

Embodied interrelations between the disciplines

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A contemporary dance workshop in the department of music pedagogy
Under the frame of an interdisciplinary seminar 'Into Dance'
At Hochschule für Musik und Darstellende Kunst Frankfurt am Main



“Contemporary dance has a privileged view on the world and humanity nowadays. Other fields can just dream of such open minded insight.” free quote from Ulas Aktas

A convinced voice invited us, Jungyeon Kim and Anastasia Kostner, to provide an interdisciplinary contemporary dance seminar in the university department of music pedagogy. During conversating with the host and organizer of the “Into Dance” seminar Ulas Aktas, it became clear that the seminar would consist of workshops, which would counterpoint mannerisms found in music education. The idea was to support music teachers who look for ways to establish a more creative environment in classroom, empowering artistic development of the pupils particularly through movement and dance activities.

The seminar took place in Frankfurt at the University of Music and Performing Arts. The first trial of 12 hours happened in October 2011, and was followed by the second block in May 2012. Invited participants were both music teachers and students of music pedagogy.

Language of the Body

Whether or not contemporary dance is more privileged than other art forms, contemporary dance certainly made its breakthroughs from classical ballet and modern dance since 1960s, and holds its liberating viewpoint. In contemporary dance, dance is seen as a language of its own, free from any symbolic or representative functions, of which primary instrument being the body. Any movement can be seen as dance, and movement vocabulary isn't bound to certain styles of dance.

In the seminar we proposed an understanding of movement based on Laban Movement Analysis - movement is an action in space and time - and explored these three components of movement - space, weight and time - through improvisation and dance composition. The participants explored specific parameters, such as the

direction of movement, the heavy or light use of the body, or the guidance by vocal and percussive sounds to suggest dynamics and rhythm of movement.

The creative process, as well as the resulting dances astonished the participants; more so, because there was no one who taught 'the steps'. Seeing dance as a language of its own, they were invited to discover resources that have already been within them. A sense of connection between the movers arose not necessarily through underlying narrative, but through spatial and temporal dialogue between movers.

„What great ways to enjoy your own physicality and make something that looks impressive!“ Sabine Stolz, participant



Whole Person Engagement

Art teachers know how crucial it sometimes can be to engage pupils in artistic practice. When our physical, mental and emotional selves are all busy in a creative flow of alertness and involvement, we are able to go beyond our usual range of expression, bypass inhibitions and invite shifts to occur. Throughout the workshop we brought improvisation tasks to explore modes of engagement and to observe how the presence of a person can vary.

One of the activities in the workshop is called 'flocking'. The group moves as a flock, first walking around the room, then gradually involving more complex movements as they arise. The challenge is to maintain the movement as unison without pre-set materials. As the activity continues, the group arrives in a state that one is increasingly aware of the own body as well as to the other movers around. Once one overcomes the concern of what is right or wrong, one readily rides the flow of movement of the group, while the sense of individuality becomes even stronger. The resulting dance is visually speaking and dynamically surprising.

Contemporary dance, in its effort to diminish the invisible wall between audience and stage, between real life and theater, often presents dancers as persons, bringing forth their individuality. Contemporary dance training, therefore, employs methods and strategies to explore stage presence of performers and foster performers' both physical readiness and perceptual openness. These methods, in which one's movement ability is less important than one's awareness and readiness for action, can support pupils in music lesson to perceive the presence of their bodies, understand the performative reality in music, as well as to grow their confidence in making individual choices.

Crossing the Divides

“I learned something that I would like to bring into my musical practice; shifting mode, creating contrast, fast change between different dynamics in music.” Simon Wolfgang, participant

Through the workshop, we confirmed our belief that creative engagement doesn't have borders between disciplines. Different art forms, when drawing on sources from each other, can discover new possibilities to educate, that reflect the wholeness of a creative person and invite more means of creative expression.

We will continue our work on bridging between contemporary dance and music education. We hope that there will be more chances that we and other dance artists can exchange and work with music educators in schools, universities or community-settings.



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