

Working with Complexity

The human being is the starting point for my current work in performance. Rather than integrate the human with outside technological agencies I have concentrated on the processes that the human performer engages in performance, and by isolating these have been able to explore the creative practice in depth.

It needs to be stated that the work I do is concerned with practice. That is it is not an interpretative exercise, it is not product analysis. I am not developing a technique in order to create a particular kind of performance style. I am exploring technical processes and as a result performance emerges. I would define this as a dynamic process, and tentatively describe the result as dynamic performance.

One of the key aspects of this approach is to help the performer engage independently with their own creative performance process. This is not a composition process, but the actual process of engaging in the space and in the moment of action.

To do this is not a matter of definition and parts. The performer always works holistically, and response to work must take this into account. Therefore the list below of process/practice elements is not an indication of a working method, rather a list of ingredients.

Perception:

In most non dynamic techniques the performer looks in order to direct the focus of the spectator in the direction of fictional interest. For example, I can ask Simon [*performer*] to look at the door, to motivate an intention of exiting, and then to execute the action to leave, as a resolution. In other words looking is a means only, not an end in itself. It is however, possible to reverse this process and ask the performer to look, and merely **to see whatever it is they are looking at**. This removes looking/perception from intention. If I

ask Simon to walk forward [*the performer demonstrates*] I can illustrate how the performer can explore their field of vision very precisely. This element of precision in perception is very important. It is the key to the exploration of there / not there. As Simon walks down the space certain areas open up to vision (become 'there') while others leave the field of vision (become 'not there').

Associated binary: in front of / behind. Using perception in this engaged active way a performer can explore the binary of in front (what I can see from here in my field of vision) and behind (what I cannot see). The performer can have an acute awareness of what is behind, but if the turn of the head is restricted (by restricting the 'turning to see something' action) then the full dynamic of what lies ahead and what is behind you can be engaged.

It is a very powerful dynamic, and associated with certain emotional fields such as regret, guilt, panic, fear, and hope, euphoria, longing, desire.

Sensation:

The skin of the body is a key boundary. It is also a key element in sensation: the experience of contact. This can also be explored and engaged by the performer in an active, dynamic way. Unless defying gravity in the air, the performer is always in contact (if only by the feet on the floor surface). The critical line between contact and non-contact can be precisely explored. For example, I am going to ask someone to hold up their hand with the palm facing us [*a woman in the front seat does so*]. I can then ask Simon [*the performer demonstrates*] to place his hand in varying degrees of proximity to the other hand until he feels he has reached the critical line. At this precise place there is a decision moment available: to make contact or remain in non-contact. It is a highly charged space, generating heat. There are other parts of the body, potentially all parts of the body, that can be engaged in this way.

Associated binary: inside / outside. The performing process is very concerned with the flow between inside and outside. What is outside is **not you**. What is inside, is you. By various means, including breathing, a performer can engage this aspect of the process and

explore the feeling of everything is inside me (in breath), associated with feelings of being very large, at the centre, and the feeling of everything is outside me (out breath), associated with feelings of being very small, discrete, part of everything.

Proprioception:

This elusive element is nevertheless a crucial factor in this performing process. It arrives as a combination of other elements: it is concerned with the awareness of **being there**. It is not a psychological matter, it is not an awareness of 'self', with its personal history, biography. Rather it is a matter of what I define as an 'autobiology': an engagement with the total presence in the particular space at a particular moment.

Dynamogenesis:

My work is particularly concerned with the origins of movement. As already outlined, the usual intention led means of engaging is removed. That is the performer has to explore the origin of movement without an intention to move. This leads to an intense exploration of what has been called dynamogenesis, the critical moment of impulse creation. I can ask Simon to demonstrate this now [*the performer demonstrates*]. The performer is asked to move **when you want to**. This is necessary to engage the dynamic of the action. In removing intention it is not enough to replace this with an instruction (walk now) given either by an outsider (eg a director) or by an interior voice which the performer might use as a surrogate director/outsider. The performer must discover the movement forward in the very moment of engaging it. The performer must make the decision.

Associated binary: movement / stillness. In undertaking this detailed work the performer is exploring a paradox, a living koan of practice. Stillness itself is illusory. When not moving forward the performer's heart is beating, a lot of movement is taking place. The performer can experience an impulse of moving forward, and **not engage it into the space**. Is this stillness or movement?

Emergence:

Once the performer has engaged an impulse of moving forward into the space [*the performer is demonstrating*], in a dynamic process the question is: when is that movement resolved? When does the performer stop? It can be seen that this approach to technique breaks up the normal bio-mechanic cycle of intention, execution, resolution. The performer has no resolution in mind, no pre-planned resolution to execute when embarking on a movement. From this comes the dynamic notion of performance emerging from what the performers do. I would call this one of the key aspects of dynamic performance. A resolution, even one that takes 30 minutes to arrive as in the case of the Robert Wilson dance solo, is still a resolution and as such is **present from the very beginning of the movement**. In an emergent approach to performing the initial conditions become the key conditions: the arrangement of the space, the opening position of the performers, and more 'invisible' conditions such as attitude, atmospheric conditions, sound. The performers become adaptive agents in the composition of performance, working the binary lines involved in the process. These lines become critical phase transition points. If the performers have no resolution given to them in advance it enables them to explore their own series of performative 'nows', a notion that is itself another paradox as the 'now' of one 'moment' becomes another 'now' and thus transforms itself from a series of moments into a continuous flow. It is a factor in performing / somatic intelligence that we can contemplate a simultaneous contradiction. Like the particle and wave of quantum physics, the performance is both a series of moment by moment 'nows' **and** a continuous seamless flow.

Associated binary: performer / spectator

Finally it comes to the notion of performing and spectating. It might be beginning to become clear from what has been outlined so far that this process applies as much to spectating as it does to performing. What differentiates a spectator from a performer is no longer a simple question. Rather, spectating and performing become aspects of a total performance process

that is not fixed, but fluid. As fixed elements performers and spectators do not exist. Each person in the event is moving along the performing -spectating line. This fluidity

leads to instability, and therefore to unpredictable consequences. Performance becomes a complex, dynamic system with limit-less potential.

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