theme of the conference in smaller groups. There will be several working groups happening simultaneously, and each particular working group will meet three times. Dance scholars, dance artists, dance teachers, dance students, and other people working in the field of the arts or research are invited to share their scholarly work or thinking, artistic and pedagogical approaches and practice, as well as personal experiences in any of the several working groups addressing different questions. Paper, lecture-demonstration, performance, performative and other kinds of innovative presentations, as well as panel and workshop proposals are all welcomed. The maximum duration of the presentations is 30 minutes, and will be adjusted depending on the total number of presentations.

In order to present your work or thinking related to the topic of one of the working groups described below, please submit a half page proposal to the moderator of the group you want to attend by the 31st of May 2004. The proposal should include your contact information and a short biography or CV. Please describe the format of presentation and its desired length. Also state if your presentation is based on previous work or research, or created for this occasion. Both options are equally appreciated. During the intermissions of the conference, it is also possible to present posters related to the themes of the working groups and describing the work of conference participants in a more informal manner. Those who are interested in participating in a working group, but do not want to present their work or want to present a poster, are also asked to contact the moderators and submit their contact information and a short biography. The conference organizers will confirm acceptance to present your work by the 15th of July 2004. We look forward to your contribution.

Working group options

1. Life histories and untold stories in dance

In this working group participants can present and share autobiographical stories that revolve around their life history in relation to dance. Significant events and memories of past events may form the core of these stories, or they may be random journal entries or freely flowing memoirs. In addition to discussing issues related to recollections of life histories in dance, this group will work in a studio and participate in movement sessions focusing on embodied memories in dance. These sessions may bring back events that previously have been untold or forgotten. The aim of this working group is to illuminate the uniqueness of individual life histories in dance, and at the same time to identify possible themes or underpinnings that are somehow related to each other. The common nominator that the group focuses on is dance as a life's work. The passion towards dance

unites persons who have chosen dance as a career despite of many hardships and few rewards it brings along.

Moderator: Eeva Anttila

Email: eeva.anttila@teak.fi

2. Ethical Issues in Teaching and Learning Dance

It is critical that dance educators be conscious of ethical issues encountered in teaching. This working group will look at ethics from two different perspectives. One perspective deals with how one might prepare future dance educators to be more conscious of their ethical decision-making. What are ethical issues faced by dance educators? What makes an issue an ethical one? How do dance educators go about making decisions, especially when ethical imperatives are in conflict, or there is no clear right answer? What kind of process can prepare dance educators to make ethical decisions? The participants in this working group will share experiences about difficult ethical decisions and consider what important literature can add to our thinking.

The second perspective looks in more detail at the ethical issues embedded in evaluation in a technique class. In teaching dance technique, assessment is mostly corrective feedback directed to a movement or position of the body. However, it may also be directed to a dancer's persona or the features of a dancer's body. The feedback given in dance technique classes is often verbal or physical, but it may also be tacit feedback, silent messages transmitted through a teacher's body and expressions. Correction, feedback and evaluation have great significance in the development of a dancer's skills. The contents and character of feedback may either promote or, in some cases, prevent learning. Giving feedback involves many questions concerning teacher authority, expertise and power: but, it is also related to the abilities, choices and independence of a student as well as the expertise she or he has in regarding her or his own body. Evaluation is not only a question of a dancer's performance. It is also concerned with the individual human being as a whole. So far, the ethics of evaluation has seldom been publicly discussed. This working group offers dance artists, dance teachers and dance scholars a place to discuss and share experiences on the above described issues.

Moderators: Soili Hämäläinen and Sue Stinson

Email: Soili.Hamalainen@teak.fi

3. Everyday life in dance institutions: how to understand the usual?

Only from time to time everyday life surfaces as a topic for research or scientific debate. Yet we are surrounded by this everydayness in our private and public working lives. This working group looks at everyday life within dance institutions: dance theatres, companies and dance schools. This group will focus on issues that are related to the dynamics of everyday life: both possibilities as well as restrictions of working as a dance artist, a dance teacher and a dance student in an institutional context. We will deliberate how the daily and the usual can be interpreted and understood when viewed from different perspectives and through different discourses. Possible topics for

presentations and discussions are: How to approach the flow of daily events and routines? Whose everyday life are we interested in as dancers, dance teachers, managers or researchers? How do the dynamics of everyday life affect our work? How to change the usual? The aim of this working group is to discuss and question the way of life in dance institutions which is often taken for granted. All dance artists, teachers, and scholars interested in the above described thematics are invited to present their thoughts and viewpoints with a presentation.

Moderator: Teija Löytönen

Email: teija.loytonen@teak.fi

4. Current choreographic practices of contemporary dance: gender, agency and approaches

What is choreography in the perspective of contemporary dance and what are the choreographic processes of contemporary dance currently like? Evident is that contemporary dance is a practice which, while building on the representational conventions of its own tradition, concentrates on discovery and illuminating dimensions as well as possibilities of human life not seen before and does this in ways idiosyncratic to different dance artists. For this reason it is difficult (even impossible) to give a detailed or comprehensive definition of what contemporary dance choreography is about. It might be thought of as an evolving mode of structuring the dance medium (which in itself has no set or unambiguous boundaries) and exploring the representational conventions of theatrical dance. This working group discusses what is topical to this exploration? It concentrates on contemplating how dance artists currently approach and solve choreographic problems related to embodying, perceiving, and evaluating motion and dance, how the agency of the choreographer, dancer, and spectator is determined in this process, and what meaning do cultural, ethnic, racial, and gendered differences have in the daily practice of creating choreography and the co-operation of dance artists.

Moderators: Leena Rouhiainen and Ana Sanchez-Colberg

Email: leena.rouhiainen@teak.fi

5. Contemporary ballet culture: Artistic practice and training/education.

On one hand ballet practice wants to safeguard and value its centuries old tradition. On the other, contemporary choreographers initiate creative changes and break the traditional norms in performance. Society, from which ballet practitioners come from, is changing. How do we connect these different influences and bridge possible gaps between performing classical works, contemporary choreography, and training dance artists equipped with flexible skills in the art form? Would you like to share research or practice in the art of ballet or just initiate discussion on issues such as politics of the body, hierarchical relationships in the processes of making, performing and education in ballet? Do we need to rethink the ballet dancer's identity from artistic or ethical point of view? Who owns the knowledge given or created? This workshop is a platform for these and related discussions.

Moderator: Paula Salosaari

Email: paula.salosaari@kolumbus.fi