Speakingdance: accessing, interpreting and performing the dancer's sense of being

This article discusses a new and original concept-based approach to contemporary dance practice called Speakingdance, in which a dancer can perform their sense of 'being'. I purposely use the word being rather than alternatives such as self or identity for example, as I am referring to Martin Heidegger's conception of the term[1] The practice responds to the need for a more considered use of speech[2] in contemporary dance and the historical perception of the dancer in terms of a body-object. Philosophical thinking about speech and being provides a context with which to re-think the relationship between speech and contemporary dance to perform the dancer's sense of being. This practice-research has been driven by the question of how speech can be used in contemporary dance to perform the dancer's being? From my position as a female dancer, I argue that speech can be used to perform being in a poetic rhythm with dance more coherently than dance or speech can alone. Heidegger's temporal consideration of being moves away from conceptions of being that are fixed and can therefore pose a challenge to the objectification of dancer in relation to their bodies.

The sense of being experienced in Speakingdance is accessed through a 'just be' approach to improvisation to interpret and perform the dancer's 'internal-being-construct', through a poetic rhythm of speech and movement. Engaging with this original 'just be' improvisation method asks the dancer to tune out of their external sensory information and attune to their internal sense of being in that moment of time, asking the question 'who am I?' Attempting to somehow pause the temporality of being, in order to capture and perform it, an 'internal-being-construct' comes forwards as a bundle of language and imagery. The dancer interprets this through a poetic rhythm of speech and movement. In this rhythm, the dance has a voice.[3]

The 'internal-being-construct' is philosophically understood in relation to ideas of affect through Jacques Derrida's writing about interior monologues in *Voice and Phenomenon* and Henri Bergson's thinking about imagery in *Matter and Memory*. Derrida describes how the 'voice' of the interior monologue unifies the subject and object of our sense of being. This hearing-oneself-speak is a specific kind of auto-affection, that uses phonic complexes in the form of words and signs (2011: 65-68). Internal images are regarded by Bergson as the seat of affection and the source of action. The centre of our universe and the physical basis of our personality are described as being in these images (1991: 61). Bergson unites affect, image, action and personality in a way that helps us to illuminate how a Speakingdancer can attune to their 'internal-being-construct' to access, interpret and perform their sense of being.

In the context of this research, speech could have been considered independently of dance. Speech acts, originally written about by J. L. Austin in his book *How to do Things*

[1] Three different forms of the word 'being' are used in translations of Heidegger's work, presented in upper or lower-case forms, as 'being' or 'Being', and the translation of the more archaic word *Seyn* as 'beyng'. Some common-ground definitions of the terminology have emerged, which Richard Capobianco and Mark Wrathall (acknowledged as world-leading scholars of Heidegger) comprehensively summarize in *The Cambridge Heidegger Lexicon* (2021). In English translations of Heidegger's work, the lower-case 'being' is generally accepted as referring to entities (*das Seiende*) and their metaphysical beingness in relation to form or essence. This is the 'being' performed in Speakingdance, hence my use of the lower-case 'being in this article.

[2] Defined as the vocal utterance of words in this research.

[3] The intertwining of thinking about dance and speech inherent in this statement can also support ideas that the voice can dance, although that was not the focus of the research project or the argument in this article.

with Words (1975) inspired further notable publications on the topic.[4] Austin's discussion of speech acts is in the context of the performative which has made his work, and speech acts generally, ripe for the picking in relation to understanding theatrical artforms. Speech acts have particularly underpinned the recent development of Voice Studies as an academic discipline emerging from UK-based theatre and musical theatre practices in academia. A key text from this emerging discipline, *Voice Studies: critical approaches to process, performance and experience*, edited by Konstantinos Thomaidis and Ben Macpherson was published in 2015. The editors went on to disseminate current research in the area through their *Journal of Interdisciplinary Voice Studies*, which began in 2016. Thomaidis and Macpherson are theatre and musical theatre academics respectively and as a result the development of Voice Studies is influenced by the performativity and ontology of the singing voice. There are re-occurring discussions of the in-between in the chapters and articles I read in this area. Initially, the idea of the voice being in-between the speaker and the listener appealed to me as a means of connecting people in those roles and transporting something of their being from one to another.

Academic Voice Studies literature has a tendency to focus on the voice as a separate entity which occupies the space between the performer[5] and the listener. There is discussion of the uniqueness and identity of the performer, made present through their voice, which has been helpful in terms of my research. However, there is an implied passivity on the part of the listener and arguments emerging from this academic discipline centre on the performativity and ontology of the voice, as something distinct from the being of the performer and the listener. In contrast to this, Speakingdance engages with the ontology of the *dancer* and the relationship between speech and dance to perform being.

In the context of this research, the dancer's being is understood in relation to the work of German philosopher, Martin Heidegger. In Heidegger's influential publication *Being and Time* (1927), he articulated a particular temporal experience of being, with-others and with-world. This thinking posed a challenge to the traditions of metaphysics at that time. Alongside Heidegger's work, I have particularly engaged with the work of the Italian philosopher Adriana Cavarero. Cavarero's notion of the narratable self conceptualises an understanding of being as externally relational and facilitated by speech. This thinking has been significant in the formulation of Speakingdance concepts and the creation of Speakingdance practice sharings. Cavarero's argument that being is not an internal, ineffable phenomenon, but is instead an externally, relational narration, opens a field in which Speakingdancers are able to share who they are. Furthermore, Cavarero's writing about speech as action has provided a philosophical frame with which to conceptualize the movement in Speakingdance as having its own voice.

The practice research approach that Speakingdance has emerged from, values the agency and experience of the practitioner-scholar as part of a phenomenological enquiry. Practical experiments with the performance of dance and speech were documented through

[4] Examples include publications from John Searle, Steven Connor and Yvon Bonenfant, in relation to speech acts, although there are also sources from performance studies more broadly that cite Austin's writing about speech acts. Recent examples include Fischer-Lichte, Jain, and Jost (2020) and Butler (2021). Given my concern with speech, it seems important to contextualise my research in relation to Austin's seminal text and the use of Austin's ideas in the emergence of Voice Studies as an academic discipline, to make it clear that my research does not make a contribution to Voice Studies, but how it contributes to dance and performance philosophy instead.

[5] I use the word performer here because the person using the voice does not necessarily speak. They may be making non-verbal vocal sounds or singing which engages much more creative and dynamic intonations, pitches and volumes, for instance.

video and in written experiential accounts to formulate the 'just be' approach to improvisation and the poetic rhythm of speech and dance in which dance 'speaks'. Following a period of studio-based exploration, three new solo 'practice sharings' were created to gather information about the resonant impact of the practice on audience members. The presence of resonance indicates that a relational engagement with the dancer's being has been encountered and that the perception of the dancer has shifted away from body-object terms. This article focuses on what was learned about the poetic rhythm of dance and speech and the performance of being in practice sharing #1[6] and #3[7].

An understanding of speech and being

Giorgio Agamben's thinking about Voice[8] and language addresses issues of logocentrism[9] outlined by Derrida, particularly in his essay 'Plato's Pharmacy'. Derrida defines logocentrism as giving primacy to the spoken word based on the premise that speech is present at the same time as the person delivering it. This 'metaphysics of presence', as Derrida terms it, is conceived of in relation to truth, reality and being. Logocentric thinking distinguishes truth from the written word, as it is considered to be a representation of speech and has a different temporality to the writer. However, Derrida argues that there is truth in absence as well as presence. The value of absence in Derrida's work informs his concept of *différance*, whereby the meaning of language - spoken or written, is revealed through differences, oppositions and deferrals. The concept of *différance*, when applied to speech, gives meaning to the spoken word in a way that is no longer dependant on presence. The truth and reality of being can be revealed through what is absent in the meaning of words. This makes what language can convey about being, and in this case the dancer, less ineffable than previously thought.

Cavarero responds to Derrida in her book, *For More Than One Voice: Towards a Philosophy of Vocal Expression.* Cavarero aligns herself with Derrida's issues of phonocentrism and videocentrism – the privileging of the spoken word and visual presence as representing the truth of being, and goes on to critique the centrality of the self[10] in Derrida's thinking. Cavarero gives attention to the other in meaning making, stating that speech is not just for us to hear, but to be shared with others (2005: 232). The relationality of self and others in Cavarero's work is underpinned by her reading of Hannah Arendt.[11] In her key text, *The Human Condition,* Arendt argues that life stories, through which we have an understanding of our being, intertwine as they are shared with others through speech and action. For Arendt, a life story is not created but revealed – through speech, language and action, when we have the courage to leave our private hiding and insert ourselves into the world (1998: 186). Arendt goes on to praise the dramatic arts as: 'the only art whose sole subject is man in his relationship to others' (ibid: 188). Speakingdance is practiced as a direct

[6] *Being: exhibiting a speaking dancer's practice* (2017), performed as part of the Cultural Exchanges Festival in Leicester, UK.
[7] *Practicing Ontology: a 'speakingdance' event* (2019), performed as part of the *Innovative Methodologies: International Art and Science* conference in Croatia.
[8] Agamben uses a capitalized version of the word 'Voice' to differentiate his reference to vocal speech from vocal sounds.
[9] Logocentrism refers to the ideas that words and language are the fundamental expression of an external reality.
[10] 'Self' refers to a person's essential being that distinguishes them from others, especially considered as the object of self-reflection. Therefore, the term differs slightly from Heidegger's concept of being which is in relation to others and world. However, Cavarero's notion of the narratable self does align more closely with Heidegger's thinking about being.
[11] Arendt's close personal relationship with Heidegger is interesting to note in terms of the connection between the ideas being discussed here.

and intentional engagement with that relationship, sharing the self with others, revealing who we are, and bringing the dancer's being out of hiding.

Taking a different approach to Agamben and Derrida, and even Arendt, Cavarero focuses her discussion of speech and being on the uniqueness of beings: 'not reducible to the name, or to language' (Cavarero 2005: 235). She goes on to argue:

> Thus, the reciprocal communication of this uniqueness functions all the more in the physical, corporeal element of the voice – in contrast to the proper name, which belongs to the verbal register. The name is not flesh; still less is it singular flesh. The voice, however, is.
>
> (ibid: 238)

For Cavarero, there is more to be considered with regards to the reciprocity and physicality of the voice in the communication of the uniqueness of being. This thinking opens doors for speech and dance in the performance of being as it challenges logocentric ideas with a physicality not discussed by Agamben. Cavarero's arguments are clearly articulated across two of her monographs: *For More than One Voice: Towards a Philosophy of Vocal Expression* and *Relating Narratives: Storytelling and Selfhood.* Both of these texts have been influential in the understanding of being explored through Speakingdance and require further discussion in order to highlight their relevance.

The uniqueness of being is central to Cavarero's argument in *For More than One Voice: Towards a Philosophy of Vocal Expression*. She argues that this uniqueness is something to be revealed through the voice as:

> The voice is the equivalent of what the unique person has that is most hidden and most genuine. This is not an unreachable treasure, or an ineffable essence, or still less, a sort of secret nucleus of the self; rather it is a deep vitality of the unique being who takes pleasure in revealing herself through the emission of the voice. This revelation proceeds, precisely, from inside to outside, pushing itself in the air, with concentric circles, towards another's ear.
>
> (ibid: 4)

This figuration of the voice is reminiscent of Arendt's comments regarding the courage needed to leave our private hiding and insert ourselves into the world, but Cavarero re-frames that idea specifically for the voice and goes on to make the point that the revelation of our uniqueness is always for someone else: 'The voice is always *for* the ear, it is always relational' (ibid: 169; italics in original). Therefore, the uniqueness of being cannot be defined in terms of a subject, but rather it needs to be considered as an inter-related self-distinction, or 'uniqueness-in-resonance' (ibid: 199).

In her argument for the physicality of the voice - in the context of the vibrating, fleshy throat, Cavarero acknowledges an alignment of the voice with the body and the feminine that is paralleled by the masculinity of the semantic (ibid: 6). This perspective on speech complicates the usually marginal position of the feminine and corporeal in addition to the normative privileging of the masculine and language. Cavarero brings these parallels together in her conceptualization of speech as an action to communicate rather than signify, further disrupting traditionally fixed, hierarchical positions. Thinking about speech as an action in

dance creates a potential for dancers to be seen beyond the objectification of their bodies and perform the uniqueness of their being with others.[12]

Cavarero's ideas about the voice in terms of uniqueness, relationality and physicality pose a challenge to the privileged position of sight and the gaze in metaphysics, by reclaiming the voice as resonant and sonorous:

> The point is not simply to revocalize logos. Rather, the aim is to free logos from its visual substance, and to finally mean it as sonorous speech – in order to listen, in speech itself, for the plurality of singular voices that convoke one other in a relation that is not simply sound, but above all resonance.
>
> (ibid: 178-9)

This reclamation of physical sonority is not at the expense of the semantic as Cavarero later goes on to outline the relationship between the voice and speech as interweaving in such a way that they: 'cannot be severed without sacrificing humanity itself; this goes for both the animal voice and the devocalized logos' (ibid: 210). Through this statement, I return to Heidegger, as Cavarero's thinking reflects his discussion of language in his 'Letter on "humanism"'. Both Cavarero's writing about the voice and Heidegger's writing about language intend to free speech from the imprisonment of metaphysical and logocentric thinking, while maintaining humanity. This conceptualization of speech provides an opportunity for Speakingdance to bring the being of the dancer forwards.

In her earlier book *Relating Narratives: Storytelling and Selfhood*, Cavarero discusses her concept of the narratable self which has a temporality resembling Heidegger's thinking about being. Cavarero's original contribution of the narratable self emphasises our external relationality with others, rather than an internal encounter with the 'self' which is prevalent in Western metaphysics. The argument for the narratable self as an externally relational concept commences with the view that our life-story begins at birth, with memories that are soon forgotten and leave our story fragmented. A desire for unity promotes the telling of our stories with a necessary other: necessary, because being is understood through our connections with world and with others. Cavarero argues that: 'Autobiography does not properly respond to the question 'who am I?' Rather, it is the biographical tale of my story, told by another, which responds to the question' (Cavarero 2000: 45). That is not to say that our narratable selves are constructed solely by others, but that our stories are created through our relationality to others. In this context, Cavarero states that auto/biography is *external* so there is no *internal*, ineffable self.

Cavarero argues that the exchange of those auto/biographies enables a recognition of the uniqueness of being and the desire for narration. That exchange facilitates a: 'tendency to recognise the meaning [*senso*] of one's own self within the other's story, especially if that story speaks of suffering and misery' (ibid: 91). However, Cavarero goes on to argue that recognising ourselves in an-other is quite different from recognizing the uniqueness of the other: 'Who I am and who you are are thus passed over in favour of the question "who are we," which is simply an ontological error of language' (ibid: 91-2). The uniqueness of being

[12] This reconceptualization of speech as an action is one that contributes to understanding Speakingdance as a concept-based approach to dance practice. Speakingdance is a practice, it acts and what it *does* is significant, with conceptual thinking through a philosophical lens in its performance. This is different to the understanding of conceptual art, in which the idea (or concept) behind the work is more important than the finished art object. The shifting relationship between art works or performance and conceptual thinking is a current area of consideration for a collaborative project I am involved with: ORIGIN/FORWARD\SLASH (originforwardslash.com).

is to be found in the resonant response to the question 'who am I', not the question 'who are we'. American philosopher Judith Butler, acclaimed for her work on the performativity of gender, summarises Cavarero's construction of the narratable self as follows:

> I exist in an important sense for you, and by virtue of you. If I have lost the conditions of address, if I have no 'you' to address, then I have lost 'myself'. In her view, one can tell an autobiography only to an other, and one can reference 'I' only in relation to a 'you': without the 'you' my own story becomes impossible.
>
> (Butler 2005: 32)

It is for these reasons the practice of Speakingdance recognises the necessity of being, as being-shared-with-others, in order for a narratable self to be revealed.

The experience of a 'just be' improvisation

Once I have shut my eyes and started to attune to the question of who I am, time seems to slow down and my sense of being broadens. I try not to think of what I have just done and allow myself to be open to the response to my question, rather than thinking about what I should do when I have finished this task. There is an intention to be in the moment and I gradually arrive there with an increased sense of the entirety of my being. My experience shifts from being sensory-heavy, cognitively-busy and temporally-linear to a web-like sense of self:

> The practice begins with 'just be'. To attune to the flow of becoming I often begin with the eyes closed, quiet, not moving. This limits my sensory input and responses to the externality of my world. I need to attune to thinking of me right now, in this now as it passes on to the next now. Me in the middle of my now web and it's connections to past, future, world and others. Me in relation. Me becoming in relation while quiet and still.
>
> I become aware of so much all at once – too much to be able to say. Words are restricting. The abstraction of movement alludes to my thoughts – my embodied thoughts. My bodily system of thinking and moving unfold and unravel into an emerging movement vocabulary with little meaning. The movement makes it's point known once words are uttered. The utterance, performed by me, the dancing me, is considered before it's delivered in its relation to the thought, the dance, the rhythm and the spectator.
>
> The utterance, my voicing of words chosen to articulate my thought, is said for another more than my movements alone are danced for them. That moment of speaking is when I find the words in my thoughts and the words are not too fast to capture with the voice. The words are rooted in language, but let us not forget their origin in the physicality of the vocal. Nuanced, resonant and ontological.
>
> Speaking discloses something more with each iteration. A childhood narrative, an uncomfortable mood, a difficult relationship. Those narratives, moods and people are not disclosed through the voicing of words that represent them. It is me that is disclosed through a decision to speak of them. These are not truths of a fixed 'me' to be revealed and discovered by others, separate from others. These are voicings, sayings, becomings. Moments when I am 'speaking', in

> relation to others who are 'hearing'. This is part of an Event[13] in which relating can become a dialectic interchange of resonance, individuation and ontological difference.
>
> (Hay 2019)

This reflection captures my experience of being as I arrive in the moment.[14] The sense of being is initially overwhelming, but clarity emerges as I start to move in response to what I can capture. As I speak, the being of the affective, abstract movement unfolds some more. However, my being is not signified by language, rather it is disclosed through the implied decision to speak and move and quality of the 'voice' in the dance. The awareness that I speak for an-other, more than I dance for an-other, is interesting and brings me back to Cavarero's argument that speech is relational as is Heidegger's thinking of Being. Through this experience I start to connect speech and being with dance.

The dance speaks (of being)

Cavarero's discussion of speech in *For More Than One Voice: Toward a Philosophy of Vocal Expression* considers speech as a vocal ontology and is particularly useful for exploring how movement and speech work together as action in the practice of Speakingdance to give greater presence to the being of the dancer. Paul Kottman, the translator of *For More Than One Voice: Toward a Philosophy of Vocal Expression*, writes in his introduction:

> Every utterance is moreover an action, which at once manifests one's embodied uniqueness to others in the context of a material, ontological relation here and now and which also initiates, or alters, a relation whose sense exceeds this sheer manifestation of one's corporeal uniqueness. In other words, action – especially vocal utterance – is the way in which the actor affirms and manifests his or her embodied uniqueness, and also inaugurates a new sense for that uniqueness by fostering a relationship whose character is more than solely ontological, but also political.
>
> (Kottman in Cavarero 2005: xxi)

The emphasis here is placed on the action of the utterance rather than the language of the utterance. With this, it is possible to perceive speech as a manifestation of a person's uniqueness, through the relation of their matter and being to others. Kottman speaks of the actor in this statement, but let us turn this well-made point towards the dancer. The dancer's movement is also an action capable of manifesting her uniqueness to others, but the movement needs to be relational through matter and being. Speech achieves this with greater ease as it is a shared experience with which people can relate. A dancer's movement can make their matter and being appear quite alien in a contemporary dance context. They become muted people moving in unfamiliar ways, drifting further away from the shared experience they have with others.

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[13] The word 'Event' is capitalized here as a translation of *Ereignis* in Heidegger's work, usefully described by Jussi Backman as 'Time, in Heidegger's sense, as the dynamic, singularizing contextualization of situations in terms of the intertwining dimensions that orient them, is what makes possible a derivative conception of time as a *sequence* of interrelated situations' (2015, p.90: italics in original).

[14] Here the moment needs to be thought of not as a fixed moment in time, but in the Heideggerian sense of *augenblick*, as an experience of insight into one's situation that breaks through the temporality of everydayness (Polt 2021:497).

The movement in Speakingdance practice differs because of its origin. The affective origin of the movement, accompanied by speech that comes from the same place, creates a Speakingdancer with the shared experience of voice and affections that enable the movement to become familiar and relational. In this way, Speakingdance practice gives a presence to the matter and being of the dancer as a relational person. Cavarero's comments on actions and language illustrate how this relationality creates *communication* rather than signification:

> And speech in turn, is an act that falls together with nonverbal actions under the category of action. It is the act of speaking to one another, rather than language. It is the act with which some unique beings do not simply signify something, but rather communicate to one another who they are.
>
> (Cavarero 2005: 197)

Speakingdance practice speaks to and communicates with others, in the form of a camera or an audience, about who *they* are *and* who the dancer is. This moves the dancer away from perceptions of being a signifying body and towards the presence of the Speakingdancer's unique being itself.

I think some care needs to be taken here not to dismiss language as unhelpful. Whilst I support Cavarero's argument which acknowledges the *action* of speech, and use that to understand the movement of Speakingdance, *language* remains a fundamental part of relational communication in the practice. Who we are can be shared through what we choose to say and the words we select to express that. Similarly, the movement in dance has to be chosen in terms of the 'vocabulary'[15] available for us to perform. Language, like movement and speech, is the result of our decision to act. Language and movement give form to those actions, but when thought of as contributing to communication in this context, language does not have to allude to fixed significations. Language can make our being present through the action of the voice, as it can through the movement of the body generally. A re-conceptualization of language, rather than a dismissal of it, is required here. This does not mean that I am claiming language as corporeal, neither am I arguing that dance is a language, rather I am conceptualizing language as ontological in a way that is similar to Cavarero's consideration of the voice as ontological. Language, as well as the action of the voice, is part of speech and its communication of our uniqueness with others. In Speakingdance, language and the voice, through speech and with movement, create a relationality between the matter and being of the dancer and her audience members.

As I have already acknowledged, dance and speech are interpretative performances of the affective response to the question of who am I? in the practice of 'just be' improvisations. Therefore, the intention of the practice is to disclose being, not perform the self through storytelling. The practice draws on autobiography as it is experienced in the act of improvisation in its fragmentary state, bound up with other features of the 'internal-being-construct', not as a temporally linear narrative about my life. Consequently, what I say is not structured to tell a story and the way I move does not need to mimetically signify the words I am thinking of. Through the rhythm of dance and speech, performed in response to the

[15] I think about this 'vocabulary' in terms of Jennifer Roche's discussion of 'moving identities' that dancers develop, which can be recognised in the choices they make, movement they recollect and a dancing 'signature' that emerges: 'Therefore, the moving identity is the result of a dancing agency, the composite of choices conscious and unconscious that have been made throughout a dancer's career. It is the site through which dancers establish as self-in-movement and realise the potentialities of a creative dancing signature' (2015: 137).

'internal-being-construct', the dance shares its voice with others through the camera or in practice sharing events.

The rhythm that facilitates the 'voice' of the dance, like speech and movement, originates in the 'internal-being-construct'. The Speakingdancer has an awareness, through her experience as an improvisor, of what to say, how to move and the rhythmic relationship between those things to communicate the affective qualities of the 'internal-being-construct'. In this rhythm, abstract contemporary dance can become more accessible when framed by the familiarity of spoken language. There is also a familiarity in the apparent affection present in the dance, that extends what words can expose, and that makes the movement accessible on its own terms. The Speakingdancer plays this rhythm, poetically, to deconstruct, emphasise or stress particular gestures or words and further communicate her affective being. It is in this way that the dance speaks.

The poetic rhythm of dance and speech

Reflecting on the movement's rhythm with speech during the research process, I wrote:

> What is the movement's rhythm with speech? I'm standing in the studio, eyes closed, searching for who I am. In an authentic engagement with the question of who I am, I find affections – memories, experience and sensory information. I translate them into a language of words and images and perform them through the actions of speech and movement. Speech and movement rarely begin together. When the movement comes first it's like listening to an unknown language, but it is obvious it is trying to communicate. The movement needs to be performed long enough for that to be established before it is joined by speech for it to be clear that the speech is communicating the same thing. If speech comes too soon, the movement doesn't establish a voice and the power of words drowns out what the movement has to say. When the speech comes first movement can join it at any time and it's clear that the movement is expanding on the speech. The rhythm here is different. These rhythms are creatively structured as they are performed. Once the movement has established its own voice, speech can be performed at the same time without silencing all other communication. Speaking and dancing at the same time shifts the presence of the Speakingdancer. That presence is full of action, the affections that drive that action, breathlessness and vulnerability. This is difficult to sustain. The dancer is singing with 'more than one voice'.[16] She is performing unity through the multiplicity of voices and the resonance between them that she finds in her own solo practice of Speakingdance. The ripples of that resonance extend further when the affections of others are there to relate to.
>
> (Hay 2022)

On 2 November 2016, I recorded an improvisation in which I began with the intention to 'just be'. I remember an experience from when I was 15 years old coming forth, attuning to the sensory experiences I had then in the moment of improvisation. The 'internal-being-

[16] The phrasing is a reference to Cavarero when she writes about reciprocity in the communication of our uniqueness as, 'Like a kind of song "for more than one voice" whose melodic principle is the reciprocal distinction of the unmistakable timbre of each' (2005: 201). Here, I have used 'with more than one voice' to indicate the 'voices' that fill the moment of performance with speech, dance, affect and relationality.

construct' was not vivid, but it formed with words that the me in that moment wanted to say on behalf of a younger me.

The action begins with walking to find the place in the space that I will begin. I am looking around, noticing my environment. My hands hold each other as my thinking starts to slow down, focus and settle in on the 'internal-being-construct' that's emerging. Extended, sudden movements in the arms and legs, repeat and develop until the sharp quality becomes softer. Extended limbs seem to fragment and slow down to periods of stillness with an awkward, almost foetal aesthetic. There is a sense that something is being 'said', but what? 'Get off', 'fuck off' (these words are delivered with my natural, everyday voice, accompanied by an offensive hand gesture). 'I was 15'. These words are not speaking on behalf of the movement, but there is a sense that the words and movement relate.

I walk to settle in and begin again with what I have learned about the 'internal-being-construct' that is forming. My breath is audible this time, increasing the experience that the internal is becoming external. Speech punctuates the movement in a way that allows the repetition of each phrase to become more articulate. In this rhythm, the dance speaks.

Practice sharing #1: movement analysis

The movement in this sharing appears in different ways:

- Mimetic movement, which illustrates the speech.
- Affective movement, which responds to the 'internal-being-construct'.

An example of mimetic movement appears soon after the start of the sharing, when I am sitting on the floor of the performance space with the audience and talking about my mum. I talk about how my sister and I used to get in bed with her at night time when my dad was working nights and I used to twirl a small piece of my mum's hair which had not been hardened by hairspray, around my fingers. At the same time, I take my own hair out of the ponytail it is in and begin to twist it with my fingers in the same way. This gesture illustrates the story of the past with me in that moment, but the movement does not speak of my being. Affective movement is particularly apparent during the first recording I share and the live practice that follows, in which I respond to being with my eldest daughter and being with my husband. This is the movement that speaks of being most clearly. My descriptions of the live and recorded material have no trace of commonality in shape, dynamic, or quality of movement, but there is a shared presence that comes from attunement with the 'internal-being-construct'.

I realise that I speak more when I am practicing for a live audience than I do for the camera in my solo studio practice. On my own, I hear the words in my head and voicing them seems strange without anyone with me to receive them.[17] Whilst I am aware that the recordings the camera captures are potentially viewable by others, I am really performing for my own research purposes and therefore talking to myself about myself. The movement is different though. I do not see the movement in my head. I see shapes and forms and experience levels of tension with particular emotions, and it is this that forms the impetus for my movement, what I move in response to. Unlike what I have to say, the movement is not known to me until it is put into action. Voicing more of the words in my thoughts for a live audience is part of the way I take care of their experience. Speech supports the accessibility of affective movement and being.

[17] A similar point is made by Derrida (1967/2011) in his discussion of interior monologues and by Cavarero (1997/2000) with regards to the narratable self.

Practice sharing #1: speech analysis

When practicing Speakingdance, I try not to speak with a voice that responds to the demands of performance. That is, I do not attempt to employ a trained voice, a voice that tries to project to the back wall, that pronounces each word clearly, with a measured pace that gives the audience time to process what I am saying. Neither do I use a microphone.[18] Instead, I speak with my everyday voice, as my audience members do, even though that is not the voice that is at home in performance. I speak with an ordinary public voice, usually spoken and heard with indifference, a voice seemingly out of place in performative events.

Heidegger writes about everydayness in *Being and Time*, describing it through our relationship with *Das Man*, translated by Stambaugh as 'the they'[19]:

> We enjoy ourselves and have fun the way *they* enjoy themselves. We read, see, and judge literature and art the way *they* see and judge. But we also withdraw from the 'great mass' the way *they* withdraw, we find 'shocking' what *they* find shocking. The they, which is nothing definite and which all are, though not as a sum, prescribes the kind of being of everydayness.
>
> (2010: 123; italics in original)

Everydayness is a way of being, in common with others, 'the they'. It is a public way of being that is subsumed into the public-facing world. It is everyday life, social norms and cultural expectations. Following the above point, Heidegger goes on to state (but does not explain) that: 'Publicness obscures everything, and then claims that what has been thus covered over is what is familiar and accessible to everybody' (ibid: 124). In the context of a Speakingdance sharing there is a paradox here. The everyday voice is the voice of 'the they' that obscures what is familiar and accessible, yet it is also relational despite not belonging in a performance setting.

A Speakingdance sharing features the everyday voice, but in a more abstract form as it is deconstructed and integrated into a poetic rhythm with movement. Therefore, the environment of a Speakingdance sharing, is clearly not of the everyday. Nevertheless, the attuned audience member can relate to the Speakingdancer through the sound of their voice and perceive the authentic, affective narration that the practice exposes through the rhythm of speech and movement. Speech fragments create a frame for hearing 'the voice' *in* the movement, connecting voice and movement in the same affective narration. The exposure of affect in the movement is reminiscent of Heidegger's writing about 'the they', as a disguise of everydayness that can be fractured to reveal 'authentic being':

> In terms of the they, and as the they, I am initially 'given' to 'myself'. Initially, Dasein is the they and for the most part it remains so. If Dasein explicitly discovers the world and brings it near, if it discloses its authentic being to itself, this discovering of 'world' and disclosing of Dasein always comes about by

[18] The practice is for the benefit of the dancer and the audience, but practice sharings are purposely created as more intimate events, meaning that I can be heard without a microphone. Hearing the dancer's voice from a speaker rather than as we hear it every day is not the most effective use of the voice in this practice as I go on to discuss.

[19] Other translations of *Das Man* include 'the everyone', 'the anyone', 'the nobody'. Heidegger uses *Man* as an impersonal pronoun to refer to societal ways of thinking and acting, culturally based values. Terms such as 'everydayness', 'averageness', 'publicness' and 'inauthenticity' are bound up in Heidegger's discussions of *Das Man.*

clearing away coverings and obscurities, by breaking up the disguises with which Dasein cuts itself off from itself.

(ibid: 125)

Heidegger's view is that, for most of the time, we are 'the they'. We go about our everyday lives without giving much thought to its meaning and purpose, or who we are. We just get on with things. Speakingdance asks the dancer to attune to the question of who they are, revealed as an 'internal-being-construct' in the moment of improvisation and performance, to disclose their world and authentic being. The rhythm of speech and movement performed through Speakingdance exposes an affective sense of authentic being and breaks up the everyday disguise with which we live as 'the they'. In this way, the practice of Speakingdance enables the dancer to perform who they are, rather than tell a story of what they are.[20]

Practice sharing #3: developing the voice of dance

There was a much more conscious use of mimetic and affective movement material in this sharing. All of the movement material in this sharing speaks when it is performed in a rhythm with my voice, but the mimetic movement is more superficial in what it brings forth. This was appropriately used to speak of the banality of work routines, but affective material was needed to disclose deeply rooted experiences of my relationship with my husband, for example. I introduced the use of 'hook' gestures in this sharing too, which are created by repeating particular words or phrases with specific movement gestures. This structural feature supports the accessibility of the practice for the audience. Once 'hook' gestures are established, they can be repeated without the use of the voice and maintain the clarity of what they are referring to. At the end of the sharing, I revisit dance material from earlier on in the work and it 'speaks' without my voice because it is reminiscent of the affective experiences and life-stories already disclosed.

Figure 1: Photo from practice sharing #3. Credit: David Gazarov.

Speakingdance: to conclude

The Speakingdancer interprets the 'internal-being-construct' through a poetic rhythm of affective movement and everyday speech, carefully crafted to enable the dance to speak of

[20] In terms of being a mother, teacher, wife, dancer, for example – the 'labels' with which we might identify.

the dancer's being. The everyday speech is relatable and accessible, but also uncanny in the sense that it is unfamiliar and not at home in performance. Therefore, the use of everyday speech, rather than a trained, performative voice, can facilitate a connection between the dancer and individual audience members. This connection, along with the sense of the uncanny created by everyday speech in performance, challenges body-object perceptions of the Speakingdancer that might otherwise come into view. In a poetic rhythm with otherwise abstract contemporary dance, this everyday speech provides a frame with which to hear and understand the affective voice performed through the movement.

The movement communicates more of the Speakingdancer's 'internal-being-construct' than words alone are able to, because of the way that dance, framed by speech, can allude to meaning that is more expansive and inclusive than words. In Speakingdance practices, affective movement communicates with audience members through a system of resonance based on Cavarero's (2005) considerations of speech that communicates uniqueness. This affective resonance is how dance speaks of being in Speakingdance. Autobiographical stories can emerge from this practice, but the intention of Speakingdance is to communicate a sense of being rather than storytelling. The focus is on the dancer's performance of who they are, rather than the roles or labels they undertake and assume in life. Affective movement, in a rhythm with everyday speech, performs something of who the dancer is through the tension, energy, shape and quality, triggered by the 'internal-being-construct'. The rhythmic relationship with speech means that dance and speech collaborate to communicate the dancer's sense of being, so affective movement does not serve as a mimetic illustration of what the dancer has to say.

Cavarero's (2000) notion of the narratable self argues that the sense of being we create for ourselves is relational, unfolding through spoken communication *with* others. This challenges the understanding of the voice communicating *between* people articulated in Voice Studies. In the context of Speakingdance, Cavarero's notion provides a way for the dancer to share their sense of being and to be 'seen' in light of that, beyond the perception of their body as an object. This understanding of being as relational also demands that the performance of being, and therefore the performance of Speakingdance, requires 'a necessary other' (Cavarero 2000: 84).

In the practice of Speakingdance, affective movement is conceived as speaking of the dancer's sense of being, through a reconceptualization of the physicality and ontology of the voice. The relationality experienced between the dancer and individual audience members is facilitated by the poetic rhythm of movement and speech performed by the dancer, in which the everyday voice makes otherwise abstract dance accessible. In the performance of practice sharings, beings 'see' one another.

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