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Kinaesthetical Intellect As a Key-Source for Analysis Dance Works by Andrey Andrianov and Po.V.S.Tanze

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Abstract. Russian contemporary dance has been developing vigorously over the past 20 years. Its various developmental directions make it difficult for analysis: Russian critical dance discourse hasn't fully developed yet, and the criteria used by ballet and theatre studies doesn't seem to be applicable especially to some of the contemporary dance forms which rely primarily on the body and embodiment approach in their communication strategies. The latter ones are the focus of this article and may reveal their relevancy to the XX century's shifted focus in aesthetic. The essence of such an aesthetic turn – kinaesthetic awareness – will be used as primarily optics to look at two works of Russian dance artists based in Moscow. The methodology strategy combines two approaches: one is based on a phenomenological reduction, to fix an almost immediate response and doesn't take into account any other information and the other – to delve deeper to the artists' creative practices by asking them about their attitude towards the performer-spectator communication and the role of body practices' in the creative practices.

Keywords: kinaesthetical intellect, Russian contemporary dance, dance studies, somatics, body awareness, Russian dance performance, Po.V.S.Tanze dance company, Andrey Andrianov.

Research area: theory and history of culture, art.

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Кинестетический интеллект как средство анализа танц-перформансов Андрея Андрианова и танц-компания «По.В.С.Танцы»

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Аннотация. Развитие российского современного танца за последние 20 лет происходило настолько стремительно, что вариативность всевозможных форм, которые он принимал, затрудняет его художественный анализ. Это происходит потому, что пока еще нет сформированного дискурса о современном танце, а критерии близких форм, балетоведения и театроведения, сложно применить, если исследование касается зоны художественной коммуникации, основанной на категории телесности. В статье анализируются примеры такого взаимодействия в рамках кинестетической осознанности, которая является призмой для рассмотрения двух работ московских танц-художников: «Кровь» танцевальной компании «По.В.С.Танцы» и «ТанцТанцТанц» Андрея Андрианова. Для понимания способа осмысления создателями процесса зрительско-исполнительской коммуникации проанализированы интервью по вопросам о месте практик тела в художественном процессе.

Ключевые слова: кинестетический интеллект, российский современный танец, танцевальные исследования, российский танц-перформанс, танцевальная компания «По.В.С.Танцы», Андрей Андрианов.

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The Russian contemporary dance scene is clad in various forms ranging from expressionist abstract works, narrated stories, improvisation score pieces and so on. This article focuses on those artists whose works are grounded in movement research, that don't follow linear narration and don't appeal to emotional expression. As a term, 'dance performance' has a different connotation in Russian. It has a similar pronunciation to English and refers to live or art performance forms where the body is exclusively charged with accumulating forces and energies, a spatial reorganisation and the creation of new values. That's why I am using kinesthetic intellect as an evaluative term to analyze works

by Aleksandra Konnikova and Alberts Alberts (working together as Po.V.S.Tanze dance company) and Andrey Andrianov. Kinaesthetic intellect is a unifying term for body knowledge, embodied sensitivities, developed kinaesthetical awareness and so on. It describes one's body as a self-regulated and autonomous system achieved through the development of neuro-skeleto-muscular sensitivities and not through rigid training, for example the acquisition of new motor skills through repetition.

Kinaesthetical intellect

A new turn of aesthetic paradigm changed the sacred borders of the transcendental

in art revealing new potentials for artistic communications. Kinesthesia, a sense of movement discovered in the late nineteenth century, whose function is closely connected to mirror neurons' actions, influences our understanding of how our bodies relate to each other, how we perceive the movements of others (Ehrenberg and Wood, 2011: 113–118; Gardner: 2008, 55–60; Jola: 2010, 203–234; Reason: 2010, 49–75; Warburton: 2011, 66). This led to the appearance of the idea of kinesthetic empathy in the field of dance, initially proposed by dance critic John Martin in the 1930s (Reason: 2010, 53). Later in the 1960s, the development of kinesthetic awareness was an important strategy in Judson group's¹ artistic practice (Burt: 2006). It resonated with their ideas of rejecting the expressiveness and validating routine movements and ordinary body. Kinesthetic awareness emphasizes 'the organizing potential of proprioception and kinesthesia' (Batson: 2008, 137) and implies body knowledge which is based on learning anatomical and somatic functioning often through improvisation.

The body awareness approach is closely aligned with somatic disciplines and emerged at the end of nineteenth and beginning of the twentieth century steered by the phenomenological blurring of the dichotomy of mind and body 'embodied consciousness through the integration of perception and action' (Batson: 2007, 48). The most well known among these practices are the Alexander technique, the Feldenkrais method, Body-Mind-Centering, Ideokinesis, and Rolfing. They, and many others, were started by practitioners in different parts of the world who shared the simple thought – to pay attention to one own body. As Schiphorst notes, 'Somatics offers an account of experience enacted through first-person methodologies incorporating technical expertise and reflection-in-action that has the attributes of being rigorous in its own right' (Schiphorst: 2009, 49).

Since the late 1960s and early 1970s, the growth of improvisation and of the somatic field initiated by the post-modern dance generation spread in 'a multitude of body learning practices based on the concept of autonomous self-

regulation' affecting the whole dance community (Batson: 2008, 137). There are more than 100 somatic 'host of techniques' (Batson: 2007, 48) such as mental practice, release work, kinesthetic anatomy, experiential anatomy etc. Glenna Batson describes the discovery of somatic educators throughout the 20th c. as the 'a vast array of principles of perceptuomotor learning' (Batson: 2007, 48) and summarize their search as 'a seamless through line between two basic somatic acts: attention and intention' (Batson: 2007 48). There is no information to date about the appearance of somatic disciplines in Russia, but there were definitely teachers coming to Moscow and other cities in Russia introducing some of the somatic principles in their teaching (released based technique) in the 90s and beginning of the 2000s. Ramsay Burt underpinned the influence of somatics on artistic communication in dance works: 'The new dance not only prompted performers to develop new kinds of embodied sensitivities, it also made demands on spectators to acknowledge the physical presence of the dancing body in ways that departed radically from spectatorship of mainstream theatre dance' (Burt: 2006, 53). Such 'embodied sensitivities' refer to the state of 'here and now' (Fischer-Lichte: 2013, 93–94), happening in front of the public. A performer's ability to self-regulate can be considered as an extraordinary experience related to a spectator's perception because a routine performer's body lacks exceptional physical qualities – in a way a performer's body is similar to spectator's one. In discussion of art performance Erika Fischer-Lichte described such a spectator's experience as conspicuous. She noticed that 'aesthetic experience is not just created by exceptional events but also by perceiving the ordinary' and 'performance allows entirely ordinary bodies, actions, movements, things, sounds, or odors to be perceived and has them appear as extraordinary and transfigured' (Fischer-Lichte: 2013, 179180).

A performer cannot pretend that she or he has embodied sensitivities: the thinking body cannot be illustrated or achieved through repetition of some body movements. To put this another way, it's an obviously complicated matter to evaluate the degree of sensitivities, as it may

¹ The practice of the dancers from Judson Church Theatre was called post-modern dance.

only keep one's attention and thus change the way in which time is perceived (Menshikov: 2016, 174).

The performer's transformation in *Tanz-Tanz-Tanz* by Andrey Andrianov.

A. Andrianov is a dancer, choreographer and performer based in Moscow. His dance and movement practice started in the mime studios of G. Mjackavicus, V. Martynov in the 1980s and then continued in Saira Blanche international artistic laboratory organized by him and Oleg Sulemenko in the 1990s. The laboratory undertook the challenge of a research centre in Moscow cultural life at that time. Andrianov was a participant in many residences and international projects such as 'Lux-Flux & Saira Blanche'. In 2001–2014 he was a performer in Min Tanaka's project 'Do Tanza' run in Anatoly Vasiliev's School of Drama Art. Saira Blanche's projects (2009–2013) 'Distribution of Similarites' (TanzQuartier, Vienne), 'Made in Russia' and 'Old Chaos New Order' (Brut, Vienne) brought Andrianov and Sulemenko European recognition.

Last decade Andrianov has actively collaborated with different musicians and performers in Russia. He is one of the founders of dance improvisation and performance fields and often is invited to conduct research laboratories and share his experience with younger generations. Andrey's opinion is of a great value for his colleagues.

For the following discussion, Andrianov's work was studied on video, hence its analysis is written in the historical present tense.

Tanz-Tanz-Tanz is a 23 min. dance improvisation work with 3 electro music tracks produced by Klaus Schulze 'Trancefer', 2 of them with clear 'bits' and no melody. The solo is performed in a black box studio theatre, with minimalistic set and no lighting effects, apart from a fade in at the beginning and out at the end. Andrianov wears casual clothes and is barefoot.

Andrianov follows the music and changes his movements in accordance to it. His body, relaxed rather than exerting itself, is capable of producing the subtlest articulation and to reveal many tiny details. There are two parts and in the 1st one he moves forward facing the audience. He changes the gesture on each bit, and it takes

some time for him to understand what his body is actually proposing, as if the task would be to fit these propositions into this body and mark it with a sign. Andrianov actively includes facial gestures as if to complete the discovered sign. At one moment, the corners of his lips are up as if smiling, while at others there is a neutral expression. The motion of his eyes is remarkable: they seem to be more conspicuous when there is a neutral facial expression and to serve as roots for the body's energies. Then he changes his direction to a circle and his movements start to refer to more recognizable dance signs: a tug of war, the dying swan, the afternoon of a Faun, break dancing, folk dance. It looks like a performer is wandering among these gestures, patiently waiting for the subsequent body's proposition in order to mould it into a form.

Before the start of the second part there is a pause when Andrianov goes down to the floor and lies on his side with his back to the audience. There is no music, no movement, only in his feet move. When the music starts – a melody played on a cello – Andrianov gets back on his feet. At this moment something completely new appears. His movements spread around, his fingers are very active. There is a new movement principle – to lose the support. The performer is involved in each dance sequence for 100 %, he disappears in a dynamic of transitions. The question 'Who is Andrey Andrianov?' can't be asked. If in the first part the form was caught through the body propositions, in the second – the body is filled with the information from the space imprinting or reflecting it. At the end Andrey bent over with his legs wide apart and waves to the audience. Or it is more like an intention to wave – as soon as the intention has been recognized, the movement is deconstructed. 'An addressing to the audience' gesture is devalued by the fact that the performer is actually addressing to the audience: his body faces public during the whole piece and the wave refers only to the sign of 'addressing to the public'. So, a performer's look at the audience reveals some of his conventional rules. He stands up and leaves.

There is nothing else, only the body and its movement available for the audience's view. The attention is waving, when the totality of a performing body loses its grip while changing

from absolutely absorbing to floating away. It seems that the performer challenges his own body by listening to it, letting it choose the form and by passing through deconstructions of signs thus enabling the audience to access his body's transformation.

José Gil argues that the manipulation of time constitutes the temporalization of artistic work and the time of its presentation is continuous present established by the work itself. The time of the work of art corresponds to the form related to the ontological slowness of its construction, its genesis, absolute now, or non-temporal present, where all movements, belonging to an objective time, converge to a single interval – 'zero instant' (Gil: 1998, 104).

The continuous present 'within its multiple time dimensions, considered within the assimilation of chaos and emptiness' (Gil: 1998, 104) is contained within or produced by Andrianov's body and his movement. His presence is marked by the virtuosic ordinariness of his body which influences perception of time and invites the audience to witness its transformation.

Relationship of body, movement and perception in Blood of Po.V.S.Tanze dance company.

Aleksandra Konnikova and Alberts Alberts are dancers, choreographers and teachers based in Moscow. They met in Gennady Abramov's Classes of Expressive Body Movements in Vasilyev's School of Dramatic Art in Moscow in the 1990s. In 1997, together with other dancers, they organised group Po.V.S.Tanze which in Russian stands for 'almost inwardly free dances' and sounds like 'rebels'. It was an experimental project in the field of dance performance and improvisation. Since 2000s Aleksandra and Alberts are the project's constant members, who have taken part in the creation of around 20 productions and performed and toured in Russia and internationally. They are in great demand in dance and drama fields, and are invited to work as choreographers and as participants of international projects. They initiate 'Action' workshops – experimental research groups with the aim of deepening the knowledge of processual work and accumulating creative

energy of younger generations. They teach a lot and play the role of experts in the Russian dance community.

For the following discussion, Po.V.S.Tanze's work was watched live first and then on video, hence its analysis is written in the past tense.

Blood is a one-hour dance performance made and performed by Aleksandra Konnikova, Alberts Alberts and 3rd invited participant – Alina Mikhailova (from Saint Petersburg). The performance was created and performed in Moscow, with support of Theatrical union, in Boyarskye palaty – a small-scale location with low ceilings, arched vaults, a small free-seat performance space. Po.V.S.Tanze inhabited it with expertise, creating a cozy, intimate atmosphere. All of the performers wore white clothes with some red details. The original sound track was made by R. Norvilla with the use of information about the participants' blood². It consisted of electronic music and a mix of noise and popular melodies. The lighting design was created by Evgenia Kaufman and Maksim Kirillovsky: it was influenced by the creation of a concealed past.

The introduction revealed the blood composition of each participant presented on a small video projection on the wall. Meanwhile dancers occupied 3 chairs located on the stage. It gave the impression that their chairs were islands with no chance of crossing borders. The blood composition showed Aleksandra's mix of Jewish, Belarusian and Russian blood, Alina's mix – Korean and Russian, and Alberts's Jewish blood. After the performers left their chairs, spread over the space and in a disco style started exploring functional qualities of the red objects they'd been holding. Next, 5 people from the audience who had the blood were invited to take seats on the stage to be exposed to a unique experience. There were 5 chairs arranged so that the volunteers would face the centre of the stage. They were given blankets and earphones. It took four minutes for them to listen to and find out about 'the secret of the whole nation' and 'the voice of blood'. (They stayed in these chairs until the end of the show.) In parallel, the other spectators could watch a slideshow of old photographs depicting change.

² The composer used an electrolyzed analysis of the participants' blood which was transformed into the sound.

In the next part participants delegated space and time for each's biographical story. All solo parts were structured with a similar approach: each of them would start his/her story using a 'forfeit' like a gate for entering. For Alina this was a red vest she started her story with, for Alberts greetings with little nods, and for Aleksandra a handkerchief. Each of them would interlace movement and speech (noise music would replace voices from time to time), each of them would juggle their biographical facts introduced through different medias such as speech, objects, songs, movements featuring national identity, or cultural cliché, improvisation, or fixed movements. Such a juggling made it possible to create the multidimensional quality of their pasts. The facts were stirred like multicolored drops and induced in water creating a unique color scale.

Each of the participants had some distinguishing features which they used to create stories about their past. The primary movement principles would also change. For Alina it was about the loss of body support or rather the search for it, her attention inward, attuned to changes, ready to react and made decisions. Alberts made use of spontaneous movements from an unrevealed source, presumably inspired by keeping his attention outwards. His soft cat-like mode of motion continued in a duo with Aleksandra – his story was mostly revealed through the dialogue with Aleksandra, partly with Alina. It discussed his relationships with his grandparents, and ended in a duo with soft lifts, where Aleksandra took on the role of 'weight receiver'. Aleksandra's primary source to generate movement material out of vocal practices. She excessively articulated words and timbres in parallel with a search for her voice's support in her body and movements. Such articulations, for example when words are pronounced rhythmically, almost distorted words and at the same time created additional meanings to them.

Such a practice is related to a couple of exceptional moments. At some point the speech's practice was followed by interaction with her audience. Aleksandra picked up a hat, approached the audience and asked for donations service dogs' recreating what her grandmother must

have while her grandfather served at the borders. She didn't pretend to be a woman that at some time in the past was her ancestor – but she was her own grandmother. Her body was translating history: applying the tool of vocal deconstruction by moving, keeping attention outwards, and disappearing in her body's transitions to create an image. Because the practice she applied let her 'open' the present and reveal it, and let the audience soak in 'the now', the image became very realistic. A similar impression was made by Alberts at the beginning of his solo part. He would use some movement practices which let him leave the audience wondering whether it was a dance improvisation or performance of set material. Than he was asked about his grandfather and walked in silence for a while. At this moment his grandfather himself who was in front of the spectators, not Alberts.

The interplay between signifying – related to Aleksandra talking directly to the audience – and signified – related to her grandmother – creates a zone of unknowing and lets the audience go beyond the frames of familiar experience of signs and their meanings.

In the last part, the participants, covered by one blanket, were telling the stories of their parents' first meetings. The narrated depiction of the historical roots of each participant is transformed through their bodies into multidimensional experiences which were shared with the spectators. The past is hidden from the present, the attempt to 'attend' to it leads to a ritual practice. Po.V.S.Tanze's multileveled research of body, movement and perception revealed vivid images of unknown people. The participants treated their 'unknown' past with tenderness trying not to frighten it: 'It's difficult to say who we are, if we don't know where we came from' as Alberts says during the piece.

Jose Gil describes 'the property of the body in relation to the agent for the translation of signs' as an 'infralanguage', which is 'the only one that can render a color by a shape, a gesture, a sound, a taste, or a smell; or a smell by an idea; or an idea by a shape, a gesture, a sound, a taste, or a smell; or a smell by an idea, or an idea by a color' (Gil: 1998, 111). As a metalanguage, the body 'can handles all the

codes, create metaphors'. In Aleksandra and Alberts' dances, the codes are confused. They allow a flood of 'infralanguage' to emerge and their 'body doesn't speak. It makes speech' (Gil: 1998, 111). This provides a unique experience to come into being for both the performers and spectators because 'infralanguage' is 'not the totality present in each of its parts: it only appears when and because it divides, multiplies, and unfolds itself in the singularity of its exfoliation' (Gil: 1998, 144).

It must be admitted that using kinesthetic intellect as a criteria for a dance work analysis might be an ambitious project. To witness time change because of the performers' dancing and presence, involves one's perception and requires a phenomenological methodology. While this might take the form of research into audience response, this wasn't possible to implement. Instead, in order to understand of A. Andrianov and Po.V.S.Tanze's creative practices, it became apparent that the biographical facts were not enough. The artists kindly answered questions in writing about their understanding of their artistic communication and body practices.

Andrianov believes that the process of 'keeping busy to yourself' on stage can be shared with the audience. He calls the practice of staying still on stage as a 'metaphysical point' and considers the experience of not willing anything as a very important one. Another significant performance quality for him is to recreate the situation when 'one doesn't see oneself from the outside' so that one rejects the image and knowledge of oneself and does not make use of any practices prepared in advance. He learned at the international dance and improvisation laboratories in the 1990s that one's body doesn't need to express more than it possesses at the moment of presenting. At the beginning of his dance practice he was under influence of released-based techniques when the body is not forced to represent something and can be at different states. The contact improvisation teachers were Kirstie Simson and Natanja Den Buff. He was introduced to a variety of dance and performance practices related to presence, contact improvisation, and release work.

Po.V.S.Tanze emphasized that performers need to create a special situation where one's body can be considered an offering gift to the audience. Another important thing for them is the courage to be weak in front of the public: such a vulnerability challenges them to undertake necessary decisions. Making a decision is an important part of improvisational dance, it relates to the state of spontaneity. A performer's body has a performative 'working' state, a 'working self': there are different practices to obtain such a condition, among others – release work, somatic practices. Alberts and Aleksandra consider the body as a medium and describe the process of obtaining a form (both in physical and artistic terms) as a chemical reaction between a body-medium and image-based work. Their artistic practice was inspired by Gennady Abramov's improvisation classes, David Zambrano and his Flying-Low technique, Frans Poelstra, whose work related to the organs' sensitivities, and later by classes of Fiona Millwards and Gill Clarke in released based techniques and somatic approaches, practicing the body's attentiveness and perception.

The analysis of A. Andrianov' and Po.V.S.Tanze's comments on their creative practices reveals that their approach to body awareness has a long history and that they are highly appreciative of body modality in relation to communication with the audience.

To sum up, A. Andrianov and Po.V.S.Tanze's works show their ability as performers to create an undivided movement flow which changes the spectator's perception of time. Moreover, their creative approaches reveal their relationships with somatic practice and release work which draws attention to the fact that their performance practice contribute to the development of kinesthetic awareness. In conclusion, there is a unique aesthetic experience in these works triggered by these dancers' kinesthetic intellect, the shared between performers and spectators' experiences of being contemporary or, as Boris Groys puts it "contemporary", being with time, being immediately present, as being here-and-now so to help time when it has problems with being unproductive, wasted, meaningless' (Groys: 2009).

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