

Introducing my area of inquiry to the dancers

On November 4, 2020 I scheduled a meeting with the dancers that will contribute to my artistic research, in order to share with them my research topic. The dancers that will take part in my practice- led research are Lia – my dance partner and co-founder of ‘Random magnetic moment’ dance group which we’ve created in 2019- and Vicky – a professional contemporary dancer based in Thessaloniki. However, a lockdown was imposed on Thessaloniki due to the Coronavirus pandemic. So, we met via Skype.

I referred to my area of inquiry concerning instant composition and the field of dramaturgy in abstract narratives as well as my research theme in regards to time and duration. Also, I introduced to the dancers the term ‘wide-now’ which is a fundamental key element in the frame of my research. Finally, we’ve organized the next steps, introducing alternative ways of doing research during the quarantine period.

An excerpt from our discussion:

Lia: So, is duration your theme? Isn’t it pauses?

(I had shared with Lia my research on pausing concerning integrated assignment of Year one in COMMA. At that moment, I was thinking of focusing on the notion of pauses concerning my area of investigation.)

Despina: I would like to say some things at the moment concerning the term ‘wide-now’ that I am introducing in terms of my research. I define this term as a time experience and perception that could provide us with the possibility to feel time expanding as a sensation. Thus, in terms of instant composition field where ‘be at the moment’, ‘be in present time’ is within its fundamental principles I consider present moment as a ‘huge’ moment; an expanded moment where past experiences and memories as well as anticipations or images that are projected in the immediate future mingle in the improvisation of now. In this sense, I feel that ‘wide-now’ is closer to Henri Bergson’s philosophy concerning duration. In his view, duration includes the present and the infinite past. Except for actions and reactions that

correspond to our senses, there exist numerous unconscious memories that affect the way we act even if we are not aware of them. Given this, when we feel time expanding as a sensation, we may have the opportunity to open our senses and thus expand our perception and awareness while improvising.

Lia: that's a pause!

Despina: Considering my research in pausing in July, I felt that my approach was superficial: Instead of 'reaching' a pause, I was stopping the time; the pauses were imposed ones. I questioned myself: why do I reach a pause? So, I felt that it is essential to move through time; to experience time and duration while moving in order to 'reach' a real pause'; when we move in time, we possibly 'go' effortlessly to a pause. Thus, I decided to emphasize time and duration, introducing experiencing the duration of time as the fundamental improvisational task concerning my artistic research. I have a sensation that if we achieve to perceive and experience time while we are improvising, we can easily include pausing in our movement exploration. Thus, my research will be mostly focused on 'wide-now' as a time experience that provides us with a 'wider' duration of the present moment and which in turn enables us to perceive and be aware of things.

Lia: But how the 'now' is widening?

Despina: It depends on how you sense and understand the present time...

Lia: But the present time is one. The 'now' is one.

Despina: 'wide-now' and time expansion is an experience and a sensation. It probably doesn't happen in real time. Since time is passing by, every moment is preceded by another moment and this is an on-going trip. But which moment is present so as to 'be at the moment' while improvising?

In this light, instead of counting and chasing the moments, I introduce 'wide-now' in the frame of creating a wider reality of the present, where all the moments are inseparable units of a whole and that is to be the real-time creation of dance; as if

the present moment is stretched, 'shaping' the sensation that it lasted as long as the improvisational dance or that the dance was 'a moment' that took over the whole session.

In addition to that, I could understand this 'wide-now' experience as a wide- ranged process that is taking place in the dancer's mind; innumerable places, things and ideas are present in their brain, while they are moving and reacting to possible impulses. The ideas and possible reactions that emerge in our minds as performers in an improvisation of 'now' could be derived from the 'world of consciousness' or the 'world of unconsciousness'. Apart from the things that are available to our senses, there is a variety of 'hidden' things that are not visible in the present, but they influence, even unconsciously, our reactions and actions while performing. I consider this process as a temporal event that even if it is short regarding clock time, it enables me sometimes to perceive and experience the duration of time by diving into the infinite realm of memories and the endless world of imagination.

Vicky: You referred to memories. How should I approach a memory? Should I recall something from the past and describe it through movement with a clear beginning, a middle and a clear end?

Lia: How should we approach memories? Mentally or physically?

Despina: It depends on the ways a past experience has emerged in the improvisation of now?

Vicky, are you talking about brining into surface and 'illustrating' a past experience in order to show a specific a story?

Lia: Personally, I am interested in initiating from the body concerning my research and exploration. How are memories born? They are usually generated through stimulus. Then numerous associations take place in the mind that lead to an action. In this sense, the beginning is the emergence of a memory, the middle is the understanding of it and the end is the action that is preceded. In other words, a memory belongs to the past, the realization of it happens in the present time and the action originated by it takes place in the immediate future.

Vicky: I meant something like a story telling. But now I am understanding that it is more abstract. Ok. Everything is clear to me now.

Lia: Me too.

Vicky: I am asking though in order to understand your approach.

Despina: Since it will be an exploration of instant composition and improvisation, I am not guiding you for now concerning your perception and experience of time and duration while moving. My action research starts now. At first, I feel it essential to explore on your own and share with me your initial experiential outcomes.

Regarding our next steps, I will send you my Design Plan 1 to have a look. Since we are not able to meet and explore altogether in the studio due to lockdown, I thought that it will be feasible to practice on your own until Saturday the 14th of November, sending me your material via video recordings. You could send me for feedback and feedforward either a sequence of your everyday practice and explorations or a single video- extract of your research: the latter will probably include what it 'deserves' to be remembered.

Also, we could meet one by one outdoors and do the research together.

The task that you will be exploring and which stands at the basis of my research is: Do I move through time? How do I experience the duration of time while I am moving?

Within the design plan you can find a bibliography which I could share with you if you are interested in something specific.

Lia: I prefer to send us the references on which you will base your research. For instance, you could send us the article by which you were inspired concerning a task we will be working.

Reflecting: notes-thoughts- questions

What is time duration? How do I perceive it?

Is duration my research topic?

Is wide-now integrally linked to duration?

How do I perceive 'wide-now' experience?

'How could I derive improvisational tasks out of theory.'

A part of the research now is orientated towards the ways I could conduct my research due to lockdown.