

# Multiple Embodiment in Classical Ballet

Educating the Dancer as an Agent of Change  
in the Cultural Evolution of Ballet

*Paula Salosaari*



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Paula Salosaari  
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# Abstract

The research addressed the traditional teaching and learning ballet, which was questioned for its ability to prepare the dancer for the contemporary ballet choreographic environment. The gap between emphasis on technique and lack of artistic illumination in ballet teaching was discussed. In the present dance domain, the dancer is expected, in addition to technical brilliance, to contribute creatively to the dance making process. Repetition of ballet vocabulary as a closed skill in the emphasis of hierarchic teacher-learner relationship and extrinsic feedback was argued to alienate the dancer from the vivid artistic experience of ballet. To be able to educate dancers to the changing practices of ballet as art, the research argues for re-establishing intentionality in daily class. Intentionality can give the means to interpretation and expansion of the codified vocabulary as well as improvising and composing new dance material with the ballet vocabulary as a starting point.

The theoretical understanding of the vocabulary as open qualitative form, the structural images as ways to intend formal ballet vocabulary and the change to divergent production teaching style, which offered the dancer the freedom to develop personal locus of evaluation, were put into practice in experimental ballet workshops. Dancer interviews during the workshops and analysis of video recorded workshop sessions delivered information of the effects of structural images to the dancer's experience as well as of the products of the divergent teaching in ballet.

The intentional experience by the dancer was shown to be a way to holistic learning combining technical skill and artistry. It returned aesthetic feeling to dancing, enhanced body awareness and facilitated movement execution, thereby expanding the dancer's performance quality potential. Through the freedom to make individual choices it gave the possibility for 'the dancer's own voice' in performance.

By looking at the dancers' experiences in a cultural context, the cycle of cultural evolution in ballet was illuminated. The dancer was revealed as an experiencing agent of change in this pattern of fixing and opening cultural codes in ballet.

The ballet vocabulary was shown to lend itself for interpretation and

composition through its inherent formal content. The concept of *multiple embodiment in classical ballet* and broad principles for teaching it were proposed. They argue that ballet vocabulary can be viewed as an open qualitative form for the dancer to embody in multiple ways through the various perspectives offered by the structural images of dance. They emphasise experiencing of content and divergent production in ballet class as well as suggest one way to expansion and integration of vocabularies and subject-matter in ballet education.

# Chapter 1.

## Introduction

### Background to the research

As I begin to report my research into the possibility of enhancing artistic intentionality in ballet teaching, I need to spend a while talking about the reasons that led me to it. Those reasons were first personal and later I noticed the same or similar concerns in other dance persons' and institutions' statements and behaviour.

After studying and teaching ballet professionally for over 20 years, I began to feel frustrated with the continuous repetition in ballet training, both when dancing myself and when teaching ballet. Doing the same movements over and over again began to lack freshness and excitement. I began to be interested in expanding my dance repertory and wished to explore creating dance on my own. In addition to developing my own repertory and skills I wished to be able to give my students the opportunity to expand their skills towards creative production in ballet; interpreting ballet, improvising and making their own dances. All these skills and activities felt part of what we generally call art making. However, I became acutely aware that within the classical ballet teaching tradition into which I had grown, expanding vocabularies, improvisation or making individual dance movements was not included. When allowing my students to compose their own dances, I was aware that on the basis of my own training in ballet, I had no means to help them.

Because of my wish to expand my personal movement repertory, I began to take contemporary dance classes. With that activity, I was introduced to new movement vocabularies and occasionally given the opportunity to improvise and create my own dance sequences. While improvising in a contemporary class I felt that I had to leave ballet behind, as if to forget that my body possessed a technique and aesthetics that I had refined for a large part of my life. The reason for this was that I felt that mixing ballet into my improvisation in a contemporary dance environment felt awkward. Ballet, an *arabesque* or a *pirouette*, amidst the less codified and stylised movements, felt out of place, and perhaps pretentious.

In addition to my own frustration I was also aware that the ballet movements amongst improvisation would have been considered out of place by the other dancers in class. I was in another cultural environment from ballet. I did not want to 'show off' with ballet technical feats. I had two choices. Either, I would utilise my learned codified ballet technique in an environment of repetition and reproduction and forget about improvising or producing my own dance movements, or I would be inventive cutting myself off ballet. Combining the two was not an option. Eventually I came to think that, whatever the problems with enhancing intentionality and creativity in the persons practising ballet, they had to be dealt within their own cultural environment.

But that realisation was not quite there yet. My frustration with ballet had led me to continue my dance studies in London in a contemporary dance institution, The Laban Centre for Movement and Dance. There I was introduced to choreological studies. Rudolf Laban (1879-1958) initiated study and analyses of movement and dance. From these studies derive the knowledge of structural dance images used and described later in this research. In my studies, ballet and other types of dancing or improvising were still separated, taught in their own classes with their own criteria of success. The structural elements of the dance that I learned in choreological studies illuminated qualities inherent in all kinds of dance and movement. (Preston-Dunlop 1989) Therefore they had the potential to become a bridge between my individual movement style and ballet and perhaps ballet and other dance styles as well.

As if by accident, while getting acquainted with structural images in choreology, I happened to think of some of them while attending a ballet class. This incident was a personal revelation that gave hope of a solution to the problem of mechanical repetition experienced in ballet performance. Focusing attention to the different potential qualities in dance, such as the experience of weight transference, spatial directions, skin surfaces or other body parts while dancing, the experience of the movements changed. The experience began to illuminate subtle expressive nuances in the previously mechanical movements and I realised new ways of performing the same old vocabulary. Moving felt to me miraculously revitalised, meaningful and joyful, as if expedition to new ground. The experience also solved some technical problems, making dancing easier. This was the moment of personal revelation that led me to contemplate more on the problems and possible solutions to them in this research. My background as a teacher also oriented me towards

looking for more general solutions to the problem than just recovering the joy of ballet and breaking the habitual pattern of repetition for myself. Expansion to new movements or improvisation was still waiting to happen in a ballet context, although choreological concepts have been used to give intention for making individual dance movements in other dance contexts, for instance Motif Writing (Preston-Dunlop 1967).

My research question was still in a bud, waiting for a clearer formulation, but none the less there for personal contemplation. Because my interest had been aroused, I began to pay attention to how other people in ballet or dance feel about these issues of repetition, alienation, lack of creativity and lack of movement expansion and dance making in ballet class. I was especially interested in whether they see them as problematic and if so, what might be the solution to them. I found dancers, educators and artistic directors, who in one way or another touched my concerns addressing them in public.

The feeling of lack of intentionality and creativity may not be a problem for every ballet-trained dancer or ballet student. Learning by rote may well be a positive experience for a dance student. He may be aware of fast technical improvement, enjoy the security of the classroom conventions and the belonging into a homogenous group. Kathleen Rea, a former dancer at the National Ballet of Canada as well as an independent teacher and choreographer, has described her early ballet training as the place to mould herself and act according to external criteria. 'Ballet training seemed like the perfect place to act this perfectionism, because it was a place for very strict and clear and relatively unchanging view of what a perfect form should be. So I could know what to be and just put all my effort in being it.' Only later in life Kathleen connected her personal and professional problems to the ambivalence of this perfectionism and artistic expression in ballet training. (NJAB 1999) Other dancers have publicly discussed their feelings of deprivation in terms of creativity in ballet training and their difficulty of functioning in creativity demanding dance situations simply because of the lack of having opportunities to develop that side of them in training. A dancer at The Finnish National Ballet, Susanna Vironmäki, has talked about her feeling of difficulty of giving a personal interpretation in classical ballet and her lack of creativity. She finds that the possible reasons for it are in the classical ballet training model, which emphasises technical mastery, teacher authority, and meticulous corrections in class.

I feel that my creativity has disappeared, as it has always been so important how things ought to be done. I feel that I have nothing to give that way. It is extremely difficult to break out of something like this; to risk doing something without thinking of how it ought to be done and what others are going to think.

In a ballet school the general role of girls in society is reinforced. Girls are expected to be obedient, nice and conscientious. No one has questioned the way girls are brought up to become ballerinas. (Sutinen 1994, 56 author's translation)<sup>1</sup>

Susan Crow and Jennifer Jackson, independent dance artists and educators from the Ballet Independent Group in Britain (BIG), have, in their joint article pointed attention to the psychological consequences of reproducing according to outside authority in ballet and the feeling of not being creative.

Consider the psychological impact on the artist of an education, which concentrates on reproducing existing images, where identity is defined by an external image without real exploration of the internal movement logic or with no release of a personal dance 'voice' in which to speak ballet? Small wonder that many ballet dancers claim to be hopelessly uncreative. (Crow & Jackson 1999, 39)

So I was beginning to notice that I was not alone with my frustration in the lack of creativity and individual dance making in the ballet classroom. My own and other dancers' concerns had been related to the personal wish to develop as an artist and a person. Dance people in other roles in the field, choreographers, artistic directors and educators, found similar problems in ballet training. Their concerns were connected to the fast change in the art of ballet and the changing needs of the choreographers in the field. Before stating these views, a few words about the evolving art of ballet.

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1. Itse koen luovuuteni kadonneen, kun aina on ollut niin tärkeää se, miten asiat kuuluu tehdä. Koen ettei minulla ole sillä tavalla mitään annettavaa. On tavattoman vaikea murtautua tällaisesta ulos; uskaltautua tekemään jotain ilman että ajattelee, kuinka se kuuluisi tehdä ja mitä kaikki muut ajattelevat.

Balettikoulussa tavallaan vain vahvistetaan sitä, mikä on muutenkin yhteiskunnassa vallalla. Tyttöjen roolihan on olla kuuliaisia, kilttejä ja tunnollisia. Ei kukaan ole kyseenalaistanut sitä, miten tytöistä kasvatetaan ballerinoja.

## The art of ballet, an evolving tradition and expanding repertory

Thinking of ballet's evolution through its history, it is easy to see significant changes from its beginning as a social event in the French and Italian courts to its present state as a contemporary art form. During its early years, ballet practitioners created and further developed a coded vocabulary (Magri 1988; Blais 1968), which is still in use in a refined form. This vocabulary formed a core of ballet. It has been the foundation on which the different stylistic features of varying eras of ballet and slightly discerning national styles have been based on. William Forsythe, choreographer and artistic director of Frankfurt Ballet, has been said to belong to 'the small number of choreographers who have continued to develop the classical vocabulary in contemporary times.' (Bremser 1993, 515). He has compared ballet vocabulary to language. It does not get old and useless, only the way of expressing with it changes. The style of traditional works can get dated, the underlying dance material does not. (Servos 1998, 8)

In addition to developing the vocabulary from within, classical ballet has shown versatility in integrating contemporary dance styles into it. Deborah Jowitt has described the difference in evolutionary progress between modern dance and ballet by stating that modern dance tends to progress 'by violent redefinitions', while 'the more codified, less idiosyncratic field of ballet advances by absorbing innovations into an existing vocabulary of movement.' (Jowitt 1988, 9)

While 19<sup>th</sup> century classics have remained in ballet companies' repertoires, they have at the same time inspired contemporary choreographers to reconstruct them in an up-to-date mode. (Ek 1997; Bourne 1996) Ballet's intrinsic development, integration of other styles, and reworking of old classics have contributed to the evolution of ballet as an art form and to the fact that ballet companies' repertoires today often consist of a variety of styles. Nineteenth-century classics are performed along with contemporary choreographers' works. As an example, The Finnish National Ballet's repertory in 1997 consisted of diverse dance works, a reproduction, classical and contemporary ballet repertory. The audience was offered a reproduction of Nijinsky's *Sacre du Printemps* from 1913, Petipa's classic *Swan Lake* from 1895, Kylian's *Forgotten land* 1981, and Forsythe's *The Second Detail* 1991. The tendency to present a multitude of styles is evident in a statement by Jorma Uotinen, the

artistic director of The Finnish National Ballet, in a publication celebrating the company's 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary.

Creating a new tradition, linking the past to the future, bridging the gap between today and tomorrow – this is the mission of the Finnish National Ballet. The future consists not of a single style or idea, nor of abandoning or annihilating the past; rather it involves a merging of different aesthetic approaches without need to boundaries. Having passed our “rite of spring”, The National Ballet can now take the step from “swan lake” to the “forgotten land”, contemplating “the second detail” and, having tarried awhile, emerge from the night into the forest of the sylphs. (Almi & Pitkänen 1997)

The choreographic and performance practices in ballet thereby acknowledge ballet's past as well as its evolving nature. The vocabulary has been able to develop and adjust to outside influences. In addition to mixing ballets from different periods and styles in the repertory, contemporary choreographers may mix many dance idioms in one work or create their own movement styles, which are foreign to the dancers. This has resulted in the dancers' need to adjust to varying choreographers' idiosyncratic movement styles and become versatile in changing from one to another fluently.

The diverse repertory and developments in the art form have also changed the working methods used in making ballets. Some choreographers prefer giving the dancer the dance material 'ready made' with instructions on how to perform it. With increased democracy and accepting the dancer as a team member rather than an instrument to play the dance, some contemporary choreographers give the dancer more and more responsibility and freedom in creating the work with the choreographer. Reproducing the choreographer's steps or traditional ballets is one skill expected from a dancer in a ballet company at present. In addition the dancer may be asked to interpret and develop movement phrases, to improvise in studio or performance or to co-author in the making process. Forsythe is one choreographer known of his democratic co-authorship with the dancers. (Wulff 1998b, 157-160).

Both Forsythe himself and his dancers have commented on the difficulties met by traditionally trained ballet dancers when they face the new working process and changed aesthetics. Frankfurt Ballet dancer, Anthoni Rizzi has talked about the new responsibility given to the dancer by Forsythe.

Eventually the work comes from the dancers . . . the work will leave Billy at a certain point . . . and it is the dancers . . . and sometimes the dancers have not developed the thing. Especially to new people Billy would say 'I am giving you a skeleton.' All it is, is a skeleton for the dancer to fill it in. (Hauer & Gardimer, 1996)

Ana Catalina Roman, another Forsythe dancer, mentions the discrepancy between her training and the new working style in the company. 'Sometimes it's hard for the dancers as well. Like, you know, we want to do it, but for years our bodies have been trained to do it in a certain way and sometimes it's hard to throw this away.' (Hauer & Gardimer 1996)

Ballet people have been concerned about traditional ballet teaching's ability to train versatile enough dancers for this environment. Evidence of the concern was for instance an international symposium called *What Future for Classical Dance* arranged in connection with the 25<sup>th</sup> Prix de Lausanne, a yearly international ballet competition in Switzerland. The symposium publication stated as one of the conference objectives to discuss the question of how can we train dancers 'from the perspective of their capacity to adapt to choreographers, existing companies and other forms of choreographic expression' (Rosenblum 1997, v).

Choreographers and artistic directors have expressed the need for more rounded education for ballet dancers by one way or another suggesting that the training has not given them the kind of dancers they need. Forsythe has criticised the Royal Ballet dancers complaining that he 'could not work with the British team as he could not achieve the fine tuning that he was used to with his dancers in Frankfurt.' (Nugent 1996, 34). Jiri Kylian founded The Netherlands Dance Theatre 2 (NDT2) to prepare dancers for a career in the main company. 'We have realised early on that education is not enough, it cannot be complete because the demands of choreographers are so diverse. Therefore you need to make a bridge . . . NDT2 is . . . education in performing and education in creating together with choreographers.' (NJAB 1999)

The new working methods and mixed styles pose pressure on the flexibility and skill of the dance artist as well as the education, which prepares the contemporary ballet dancer to the versatile and changing ballet environment. The traditional training, which concentrates more on refining technique than illuminating the art and its changing methods, has not expanded from reproduction to the needed skills of interpretation, improvisation and co-authorship. The aim of ballet teaching is often mentioned to be safeguarding

tradition, while choreography is the place to introduce innovation to the art form. Logically these two intentions point to different directions.

## Approaches to ballet training

Ballet teachers are often former dancers or advanced dance students, who turn to teaching instead of pursuing a performing career. They have learned their 'trade' from the earlier generation of teachers by modelling on the way they themselves were taught. Books about ballet teaching intended for teachers often introduce the vocabulary meticulously describing combinations and steps that are expected to be reproduced in class as closely as possible (Laristo 1988; Kostrovitskaya & Pisarev 1978; Svedin 1978). 'Because ballet, in the way it is taught and presented, depends on tight adherence to rules, its practices are seldom subjected to rigorous questioning' (Nugent 1996, 33). The lack of questioning, which in training models surfaces as authoritarian delivery of models rather than discussion and reflection on 'why' and 'how', has resulted in slow change in ballet's teaching methods. Making changes to the traditional structure of a ballet class has been found contradictory by teaching professionals. 'Changing a tradition is very dangerous and causes many people to be alarmed and cling more firmly to the cultural heritage.' (Rist 1994, 5)

During recent years, however, the increasing knowledge about anatomical and kinesiological functioning of the body has affected ballet practices. Research done in sports and dance medicine and science has been brought to ballet teachers' attention. This research has been concerned about how the increasingly demanding technical virtuosity of the dancer can be combined with safe technique training. Research topics such as the effects of incorporating anatomy and ideokinesis (Sweigard 1974) into ballet training, safe dance technique, injury management and prevention in addition to safe execution of specific ballet steps have been introduced to and discussed with teachers (The Healthier Dancer report 1991; The Seventh Annual Meeting of the International Association for Dance Medicine & Science, A Day for Teachers 1997). Discrepancy with the traditional model of teaching may surface when anatomical and kinesiological principles are emphasised in relation to the traditional rules of conduct in executing ballet movements. Rist (1998) suggests that 'the traditional approach to class may be questioned if found wanting a new approach may be developed.'

In addition to injury prevention anatomical and kinesiological principles

are used with the intention of improving and facilitating technical aspects of dancing and performing. (Franklin 1996a, 1996b) David Howard has given workshops to teachers on how to integrate anatomical and kinesiological principles into the framework of a traditional ballet class (Howard & Corbin 1998). Irene Dowd informs dance teachers in the application of neuro-muscular patterning into training of dancers in the Juilliard School in New York and in the National Ballet School of Canada. (Annual Report. Canada's National Ballet School 1997/8).

The above mentioned research on how to improve dance technique and prevent and repair injuries does not cover dance aesthetics nor the changes in aesthetics, which contemporary choreographers manifest in their work. Benjamin Harkavy, the director of Dance Division in Juilliard School, New York, has acknowledged the advancement the above kind of research on dancers' health and injury prevention is for dance training. At the same time he expressed his concern that dance teaching lacks behind contemporary choreographic developments in dance. Dance students need to learn 'that there is an art out there and the choreographer is the centre of the art.' Ballet teaching has not (being slow in change) been abreast with changes in choreographic practices and working methods. (NJAB 1999) Likewise The Artistic Director of Canada's National Ballet School, Mavis Staines has stated that she no longer believed that classical training alone could adequately prepare the dancer for the demands of professional dance companies. 'The repertoire presented within one performance can require an extraordinary degree of versatility, with movement ranging from traditional classical ballet vocabulary to newly created fusions of ballet, jazz and modern.' (Hertzman 1997, 43 - 44).

Many ballet teaching institutions have recognised the need for wider range in training. Contemporary dance classes have been added to the curriculum. The Finnish National Ballet School has regular contemporary training for their students in addition to classical ballet classes. The National Ballet School of Canada has employed an-artist-in-residence to expand the dancers' capacity for expanded vocabulary, 'to get across the essentials of body feeling' (Hertzman 1997, 40).

When dance students attempt to possess versatility through attendance to many kinds of training, say, ballet, jazz and contemporary dance, their already big work load increases (Veldhuis 1997). When the new styles are separated from ballet instruction, ballet and other dance idioms are disconnected into

their own 'islands', as separate modes of existing and being. This, however, is not the case in performing and choreography. Integrating styles has been accepted as a quite usual way of functioning in ballet choreography as Staines states above. Therefore, in this research I look for ways for this integration to begin already in the ballet studio.

In the above, I have discussed problems seen in ballet training by, both individual dancers as well as choreographers, artistic directors and educators. Virtuoso dance skills have been attended to. The problems were defined in terms of lack of intentionality, narrow range to interpret ballet, lack of preparation for the working methods required by contemporary choreographers. In other words the traditional training has attended to refining the technique, but has lacked behind in understanding and preparing for the artistic expression and working methods needed in the contemporary ballet world.

Crow has paid attention to the split in learning technique and learning artistic practices in ballet. She pays attention to how in ballet training increasing knowledge about the body and its functioning is incorporated into teaching, while the aesthetic is still seen as a nineteenth century sylph. She worries that this imbalance will cause ballet to become only a useful movement skill and training method, no longer a relevant contemporary form of artistic expression. To remedy the situation, she suggests that ballet needs to follow a wider educational model, which includes performing, composing and appreciation. (Crow 1996)

## Purpose of the research

This research aims at proposing one way of beginning to bridge the gap between technical virtuosity and artistic intentionality in ballet teaching. It aims at developing teaching method(s) that prepare the dancer in the ballet classroom for the evolving modes of performance and choreographic practices in the field.

## About the research method

During this inquiry I acted as a practitioner-researcher (teacher-researcher), who takes up research in his own practice. This kind of research is characterised by reflection-in-action and self-directive problem solving. (Jarvis 1999)

During the research I was totally absorbed in attempting to define my research question and to find practical solutions to it. My attention was in trying to as accurately as possible to record the informants and my own actions. Later, after the practical work was done, I tried to make sense of the emerging data and looked for ways to explain theoretically the emerging themes. Finally I created my own theory of multiple embodiment. The concept of multiple embodiment and principles of teaching it embraced all the information in this dissertation.

I felt all the time that every act taken and every word reported was a continuous method. The method was problem solving that directed itself through the research not knowing beforehand exactly where it would finally arrive. Therefore the method is embedded in the writing in each step of the way. Above I have discussed and defined the research problem, the gap between learning technical skills and the absence of artistic learning in ballet class and the need to educate the dancer to expand and treat creatively the traditional ballet vocabulary. My growing awareness of the mismatch between teaching technical skills and lack of artistic learning in ballet class caused in my own practice a situation which Jarvis calls 'disjuncture'. Disjuncture makes the practitioner aware of a problem and therefore precedes change. (Jarvis 1999, 66 – 68)

In the following I will introduce the theoretical starting points for my practical workshops (Chapter 2). The practical setting for the research, data collection through video transcriptions of workshops and dancer interviews during them and the manner of analysis of data, is described in Chapter 3. The results of my analysis of the research data, the emerging themes, are discussed in Chapter 4. The cultural theory to explain the themes is introduced in Chapter 5. Chapter 6 defines the concept of multiple embodiment and principles of teaching it that evolved from this research and discusses a rationale for the new teaching method. Issues of application (validity) will be discussed in the conclusion. They lead to suggestion of further research.

## The beginning...

To begin to solve my research question I needed to decide how to approach the inquiry. My intention was to find a means that would work in the real situation a ballet teacher and students face in the classroom. The ballet studio seemed like the appropriate place to begin. I decided to arrange workshops in which I would introduce changes to the traditional manner of teaching,

hoping that these changes would achieve the research aim.

Two institutions provided me with the opportunity to give workshops as part of the teaching curriculum for their students. The first one was arranged in The Theatre Academy of Finland, Dance Department for 4<sup>th</sup> (and final) year dance students specialising in becoming dance teachers. Seven 90-minute workshops were held in the spring of 1995. The second visit to a school as a guest teacher-researcher was the workshops held at The Finnish National Opera Ballet School for the 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> year girls aged between 9 and 14. Five 45-minute workshops for each group replaced their weekly 'expression' class (7.3. – 18.4.1997).

In addition I arranged workshops for free-lance dancers and dance teachers. The dancers came forward to volunteer as participants in the research, when I wrote about it in the Union of Finnish Dance Artists' newsletter and invited dancers to join in the practical workshops. The free-lance dancers' group came together for 14 two hours long weekly sessions between September 1995 and January 1996. Three of the members of this group demonstrated our work at The Theatre Academy on 30 Jan. 1996.

When entering the workshops, I was equipped with my experience as a ballet teacher and the awareness of the problem to be solved. But from my past experience I knew that repeating the traditional manner of instruction would not bring about the desired results: enhanced intentionality leading to interpretation and co-authorship. Tools for intentionality in performing the traditional vocabulary and dance invention were needed. An intervention in terms of the teaching style was necessary. The change in teaching style was one of going from rote or reproduction to divergent learning, a style that invites the learner to open-ended production. The structural images of the dance, which can be understood as artistic qualities in the dance, were seen as potential ways to give intention to formal ballet vocabulary as well as individual dance or movement production.

Before going on to show how I implemented change into the traditional teaching, I will discuss a theoretical understanding of dance (and ballet as part of the concept) and structural images as ways to intend formal dance material that directed my behaviour when planning the workshops. I will also discuss perception in ballet with Gibson's theory of information pick-up, introduce Mosston & Ashworth's spectrum of teaching styles and the reasons of emphasising divergent production over the reproductive style (command style) traditionally used in ballet teaching.

# Chapter 2.

## Theoretical starting points of the research

### Structural images of the dance as ways to intend formal ballet vocabulary

The theory about structural images of the dance will illuminate the understanding of the dance that guided my behaviour aiming at enhancing intentionality in the ballet workshops. I will discuss the dance medium as four-stranded and nexial, including the performer, the movement, the sound and the performance area. This will lead on to discussing narrative and formal content in dance and defining the concept of structural images of the dance as a way for the dancer to give intention to formal dance material.

#### **The medium or materials of the dance**

‘The medium is the stuff that the art object is made in.’ (Preston-Dunlop 1998, 1) Often our understanding of what is dance, what it is made of, what its materials are, is tacit. We can agree that something is dance, or not, but what is it made out of? Even dance professionals have different perspectives. Often dance is explained as being movement, or perhaps movement-in-time-and-space. As a basis for my teaching and thinking in this research, I have adapted an expanded view of the medium of dance, which has been introduced and discussed by Adshead (1988), Sanchez-Colberg (1992) and Preston-Dunlop (1998). According to this view, the dance artist creates through a four-stranded dance medium consisting of the performer, the movement, the space or the visual setting and the sound or the aural elements of the dance.

The performer strand consists of the person or persons mediating the dance. The performer’s personality and appearance, technical and artistic skill contribute to the emerging dance. The dancer relates to the movement and sound in a performance area.

The movement strand consists of the movement vocabulary. The basic elements of movement are described variously by schools and individual artists.

One way of describing them is through body co-ordination, actions, spatial forms, dynamics and relationships. These elements are clustered, phrased and articulated in specific combinations to form movement vocabularies. Ballet, contemporary dance vocabularies and choreographers' own movement vocabularies have their own distinctive organisation of these movement elements. (Preston-Dunlop 1998, 78)

The space strand consists of the performance area. It can be a stage, but increasingly any other dance environment: an art gallery, church, an outdoors space, a telephone booth, a tram. Staging, props and lighting are all part of the performance environment defining the performance area. (Adshead 1988, 30 - 31)

The sound strand in dance consists of all the sounds in a dance. The movement is always accompanied by sounds of some kind, even if only by the sounds that the dancer makes by moving and breathing. The accompanying sound has often been music, but can be other sounds as well, random noise, spoken words, singing, electrically created sounds. (Adshead 1988, 31 - 32)

A performance embodies the dance in all these materials; the dancer relates to the movement, to the performance space and to the sound. Thereby the performer's personality and appearance as well as whether the sounds created by the dancer are audible or not contribute to the content in the dance. The relationships between the different strands and within the strands link together forming a nexus and thereby embody the content.

### **Nexus within the dance medium**

The nexus within the dance medium is evident in practice for instance in that if the dancer in performance makes changes in one movement component of the dance, the others, as well, are effected. If the dancer in a specific movement changes the movement flow, say from lightly bound to free flow (Preston-Dunlop 1979b, 99), the movements' spatial form or timing may be affected. The links are affected within the movement strand, but may also change the movement's relationship to the other strands. Timing, for instance, links the movement and sound strands. 'The web of connectedness' includes more than the movement. It links in a complicated whole all the materials in the different strands: the performer-movement-sound-space. (Preston-Dunlop 1998, 4)

## **Nexus as a choice for the informed dance maker**

The nexus within the dance medium is inevitable, the manner of these links is open to choreographic choices. The connections in and between strands will be there for the audience to see whether intended by the makers or not. When the authors of dance are aware of these connections, they are empowered to actively effect these links and to reduce the 'noise' created by them when they are treated randomly as incidentals.

The performer-movement nexus is always present in an embodied dance. Praagh & Brinson (1963, 205) mention how Petipa, building in his choreography on each dancer's technical and personal abilities, would have preferred a dancer inextricably tied to a certain work thereby acknowledging awareness of the performer-movement nexus. Through the lasting success of Petipa's choreographies this wish has become impossible to fulfil. Balanchine, likewise, while rehearsing his works to new casts changed them to suit the personality and skills of the new dancer. In large dance companies the dancer is almost always treated as changeable, each dancer bringing his layer into the choreography with each change of cast. The contrary is true in Brotherus (chor.) and Ikonen (mus.) *Laulu Onnesta* (1996). The performers' skills and age are integral means to the choreography. The performers do not act an age. They simply are a girl, a woman, an old woman. Similarly their skills in both dancing and music are integral to the piece. The musician is a dancer, the dancer a singer-musician. The dance emerges as a nexus between performer-movement-sound.

Meisner (1992) mentions how Forsythe has widened the scope of ballet choreography. 'He has also expanded his range of resources: speech, props, music and lighting often play an equal part in dance. A Forsythe piece today is like a collage...' But Forsythe has also limited himself when necessary. In his videodance *Solo* (Guillem 1995), in which he is dancing himself, the emphasis is on the extraordinary movement looked at from different angles (camera angles) from above, the side, focusing on one part of the body at a time. The environment, the place or location is unimportant to the dance. It has been effaced. It is almost not there to divert the spectators' attention. Being aware of the possibilities adds to the choreographer's choices and ways of working. It can also make him aware of the background noise created by the elements that are treated incidentally.

In this research the expanded view of the dance medium is taken as given, even when discussing movement on its own. It is understood that changes in movement reach further than the movement strand, into the realm of sound

and space. How the links are formed give artistic content to the dance work. Is the connection co-existence as in Cunningham and Cage? Are the links integrated supporting each other or are they contrasting each other as in Pina Bausch's juxtaposing of elements from contrasting environments? (Preston-Dunlop 1998, 1 - 6) Understanding the nexus in the medium as content and as open to conscious choices empowers the artist to make informed decisions of the connections between strands in his work.

In this research and the workshops the movement strand was usually the starting point, but other strands were sometimes influenced through their nexus to the movement. For instance the emphasis on movement qualities sometimes effected the movements' dynamics changing the movement – sound relationship. The space – movement nexus was highlighted briefly in a workshop where the dancers chose a new performance space to the dance from the old theatre building where we worked and let the space effect the dance.

### **Deep structures and surface features of the dance**

The relationships or nexus in the dance can be understood as deep structures or surface features of the dance. When the relationships are regarded as abstract concepts, which give relations, but not their actual manifestations, they are referred to as deep or hidden structures of the dance. A deep structure can have many manifestations in actual, embodied performance. A movement combination's hidden structure might be expressed by stating it through its action components and their relationships (Preston-Dunlop 1979b, 40 – 46): transference of weight followed by a jump with a gesture. This deep structure can be embodied in actual performance in several ways. In formal ballet vocabulary this combination might be a *tombé* followed by a *grand jeté*, which is a jump gesturing with the legs and often accompanied by arm gestures. But numerous other manifestations are possible as well, both in ballet or other dance styles and through individual free movement invention. The same structure can be embodied through any imaginable weight change and gesturing flight into the air.

Surface features are the properties that make the deep structures actual in embodied performance. The surface features can be perceived in performance while the deep structures remain hidden as the organising web. Many different kinds of surface manifestations of dance, multiple surface features, may have the same deep structure. Intending vocabulary through a deep structure or

structural component may result in multiple interpretations of the movement and intending new dance material with it can result in many kinds of compositional products. The deep structure can thus be understood as a kind of grammar (syntax), which determines the relations of parts. The surface features are multiple possibilities to realise these relationships (semantics).<sup>2</sup>

In my approach to teaching and learning ballet in this research the understanding of the deep structures is utilised. They are seen as a way to leave creative freedom for the dancer (both in interpreting existing vocabularies as well as composing new ones). When they fix the deep structure of the dance they leave the surface realisation open to multiple possibilities of embodiment. This capacity of the deep structures has been used in dance making for instance in *Motif Writing* (Preston-Dunlop 1967). When, in this research, the traditional teaching style in ballet is changed to divergent production style, the open-endedness of the deep structures offers a way for the teacher to formulate open-ended questions or tasks in ballet (look at teaching style, divergent production). The deep structures open dance qualities to be played creatively by the person embodying the dance.

### **Embodied content in dance**

Dance is embodied in its surface structures. They carry content. According to Reid (1969), rather than being an expression of a pre-determined feeling, idea or concept, a work of art emerges from its material medium. The materials, their organisation and form embody the content. In the beginning of this chapter I discussed these materials specific to dance and their organisation to links or nexus. The content may be enclosed in the materials themselves. On the other hand the art work may refer, through the organisation of its materials, to 'instances, elements, objects, feelings, ideas that are in the cultural context, that are in the world shared by both the spectator and artist or embodied in the private world of each' (Preston-Dunlop 1998, 28). In each case, the dance embodies the content by means of its own specific medium. In this research

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2. The terms *hidden structure* and *surface structure* originate from linguistic theory. Hidden structure refers to grammatical (syntactic) rules of language which can be manifested in writing through many surface features and in speech through multiple utterances. (Chomsky 1975) Preston-Dunlop (1979a) discusses syntactic and semantic content in the study of the spatial forms of dance.

when a dance embodies content purely in its own materials, its rhythms, shapes, directions and the like, I call it formal dance with formal content. When it refers to anything outside its own medium into 'the life shared' I call it narrative dance having narrative content.

### **Narrative versus formal content in ballet**

The tension between technical feasts and narration in ballet dates from the time when ballet separated from Opera and became *pas d'action* (Praagh & Brinson 1963, 19). Being able to tell a story was a triumph for ballet as an autonomous art form. At the same time it continued to develop and codify its own formal vocabulary. (Foster 1998, 8) The two layers of content were present in ballet, in one way or another. Noverre (Cohen 1974, 57 - 64) introduced the ideal of fusing the narrative and formal dance together into an inseparable unity. Ivanov and Fokine continued this choreographic trend as also many contemporary choreographers do. Meanwhile Petipa arranged the content alternately by telling a story in mimicry and then concentrating in formal dance movements as *divertissements*. (Praagh & Brinson 1963) In *Swan Lake* the two approaches are contrasted. Petipa's approach alternates story with formal dance in the first and third acts and Ivanov's more united effort embodies the swan and love in the dance movements in the second and fourth acts of the ballet. Whether presented as united or separate, the two layers of content can be discerned in ballet. However, dance and ballet can exist without narrative content but not without formal content.

Narrative content has been acknowledged and valued in ballet.

Strong characters and clear dance images are inseparable from good choreography just as acting is an essential part of a dancer's art. This has always been so for Noverre's good reason that 'it is impossible to create interest by . . . merely executing some beautiful steps; the soul, features, gestures and attitudes must all speak at once and always with energy and truth'. (Praagh & Brinson 1963, 202)

Formal content, although always present in dance, sometimes receives less emphasis and respect. It may be considered plain technique, simply virtuosity dancing, which interferes with content (understood as dramatic or emotional). In an interview by David Tushingam, Lloyd Newson explains the artistic view of his company DV8 Physical Theatre. He polarises meaning in dance and form-oriented techniques 'in which meaning has been lacking.' Formal dance is

perceived as form without content and contrasted with dance with feeling or dance with content. 'Too often I see dance companies who are more interested in the aesthetic and the visual than they are in content.' Technical mastery, physical tricks and virtuosity validate the empty form. (Tushingham 1998, 14 -15)

Anya Peterson Royce explains how ballet choreography can be appreciated on several levels, for instance narrative and metaphoric. After explaining the narrative and symbolic content in ballet she adds that a layer of meaning attached to the dance itself still exists. (Royce 1984) The formal content is always present in a dance, while the narrative is an option. Even when the dance aims to tell a story or the dancer to interpret a role, the formal layers of meaning still remain: the codified movements, the lightness, the speed, the graceful lines, the dynamic qualities... Narrative and formal content therefore can be seen as layers of meaning in ballet. Choreographers and dancers may prefer to emphasise, and spectators look for, one or the other.

Natalia Makarova emphasises narrative content while coaching Rafaela Renzi as Odette in *Swan Lake*. She attracts the dancer's attention to the swanlike qualities in the dance and the story to be told. '...wings start here... you see him and you are frightened, nervous... cover yourself with the wings...neck is important for the swan...everybody waiting for the song, your story to be told.' (Makarova 1987) Another possibility in the same dance would be to look for the layer of content in the dance itself, as Royce suggests, not playing a swan but concentrating on the form and its dynamics, its actions and relationships. Merrill Ashley describes Balanchine's attitude 'a different view of *Swan Lake* from almost any body' to be of the latter kind. 'He just wants dance.' (Newman 1982, 388)

In 1998, Sylvie Guillem, one of the best known contemporary ballerinas, staged Coralli's and Perrot's romantic ballet *Giselle* for the Finnish National Ballet company. In her interpretation of the ballet the emphasis on story as content is evident. While bringing out the story in a vivid way in the choreography (Räsänen 1998), she cut out *Giselle*'s famous variation in the 1<sup>st</sup> act. The variation is a solo dance separated from the story presenting formal ballet vocabulary. This pleased those in the audience in favour of lively storytelling but may have been noted with disappointment by those informed about the ballet *Giselle* and enjoying the formal content in it.

Another kind of approach is needed when the ballet lacks a story and a character role for the dancer. David Wall, who is described by Barbara Newman (1982) as having 'dramatic depth' in his dancing, describes the difference of

performing in a dramatic and formal ballet; *Mayerling* and *Symphonic Variations*. Kenneth Macmillan is well known for his psychologically motivated drama-ballets. *Mayerling* has been considered his best full-length story-ballet and David Wall has been praised of his acting skills and 'outstanding dramatic presence' in the leading role in its premiere in 1978 at the Royal Opera House in London. *Symphonic Variations* is Ashton's plotless ballet created for the Sadler's Wells Ballet in 1946. It has been said to testify to Ashton's 'belief in the continuing viability of the classical vocabulary' and a piece that brought forward the grace and elegance of the company. (Bremser 1993, 1367) David Wall points to the difference of dancing the two.

Certainly there is a difference between performing a ballet like *Mayerling* and say, *Symphonic Variations*. Symphonic can be performed impeccably and nobody is going to complain. But Sir Frederick always wants there to be a spirit to the performance apart from just technique. It's such a balanced, perfect work that even at the worst, it's going to be a beautiful ballet. And given the right sort of lift and feel, it just transcends. (Newman 1982, 375 - 376)

Wall asserts here that when the choreographer takes away the drama and the plot from dance, expression is different, but present. What he calls 'lift' and 'feel' is formal content that is intended and experienced by the dancer in the dance elements themselves and embodied in the performance.

Balanchine is well known for his emphasis on pure movement qualities rather than narrative in his choreography. Merrill Ashley explains how it is possible to hide the movement by the story and emotion. '...sometimes people get too involved in creating something other than what Balanchine intended. They create their own story and superimpose it, and suddenly the movement gets hidden and all you see is emotion.' She also explains a difference in her experience when performing Jerome Robbins' or Balanchine's choreography. Robbins' works concentrate more on the story and the role of the dancer, while Balanchine, as mentioned, prefers to choreograph ballets that emphasise the formal rather than the narrative elements in the movement material. In the first 'the steps feel different; they tend to be less concrete than with Balanchine.' (Newman 1982, 387 - 393)

The argument for narrative content and the lack of recognition of formal content is polarised in Newson's statement (Tushingam 1998). In ballet training, open recognition of a third option, form as content, has been lacking.

Ashton and Balanchine would most likely not have agreed that their formal dances lacked artistic content. Petipa's *divertissements* success with audiences all over the world as well as the more recent Forsythe's plotless ballets testify to the communicability of formal dancing. The above dancers' comments show that form as content can be recognised by dancers, but is difficult to communicate verbally. It becomes 'lift' and 'feel' and just 'different'. To discuss intention in a ballet class, a more concrete means to communicate this content is needed. Basic to the argument in this research is that in ballet narrative and formal content and the dancers' possibility to intend the dance with both is recognised.

### **Dancer's narrative and formal intention**

When the content in the work relies on the role or the narrative, the dancer is aided in finding the required intention to express it through using dramatic imagination as Makarova was indicating to Renzi, stimulating the dancer's imagination through the story and role. In formal dance material this kind of intending can be inappropriate as Ashley suggested about Balanchine's choreography. If only narrative intention and content is recognised, the ballet classroom work from an expressive point of view becomes problematic. The technical execution of the vocabulary can often be clearly defined, while the expression in it is elusive. Teaching needs concepts and words for the qualities inherent in the vocabulary. If the classroom work is emphasising learning the vocabulary as a basic technique on which the later artistic intention (probably dramatic) is added, the dancer may not become aware of the potential expressiveness in the vocabulary itself. The lack of qualitative intentionality in the classroom practice leads to the attitude that formal dance material is to be performed 'impeccably', and that the range of choices is narrow.

Rosemary Brandt has discussed the realisation of and the means to discuss and perform form as content in the classical ballet teaching.

The classical ballet vocabulary is not a bearer of meaning and not a referent to things outside of itself. It has intrinsic value, which is clearly expressed through the mastery of the principles, which govern classical ballet technique. Nothing needs to be added to the ballet. Expression is inherent in its vocabulary. (Brandt 1987, 22)

To begin to remedy the imbalance of technique over expression in the ballet classroom, ways to communicate and discuss this content are needed above the elusive 'shift', 'feel', 'soul' and so on. Brandt suggests that the application of

Laban's principles of movement analysis 'provides for the identification of the seemingly elusive qualities of dance (rhythmicity, musicality and dramatic ability) . . . making it possible for them to be explicitly taught in terms of skill. . . . They provide the means for explicitly teaching the students how to transform their movement vocabulary into dance.' (Brandt 1987, 53, 54).

The structural components of dance are constituents of the medium itself and therefore communicate the formal dance qualities, including those inherent in the ballet vocabulary. The structures and structural components in dance are the building blocks of form as content. They indicate what can be intended in formal dance material. By committing to intention in the form through these components as deep structures while performing ballet vocabulary, the dancer embodies the dance in its surface materials. The dancer can choose and change intention in the same dance material, say a 'step' in ballet vocabulary thereby producing multiple embodiments of the same step. The structural components are used in this research and the ballet workshops as images to intend the ballet vocabulary.

The structural images serve as a means for the teacher to see the qualities in ballet as open-ended and intend form as content in performance. In the following I will discuss perception in ballet, the human way of attending to the dance, the body moving in and in relation to its environment.

## Perception in ballet

The movement vocabulary in ballet is learned through constant repetition of the basic movements in gradually more and more demanding combinations and tempi. Christina Schulgin (1996) says that a ballet student or dancer has, during the first two years of training, done about 360 *plié*-combinations. In the sixth grade he or she has done more than a thousand of them, and while approaching retirement age (42 years at the time) over 6000 repetitions. This repetition is done in an atmosphere of constant extrinsic feedback. We might say that ballet is learned as a closed skill<sup>3</sup> repeating the same forms over and over again aiming

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3. Schmidt's schema theory elaborates how skill learning is dependent on both extrinsic feedback (knowledge of results often given by the teacher or coach) and the intrinsic feedback provided by the person's proprio- and exteroception. By comparing perceptual information, knowledge of results and the desired outcome, the person through repetition

at learning a fixed ideal execution of the codified vocabulary.

In the situation of constant repetition of the fixed forms in a ballet class, the outside feedback can begin to dominate the dancer's experience. The dancer may begin to rely on it rather than on individually sensed information of the movement. An extreme case of this kind of minimising the sensory information possible for the student is expressed by Schulgin, who, while making a document of The Finnish National Ballet School, is again as an adult in the same classroom situation as in her youth while studying in the school. She remarks on her reaction to the feedback she hears being given to the students. 'Only while making this document, I realise that while practising daily for over ten years I often did not think what I was doing. I remember the teacher's commands. My muscles react to them still. I am still a small soldier.' (Schulgin 1996)

### **How does it look? / How does it feel?**

Extrinsic feedback is emphasised in the ballet class by the use of mirrors from which the dancer can check the correctness of his motion as if from the outside with the spectator's eyes rather than sensing the positions and movements. Another form of outside feedback is the teacher's remarks. One of the criteria of a good ballet teacher has been said to be that he makes lots of corrections. (Hammond 1993) This is based on the idea of teacher's expertise and control of the students' learning. Teaching the vocabulary as the tradition knows it, is a necessity in ballet. That includes giving guidelines of correct execution. When overemphasised and with lack of trust to the student's possibilities to sense, to learn by perceiving himself moving, can lead to a situation in which the learner has to pay a lot of attention to the teacher's suggestions of corrections. Less time is left for personal searching through sensory information.

In addition to the emphasis on extrinsic feedback in ballet class, the dancer is given a narrow agenda of possibilities to perceive ballet when the vocabulary is understood as a fixed, closed movement form. To determine how perception operates in the moving dancer in ballet performance, let's look at perception and perceptual learning in general.

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creates a motor response schema, improving his motor skills. When the repetition is always done in similar conditions, the skill becomes closed. When variation is introduced during the repeated attempts, the skill becomes open. (Schmidt 1982)

### **Gibson's theory of information pick-up**

While dancing, the person can pay attention to the sensory information from within the body and information received from the environment. The dancer can be aware of himself and his movements and their relations to the environment through proprio- (perceiving oneself and one's own movements) and exteroception (perceiving the environment).

Most research on perception has been done in laboratory conditions. Goldstein (1999) notes Gibson's ecological approach to perception for its concern for studying perception as it occurs in the natural environment. Gibson explains in his *Theory of Information Pick-up* how perception is sought by the perceiver. The environment (including one's dancing body) is loaded with information of which the person picks up data according to his interests or mode of attention. A human being is not a passive receiver of information but an active information-seeking organism. 'Animals and men can select or enhance the stimuli they receive from the world, or even exclude certain kinds, by orienting and adjusting their sense organs. The observer who is awake does not wait passively for stimuli to impinge on his receptors; he seeks them.' (Gibson 1966, 32)

According to Gibson, perceptual learning is about learning to discriminate. Perceptual development is 'the acquiring of what might be called economical perception' or 'development of selective attention' (Gibson 1966, 286). While the available information in the environment and the sensing organs stay the same, the person can educate attention and thereby improve his 'noticing of critical differences' while ignoring 'irrelevancies' (Gibson 1966, 52). Gibson distinguishes imposed and sought perception. In the former, the information in the environment is so strong that it forces the person to pay attention, it impinges on perception. In the latter case, the person seeks and finds what to pay attention to according to personal interests.

Gibson differentiates many perceptual systems through which the human being attends to himself and the environment. We can perceive our body movements through the positioning of the joints (articular system), feeling the tension in the muscles (muscular system), through skin and the layers just underneath the skin (cutaneous perception). The perception of balance is one important channel to perceive our positions and movements (auricular system). The visual and auditory perceptual systems also contribute to perception of the moving body. Although all these channels are possible to a human being, they are not possible all at once. Therefore the person, in this case dancer, makes

choices of the mode of attention with which he pays attention to himself and the environment. (Gibson 1966) Often a human being habitually perceives in one way more than another or perhaps training has conditioned him to one rather than another channel of information. When this mode of attention is changed, the dancer gets different information of his movements.

### **What are the dance qualities available for the dancer's perception?**

Preston-Dunlop has discussed active perceiving in performing dance. In the spirit of Gibson, she suggests, that while dancing

We miss most opportunities to experience  
because we select what we will attend to.  
We cut out swaths of potential sensation  
Because we have to make sense of a body in an environment  
Which is bombarded by ambient energy of all sorts –  
Light, motion, tension, sounds, gravity.

To make use of our opportunities  
To perceive our own dancing  
We need strategies  
To help us attend to what can be felt. (Preston-Dunlop 1998, 42)

In this research, the discriminating learning is attempted in the formal content of ballet. The structural images reveal this content in its diversity and in an aesthetically open-ended way. Thereby, the dancer is offered varying kinds of modes to attend to the formal content in the same movement. When the codified ballet vocabulary is explored with multiple images of content, the dancer is given a wide agenda of perceptual modes of attention to choose from and vary, to learn to discriminate in the perception of ballet, even within the same movement. For instance, the dancer can attend to the movement by paying attention to the bodily form (body design) or the space between the body form, the space that is left in-between body parts and called spatial tension (Preston-Dunlop 1998, 133 - 137). Or in the same movement, the dancer can attend to its dynamics by paying attention to its relationship to music or timing, alternately attending to physical force needed for producing the movement or perhaps to the movement flow, its connection to other movements (Preston-Dunlop 1979b, 101 - 104).

By stating the above, I have returned to the structural images as dance content. The dancer intends with them to the formal content in ballet. To intend, he has

to attend to them in perception. Intention and attention are interrelated. The structural images are there as potential intentions for the dancer. They are there to be paid attention to and experienced by the dancer. When the dancer is made aware of these possibilities to intend and attend, his selection for making discriminations in ballet vocabulary increases. Through different images he can orient to the dance differently and perhaps learn, as Gibson put it, increasing 'discrimination' of the content in ballet. By expanding the dancer's perceptual possibilities in ballet the teaching in the forthcoming workshops aims at opening out the closed skill of ballet to multiple experiences, enhancing the experiencing of artistic content in ballet performance.

In addition to attempting to open the fixed ballet vocabulary in the dancer's experience, the change in teaching style in the forthcoming workshops aimed at further opening out the outcomes of learning ballet.

## Teaching style in ballet

The research aim, to enhance intentionality in ballet class preparing the dancer for the roles of interpreter and co-author with the choreographer, is logically impossible to fulfil as long as teaching conforms to the traditional mode of reproduction in class. Replicating given forms in an air of teacher authority does not allow dancers the autonomy to produce individual solutions, either when performing known vocabulary or while creating their own dance material. Therefore I am searching for a change or at least a mix in teaching styles that would allow for the autonomy for learners to produce through their own artistic intention in class, to create their own solutions in a ballet context. The overall aim of teaching is to educate dancers as practitioners for the evolving theatre art form of ballet, to educate autonomous artists in the field.

### **Spectrum of possible teaching styles in teaching and learning movement skills**

Mosston & Ashworth (1994) have introduced a spectrum of teaching styles for the teaching of different kinds of movement skills, beginning from a style for reproducing given movements and going on to introduce styles for learning more open skills in the physical education context. The spectrum is divided into two groups according to whether the styles in it are teaching known facts (reproduction) or whether they invite creative new insights or discoveries from

the learner. The command style is the most common style to aim at reproduction and safeguarding of traditional forms. The divergent production style is the first one to allow divergent production by the learner. Between command style and the divergent production style in the spectrum, the learner is educated to become more and more independent in his own learning through experiencing the practice style, the reciprocal style, the self-check style, the inclusion style and the guided discovery style. In all of these styles, although increasing the learner's independence in the process of learning, the final product, the correct answer is pre-determined and singular conforming to a fixed model. After the divergent production teaching style the spectrum continues with the learner's design style, the learner's initiated style and the self-learning style. The final independence in learning is accomplished through experiencing them.

The model offers a way to analyse the most common teaching situation in ballet and to contemplate on the possibility to change the teaching style in this inquiry to provide means for interpretation and compositional exercises. The same style cannot provide means for both reproduction and divergent production. A change of style is inevitable.

Mosston & Ashworth's model deals with the open and closed skills in sports and gymnastics. I am interested in the qualitative content of dance as art. Rather than looking at the 'measurable' qualities in sports and gymnastics, I am applying the model to looking at how the formal qualitative content is kept predetermined or is opened out to interpretations by the students. Therefore my emphasis will be in applying Mosston & Ashworth's model of divergent production teaching style, opening out the formal content in ballet to divergent production by the dancers with the help of the structural images of the dance.

Mosston & Ashworth emphasise the reversibility of different styles along the spectrum. 'The fundamental issue in teaching is not which style is better or best, but rather which style is appropriate for reaching the objectives of a given episode. Every style has a place in the multiple realities of teaching and learning!' (Mosston & Ashworth 1994, 7) When the teacher is aware of possibilities, he can shift the teaching style according to the present objectives of teaching, either during a teaching session or in the course of several sessions. Let us first contemplate on the different characteristics of each style.

### **The command style**

Command style can be a teacher's choice when fast learning of pre-existing

movements or forms and safeguarding tradition is aimed at. Mosston & Ashworth explain its essence as being the direct and immediate relationship between the teacher's instruction and the learner's response. The command signal by the teacher precedes every movement of the learner, who performs according to the model presented by the teacher. Among the objectives of this style are precision and accuracy of the response, maintenance of aesthetic standards, efficacy in time use and conformity by the learner. It can also be student safety in risk involving movements. The command style, having as its objectives the reproduction of traditional values, does not allow the production of knowledge that is new to the learner. (Mosston & Ashworth 1994, 18)

### **The practice style**

The practice style offers the learner in the classroom independence in learning a given task. He is given 'private time' to practice and learn. This style is not aiming at individuality in the sense that in Mosston & Ashworth's model the learning outcome conforms to a 'fixed standard'. The teacher will give feedback both on achieving the task as well as making the decisions during practice: finding a location, order of tasks, starting and stopping time, pace and rhythm, intervals and initiating questions for clarification.

### **The reciprocal style**

Characteristic to the reciprocal style is working together with a peer, observing and giving feedback as well as being observed and getting feedback, against given criteria.

### **The self-check style**

The self-check style aims at developing the learner's kinaesthetic awareness of his own performance. The learner begins to rely on himself for feedback, a major step in becoming independent in the learning process.

### **The inclusion style**

In the inclusion style the performer can decide on the level of challenge or difficulty of performance. Thereby the same activity can allow different levels of ability. In ballet this might mean that the dancer decides on his class level at a certain time. Even experienced dancers may for some reason or another decide to take an elementary class. Dancers in the same class may vary the height of

the leg in a *développé* or replace a difficult movement with a less demanding one because of injury or skill level.

### **The guided discovery style**

In guided discovery style the teacher designs a chain of problem-solving tasks for the learner. At the end of the chain the learner discovers a new concept, idea or perhaps movement ability. Every problem solving step on the way and the final solution are pre-determined.

### **The divergent production style**

In divergent production style the learning outcomes are open to divergent answers. Mosston & Ashworth (1994) describe the sequence of events in the classroom where this style is used. First the teacher creates a secure climate for divergent production by reassuring that all solutions within the parameters of the problem are accepted. 'Learners who are used to produce single, correct responses may hesitate when asked to design and develop alternative movements.' The teacher provides a problem to be solved, which gives each learner the 'opportunity to inquire, design, move and assess alternatives that he or she has produced.' Meanwhile the teacher waits for the process to evolve. After performing the learner evaluates the results against given criteria. (The criteria are implied in the parameters of the task. All solutions that are within the stated limits of the task are considered 'correct'.) (Mosston & Ashworth 1994, 203)

The roles of the teacher and learner have changed in this style when compared with those of the command style. Rather than giving a model to be reproduced, the teacher now designs tasks or questions in the subject-matter that invite multiple answers or solutions. The teacher needs to 'accept the possibility of new designs within the subject-matter that were previously conceived of as fixed' (Mosston & Ashworth 1994, 205) and be able to accept answers that do not conform to his or her set of values. All the solutions produced by dancers that fulfil the limits of the task are acceptable. They are correct in the sense that they give a solution to the problem in a way that satisfies the learner's rather than the teacher's set of values.

### **The individual program style**

In this style the learner discovers and designs a problem in a given subject-matter area. This style aims at self-directed development of a competent

performer in a particular topic. According to Mosston & Ashworth this style is a 'highly disciplined approach for developing the creative capacities of the individual learner'. (Mosston & Ashworth 1994, 234)

### **Learner's initiated style and self-teaching style**

The independence in learning is at its maximum in the two final styles in the spectrum. The teacher eventually has made himself unnecessary.

I will next look at the characteristic features of ballet teaching, which is often taught as a closed skill and therefore resembles what Mosston & Ashworth call a command style. The divergent production teaching style applied to opening out the formal content in ballet is then suggested as a potential style to open production in ballet.

### **Ballet teaching**

Walking into almost any ballet class shows that the standard mode of teaching in ballet is that the teacher presents the movement form to be learned, the students repeat it exactly and in mutual timing often determined by given music or counts. Afterwards the teacher gives feedback in terms of how closely the performance followed the teacher's criteria of excellence. In a ballet class for girls at the Central School of Ballet in London (Nicholls 1994), the execution was supported by piano music (as in almost every ballet class) giving shared timing to the movement execution. The teacher's words and gestures, tone of voice, and sometimes touch were destined to get the desired response from the students. The doing is followed by feedback from the teacher.

In a ballet class the teacher's authority is emphasised. Sondra Noll Hammond advises students on how to accept feedback, which she calls criticism, humbly and with respect. 'Correction and criticism are basic ingredients of instruction and a good teacher knows how to give them to the beginner as well as to the advanced dancer (Hammond 1993, 46).' The teacher's dominance in a ballet class is reinforced by manners that come into effect the moment the dance students enter the studio. Often ballet students are taught to bow to the teacher whenever entering or beginning a class or at the end of class. Hammond refers to the manners in the ballet classroom that deviate from those of ordinary life situations. 'Ballet's aristocratic heritage from royal courts has continued a certain formalism in manners as well as style. Thus in class a certain politeness prevails, and the ballet teacher may expect to be addressed as Miss, Madame,

or Mr. Such-and-such even though some students in the class may be older than the teacher or on a first-name bases outside of class (Hammond 1993, 46)'.

The meticulous safeguarding of content, repetition and imitation as patterns of teacher-learner relationship and student conformity to the teacher's commands are signs telling that the commonly used teaching style in ballet is the kind that Mosston & Ashworth would call command style. The reasons for the appropriateness of such a style are obvious if ballet teaching is seen as transferring the known vocabulary accurately, precisely, and efficiently to the learner.

In the present inquiry the aim of teaching is expanded so that in addition to learning the vocabulary it is also used as a starting point for exploration. The divergent production style aims at allowing the learners to produce open-ended answers to tasks. To apply divergent production, the teacher needs more than surface understanding of the subject matter taught. For a ballet teacher, it is not enough to know the codified vocabulary, for instance in the way it is meticulously described in textbooks. (Kostrovitskaya & Pisarev 1978, Svedin 1978, Laristo 1988) The teacher needs understanding of how to create open-ended tasks in the subject matter. In the present approach the formal artistic content was the stuff opened out in the tasks. Understanding this content (the structural images) as deep structures that can be embodied in multiple ways by the dancers gave me as a teacher the keys to making divergent production tasks in the classroom.

### **Discussion of change in teaching style**

I acknowledge that the manner of teaching is in a sense an individual style reflecting the teacher as a person. The individual style affects the way he pre-reflectively reacts to classroom situations and students as persons. Van Manen (1991) has called this reflection-in-action the tact of teaching. For a professional teacher, underlying the surface reactions there is also an undercurrent of consciously chosen attitudes that direct the teacher's behaviour. Contrasting teaching styles, for instance in ballet, can be delivered in the classroom with tact. Still the tact overlaying authoritarian teacher-student roles and democratic sharing in a dance classroom would show in very different teacher behaviour and work towards different ends. Experience has revealed that changing such outward behaviour and attitudes requires conscious effort from the teacher, who by reflection and education has come to understand teaching in a new way

and wants to give off new signals and put into practice other kinds of teacher-learner roles. When I talk about teaching styles here, I refer to these broad principles, which can be stated in terms of learning objectives and teacher-learner roles.

By suggesting the above changes in the ballet class, I do not mean to say that one style of teaching as such would be better or worse than another. They simply answer different needs and aims. A ballet teacher may utilise several styles, although traditionally the reproduction in command style has been the norm. There will always be episodes in a ballet class, where new movement is being learned and reproduction is the obvious fast route to mastering it. Exploration can begin when the initial work is done. Although the emphasis in the workshops was in divergent production style, the others as well were present. Movement sequences had to be learned and memorised. However, right after the initial reproduction of the sequences to be studied, they were opened out by suggested imagery. Therefore, what looks like reproduction is not always so. Later it will be explained how paying attention to the structural imagery had the potential to open out the experienced qualities in dance, as happened when dancers reported of revelations in the ballet workshops.

Exploration with images might also result in practice style when dancers were given time to practice on their own. The feedback in class was mainly peer observations and comments resulting in reciprocal style. The difference to Mosston & Ashworth's (1994) model is that rather than dealing with fixed models or standard criteria, our attention was in the qualitative aspects of dance as art. Therefore it was not possible to define 'right' or 'correct' answers. Peer assessment was dialogue between what was experienced by the performer and observed by the spectator.

The individual program, learner initiated or self-learning style were not incorporated into the workshops. When dance students move along to independent choreography, the principles of these styles may be found useful.

The focus of my attention, when planning and attending the ballet workshops, was strongly in changing the reproduction to divergent production. The other teaching styles emerged as side products without conscious effort to introduce them.

All styles can be taught skilfully or not so. The teaching skills, though, are different. The teacher in the divergent production needs deep understanding of the subject-matter to be able to create open-ended tasks in it. For a ballet teacher it is not enough to know the movement forms and their execution. He

needs to acquire knowledge of the components of formal content of ballet and to be aware of aesthetic trends in the field.

Ballet teaching tradition has a reputation of being abusive, mentally at least, if not even physically. According to many writers (Smith 1998; Wulff 1998b; Sadono 1999), this abusive practice on verbal level is still common in a ballet class. In this research I am not investigating this phenomenon. I only point to the differences in teaching styles. These broad principles do not know of abuse and simply reject the idea of abuse as a misuse of any teaching style (Mosston & Ashworth 1994). The emphasis on teacher expertise and authority in command style may tempt some teachers to misuse their position. But it is not a necessary part of the style and here condemned as malpractice. In divergent production, which by nature is more democratic, abuse can be assumed to seriously interfere with individual production.

In this chapter I have discussed the theoretical starting points of my research. They explain some ideas behind the changes to ballet teaching in the ballet workshops. The structural images revealed the formal content in ballet vocabulary in its diversity and in an artistically open-ended way. It is suggested to give the dancer a means to intend in the formal vocabulary and attend to the content in perception, so enhancing the experience of ballet as an artistic endeavour. The expansion of teaching style is suggested as a means to open out the formal content in ballet to individual production. The sought perception (ballet vocabulary as an open qualitative form), structural images as indicators of and way to communicate content in ballet and the change in teaching style was applied to practice in ballet workshops.

# Chapter 3.

## Ballet workshops

The function of the ballet workshops was twofold. Firstly, the workshop sessions were to generate information on the possible effects of structural images on dancers' and dance students' experiences of embodying ballet vocabulary. Secondly, during the workshops the teaching method (which I later began to call multiple embodiment in classical ballet) and broad principles of teaching it gradually evolved. I was putting in practice the theory that I brought into the situation and developing it further through reflective practice. (Jarvis 1999, 51)

Characteristic to the teaching in the ballet workshops was the open-ended use of structural images of the dance and the use of divergent production teaching style to present dancers with interpretation and composition tasks. The workshop sessions were to generate information on the dancers' and dance students' experiences of embodying ballet vocabulary.

In the following I will discuss one by one the different elements of the practical research instrument: participants, common features of the workshop sessions, data collection, teacher journal and analysis of workshops.

### Participants

#### **Dancers and dance students**

The informants in the research were dance students, dancers and dance teachers ranging between 9 year olds and adults. Their motivation to assist in the study varied. The free-lance dancers group was in the study from their own initiative. The rest of the participants were in institutional settings in which my class became part of the curriculum. The free-lance dancers' workshops lasted for a longer period than the other workshops. The group of free-lance dancers was very articulate of their experiences and therefore they became my main informants. However, information from all groups is included in the study.

## Teacher-researcher

I acted in a double role in the research. I was both the teacher and the researcher. This was essential, as I was making an intervention into the ballet class as I knew it. I was creating a new practical teaching method. Therefore, it would not have been possible to simply observe ballet classes and interview students. The research emerged through my teaching efforts and evolving relationship with the dancers and dance students. Jarvis (1999) finds this kind of double-role of practitioner-researcher increasing, when practitioners take up research on their own practice in various fields such as nursing, education, consultation and others.

Some writers on dance research have seen the double role of practitioner-researcher as problematic. One of the reasons for this is said to be that the information given by students might be distorted if the teacher is also evaluating the dancers. 'They may not be willing to share negative impressions about the class with a teacher, who is also assigning grades' (Green & Stinson 1999, 91 - 124). In this sense I felt relaxed as I did not need to evaluate students, even in the class. The research aim of allowing any kind of results and products without critical feedback was congruent with the aims of the teaching style, which stresses developing the locus of personal evaluation in dancers. As a teacher I was 'new' to all participants when beginning classes and only visiting the institutions.

Occasionally I experienced a tension between my roles as a researcher and teacher. This was caused by difficult situations in the class, for instance when students seemed uncommunicative or children tried my patience with antisocial behaviour. In these situations I handled the class in the teacher's role and the research had to be suspended. I have written in my teacher journal of a situation where as a teacher I felt the need to go on with the class, although as a researcher I would have liked to ask questions. In the situation the atmosphere had been 'cold' and dancers resistant to work. I felt the need to just get the class evolving and dancers to work in a positive mode. I did not interrupt this by starting to ask research-related questions from the dancers. Another situation where I became simply the teacher was when I had asked the children if they were familiar with a *pas de basque* step. They were not, but were eager to learn it and insisted that I teach them. As it is a step suitable for their level I decided to take the time to show and practice it for a while.

In my role as a researcher, I created the circumstances, the environment, in

which we could discuss and compare the dancers' experiences in class. As a teacher, according to the role divergent teaching style grants me, I created dance tasks to which dancers could produce open-ended answers. I was an insider in the situation and a member of the ballet dance culture. Therefore my interpretations of the results can be viewed with that in mind. Jarvis argues that the practitioner-researchers are more likely to pose the right questions for research than individuals coming from outside to investigate. Their 'in-depth involvement in the practice' can result in depth of reporting that traditional forms of research might not capture and give interpretations based on inside knowledge of the situation. (Jarvis 1999, 3 - 4, 24, 96) Jarvis mentions the practitioner-researcher's possible blindness to the tacit and taken-for-granted aspects of their practice and research situations '...tacit knowledge may be such that they (practitioners) find it extremely difficult to articulate what they know (Jarvis 1999, 96). Therefore he suggests that practitioners are more accurate in recording 'critical incidents' than habitual practice.

## Data Collection

The research data were collected through video recording the ballet workshop sessions, interviewing dancers and dance students during the workshops, transcribing the video material and keeping a teacher journal.

### **Video recordings**

All workshop sessions were recorded on video. In the initial sessions I explained to each group that the video recording was for research purposes only. I set the video recorder in place before each class. It became part of the classroom equipment. The video was placed in a corner of the studio so that 'it could see' as much of the action as possible. All participants are not always visible, but their comments can be heard even when the dancer or student is not at that moment in the picture.

### **Interviews of dancers and dance students**

I entered the workshops with one main question in mind. 'How do dancers experience combining structural images with formal ballet vocabulary?' In the first session for each group I mentioned that conversation, dancer-initiated questions and comments were welcome in class. During the sessions I also

initiated discussion. In the beginning of the class I introduced verbally and through movement improvisation a structural component or a set of components that would be the theme in the class. (Appendix 1) I discussed with the dancers their experiences while dancing with structural images in mind.

When the dancers were performing ballet barre or centre exercises or rehearsing repertory, I asked them to keep in mind the image in question while performing. I let the dancers talk about what happened. 'What was that like?' 'Did they notice differences in their experience of the dance, and if so, what were they like?' In the beginning dancers compared dancing with an image in mind to their earlier experiences of ballet. For example, I might introduce a *plié* exercise on one side at the barre without talking about an image, and then before the dancers started on the other side, I would ask the dancers to keep a certain image in mind. After the dancers had finished I would ask them to comment on their experience, especially if they noticed a change in the two experiences, with or without an image.

Later the dancers also compared their experiences of dancing with different structural images in mind. How was it different to perform a movement or combination of movements as spatial progression or the same movement with spatial tension in mind? What happened when the same movement was done with different kinds of flow images? Or was it different when balancing or falling off balance was the image?

My intention was to keep the discussion in the 'here and now' -experience, leading it away from expressing opinions that did not describe the experience at hand. Often this guiding of the discussion was not necessary. Occasionally, however, the conversation eluded its purpose. I reflected on this in my journal 'I think that the discussion today slipped into declaring our beliefs rather than concentrating on our present experience. On the other hand, it is good that people feel free to talk about anything they have in mind so that they do not feel restricted.' Van Manen talks about the need in a conversational interview to 'discipline the process by the fundamental process that prompted the need for the interview in the first place' (Van Manen 1990, 66).

At times I also made probing questions to clarify what the dancer had meant. Some dancers spoke in a more abstract way than others. My question might want to clarify the description of experience through asking 'In which movement, when, where in the body and how did something happen?' The dancers could speak freely about their experiences, but did not have to respond.

At the time of the workshops I did not reflect on the reasons why dancers or dance students might remain silent. I assumed that they did not volunteer to talk, because there was nothing of special interest to tell. Later, I have thought that other reasons, for example shyness, are possible. The norm in a ballet class is that the teacher speaks and the student listens. The dancer is expected to work diligently on his own, paying attention to teacher's requests and feedback but not sharing his learning experiences with others. Although I had invited conversation and questions, some dancers may have preferred experiencing privately. Whatever the cause of occasional silence, it is only possible to use as informants persons who communicate their experiences.

I assured dancers and students that all experiences are interesting to me. There are no 'right' or 'wrong' ones, nor do I expect them to be congruent. Speaking in a group is different from private interviews. The members of the group can react to one another's statements. Talking in a group elicited additional answers, when experiences from the same image varied from one dancer to another. Speaking in a group was suitable for these interviews as the matters discussed were dealing with the dance performance, not the participants' private or confidential issues.

When transcribing and analysing the video recordings, it was also possible to pay attention to the dancer's tone of voice and body language as expressive of their present experiences. Among other non-verbal cues I sometimes felt that laughs in class were significant information. Dancers laughed when I proposed early on in the sessions that they might try using structural images in other ballet classes given by other teachers. They laughed when I suggested, while working with action images, that they could vary the actions emphasised in the movement combination used as they themselves saw fitting. They laughed when I recommended that their interpretation, while they repeat the movement on the other side, might be slightly different from the first. A laugh may result from plain enjoyment or a funny expression. In all of these cases, however, I had asked the dancers to deviate from what is customary and a norm in ballet class. I asked them first to use images in another class with another teacher who probably would have no clue of what would be going on. Secondly, I was allowing decisions to be made by the dancers rather than giving exact instructions on how to perform the movement. Thirdly, I had deviated from search for the ideal form, the one correct form, suggesting that there are choices. All this sounded funny to the free-lance dancers. I interpreted this to be cultural. I assumed that dancers

laughed because of the tension I created between what they felt should happen in a ballet class and my actions. The laughs indicated reactions to a change of attitude. These observations marked the beginning of my realisation that I was dealing among other things with cultural issues in the research.

The timing of the interview was such that it caught the dancers immediately after the experience, when it was still clearly in mind. Dancers could indicate places or movements exactly, or repeat particular instances clarifying their description. They were close to the experience, accurate, and least inclined to give 'explanations', 'opinions', or use abstract language. (Van Manen 1990, 64 - 65)

## Teacher journal and analysis of workshops

After each session I transcribed the conversation from the video to my journal. In addition I wrote down themes (images used) and tasks that were introduced in the class and any special points of interest. I reflected in the journal on the classes and happenings around them. This happened especially when something disturbed me and I did not yet have an answer or solutions. The journal, then, was a combination of transcribed interview material including the dancers' and teacher's comments during workshops, description of the teaching method used as observed from the video, and a teacher journal. It was a way to make notes of the overall situation in which the dancers' comments happened. It facilitated analysis of data.

### **Analysis of transcribed material**

To analyse the workshop material, the journal entries were divided into notes of the teaching style used, recording the images or themes of the class at every moment, dancer or student comments during class, teacher reflections of the activities and cultural 'collisions' that emerged during teaching. This division seemed reasonable when I studied the text. Next to each transcribed journal page, there was a corresponding analysis page with columns showing notes of topics within the six categories of notes (Appendix 2). When I needed to discuss specific issues, for instance a certain kind of interpretation that happened in class, or dancers' comments with a certain structural image component, it was easier to find the places in the transcription handling these issues. From the analysis of the interview material and the workshops emerge the five basic themes discussed later in this research.

## Workshop sessions

The movement vocabulary used in the ballet classes was 'traditional'. That means I used similar movement combinations that I would introduce in an ordinary class. My ballet teachers had had Russian influences in their teaching and that would show in my approach. I decided to use simple clear combinations, so that the dancers would have time to consider the effect of the image rather than just concentrate on the execution of difficult steps. For the adults this was easy, as they already possessed a wide movement repertory. For the children it was sometimes difficult to know what their usual class consisted of, as I did not know them beforehand.

Each workshop contained three distinctive parts: tuning into the theme or images used, exploration of usual ballet class movement combinations with the images in question and interpretation or co-composition tasks with the images as tools.

### **Tuning in**

In the beginning of each ballet workshop session, I introduced a structural image. In one class we might be interested in looking at the space around the dancer, the kinesphere, imagining it through spatial models, either as an octahedron, icosahedron or a cube (Laban 1966). In another we might focus on the manner in which the dancer can materialise form either through body design, spatial projection or tension, or perhaps through spatial projection initiated by the body but continuing to the general space outside the dancer's kinesphere (Preston-Dunlop 1998). In yet another session, we might be interested in the movement flow, or basic movement actions (Preston-Dunlop, 1979b).

In the studio I first explained the selected image by words and/or pictorial illustrations and with bits of movement as examples. Often the dancers asked for clarification and we discussed the matter further. Then I asked the dancers to explore movement with the image. They improvised freely intending their dance with the particular image. This served also as a warm-up for the forthcoming ballet class. I called this part of the class 'tuning in'.

### **Encouraging exploration**

After tuning in, the session continued with applying the image to ballet barre and centre exercises. While doing this I discussed with the dancers their

experiences of performing ballet with the selected image. I asked the dancers or students simply to do ballet exercises with a specific image in mind and to comment on the experience. Often they began to talk about their experiences right away.

If the dancers did not begin to talk about their experiences or there seemed to be some difficulty, I would encourage dancers to begin to explore. I might give suggestions of how to search, such as examples of possible intention in a certain movement. I might say 'let's try this *battement tendu jeté* with spatial projection through the toes', or, 'let's do one with spatial progression and the next with spatial tension'. Even though I sometimes suggested exact performance intentions, that is, paying attention to an image in a specific movement and body part at a certain time, the aim was always to activate the participants to explore movement on their own. It was preferable that the dancers would find a way to embody the movement with the selected image on their own and eventually to vary the intentions in the same movement. I let the dancers know that my examples were only suggestions and that it was preferable for them to find their own intentions. Even though the workshop had a theme, and a particular image component was used, the activity always left free choices of embodiment to the dancer. For instance the dancer could begin to realise the twisting action component in different body parts. Some would become aware of it in the turned out feet. Others might become aware of the twists in ballet's hand positions and yet others in the turning head. Therefore my intention was not to specify where and when, only to give a general guideline with the structural component to the dancer.

The exploration period was characterised by first indicating to dancers that there are options and making them aware of options as experiences of the dance. After that as a teacher I emphasised freedom to choose from those revealed options of embodiment. Sometimes dancers were first timid of showing their findings. Some of them needed to build trust in their products. This was done by peer discussions of what had been seen in the performances. As a teacher I also encouraged to 'break performance habits' to get into a deeper investigation of the possibilities of the given material.

### **Feedback**

Possible judgement of the worth of their experiences was left to the dancers themselves. As mentioned the aims of research and teaching were congruent in this regard. Both roles (teacher and researcher) required me to be open to any experiences the dancers might report. For this reason I refrained from

evaluating the dancers' work or comments.

The main feedback was hearing dancers talk about their experiences. This gave information not only to dancers themselves and peers, but was important in terms of my understanding of what was going on. It was description rather than evaluation.

Some feedback originated from discussions with peers when the dancers and students performed to each other. Open discussion gave information of what spectators had or had not perceived in the dancers' performances. This feedback was reinforcement, not evaluation in terms of 'good' or 'bad', 'right' or 'wrong', 'correct' or 'incorrect', but in terms of what qualities had been perceived in the dancer's performance and how the quality changed from one performance to another.

Experiences reported by different dancers during the same movement combination in the same session at the same time might differ from each other. I sensed a mute question in the air 'What is right?' 'Is my different way of experiencing inferior or outright mistaken?' 'What if the teacher knows the "right" answer?' My intention as a teacher was to convey, both with words and with my behaviour, the attitude that all experiences are important and differences in experiences are anticipated. My response to the dancers' comments was either confirmation of what they had said or asking for clarification.

### **Compositional and interpretational tasks**

Often towards the end of the class I introduced interpretational or compositional tasks. Interpretation consisted of making conscious choices of embodiment in performance from the possibilities that exploration with the structural image component had revealed to the dancer. In compositional tasks the same structural image component that was used to intend the ballet combinations and movements, was used to generate dance material by the dancer or student. The following will illustrate dancers' experiences as they explored ballet with structural images.

# Chapter 4.

## Emerging themes

The analysis of the video recordings of workshops and the dancer interviews in class revealed five basic themes and their sub-themes. The dancer's experiences while paying attention to the dance content with structural images of the dance while performing ballet are described in the first three themes: obstacles to experiencing ballet as a qualitative open form, revelations and stretching limits in ballet. The open tasks in divergent teaching led to four ways of interpretation in ballet workshops (interpretational emergents) and ways of co-authoring having ballet as the starting point.

### Obstacles to experiencing ballet as a qualitative open form

#### **Resistance to change**

To begin a ballet class by introducing new concepts and improvising with them can be an outright revolutionary experience for dancers who attend a ballet class. This caused the first obstacle in the beginning of the workshops. Some dance students and dancers probably questioned my professionalism. Does she really know what she is doing? Dance students 'probed' into my 'knowledge' by questioning me: How to 'cure' their special problems in ballet, for instance 'lifting the hip' in *développé*? Sometimes they turned to their own ballet teacher to discuss our work and looked for verification to my actions. The students in the institutions showed their resistance through reluctance to participate or objections to some procedures (not using music etc). The free-lance dancers, whose motivation to participate was different, discussed the matter more openly and constructively by asking '*Is it the idea to obey the rules in ballet?*' and such like. To make a new teaching-learning agreement and to earn the students' trust as a teacher takes time.

#### **Experiencing ballet**

In the early stages of our work together, when I asked the dancers to combine the specified structural image with the ballet exercises and combinations at the

barre and in the centre, dancers occasionally seemed perplexed or quiet or expressed difficulty in the work. Working with a perceptual or structural image component and thereby being attentive to the experience of dance in an open-ended way was not 'natural' to all in a ballet class. It felt strange. Dancers expressed this as a perceptual block or pretentiousness in a ballet class. *'I normally work differently in a ballet and contemporary dance class. In ballet I put on a form.'*

A dance student with the background of both classical and contemporary dance training responded to my request to try out a ballet combination with different action images. She tried out a few actions, one at a time, with the same movement combination and seemed to enjoy dancing. After doing the combination with the action-image of gesturing, the dancer remarked. *'I did not like it, because it felt pretentious, as you are being taught to be like in a ballet class.'*

In compositional work dancers combined ballet vocabulary and individual movement material, both motivated by the same structural image. One dancer found it awkward to combine the two. The gulf between ballet and individual dance style in the dancer's experience was expressed. In a task of mixing ballet and individual dance movements dancers combined ballet vocabulary (*temps lié*) that had been intended through an action component with individual movement generated with images of the same action. The awkwardness was felt in the experience of doing rather than in looking at others perform. Doing this was felt clumsy at first, although to the same dancer watching others do the identical task seemed 'smooth'. Playing with flow qualities in ballet vocabulary and combining it with personally generated flow movements was explained to be *'a big jump mentally from ballet to your own'*.

### **Persistent movement habits**

Sticking to old movement habits and seeking the same perceptual experience as before was another obstacle to working with images. Some dancers were aware of this. *'At least I feel that I am so set in my ways, using the same patterns as always before. It is difficult to change that and feel oneself differently.'* Or *'It is difficult to break out of the usual way...'* and *'One has learned it in a certain way...'* The possibility of personal variation was felt narrow or *'it did not feel like ballet any more'*. Sometimes this attitude was more disguised. The dancer felt it necessary to seek habitual ways of experience rather than try out a new suggestion. When I asked dancers while working in ballet with a spatial model whether they had any trouble with the image someone replied. *'Yes. I have been thinking which*

*should come first, the image or if I need to think of muscle work?* At the time I was perplexed with this question and suggested that if he feels so, he might need to then think of muscles. At present, having had time to reflect I would suggest that the dancer would explore other possibilities with images, find out various ways of performing and only then decide about his priorities. Muscle work was probably his habitual way of approaching dance or ballet.

### **Focus and concentration**

Franklin (1996b, 55 - 56) mentions lack of concentration as one possible reason why an image would not work for a dancer. A few times dancers expressed the difficulty of focusing on the image. One of the reasons was that the dancer was technically ambitious, concentrating on lifting a leg high or achieving many pirouettes, that being the main task. Once a dancer noticed looking at a peer's dancing with the image of spatial projection that *'in a difficult movement, the projection gets lost'*. In another instant a free-lance dancer reflected on her performance and said that she had lost the quality because of her technical ambition. Her focus had been on that rather than in the image in question. On the other hand, dancers expressed the opinion that it was easier for a dancer to concentrate on movement quality, if he possessed good basic technique in ballet. Too taxing a movement makes it difficult to work with images. When revelations began to happen, though, concentration on the images and quality was also found to facilitate dancing technically.

## **Revelations**

Some dancers never reported any obstacles to working with structural images and ballet vocabulary. Those who did, for whatever reason, often overcame the problems and began to comment on experiences of another kind, namely, experiences that informed the dancers and facilitated performance. Therefore I termed them revelations.

During the conversations in class, the participants were free to talk in between dance combinations, but not obliged to do so. Because of their earlier ballet training and performing experiences it is safe to conclude that they had an expectation of the kind of encounter they could expect while dancing ballet. Revelations began to reveal changes, new experiences in ballet. The following example illustrates that differences were discernible by the dancers.

A dancer was making an open ChUMm (Preston-Dunlop 1998, 133 - 137) interpretation of a piece of choreography that she had performed at an earlier occasion and to which she referred to as '*an enjoyable dancing experience*.' When asked about the original rehearsing process she told us that the choreographer had given just the movements and only a few indications of movement quality, such as '*soft*' (she moved to express this quality in her body as well as her words). The performance and the dance had been choreographed to '*strong effective music*' but now the dancer was performing it without music altogether, only motivating her interpretation through ChUMm images. After performing she empathetically noted the distinction between her original performance experience and the present experience. Embodying the same dance by intending it with structural images felt '*totally different!*' At that moment I did not ask her to specify further the difference, but the following themes are drawn from the interviews and video material of the ballet workshops to indicate the kind of changes to experience and information on their dancing that students and dancers observed.

### **'Soul' to the performance**

In the first workshop session for free-lance dancers, a dancer compared a peer's performances of a ballet combination, first danced without any specified intention and immediately followed by the same dance combination done by the same dancer with her own open action (Preston-Dunlop 1979b) interpretation. The observer remarked that the first one looked like '*just a mechanical performance*' while the action version had '*soul*' in its presentation. During another workshop, dancing with the octahedron kinesphere image (Laban 1966) was perceived by the dancer as '*not just mechanical, (the image) brings in something else. Softens the idea that there is only the technical movement execution (the dancer makes sounds and moves to demonstrate her statement)*'. These observations hallmark the feeling that seemed to be present, when dancers began to experience their dancing through structural images. This something extra or out of the ordinary was also communicated by dancers with words like '*fascinating experience*', '*more dancelike*', '*playful*' and the like.

### **Element of surprise**

Intention does not yet determine the quality of movement. The true quality of performance was revealed to the dancer only by embodying the movement with the image, by doing and perceiving the dance with the determined intention. A

dancer did not know beforehand that paying attention to stillness in the dance would make her *'give a different kind of impulse to the movement'*. The same image, in the same movement, at the same time for different dancers highlighted the dance in a distinctive way for each. When dancers used the octahedron kinesphere model as image, they reported very different effects on their performance. One dancer became more conscious of the movements' polydirectionality and resulting facilitation of performance, while another reported that the sense of a supporting structure in space helped her balance. Yet another became aware of her position in a manner that made her change her arm position. The dancers experienced these sudden occurrences in their dancing as surprises on the lines of the following dancer comment. She was intending her movement at the barre through spatial projection. *'My expectation of what would happen to me was very different from what actually happened. When I projected through the foot forward, I got a terrific pull down into earth through the supporting leg. It was surprising!'* I reminded this dancer of her comment in ordinary conversation about 18 months later and she remarked *'I remember that, it was truly surprising!'* For her the surprise had also been memorable.

### **Facilitating dancing**

Dancers' mentioned how working with structural images made dancing ballet easier. It became *'playful'* and *'lighter'*. It was easier to perform many movements in different parts of the body at once *'...like going into plié and stretching leg forward at the same time'*. The images might *'support'* positions and *'help balancing'*. The planes in the icosahedron kinesphere (Laban 1966) model helped execute movements. The dancers noticed that even if ballet movements' directions often conform to the octahedron model, the motion itself may happen on the planes. A dancer commented on the hand movements of the *fourth port de bras* (Vaganova 1969, 48) *'...I was thinking of the plane (wheel plane). Even if the end directions are front and back, the whole movement is happening on the plane.'* Another dancer using the same image felt that the table plane supported her leg and arms in an adagio movement. *'I decided that it is the table plane corner where I try to aim the leg. Now the table plane became very supportive in the attitude tour lent and also supported the hands in moving around.'*

Using too much tension while executing movements has been found to be a problem for many ballet dancers (Howard & Corbin 1998). Work with the image of force, was after a while, accompanied by heavy breathing in a workshop

session. One of the dancers expressed the difficulty and her personal escape. *'Now this feels like the usual horrible exercising in class, like I cannot tolerate the first tendu. Then, for a moment, I began to think of octahedron and the directions and it became easier.'* We discussed this problem with the dancers. Even though I suggested that they try to use as little force as possible, they were reluctant to go on. My suggestion was met with *'cannot do it' 'nor can I'*. Therefore I decided for the next session to give up force and turn to flow, another component in Laban's Effort-concept (Laban & Lawrence 1974/1947). It turned out to be a more fruitful image for my group of dancers even if they still needed time to *'give away'* from the habitual tension to become more fluid. Using free flow one dancer found that freeing the hands from the formal balletic poses in pirouettes and using them with more natural flow would give more impetus for turning in *pique*-pirouettes and thereby make their execution easier. In general the flow sessions were energetic and lively especially when contrasted with the distress while motivating ballet with images of force.

In addition to flow other images as well helped dancers to free themselves from the extra tension in ballet and to understand that less is possible. In addition to the octahedron kinesphere image, which gave support, the articular mode of perceiving the body (Preston-Dunlop 1979b, 131), eased out dancing. While doing barre exercises as *'dancing skeletons'* and when asked about a possible difference in feeling of the usual, dancers commented on the lack of tension in the muscles. *'I am beginning to work more like I feel people with 'easy legs' work. They don't have to work so hard.'*

### **New awareness of the body and its functions**

Using structural images to give intention to ballet movements enhanced the dancers' awareness of movement and the functioning of the body. When the dancer concentrated on the image while dancing, intending the dance through it, lots of experiences of this kind were reported. A selection is given here.

Working with the images of basic movement actions reveals that ballet movements are saturated with them. Actions occur in different parts of the body simultaneously or following each other. Being aware of the twisting action might reveal to the dancer twists in the body that had so far not been so clearly sensed and therefore understood. Besides highlighting the turnout of the legs, which is a distinctive feature in ballet, the less obvious twists in the arms or elsewhere in the body may come to the dancer's awareness. The arm in its rounded curves in ballet hides spiralling twists, which the dancer found by using this image. By

playing with the twist the dancer begins to adjust her positions and movements.

Young ballet students' comments before and after performing a move with an action intention reveal their expectations and pre-existing knowledge about movement and the new revelations after actually performing. They were paying attention to transferences of weight in a certain ballet combination. Before trying they were aware of a few places with weight transferences. After trying out they found new ones that they had not been aware of before. In a jumping combination I asked the students whether there would be any stillnesses in the big travelling jumps executed diagonally across the room. Before trying, somebody shouted 'No!' After carrying out the jump many of them reported of stillness in the air at the height of the jump. This also made the jump look higher.

### **Way of discussing style**

The images could highlight the way ballet is built, for instance spatially or dynamically. The kinesphere models highlighted the directions in ballet even when the direction in question was missing either in the image (octahedron) or in ballet (diagonals in cube). Alone all the kinesphere images (octahedron, icosahedron and cube) only give partially the possible directions in space. Ballet often forefronts the octahedral directions. When the dancer was using the octahedron image and confronted an exceptional pose with diagonal movements she exclaimed: *'Awful lot of diagonal directions! It is sort of hard to include it in this figure (shows octahedron directions . . . and the lean in ballet's ecarte movement). The basic support sort of disappears from there.'* When a dancer was working with the icosahedron image she noticed the lack of some directions from ballet. *'I cannot find table directions!'* The dancer might also find that directions that are not obviously there in ballet, that are not the emphasised stopping places for movement or directions in the codified poses of ballet such as *attitude*, *poses croisé* and *effacé*, are still significant in ballet vocabulary when the dancer is moving. For instance, when the kinesphere image was changed from an octahedron, which dancers had found useful for them, to icosahedron, much to my surprise the dancers began to comment on its significance: the icosahedral directions filled in the curves that the dancers were making with their arms, legs, torso, head... The curves found an extra direction to pass making them more rounded and therefore the feeling of the form more significant.

In one of the free-lance dancers' workshops I had given an exercise that included all the four arabesques of the Vaganova-school. The dancers had

learned the poses in a slightly varying manner in their past training, directions of hand positions or head positions being slightly different. Through the structural images we could discuss the qualitative differences these different ways embodied. For instance an arabesque position with the head and focus over the shoulder to the side (2<sup>nd</sup> arabesque, Vaganova 1969, 56) embodies different kind of projection and body design than an arabesque pose where the focus is forward enforcing the projection forward with the stretched out hand. In ballet 'line' is often talked about. But what actually is the 'line'? In the first choice of arabesque, the line might be experienced across the shoulders continuing from the hand to the side through the shoulders and the turned head, continuing as projection with focus out into space. In the second choice of embodiment, the line might be through the body from the hand and focus forward through the torso down and out through the backwards stretched leg. Rather than the teacher declaring what is being understood as the line, or the 'correct' way of execution, we could discuss the qualitative differences. One way was not better than another. They were just different.

### **Enhanced awareness of aesthetic qualities in the dance**

The revelations that the dancers became aware of while intending the dance with structural images were, besides functional, also aesthetic in nature. Although the effect on the body and its functions also have an effect on the aesthetic, it was possible to see that some revelations were more clearly choices in the aesthetic realm. For instance projection into space is an aesthetic possibility for the dancer but not a functional necessity. A dancer described how the image of spatial projection illuminated her dancing. *'The direction of projection changes all the time when the movement is going on. I felt it very much through the chest and also through the foot, head, hand... Head when coming back to vertical stance.'*

### **Play with choices**

When dancers explored many ways of intending the same movement, they became increasingly aware of the different sensations and choices in performing. A dancer explained the different sensations of the *rond de jambe*, when it was performed successively several times changing the intention each time. *'In twisting the feeling is very much in the hip-joint, in progressing I sense it in the toes and the feeling weakens in the hip. It was also good to think of rond de jambe as space enlarging (spatial tension) between the legs.'*

When the dancer became aware of the dance in a new way, he often immediately and instinctively began to play with these possibilities and change his dancing. When the twists in the arms are sensed, the dancer can play with the position and the form that is being made through these twists. When the dancer is thinking of directions, she can become aware of the need to change movement or body positioning as a dancer reported doing with the octahedron image.

Dancers compared motivating the same movement with different images. What is the difference in quality of movement when it is motivated through spatial progression to a situation where it is intended through spatial projections or body designs? For instance *'For me design makes positions. It is more stiff.'* or *'In progression one pays more attention to movements in between positions. More dynamic.'* Also children were able to discern and discuss these differences. They noticed that if they motivated their jumping combination with the action 'jump' they jumped higher, or if their intention was stretching, they pointed their toes more in the air and such like.

Sometimes dancers began to actively compare images in terms of their benefit or meaningfulness to their present dancing. In a workshop with actions as a theme, dancers preferred different action components. For a certain dancer at a specific time travelling may be the image that brings in the significant change. For someone else twisting or transference of weight or some other action makes the significant difference. While working with the flow-image, a dancer found a way to facilitate a difficult step. *'Personally what worked best for me was, when in the beginning of the fouetté I let the movement flow and at the end, to stop, I bound it.'*

The new awareness, comparison and conscious changes to movement, that is, the possibility to perceive differences and act on them while dancing is the key to open interpretation of formal ballet vocabulary (Chapter 4, Interpretational emergents).

### **Exploring one's physical and artistic boundaries**

Because the images are introduced in their full potential and varied from one performance or class to another, they invite the dancer gradually to move away from the usual and secure way of dancing, to risk the unexpected. In a flow-workshop a dancer commented on developing versatility in her dancing. *'This is good for own technique to try many qualities. Personally I do not know which is most beneficial for me. It is testing one's limits.'*

## Stretching limits, crossing borders: Going beyond the generally accepted way of performing in ballet

### **Teacher behaviour**

The open-ended use of the images invited the dancer not only to become versatile in performance qualities, but to experiment beyond the generally accepted way of performing in ballet. With my behaviour and suggestions I supported experiments into this direction while searching for my own answers, grounds and criteria for my behaviour. How much and what kind of change would be accepted to the codified ballet movements? It was sometimes hard as a teacher to meet dancers' and dance students' contrary expectations and to try to explain my point to the dancers. Working at the time more through intuition than being able to rationally explain to dancers or to myself my willingness to allow deviation from the conventional performance style in ballet, I sometimes felt insecure as a teacher when trying to give grounds for my behaviour. Why indeed would it be all right to break rules?

My attitude of allowing and encouraging deviation from the conventional norms in ballet was revealed to the students sometimes in the way I promoted going beyond the generally accepted rules in ballet by simply accepting it when it occurred or sometimes by suggesting it. One dancer put the question to me after class *'Is it the idea to obey balletic rules?'* My answer to the dancer was to look for all the variability within the rules. Implicitly, my behaviour suggested that it was all right also to deviate from the conventional way of performing when the artistic intention (through the image) so demanded. At the time I was not quite prepared to state it.

My promoting of moving in silence as well as to music was a way of stretching the rules of music and movement relationship in ballet teaching as the vocabulary is in class constantly supported by musical accompaniment. The open use of images affected the dynamics of the movement so that its relationship to music changed. Having noticed this and hoping to give the dancers as much leeway to interpretation of the movement as possible, I often suggested working without music. That in itself is stretching the usual movement sound relationship in ballet class where precise pre-determined and mutually congruent relationship is the norm.

Sometimes my task contained a suggestion to look for unfamiliar qualities

in ballet. In a workshop I asked the dance students to perform a combination of movement with 'continuous' flow. This is in accord with the accepted in ballet. After that I asked them to introduce pauses into the movement making their own choices rather than having them decided by habitual or traditional phrasing of the movement. They did not need to be the poses in which ballet normally comes to a stop. That meant that the dancers could show an unusual stopping place making the familiar look strange.

I also accepted an unfamiliar solution to a task that could have been handled according to ballet's norms. The fact that a teen-ager would see in her *croisé* pose not the form or designs that she had been taught, but a triangle formed by the legs, was an indication to me that she was actively exploring her movement and understanding it in a personal way.

### **Dancers' reactions to stretching and crossing limits**

Dancers in every workshop group reacted in one way or another to my allowing them to cross what was perceived as the borders of the conventional norms in ballet. The participants' reactions varied from feelings of guilt and hesitation to excitement. Already the making of individual decisions of intention and embodiment in the process of mediating the dance caused mixed feelings. Dancers were used to putting into action the teacher's suggestions rather than using their own judgement in a ballet class. Their frequent question in class was *'How do you (the teacher) want us to perform the movement?'* Stretching the rules was experienced by some as even more serious. After one of the first workshops a free-lance dancer confessed: *'I have the kind of feeling that I have to do this secretly so that the teacher does not see.'* When I suggested, in an adagio combination, that the dancers could play with the flow and that they can depart from the usual qualities in ballet, some dancers *'had fun'* changing the movement while others felt that *'the possibility to vary the flow was not very wide'*. *'Then it did not feel like ballet any more.'* And when a peer reminded of the permission to change... *'Yes, but...'* My permission did not always convince the dancers.

Integrating ballet vocabulary with the dancer's individual style in a ballet class was a new experience to the dancers. When they were asked to combine ballet movements with their own individual movements created with action images in a *temps lié* exercise a dancer asked *'Does the personal, action motivated movement need to be balletic, similar to the continuous soft hand movements in the temps lié?'* I explained that we are creating rules for our work. We could agree that the

individual movement generated through the image and mixed with ballet would have to be continuous as well as action initiated. However, at that time our only agreed limitation was that it is initiated through action imagery. In each task the limits could be defined. But they were not necessarily the limits defined by the ballet tradition.

Children reacted loudly to the occasional lack of music in class. *'But if we do ballet we have to have music.... We can not do full out. Are we really not going to have music?'* The children's behaviour could also be interpreted as testing the new teacher's limits of behaviour in class. They were also demanding to be barefoot, contrary to ballet class norms. Even if that was the case, they could still use the convention that 'ballet is done to music', as persuasion.

With adults the relationship to music was discussed especially in connection with rehearsing repertoire. Interpretations with flow components sometimes changed the dynamics in a classical variation. A dancer felt that performing the classical variation with the new dynamics violated the intentions of the author of the work. *'I feel now when I sometimes flow ahead of the music, I feel that, so beautiful music has been composed and it has clear places for the movement, why would I go forward when it (the music) is there. Petipa has already thought about it, probably for quite a while. I felt bad to go faster in this material.'* This reaction elicited from the participants a long discussion on dancer-movement-music relationship in ballet. Dancers had varying opinions on the matter.

### **Individual experiences of ballet's borders**

Dancers' and students' ideas of how much deviation from established conventions was possible in a ballet performance varied from one individual to another. What was acceptable as an artistic interpretation of the codified movement to one dancer caused scruples to another. The question became more pressing when we rehearsed classical repertoire. A dancer worked with notable interest on exploring a classical variation through flow images in the classroom. However, she commented that her flow-version in class would not be an acceptable performance version. Some changes were tolerated only in the classroom. In a performance the dancer would call the same qualities mistakes. *'...in the beginning for instance, the free flow, wasn't it such that ...the first arabesque...I didn't even stretch my legs from here (shows the place)...'* Dancers disagreed on how much variation could be tolerated and which embodiments could be thought of as performance versions.

## Interpretational emergents in ballet workshops

I had attempted to open out the dancers' experiences of the ballet vocabulary by introducing exploration with structural images into their performance. In my role as a teacher using divergent teaching style I created open-ended interpretational and composition tasks. I gave dancers time to find their individual solutions to them according to the principles of the teaching style.

When analysing the ballet workshop sessions from the video and reflecting on the kind of work done, the following types of interpretation emerged: *interpretation as reproduction, open structural interpretation, layered interpretation and form-breaking interpretation*. Some of these modes of interpretation were used more often than others. Some are clearly possible growth points, activities that could be further developed in collaboration with students and therefore hold potential for future work. Exploration by intending the vocabulary through structural images had begun to inform the dancers of varying possibilities in mediating and embodying the dance. This equipped the dancer with choices in how to interpret the dance combination. The interpretational emergents were potential attitudes of the dancers in their mediating the dance. Reproduction respects the author's intentions rather than those of the performer's. Open structural interpretation shows the dancers attitude and readiness to choose open-endedly from multiple performance possibilities. Layered interpretation embodies more than one intention at a time. Form-breaking interpretation is a conscious choice by the performer to allow and find performance possibilities through breaking the traditional or given form and possibly the limits of conventional rules in ballet.

### **Open structural interpretation**

My initial aim in the workshops was to direct dancers to make open interpretations, although at the time I had no name for this kind of interpretation. It was my goal to activate the dancers and students to generate and perform individual personal performance solutions of given vocabulary. This meant that participants assumed more and more artistic responsibility of their own dancing.

Janet Adshead-Landsdale has defined an open interpretation as 'the concept that there cannot be one interpretation which is the definitive interpretation, but that there are many, possibly conflicting, which will continuously emerge' (Preston-Dunlop 1995, 585). As interpretation in this research is generated in

the formal ballet vocabulary with the structural images of the dance, I call this type of interpretation *open structural interpretation*. The dancer through exploration of the dance material becomes informed of its performance possibilities. These qualities reveal themselves to the dancer in the manner described earlier through dancer's comments (revelations). From these possibilities in the material, the dancer refines an interpretation deciding an intention to each moment of the dance.

In the final workshop for teacher students at the Theatre Academy of Finland, each dance student presented an open ChUMm-interpretation of a freely chosen ballet combination. The dancers had spent time exploring the movement with the ChUMm-images for several occasions with me in previous classes and on their own. They had found an intention for each part of the dance. They decided in each moment of the dance, on which ChUMm-component the emphasis would be on, whether a specific movement would be done as body design, as spatial progression, as spatial tension or as spatial progression. Many dancers also found simultaneous clusters of ChUMm. The dancers first demonstrated the dance that had been the starting point for their exploration. They then performed their new ChUMm interpretation of it. Immediately afterwards they commented on how the interpretation had changed the dance and their experience of the dance. Some of them also discussed whether their intention had been realised in a particular performance, and if not, they might try again. They were able to explain their intentions in every move. They might have the same movement several times in the dance and give it a different intention each time.

Children made open interpretations as well. When the action-images had begun to reveal choices to the children beyond the obvious and pre-known, it was possible to ask for a combination in which the action-intention was the student's free choice. Children created open action-intentions in their own movement and also recognised in each others' movements the embodiments of specific intentions. They also taught each other the dance combination specifying their own intentions in it.

Open interpretation was always my aim when introducing structural images to the dancers. It was done at least with actions, flow and kinesphere models. Towards the end of their workshop sessions and while preparing work for demonstration, the free-lance dancers' group tried not only to find interpretation with a specific structural image, but to choose also the image used.

### **Structural interpretation as reproduction**

While aiming at openness in the interpretation, I realised during the workshops the need to initiate the dancers by asking for a certain kind of interpretation, to specify exactly the intention in a certain movement. I turned to structural interpretation as reproduction of given intention. That is I asked the dancers to produce a given intention or quality at a certain time in a certain part of the body in a specific movement or combination of movements.

My interest in reproduction was that it would be a mediating step into open interpretation when needed. I varied the intention that I suggested for the same movement at different occasions or during the same class. This kind of versatility was intended to offer and suggest performance choices and to be a way to initiate dancers to view ballet as an open possibility rather than one that keeps closing the movement to one particular interpretation. An active dancer might even when the performance quality was suggested, begin to realise her own choices in addition to the ones indicated by me as a teacher. A dancer found an intention that facilitated the execution of the movement *'personally what worked best for me was when in the beginning of the fouetté I let the movement flow and at the end, to stop, I bound it.'* Or she found her own intentionality to the movement above what had been suggested *'it was also good to think of frond de jambe as space enlarging between the feet'* Reproduction of artistic intention in these workshops was a mediating phase that paved the way for open interpretation.

### **Layered interpretation**

The layered interpretation emerged in the course of the practical work with one dedicated dancer when preparing for a research conference demonstration of my work. In it two or more open interpretations are added on top of each other. The dancer first commits himself into one open interpretation with a structural image and rehearses this interpretation in the movement. He or she then works with what has emerged and adds another layer of structural interpretation and rehearses that in the combination. For instance, on top of an open ChUMm interpretation, another, maybe flow-interpretation, is added. Possibilities are limited by the dancer's perceptual and movement skills.

Layering was used in the workshops for instance when a self-made flow-dance was performed with action-intentions or a cube-dance was given an expressive dynamic layer. It was not used much in ballet material, but can be considered a possibility for much future exploration by dedicated and gifted students.

### **Form-breaking interpretation**

Form-breaking interpretation emerged when the structural image used invited a crossing of ballet's conventional performance style and when crossing over was allowed and encouraged in class. When the structural images are laid out as open possibilities as happens when the images are used in the divergent production teaching style, the open-endedness invites some dancers to break the form, to depart from the specific performance style we have come to accept in ballet. This kind of interpretation gets emphasised meaning when applied to old classical repertoire as happened when in the workshop we interpreted parts of a *Sleeping Beauty* variation through flow-images. The flow qualities in traditional ballet are narrow, meaning that only a small range of flow qualities are in use. When the flow is used open-endedly, it easily upsets the usual. It is possible to imagine any image to break the codes; other dynamic qualities in addition to flow, spatial images, relationship in pas de deux... An action-component or any other structural movement component can be emphasised in ballet vocabulary to the point that it makes the movement clearly different or unrecognisable as ballet.

Form-breaking interpretation does not mean an 'anything goes' -attitude to ballet. The intention, which in this case is determined by the image, in the dancer's experience as if demands the border crossing. This might be illustrated by incidents in the children's class of what form-breaking is not. It is not motivated by anything extraneous to the dance and its artistic or qualitative intention.

In the children's classes (as also in the other workshops) I was establishing new kinds of teacher and learner roles by changing the teaching style. For the children this situation would have demanded a longer teaching period to establish a teacher-learner relationship in the new style and to negotiate, not only with words but also by behaviour, the new relationship with the students. The children experienced a lot of relaxation from the usual discipline in class. I did not demand the class costume to be worn, or the usual hairstyle. In the class the students were not placed 'geometrically' or according to height as in the ballet class with their own ballet teacher that I observed. Instead the children worked as a 'crowd' looking for place in the classroom on their own. These changes immediately prompted testing of behavioural limits in class. As part of this some of the students started to do uncalled for hand movements in a classical combination and change the movement arbitrarily, calling for attention to themselves. This,

obviously, has little to do with what I mean with form-breaking interpretation.

Form-breaking is not change for its own sake nor arbitrary modification of movement. The experience of intending the formal movement with a structural image as if demands the changes that feel meaningful to the dancer. By embodying the dance the dancer communicates the new possibility of performing to others and originates an exchange or dialogue with the dance community.

## Co-authorship with structural images in ballet class

All structural images of the dance can give intention to produce multiple manifestations through the surface materials of the dance. This possibility has been used in contemporary dance teaching (Preston-Dunlop 1967; Oliver 1998) and improvisation (structured improvisation). Forsythe's way of working with dancers in ballet context uses spatial structures, lines and forms in space as intention for the dancers' improvised movements both in rehearsal and in live performance (Forsythe 1999).

Compositional exploration in the workshops consisted in generating the dancers' individual movements with the structural images of the dance in a manner specified in each task. Demonstrations of the work in class can be viewed as work in progress, rather than finished artwork. The purpose was to illuminate possibilities of composition in a relaxed atmosphere, rather than presenting a final product. The compositional emergents were *composition with the structural images, mixing vocabularies, altering ballet and open work*.

In the beginning of each workshop, during tuning in, the theme or image used in the class was introduced. The dancers acquainted themselves with it through structured improvisation playing with the concept freely in their own movements. Towards the end of the session, the same image might be used in a co-authoring task where dancers produced their own dance material. For instance, the octahedron directions were linked with different body parts by chance. The order of these pairs provided a 'script' for a dance of which each dancer created his own outcome. When looking at each others' products, dancers commented on the results. *'This looked delightful. It is exciting to think like this'* and *'It creates its own kind of movement language. People do different things, but one can see that there is something mutual in it. It is an exciting element, the same thing in different ways'*. When the dancers did the same with cube directions and body parts, they surprised me with their different kinds of energy and it was hard

to believe that the different dancers' movements had the same starting point.

Children used actions to create their own dances. This dance was then used as a starting point for interpretative work: changing or paying attention to focus, finding continuity or layering the actions with ChUMm images.

In addition to simply creating with the structural images, I sought tasks that would have ballet as their starting or reference point. This led me to propose tasks that called for combining dancers' self-created individual dance movements with codified ballet movements either by juxtaposing or integrating the two vocabularies.

### **Mixing ballet and dancers' individual movement vocabularies**

Open interpretation often followed by compositional mixing of ballet vocabulary and individual movement. Mixing juxtaposed ballet with individual movement styles embodying both through the same deep structure. The ballet vocabulary was interpreted with the same image that was used to generate individual dance movements. The dancer's intention stayed the same when the vocabulary changed giving the two vocabularies a mutual intention. In a dancer's words '*that (image) is what ties them together*'. This was done for instance with action-images. The dancer would begin by performing *temps lié* movement intending it with a certain action, say, transference of weight. When finishing the movement on one side she departed from the ballet continuing with improvised movement, which was intended with the same image of transference of weight. After a while she would return to ballet's fifth position and continue with the *temps lié* on the other side possibly changing the action component and thereby continuing the mixing by alternating with ballet and individual vocabularies.

The different vocabularies were also combined in a duet, so that while one dancer performed action-intended ballet, the other at the same time executed his own movement with the same intentions. For instance children did this with a classroom exercise and action images and performed the results to their peers. In principle this is possible with any structural image. All of them are potential qualities in the dance, can be focused on (intended) and are possible starting points for new dance material.

### **Altering ballet**

An example of altering the ballet vocabulary was to change the image of the dancer's kinesphere, making the movement find and emphasise new places,

directions and pathways in space. The spatial directions in ballet vocabulary often emphasise the vertical, horizontal and forward-back dimensions of the octahedron space model. The two opposite directions of each dimension, up-down, right-left, forward-back, are often the stopping places of bodies extremities (hands, feet, head etc.) in ballet movements and the main directions in established ballet poses such as *attitude* and *arabesque*. In altering, the dancer denies himself the octahedron directions. The same movement is altered to emphasise icosahedron or cube directions. In an icosahedron, instead of one direction up, the dancer has four choices, the corners of door and wheel planes. If the hand has been in direction up, it now chooses any one of the four, while other body parts also find new directions. The other aspects of the movement, for instance its dynamics, are open to the dancer's judgement, or are determined by the changed movement form. This kind of altering was done with one dedicated dancer and myself as a preparation for a demonstration of our work. A classical variation was altered separately into an icosahedron and cube form. These two versions were layered with varying flow dynamics. The material was mixed in different combinations, performed together, as solos, as kanon, facing different directions etc. A one-minute classical variation became about 15-minute duet. The duet was performed in a demonstration and also later became part of a choreographic work.

### **Open work**

One of the ways of co-authoring with the dancers I termed open work.<sup>4</sup> The idea is that the performer contributes to the final product. Dancers were invited to react to this kind of co-authoring task in the ballet workshops only briefly in preparation to a demonstration. In this research, an open work is handled as an educational device and I look upon it as potential for future work in ballet class, which offers possibilities to practice co-authoring skills.

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4. Umberto Eco (1989) has pointed out artworks in music, literature and fine arts that leave some of its parts open to choices by the interpreter, the performer or the audience. He calls this kind of artistic product an 'open work' or a 'work in movement'. '...the author offers the interpreter, the performer, the addressee a work *to be completed* (p.19). 'The same work has many manifestations. '...we can say that every performance offers us a complete and satisfying version of the work, but at the same time makes it incomplete for us, because it cannot simultaneously give all the other artistic solutions which the work may admit.(p.15).' In dance the concept of open work has been used by Sarah Rubidge in her choreography and Ph.D. dissertation. (Rubidge 1998)

After rehearsing the original dance, the dancer analysed it with the point of view of certain deep structure. He then explored possibilities to express this deep structure in different ways. He then chose the final manner of performance and finally evaluated the explored possibilities and made aesthetic judgements of choices of performance.

In the free-lance dancers' workshop we used as a starting point a duet that I had created for a student performance a few years previously. Dancers decided which deep structure they considered as "open". If they had decided to regard the dancers' relationship as an open structure, they first looked at where and how relationships were realised in the dance. Was it the proximity, the touch, surrounding, carrying or some other? They could then change the movement, the surface, while keeping the deep structure. Carrying was still carrying, but in a new manner, touching was still there, but maybe with a different body part and dynamics, changes in closeness were realised in a new way and perhaps different timing.

In addition to movement structures, in this duet we also played with the movement's nexus with the other strands of the dance medium. The dancers found a new performance place for the duet in the old theatre building, where our studio was. The shape of the underground concrete wall corridors and furniture (sofa) initiated them to make changes into the movement material. Sometimes only part of the movement was visible (hands). Sometimes the narrow walls restricted the dancers' movements or instead of laying down on the floor, the dancer used the sofa. In the demonstration the dancers also changed the appearance of the performer. The light blue 'Kilian-type' dresses were replaced with street clothes. In a later interview a dancer commented on the change. *'It was fun to see the change, first it was such a beautiful, sensitive duet and look what came of it when we handled it a bit (laughs)...'* In the demonstration discussion the dancers communicated their wish to 'up to date' the choreography.

# Chapter 5.

## Cultural significance of emerging themes

### Ballet as representation and transcendence of tradition

When categorising and naming the dancers' comments during the ballet workshops (when they were combining structural images and ballet), I was making interpretations and value judgements (in my research, not in terms of evaluating the dancers). These interpretations were influenced by my being an insider (in the culture), of having had similar (but not the same) experiences and being able to understand, as if from inside, from personal experience, the value of these experiences to the dancers. Therefore, I could empathise with the dancer's feelings of the facilitation of their dancing. I could live with the dancer's surprise on a revelation, say, a sudden ability to balance more easily, or a feeling of support that emerged with the dancer's attention to the body surfaces. I could as if sense the dancer's release of extra tension in movements that were intended through fluidity. I also sympathised with dancers who reported or showed resistance and obstacles to working with images, although that made my life as a teacher/coach sometimes difficult. Perhaps I was here in the privileged position 'to capture and give interpretations based on inside knowledge of the situation', that which Jarvis calls 'in-depth involvement in the practice' and which researchers coming from outside to investigate might not capture. (Jarvis 1999, 3 – 4, 24, 96)

After the analysis I tried to see the emerging data through many theories, for instance theories of creativity (Best 1986, 1992; Csikszentmihalyi 1988) For a long time I rejected the possibility of discussing my research findings through phenomenology, the philosophy describing and explaining human lived experiences. My hesitation was caused by my difficulty in understanding phenomenological language. After studying the dancers' experiences, however, I realised that in revelations, the dancers were expressing with clear ordinary language the outcomes of their lived and intentional experiences of the dance. I understood that without the immediacy of perception in lived experience and

what Csordas (1994b) (after Merleau-Ponty) describes as 'a step backward' from the objective or abstracted world, something of importance would not be attended to.

When I began this research, I did not think of the issues in it as cultural questions although I thought that it was important to see ballet as a culturally evolving phenomenon. In my mind this evolving phenomenon was somehow separated from the reality of the classroom. However, when beginning the empirical exploration in the workshops, cultural collisions began to happen. When analysing the events of workshops from the transcribed videos, this became more evident. A collection of cultural issues began to surface. Dancers and students reacted sometimes to my teaching method, sometimes to the cultural products accepted in the classroom. Children reacted to not having music in some part of the class, dance students questioned my ability to teach ballet, dancers were puzzled by my leaving the evaluation to themselves. Some of my suggestions were outright hilarious to the free-lance dancers committed to participation in the research. While analysing and placing the emerging themes into a cultural context it became evident how the culture is actually evolving in a subtle way right there in the classroom under our eyes and ears, within the experience of dancing that we as participants witnessed.

We can have two distinct, although interrelated, viewpoints into dance, one from within and another from outside. 'The embodying person has a perspective distinct from that of the person standing outside. Embodied (dance) material not only looks like something to be appreciated, it also feels like something to be experienced. The view from within and an observer's view are distinct but essentially interrelated.' (Preston-Dunlop 1989). Csordas' cultural phenomenology offered a way to look at the interrelationship of the two views in a culture. Phenomenology is an established discipline, a way to discuss the experience of the person. Semiotics is a way to discuss cultural representation. In his cultural phenomenology, Csordas includes both. He studies a quite different culture from ballet, namely that of Catholic Charismatics, a religious movement in New England. However, he intends his theory to have inter-cultural validity. He wants to 'identify features in it that are comparatively and cross-culturally relevant, and on the other hand, to analyse it with theoretical constructs that are themselves valid for comparative study.' (Csordas 1994b, ix). Csordas begins from the concept of self, which is grounded in cultural phenomena. In my research I begin from a discussion of the culture and end in the building of

cultural identity (self processes) within the process of cultural evolution.

Ann Cooper Albright describes how the phenomenal and cultural representation co-exist in dance.

...dancing bodies simultaneously produce and are produced by their own dancing. This double moment of dancing in front of an audience is one in which the dancer negotiates between objectivity and subjectivity – between seeing and being seen, experiencing and being experienced, moving and being moved – thus creating an interesting shift of representational codes that pushes us to rethink the experience of the body within performance. (Albright 1997, 3)

Csordas (1994a, 10) describes this difference between representation and the phenomenological experiencing (being-in-the-world) as the difference between understanding culture in terms of objectified abstraction and existential immediacy. 'Representation is nominal, and hence we can speak of "a representation". Being-in-the-world is fundamentally conditional, and hence we must speak of "existence" and "lived experience".' In addition Csordas understands these two ways of discerning culture as 'methodological twins', two ways of looking at the same thing. (Csordas 1994b, 1x)

I will base my discussion on the findings of my practical research to this double vision of cultural embodiment, speaking at times about the lived experience of the maker or interpreter of dance and at times of the semiotic content discernible in the embodied dance. With Csordas I see the continuation of lived experience through objectification as the forming of culture with specific rules or as semioticians often say, codes. When speaking of representation, when appropriate, with the theories of Nattiez and Guiraud, I will also glimpse into the phenomenal experience of the codes. As dance, according to Albright, is hovering between the two, so will my discussion.

## Cultural transcendence through the lived intentional experience of ballet

Csordas grounds his cultural phenomenology and the concept of embodiment in Merleau-Ponty's understanding that objects are the end rather than starting points of perception. We step backwards from the objective to begin with the body in the world. Starting from pre-objective, however, is not beginning from pre-cultural. Csordas refers to Merleau-Ponty: 'We must return to the social

with which we are in contact by the mere fact of existing, and which we carry about inseparably with us before objectification.’ (Merleau-Ponty 1962, 137, 362). In pre-objective, lived experience ‘our existence transcends but remains grounded in de facto situations.’ (Csordas 1994b, 9) Building sharable culture (and self) is then a question of objectifying this perceptual and phenomenal experience.

Curiously enough transcendence is one of those concepts in phenomenology that to me has had a mystical echo. Csordas assures of the contrary. He explains it as real in a strong sense. It is based on the indeterminacy of perception and existence. In lived experience we cannot regard ourselves as objects and thereby separate as mind and body, affect and cognition, technique and artistic quality. It is a spontaneous state, controlled, but not determined, by the cultural habitus.<sup>5</sup>

In becoming into contact with the world, through immediate perception in lived experience, the familiar transcends. It gets fresh meanings. ‘...hitherto meaningless takes on meaning’ (Merleau-Ponty 1962, 169). An objectified experience offers logical choices, even though they may not always be conscious to the person. In its transcendence, lived experience is unique. It genuinely surprises with its spontaneity and indeterminacy.

Through Csordas’ account of cultural phenomenology, I began to see revelations as evidence or outcome of transcendence in embodied, lived (intentional) experience of ballet. The spontaneity and indeterminacy of the revelations was evident in the way they surprised the dancer. What was revealed to the dancer in embodied lived experience of the dance could in no way be anticipated. It felt like a small miracle. Neither the dancer nor the teacher or spectator could anticipate the outcome of a dancer’s engagement with an image and ballet. A surprise in itself does not make this experience valuable to the dancer. It has to be somehow meaningful to the person. Dancers sometimes explained this meaning, sometimes not. Often it could be detected in the way the dancers exclaimed their findings in a surprised or excited tone of voice. It was also in the feeling that they experienced, the ‘soul’ in the performance. In my research the value of revelations is judged by the dancers themselves. But

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5. The concept of habitus is a Pierre Bourdieu (1977) term for ‘the socially informed body’, that which Merleau-Ponty refers to by ‘the social... which we carry about inseparably with us before any objectification’ (Merleau-Ponty 1962, 137, 362). It causes an individual agent’s practices without either explicit reason or signifying intent, to be none the less ‘sensible’ and ‘reasonable.’

for a non-dancer to understand the dancers' occasional excitement about their findings it might be revealing to discuss some of them in terms of how they help the dancer, how they are phenomena that other dancers and sometimes teachers value as well.

Let us return to a succinct explanation of one revelation and surprise by it of a dancer. *'My expectation of what would happen to me was very different from what actually happened. When I projected through the foot forward, I got a terrific pull down into the earth through the supporting leg (the leg the dancer is standing on). It was surprising!'* The exclamation is full of positive affect, but the dancer has no need to explain the meaningfulness of this experience to herself any further. This reminded me, however, of a story David Howard (Howard & Corbin 1998) told about Gelsey Kirkland, a world-renown ballerina and author of *Dancing on my Grave* (1988) and *The Shape of Love* (1992). She really valued this pull down to the earth and wanted to develop it in her dancing. She asked the men in the class to push her off balance while standing in a ballet pose. They could not, as her pull down to the ground was so strong. In a sense this realisation by the dancer of the pull down from the supporting leg may sound strange. Why would a dancer value a pull down to the ground when often the most common advice given to dancers in a ballet class is to pull up? I think that through engagement in the dance in immediate perception the dancer is clearing for herself a contradictory recommendation, one example of terminology used in ballet teaching that is causing confusion in a ballet class.<sup>6</sup>

The above example also shows how, in the lived experience of the dance, the technical and the artistic intertwine. The spatial projection, which was used as an image in the dance, is an artistic device giving intention to the dance. While fulfilling its artistic purpose the image also caused the dancer to perceive surprise in the experience of the supporting leg. This kind of awareness is technical assistance to the dancer.

In revelations the dancers also reported becoming aware of counter-forces in movements as well as spiralling twists in the body. When projecting forward with the focus a dancer became aware of a counter-force behind, opposing the

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6. The erector spinae plays a major role in the dancer's habitual lengthening of the spine and, like other muscles of the lower back these muscles *cannot* pull up. Trying to pull the small of the back up, as we are instructed even by such eminent authority as V. Kostrovitskaya is like trying to drive a car with the brakes on. (Grieg, Valerie 1994, 31)

direction of the projection. When engaging in the movement with the image of twisting a dancer became in a vivid way aware of the twists in the arm positions that were now there for him to be adjusted. By introducing structural images the teacher is not pointing to specific sensations and feelings in the body, nor leaving the dancer on his own devices altogether, but is giving tools and leaving freedom to discover through his own perception of the dance.

When a dancer reports new experience of support to the movements or of sudden easiness of balancing, of a release of extra tension, another dancer can imagine the positive impetus for the dance. It is as if the dancer lets the dance happen rather than tries to make it happen with considerable effort. Such a release of tension was also important for the interpersonal atmosphere of the class. In the session where we played with movement flow, especially adding fluidity and free flow to ballet movements but also alternating bound and free moves, the atmosphere in class was very positive. Dancers were laughing at their mistakes as well as enjoying moving, as it did not exhaust them unnecessarily. Flow seemed to be more than a quality of the dance. It was and is a quality of the person's being in the world.

The indeterminacy of the revelations is evident from the way an image, applied to the same ballet combination by many dancers at the same time, gave rise to very different experiences and comments from dancers. Let us just remind ourselves of the effects of imaging the octahedron and icosahedron spatial constructs of the kinesphere to the performance. Dancers, after performing the same movement combination reported very different sensations and notions. To some the images were supporting the movements like an imaginary scaffolding, to others it highlighted multidirectionality in the body. Some adjusted their positions through enhanced awareness of body positioning, while others felt the sensation of the three-dimensionality of the dance increased. We can see how teaching in this way is like enabling learning to take place rather than imposing just what is to be realised at a certain time. It is far removed from what could be called conditioning into a specific execution and sensation of the vocabulary. Csordas (1994b) explains with Merleau-Ponty's assistance how immediate perception in lived experience cannot be conditioning, a matter of stimulus and the person's specific response to it. Perception gives 'an indefinite series of perspectival views', but none of these views are exhaustive. In embodied lived experience, which is a stepping back from objectification, we experience the world in its full richness and indeterminacy. In a concrete

sense we can determine from the dancers' comments of their experiences of giving intention to their dance with structural dance images, that the lived experience of the embodied dance gave them insights into the tradition. It freshened and altered the experience of the dance giving multiple views to it rather than one definite one, and thereby deepened the dancers' knowledge of the familiar vocabulary.

## Objectification from the lived experience of ballet

The dancers' comments on their experiences of performing ballet and intending it through structural images are already abstractions or objectification. They are reflections on the experience after it has happened. The categories of revelations that I called 'a way of discussing style', 'play with choices' and 'exploring one's physical and artistic boundaries' seem to me more clearly continuous reflections than the above introduced single revelations, originated from revelations within many instances of immediate perception of the embodied experiences. Csordas explains how the culture transcends concurrently with the person, who acts in the culture (in this case the dancer). He brings forth transcendence in the culture while at the same time creating a cultural self. This self is identified as a 'person' with a cultural identity or set of identities. '...reflexivity becomes self-awareness...self-awareness of a specific cultural kind.' (Csordas 1994b, 5, 14) The creation and evolution of a culture is concurrent with the construction of cultural identity in the persons through whom the transcendence and objectification take place. These constructions, whether evolution in the culture or self-processes in the individual, are never complete. The culture as well as the person is always evolving.

In the following I am going to look at how the cycle of cultural evolution emerges from the acts of embodiment, transcendence and objectification, by the dancing and composing person. These acts direct evolution through indeterminate transcendence, which opens out the fixed representations to new potential for expression. I will then look at how the structural images act as tools in this process. Finally I will discuss the construction of the cultural self of the dancer in this process and how the dancer becomes an agent in creation and cultural evolution.

Play with choices comes about when the same movement is embodied several times, either with same intentions or with varying images and the experience has thereby revealed many ways of performing. Thus the dancer is empowered

to choose, not from predetermined, obvious, logical or habitual choices, but from insights that have emerged from the immediate perception and experience of the dance. Instead of reproducing the predetermined, fixed tradition, the dancer can act in a way that brings forth creative solutions, new ways of embodiment. The transformed dance becomes part of the dancer's habitus. It becomes the dancer's possession and as such directs his new dance experiences.

Let us take as an example the dancer's description of the effect of the image of spatial projection to her dancing. *'The direction of the projection changes all the time when movement is going on. I felt it very much through the chest and also through the foot, head, hand... Head when returning back to vertical stand.'* The embodied dance intended through the image of projection had, as was described by the dancer, informed her in a rich way. We can imagine that the exact same experience never repeats itself. When the dancer again engages with the same dance, even with the same image, the experience again gives new insights, new revelations. The tradition, when embodied, again transcends and brings to the surface fresh outlooks, new understanding. The past experiences, when objectified, can be understood to become the dancer's possession, his cultural understanding and skill, which follows his embodied experience as unconscious habitus. This way the dancer is building on past experiences, which in new situations transcend and get further layers. This seemed also to apply in the workshops in that when the dancers for the first time used the ChUMm image, their commenting was scarce in relation to a later instance working with the same images again. On the first occasion the dancers reported occasional insights, in the later session their engagement with the same image produced layered interpretations and spatial clusters.

In addition to repeating embodiment with the same image, other structural images embodied and acted on in the same dance again directed the dancer's awareness (without binding or determining it) to new properties, new meanings in the same dance. The same movement, when embodied in lived experience of a dancing person, does not remain static, in the sense that there could be an 'ideal' one perfect representation. Dance is changed with new realisations by the dancer, who embodies it giving it a fresh perspective through different images in each performance. In addition to choosing from these emerging possibilities, the possibility of layering the dance with intention and expression deriving from many images at the same time was done in the workshops (Chapter 4, layered interpretation) The transformed dance can become a starting

point for new pre-reflective and indeterminate dance experiences by the same dancer or other dancers. The dancer, carrying the transformed dance as habitus or conscious starting point, again takes 'the step backward' to immediate perception and experience. This act again informs the dancer of new possibilities in some respects and transcends the dance. The represented fixed dance has opened to new kind of expression and is again fixed in its newly found form through objectification and is opened again in succeeding embodiments. A pattern of fixing and opening out in transcendence emerges.

Through objectification and sharing these new ways of performing become layers in shared cultural understanding. By alternating between representing what can be shared and living in the individual consciousness, dance is dynamic and evolving. Each dance, including the codified ballet vocabulary, while representing the existing tradition, is also an open possibility for the dancer to embody in performance. Forwarding a tradition is then not a question of transferring surface forms from one generation to another, but offering these traditional conventions and forms to new persons to experience and thereby transcending the tradition. Tradition lives along in the experiences of its users getting new life and fresh outlooks 'en route'. No two performances of ballet are the same. Multiple embodiment of ballet results inevitably in individually and personally created variation, when ballet lives in the personal experience of its makers.

## Structural images as semiotic (communicative) and phenomenal (embodied)

The structural images were introduced as deep structures of the dance, which provide opportunity for individual creation through embodying deep structures in multiple ways in the surface materials of the dance. The idea of a structural image was to direct the performer's attention, to engage him with the dance and thereby enable him to give intention to the dance while keeping embodiment possibilities (surface features) as open as possible.

When listening to the dancers' descriptions of what structural images made them aware of in the dance experience, it is obvious that the images do not act in a fixed or static way. For instance, an image of body design is not an image of a specific body design in a specific part of the body at a specific moment in the movement. In addition each body is different and therefore creates an individual

embodiment. Therefore the image works differently for individual dancers in the same situation. Even when perception is thus directed, the end products (and processes) vary. The images do not act as a stimulus for a specific goal, but the person embodies the image and pays attention to it in a personal way. In the workshops the images offered tools for intentionality in the formal ballet vocabulary, suggesting what could be engaged with in the dance, but did not impose a pre-determined end product.

Csordas' understanding of images as signs and as embodied is in line with his double vision of culture through phenomenology and semiotics. An image-as-sign has communicative value. Image-in-consciousness (embodied image) has 'intentionality and presentational immediacy.' (Csordas 1994b, 85) The semiotic and phenomenal functions of images do not exclude each other. An embodied image can be abstracted so that it can be shared and an image as a sign can be acted on in lived experience. The dancer takes the structural image of the dance (which communicates dance qualities) into the lived experience of the dance (which makes it intentional).

By being structures of the dance, the images have communicative potential. We can perceive a dancer's intention of projection into space, when he is using that image to engage in the dance. But each dancer embodies this image in an individual way. The somatic experience of the moving person has what seems like infinite possibilities for embodiment of an image. The person seeks and finds existentially, and what is found is a vivid experience. Intentionality gives off signification.

## Lived experience as both motivating the artificial and habitual as well as freeing from established cultural conventions

In addition to revelations, dancers commented on obstacles to experiencing and the feeling of stretching cultural limits in ballet. Obstacles were identified as comments, which expressed some kind of inability to engage with the dance. This might be a persistent movement habit or feeling of artificiality when performing ballet vocabulary. Stretching limits indicated that in the experience of embodying the dance, a new way of performing had been found, which in one way or another created a tension between the established manner of

performance and the new emergent one.

The obstacles to work were seldom long lasting. When the dancer concentrated on the dance with an image, revelations often began to happen. When revelations began to happen, the feelings of artificiality or pretentiousness evaporated. In one class a dancer declared in the beginning of barre work that her body felt numb from previous work and she could not 'feel a thing'. A few minutes later she was surprised by unexpected findings with the image of projection. The question of stretching limits arose occasionally all through the workshops.

The feeling of crossing or stretching limits is evidence of an awareness of ballet as a rule-governed culture. It is based on being part of and having embraced 'the rules of the game.' The rules are often norms in the sense that they may or may not be stated. They live in practices and are communicated sometimes openly but often tacitly or implicitly. When a dancer becomes aware of possible tension between what has emerged in a lived embodied experience of dance and the general consensus in publicly agreed conventional norms, he is in a semiotic mode of reflecting, objectifying the embodied emergents. A dancer who feels pretentious or artificial, we could say, has not been able to take the 'step backwards' to engaging with the dance in the lived experience of it. Therefore he is representing the convention as he knows it (pre-determinately). Let us stay for the moment in this semiotic mode asking how these two experiences, obstacles and stretching limits, although different, are connected. I will include the other perspective, the phenomenal, when it becomes relevant for the discussion.

Jean-Jacques Nattiez (1990) based his semiotic analysis of music on Pierce's definition of a semiotic sign. A sign refers to an object. That is, it mediates an object. At the same time the sign, in each individual's interpretation refers to the object in an individual way. It forms an infinite number of interpretants. Nattiez writes that the object of musical analysis is the music, the sign is the musical performance (an expression of music) and the interpretants are the infinite number of interpretations of that music. In the present discussion I will refer to dance or ballet in similar fashion understanding it to be mediated by a dance artist in person (and actually the dancer becoming the sign unlike in music). He mediates the dance by making it concrete and accessible, perceivable to the senses.

Nattiez recognises the 'methodological twin' of semiotics by saying that the sign or 'the symbolic form' is interpreted based on the user's lived experiences.

'... The thing to which the sign refers is thus contained in the lived experiences of the sign's users' (Nattiez 1990, 7). Therefore the meanings of ballet's signs are not fixed. This became occasionally evident in the workshops. After exploring a classical variation with flow-images, a dancer discarded her free flow version of it as a possible performance interpretation. In the following discussion the other dancers would have accepted, even preferred, her free flow interpretation as a performance possibility. At another time dancers expressing their individual and varying views when they discussed whether they can deviate from exact following of the music in the same Petipa's variation to Tsaikovski's music. After interpreting the dance with flow images, the dancer contemplated what she had done. *'I feel now that when I sometimes let myself flow ahead of the music – I feel that – so beautiful music has been composed and it has clear places for the movement – why would I go forward when it is there? Petipa has already thought about it, probably for quite a while. It felt bad to go fast in this material.'* In a lively discussion that followed the dancer's discussed whether in classical ballet the dancer can play with the music-movement relationship or whether it is fixed and determined by the tradition or the author's intention. Dancers demonstrated individual differences in understanding of the limits of the quality of the dance that their performance embodies as a sign.

The semiotic sign is organised through codes. 'A code is a system of meaning common to the members of a culture or subculture.' (Fiske 1990, 1) By using and adhering to certain codes, practitioners strengthen these codes making them more arbitrary. At the same time they decode others, making them more iconic. Codes are those rules and conventions that the dancers were aware of as 'the rules of the game.' In terms of the discussion of the dance medium and its nexus (Chapter 2, structural images) codes could be understood as specific types of nexus that have become rules in ballet. They are used in ballet again and again in specific combinations and thereby begin to define ballet until broken through new kind of use. Thus the metric movement and music relationship was a strong code in ballet's classical period. The balanced and spacious calm, that Lawson (1960) describes as ballet movement's quality is a code as is the performers' body type in ballet and other performance conventions. A dancer does not only manipulate the codes, but he becomes the codes experiencing them in embodied performance.

Semiotic discussion identifies the strength of the convention as degree of motivation of the codes. The stronger the convention, the weaker the motivation of a code. Guiraud (1975) refers to these concepts by identifying arbitrary and

motivated codes. An arbitrary code is well established and widely used. The more the users of a sign agree on its meaning, the stronger the convention. The more persons adhere to it, the stronger the 'rules'. Codes are implicit and explicit agreements by the users of the sign. 'The weaker the motivation, the stronger the convention has to be...' (Guiraud 1975, 25 - 26) When a code is strong in this way (being a strong convention) it does not have to be motivated to convey its message. It communicates through its shared, culturally agreed meanings.

Motivation of codes in the dancer's performance comes about through the lived experience and intentionality of the dancer. (Nattiez 1990, 8) This was evident in the ballet workshops, when dancers reported of feelings of artificiality (arbitrary code) and at other instances of revelations (motivated code being created) and stretching limits (awareness of conflict between creation and already established codes). The dancer can feel the motivation or arbitrariness of a code as he becomes the sign in ballet performance. Arbitrariness is a feeling of little significance when a dancer acts through habit performing the movement, say an *arabesque*, automatically, without intention. Still the performance is recognised and respected as a sign in ballet. Or the dancer can feel the strong motivation as artistic feeling of significance in revelations. The *arabesque*, although recognisable as such in the dancer's experience, gains something new, something fresh, in performance.

In ballet teaching the repetition is done with the old strong codes of the vocabulary. The fresh new codes initiated by present day choreographers are less often included in training. The fresh new codes initiated by dancers in class by allowing individual performance choices are often not sought. Instead a fixed ideal is presumed. The fact that some dancers initially had felt ballet as artificial and had difficulty in diving into the lived or pre-reflective experience of ballet, may be explained by the strong old conventions and arbitrary signs in ballet. '*In ballet I put on a form.*' Does that not mean that in her ballet practice, contrary to her contemporary work, the signs are arbitrarily produced rather than experientially sought? The narrowing of perception and external evaluation in ballet class may have strengthened this mode. Representation, or how dance looks like, has been regarded as more important than the experience of ballet by the dancer. The experience has been sought in a predetermined rather than open-ended fashion. Producing form without personal motivation alienates the dancer from the artistic feelings of significance in ballet. In revelations the old codes got fresh meanings. They were re-motivated as communicating codes.

The revelations encountered in the workshops were sometimes of the kind that invited the dance maker to deviate from what has been accepted in ballet before, or what the person feels is the limit of convention according to his previous personal understanding of the tradition. Sometimes the dancer felt scruples. The control of the culture was felt as narrowing the possibilities that opened out in transcendence. On the other hand, the new form, or way of dancing has involved the whole person. It has surprised. It has delighted. It has informed of technical ease. Through the situationality of the person in the culture as part of the culture, through the underlying habitus, the new is justified to the individual. The rules are intrinsic to the event. The new form or way of moving is motivated by an artistic need. This is the moment of creation. Guiraud calls the artist the inventor of signs.

The "maker" (poïéte) – like the troubadour – is an "inventor" of signs: of signs in the making, relational expressions in the process of formulation, nascent or spontaneous signs which achieve their veritable semiotic status only to the extent that they are generalised and that their signifying relation becomes explicit. (Guiraud 1975, 68)

This is how the habitual, pretentious, or arbitrary, referred here as 'obstacle to work' is connected to stretching artistic limits, through the strength of experienced motivation of the conventions. The dancer can motivate the established and perhaps artificial form by 'stepping back' to lived experience and allowing the dance to transcend through the way his perception and the experience that arises from it informs him. When that happens, the maker realises spontaneous and unexpected ways of performing and composing. These realisations may stay within the conventional borders of the art form, within the established tradition – or they may not. If they do not, the maker (dancer or choreographer) is, with his performance or composition, suggesting a new way of functioning in the culture. The limits of the culture are tested. It is evolving. Individual creativity is an element in the cultural evolution.

## Dancer as a cultural agent

According to Csordas the person affecting transcendence in the culture is, in addition to affecting cultural change, also building a cultural identity. Thereby a dance maker is not only constructing a dance by performing or choreographing,

but by that activity is also building a cultural self. The change the dancing person initiates through transcendence is dependent on his physical skill and artistic values and boundaries. The evolution of the culture and the construction of self are concurrent processes depending on each other. Self is not a substance or entity, but an indeterminate capacity to engage or become oriented in the world, characterised by effort and reflexivity. In this sense self occurs in pre-reflective bodily experience, culturally constituted world or milieu, and situational specificity or habitus. Self processes are orientational processes in which aspects of the world are thematized, with the result that the self is objectified, most often as a 'person' with a cultural identity or set of identities. (Csordas 1994b, 5)

Exploration can expand this construct of the cultural self. A few dancers in the workshops were aware of this, when they were asked to experiment with images that offered a wider choice of potential possibilities than the usual ballet class practices. The exploration tested both the dancers' physical abilities and artistic resilience. The performer becomes concurrently with his dance. His identity is constructed with the aesthetic choices he becomes aware of and makes.

Through the person's actions in pre-reflective reality, the transcendence has taken a direction (oriented). The changes that transcendence revealed to the dancers felt personally significant to them. The dancers acted, not directed by outside evaluation, but on the basis of cultural habitus and their own perception. Evaluation is intrinsically in the act in the way the person is culturally situated and socially informed. The dancer acts as an agent with cultural awareness and individual taste in creating the dance, whether interpreting or co-authoring in the process.

The divergent tasks of interpreting and co-authoring in the ballet workshops acknowledged the dancer's agency and left freedom to act on and develop it.

## Chapter 6.

# Findings and their implications: Towards the concept of multiple embodiment in classical ballet and the principles of teaching it

During the continuing practical work and its analysis I began to call the teaching method that evolved multiple embodiment in classical ballet. The method holds together all the information discussed so far in this dissertation: the theoretical information preceding the ballet workshops (Chapter 2), its practical application in the ballet workshops (Chapter 3), the emerging themes and outcomes of the practical work (Chapter 4) and the theoretical framework to explain the emerging data (Chapter 5). As the name multiple embodiment suggests, the emphasis is in the variation in the performance that becomes possible for the dancer when he explores the traditional vocabulary with structural images. From this available variation the dancer can begin to make individual choices and act as a cultural agent. I will first give a short definition of the concept of multiple embodiment. I will then introduce the principles of teaching multiple embodiment. I will give each principle at a time and state the key points leading to it in this research. Some of the key points repeat the main ideas in the previous text while some anticipate the forthcoming rationale for the method (implications of teaching multiple embodiment).

### The concept of multiple embodiment in classical ballet

Multiple embodiment in classical ballet treats the classical ballet vocabulary as an open qualitative form pregnant with potential content, which the dancer can embody in an individual way in each performance.

Embodiment involves the whole medium of dance. The movement is embodied corporeally by the dancer in relation to sounds and the performance space.

The embodiment involves representation of learned conventions as well as transcendence of these conventions in the dancer's experience in live performance. Because of selective attention to the vocabulary, understood as a rich source of potential qualities to choose from, the same step or movement in the vocabulary can be intended and performed in multiple ways. The dancer commits himself to the intention of becoming form as content and presents a fresh, each time new, embodiment of content in the tradition. Each performance is an individual interpretation of the dance. The dancer recreates the dance each time. Multiple embodiment can also extend the vocabulary by embodying the content in it in composition in a new way giving the content a new surface form.

## Principles of teaching multiple embodiment in classical ballet

The teaching of multiple embodiment in classical ballet embraces the following principles.

### **The ballet vocabulary as an open qualitative form**

*The ballet vocabulary is realised as an open qualitative form, which the dancer can embody in multiple ways.*

In the introduction (Chapter 1) and discussion on perception in ballet (Chapter 2) the narrow agenda for perceiving and therefore experiencing the ballet vocabulary was discussed. The dance vocabulary is often looked at through the artistic values of the teacher or understood as more fixed by tradition than open to variation through individual exploration. In the workshops the dance was treated as a rich source of available information of formal content (by suggesting new ways of perceiving it with the aid of images) from which the dancer chose his points of interest (Chapter 2). Therefore it can be stated that multiple embodiment treats the tradition as an open qualitative form.

## **The structural images as tools to reveal and communicate potential content in the form**

*The structural images of dance are used in ballet class to reveal and communicate the diverse content inherent in the vocabulary in an artistically open ended way.*

In Chapter 2, the elusiveness of formal content in dance was discussed. Brandt (1987) suggested that Laban's principles of movement are one possible remedy for the difficulty of communicating the content in dance and ballet. The structural images, which include Laban's movement principles and are expanded further by other dance theorists and practitioners, being the structures of the dance, give a language (or concepts) to speak about content intrinsic to the dance. Therefore they serve as tools to reveal and communicate potential content in the form.

## **Experiencing content in ballet**

*The closed form of ballet is opened out in the dancer's experience by enlarging perception. This is done by intending with and attending to the structural images as potential content in the form.*

During documenting the ballet workshops I mentioned that a dancer's intention with a structural image in itself is not yet enough. The dancer does not yet know what this image has to give to his dancing at that particular time. The image has to be embodied in live performance. This performance gives the dancer the experience of dancing which informs him. It is not enough to know cognitively about dance. The dancer needs to embody the dance and experience it so that the pre-determined has a possibility to transcend (Chapter 5. Cultural transcendence through the lived intentional experience of ballet). In Chapter 2, perception in ballet, the emphasis on outer form and extrinsic feedback rather than sensing and feeling which leads to intrinsic feedback, was discussed. Multiple embodiment makes a strong commitment to the experience of performing and dance making. The experiencing by the dancer is the key to his growing ability for individual choices.

## **From 'rote' learning towards divergent production**

*Through imagery the same movement is opened out to many possible experiences by the dancer and multiple embodiments in performance.*

During the workshops, when the given dance combinations were illuminated with structural images of the dance, the dancers commented on becoming informed in an integrated manner of new possibilities and ways to change their dancing. The experiencing of the form opened it out to individual performance solutions. Even that which at first glance may seem like reproduction of the given form, is not so, when through imagery perception is opened out to individual multiple variations. Therefore multiple embodiment changes rote learning into divergent production.

## **From reproduction towards interpretation and co-authorship**

*With enlarged perception and divergent choices in embodying the form the dancer moves from reproduction towards interpretation of the classical vocabulary and co-authoring with the vocabulary as a starting point.*

The discussion on teaching styles emphasised the change that I had in mind when beginning the ballet workshops. That was to change the most common teaching style used in ballet (command style) to divergent production, a teaching style that emphasised individual solutions to tasks. In terms of the art of ballet and its working processes, divergent production means that the dancer becomes a creative active member in making dance. He becomes actively the interpreter of given dance as well as co-author in creating in collaboration with the choreographer. Dancers' comments on the difficulty of this process were discussed in the introduction. The growing need for dancers to possess this ability is further elaborated in the following pages (implications of teaching multiple embodiment). By changing the teaching style and emphasising personal choices and creative dance making multiple embodiment aims at taking a step to remedy this difficulty. It attempts to lead the dancer towards this process early on in his training/education.

## **Integration of subject-matter**

*Teaching is a seamless continuum from learning the vocabulary to interpretation and co-authorship. Subject-matter is not separated into compartments of technique, improvisation, interpretation and composition, but are all part of an integrated learning process.*

In the workshops different subject-matter areas, that often might be separated in training to their own categories of learning and their own classroom times and places, were integrated in the same ballet class. This situation followed organically from the attempts to solve the research question. Improvisation was a way for the dancer to experience the structural dance images. The activity was suited in the beginning of class serving, in addition to its initial purpose, the warming-up of dancers. It incorporated not only warming-up the dancer's body, but warming up the dancer as a holistic being (body-mind-sensing-feeling). Experiencing the vocabulary through images and continued by divergent teaching led logically into interpretation in class. Divergent teaching also led to making compositional products, which in other instances would be taught in a composition class. When ballet vocabulary is expanded or new composition is created in ballet class, the dancer comes to develop movement skills ordinarily practised in a contemporary dance rather than a ballet class. Multiple embodiment included these in ballet classes without subject borders.

Preston-Dunlop and Sanchez-Colberg discuss a triadic view of dance in which they question the traditional divisions into different dance making roles. Instead, the dance maker, whether choreographer or performer, engages holistically to many roles at the same time. He is a creator, performer and appreciator, all at once. (Preston-Dunlop & Sanchez-Colberg) In multiple embodiment integration of subject-matter was a logical and organic result of expanding the activities in the traditional ballet class.

## **Expanding the classical vocabulary and integration of styles**

*The classical ballet vocabulary is expanded by the dancer's creative work and integrated with other dance vocabularies beginning with the dancer's individual movement style.*

Traditional ballet teaching does not offer experiences of integrating ballet and other dance idioms although mixing dance vocabularies is a feature of many contemporary ballets. Dancers' difficulty of coping with integrated styles was discussed in the introduction and the ballet workshops. The need for versatility and benefits of integration to the dancer's understanding of ballet is discussed further in implications of teaching multiple embodiment. In multiple embodiment the dancers are given possibilities to expand the vocabulary and to integrate styles beginning from juxtaposing ballet with the dancer's individual movement style.

### **Education of the dancer as a cultural agent**

*Multiple embodiment, by being open to the continual evolution in ballet as art, allows the dancer to gradually develop his agency as an active member of the developing culture. The dancer is educated, through initiation into the experience of existing conventions and by giving the freedom to act as a developing artist, to become an agent of change in the cultural evolution of ballet.*

Csordas' (1994b) cultural phenomenology illuminated the evolution of the culture through its experiencing agents. By communicating his findings in exploration and making informed choices, the dancer contributes to the evolving ballet culture. Therefore I state that multiple embodiment, through exploration and freedom to choose and create, educates the dancer as a cultural agent.

When I suggest principles to teach multiple embodiment in classical ballet, I give these principles as basic guidelines without asking the teacher to follow exact rules or imitate behaviours or tasks. Instead, I invite the teacher to acknowledge the open content in classical vocabulary. I invite the teacher to communicate these qualities to the dancers and by attending to them enhance the experiencing of content in ballet teaching. In addition I invite the teacher to continually find new qualitative open ended tasks in ballet for dancers to realise that content allowing the developing dance student the freedom to cultivate personal artistic judgement in becoming aware of and making choices in their dancing. That is, I am inviting the teachers to make divergent teaching in ballet 'their own' in its cultural context.

## Implications of teaching multiple embodiment in classical ballet

Having defined the main points of multiple embodiment and specified basic principles in its teaching, it is time to reflect on the implications of putting these principles into action in teaching ballet. What does it really mean to teach and learn ballet in this way and to whom?

Professional ballet teaching needs to aim at preparing dancers for a career in performing ballet. Teaching and learning the skills and requirements of the art and profession is therefore a basis on which the tacit teacher-learner agreement can be firmly based. But as all education is dealing with growing human beings, it is necessary to reflect on the consequences of teaching for persons in the process. Mosston and Ashworth state this as the ultimate question in education. 'What really happens to people when they participate in one kind of experience or another? (Mosston & Ashworth 1994, 26).' Are dancers instruments in the service of art? Or might their good and well-being be integral to the well-being of the art form? Or might the experience of the dancer actually exceed the needs of the art? Therefore I am reflecting on the implications of teaching multiple embodiment in classical ballet from the point of view of the art form and the profession. Being also education of persons I will reflect on these implications from the point of view of the persons involved. It is sometimes difficult to separate these interests. Implications may also vary for individual persons. The following are my reflections, visions of possible future when teaching with the principles of multiple embodiment in classical ballet. They are grounded in the findings of the present inquiry and the state of classical ballet today as I understand it.

## Implications of multiple embodiment to the art form

### **Re-vitalising tradition**

In the 25<sup>th</sup> Prix de Lausanne symposium *What future for classical ballet*, Ursula Fraefel opened discussion on ballet training by stating

Classical training is considered to be the most efficient way to train a dancer. And yet: the success of different forms of contemporary dance on stage and the artistic stagnation of ballet make ballet lovers and teachers think about the future of classical dance. (Rosenblum 1997, 69)

Stagnation comes about when a living art form stops evolving and turns into a 'museum attraction'. We might say that its artistic codes are firmly codified and safeguarded for their own sake without natural dynamic freshening of content coming from an exploring live practice. John Percival (1992) writes about one particular example of a performance of *Swan Lake*, where the codes are treated as self-evident and exaggeratedly stiff beginning from the presentation of music to acting out the story and performing the classical vocabulary. 'Pavlova (Nadezhda), with an almost unvarying glum look, danced smoothly but with no expressiveness in her movement; the gestures became just decoration. Kunakova (Lyubov) slammed her showpiece dances at the audience with a grin, leaving us to guess how Siedfried might find this seductive' and so on. We might say that this is an exception, but how many ballet goers have sometimes sat through a neat but not touching performance?

In this research I have paid attention rather to the dancer's experience of ballet than to the audience response. However, they are interrelated. Without being asked, dancers gave some responses as peer assessment in the ballet workshops. Spectators noted the re-vitalisation of the dancer's experience. They could not always explain the dancer's motivation, but they noticed in performance 'that something' that cannot be exactly stated or defined. '*There was something in it.*' Or '*it had soul in the performance.*'

The more the classical ballet scene presents performances of the kind Percival describes above, stagnated or stiff in their coding, the more artists and audiences may turn away from ballet looking for more potential ways of expressing in art. Almost without exception, contemporary choreographers working in ballet context are looking for ways to 'reanimate and renew it (the tradition) from the standpoint of the present' (Witzeling 1999). Steven Thoss, head of the ballet division of the Kiel Opera, is one of the contemporary ballet choreographers that the ballet international magazine introduces in its series on innovators in the ballet scene. He, like other contemporary ballet choreographers, sets himself apart from the stagnated forms and identifies with that which commits to expression. Thoss finds classical ballet emphasising the pose devoid of dynamics, spatial development and 'guiding contours' of movement. He wants to make use of the ballet form 'only when it is motivated by content.' (Witzeling 1999)

In multiple embodiment of classical ballet the dancer intends and attends to the traditional form through its content, which is seen in its diversity and in an artistically open-ended way through the different perspectives offered by

structural images. He embodies the content in the live performance. The change from stiff adherence to traditional rules to re-vitalisation is immediate. Each performance brings out one manifestation, but never a final one. We can always expect fresh expression in the same form in the future.

In this research, I have limited my inquiry into the formal vocabulary and elements in dance leaving out the narrative content and treatment of roles and for instance questioning of the ballet performance frames, which Forsythe has done in his choreography in addition to expanding its vocabulary. (Wulff 1998a). The vocabulary and the formal features are always present in ballet. One could see them as the heart of ballet, the part that, according to Forsythe, never gets dated. Therefore I find it a suitable beginning for the re-vitalisation of the art form. It is also the formal vocabulary, which is dealt with in the ballet class. By indicating to the dance students that dancing the vocabulary is artistic practice, and by giving them the traditional vocabulary as an experience of art, we give them the understanding that we are learning a living art form rather than a virtuosic form of gymnastic movement on top of which a later artistry can be built.

### **Dancers' versatility**

One of the concerns in the 25<sup>th</sup> Prix de Lausanne Symposium *What Future for Classical Dance* was the development of classical training and its ability to produce versatile dancers, who are able to 'adapt to choreographers, existing companies and other forms of choreographic expression.' (Rosenblum 1997, v).

Tarja Ranta, a teacher and a former soloist of The Finnish National Ballet reflects on the changes within the past ten years in the ballet world. She refers to the 'democratisation' of the working situation and the expanding repertory including varying roles and dance techniques. The dancer is expected to assimilate many visiting contemporary choreographers' idiosyncratic 'hand-writing' fast, in one production after another. (Rauhamaa 2000, 24 - 25). A present day ballet dancer is expected to be fluent in multitude of styles, but cannot be locked into any of them in the sense that his body would only possess one style or another.

Learning a style is thereby diminishing in importance while the dancer's need for versatility in performing across styles is increasing in importance in the ballet-making context. Jacobi Godani, Frankfurt Ballet's dancer and choreographer, has noted the increasing significance of versatility across styles and advocates the concept of an all-around dancer.

I am jolly glad that on the threshold of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, dance is increasingly being perceived as 'dance.' A division between the styles occurs more and more seldom. Everyone nowadays moves their hips, and are slowly realising that we have joints in the body with which we can produce movements. Today, you're not a 'classical,' 'modern,' or 'contemporary' dancer any longer. You're just simply a dancer. (Siegmund 1999, 27).

In multiple embodiment of classical ballet the tradition is introduced to the dancer as a qualitative open form to be interpreted and the structural images are used as open-ended potential for content. The dancer comes to practice multiple qualities when learning and practising and occasionally expanding the vocabulary. In the same movement different qualities are explored. In addition the qualities practised are not limited to those conventionally frequent in the classical vocabulary, but while including those the repertory of movement qualities is extended to practising ways of moving traditionally unfamiliar in ballet. This gives the dancer the possibility to expand his skill in versatile performing. He acquaints himself with a wide range of movement qualities that he can utilise in performance.

In her introduction to papers on teaching ballet in the Lausanne Symposium, Ursula Fraefel suggests that the way forward in dance training might be in going beyond style. At the same time she expresses the concern of whether it is possible for the classical dancer to master every style. Would the mix mean to loose the souls of the styles? (Rosenblum 1997, 69). It was discussed earlier how the ballet dancer is expected to become versatile across styles rather than possessing many dance techniques as such. Knowing that we have no way of defining what different people mean by 'soul', I would still like to remind that making the ballet an experience to the dancer through attention to the dance qualities (content) was commented in the ballet workshops as adding 'soul' to the dancing. Loosening the stylistic codes, as it was, gained rather than loosed that which might be expressed with the word. In that sense multiple embodiment is a way for ballet to 'go beyond style' and suggested here as one way forward in ballet training.

### **Integration of styles**

Dancer's versatility is needed not only in the changing styles from one performance to another, but in the increasingly common situation of mixing dance idioms in a single dance or performance. (Hertzman 1997). Integration

of different styles has in some sense belonged to ballet performance for a long time. Petipa's mix of ballet, character dancing and mime was clearly defined having its own time and place for each idiom. The originator of a more integrated mix in the ballet context has been considered to be Twyla Tharp with her works for the Joffrey Ballet (*Deauce Coupe* 1973) and The American Ballet Theatre (*Push Comes to Shove* 1976). Her works were revolutionary in their true integration of many dance codes, 'that flew in the face of austere, formalist, high modernism that dominated the dance scene of the seventies.' (Banes 1994, 292). 'Her abilities to draw convincingly on popular styles as well as on the classical tradition has enabled her to extend the language of choreography and to develop the individual ability of each dancer.' (Tharp & Yentob 1982). 'She heralded a new generation of "new dance" choreographers who mix the casualness of postmodern dance with the expressiveness of modern dance, the gusto of social dance, and the virtuosity of ballet.' (Banes 1994, 296).

In ballet international magazine's series on ballet innovators, integration is often indicated to be part of the choreographers' process in one way or another. It seems to be a rule rather than an exception. Stephen Thoss integrates into 'ballet motivated by content' Joos-Lieder-Laban derived dynamic elements 'most of which would not be allowed in the classical vocabulary.' (Witzeling 1999, 27). Mike Dixon writes of the British choreographer Ashley Page that to understand his choreography, one has to 'examine the powerful crosscurrents at the confluence of classical ballet and Cunningham technique.' (Dixon 1999, 19). Kevin O'Day, an American dancer and choreographer for The Joffrey Ballet, American Ballet Theatre and New York City Ballet, draws from his experiences with a variety of techniques and improvisation. '...I've always got unlimited resources to draw on.' (Regitz 2000, 22). Godani sums up the reason for integration as a way to expand ballet's expressive possibilities and to open it up to experiences appropriate to the times.

The limits of classical ballet choreography consist alone in the fact that the vocabulary is limited. But then, one does have just a limited number of words. When we communicate with other people, in principle we're also making use of an old, 'classical' language. And yet, we don't speak in an antiquated way. If we were only capable of expressing ourselves with a fixed vocabulary, that would be pretty bad. And it's similar with the language of ballet. Ballet is not a thing of the past. It has developed. (Siegmond 1999, 27 - 28).

Because choreographers are so keen on integrating styles, I am tempted to marvel at the reasons for it. Dixon (1999) called the collision of Cunningham technique and ballet in Page's work turbulence. What is it that makes these transitions where one turns into another or two exist together so meaningful and potential for expression? Theoretically the coded vocabularies, as long as they may exist in their untouched piece, are strengthening their artificial coding. When disturbed by a need to change from one to another or by the co-existence of the other, they are forced to decode, to re-arrange content/expression. In the ballet workshops when dancers mixed ballet with their own vocabularies, they noticed that it was the content that bound the two together. When integrating styles the dancer can not move in the safety of the artificial codes, but needs to hang onto the dance content, the quality of what is being created, the dance. At the same time there is something familiar in the dance to give an idea of safety and belonging.

Although integration has been around in the ballet context for a while, ballet training has not assimilated the idea into the curriculum. In multiple embodiment, the future dancer has the possibility to experience integration. It is a possibility to further expand in versatile skills and a possibility to hang onto the dance qualities in ballet and in the integrated styles. It is a possibility to come to experience many styles as means to embody dance qualities. All idioms are a possibility for the dancer to realise and embody dance content.

### **Expanding the dancer's skills of working with a choreographer**

Besides using and demanding from the dancer fluency in moving in-between different styles and techniques, the contemporary choreographers utilise new working methods to create the dance. In addition to sometimes copying the choreographer's suggested steps and movements, the dancer may often be expected to develop or produce new dance material in rehearsal and sometimes even in performance.

Ballet training has not prepared the dancer for this kind of work. Jiri Kylian sums up the activities of Netherland's Dance Theatre 2 (NDT<sub>2</sub>), a company for young beginning dancers. It is 'a bridge between education and professional dancing'. It is '...education in performing and education in creating with the choreographers together. That's what it all comes down to ... making the steps from studio into the stage, a very difficult and important step' (NJAB 1999). Multiple embodiment, by requiring dance students to co-author in class already begins this process in the ballet classroom leading the future dancer towards

the skills necessary in the profession.

Forsythe is well known of his democratic working methods with the dancers. In the introduction I discussed some dancers' feelings of difficulty when changing from the way of working learned in ballet training into the new processes of creating through improvisation, developing movement phrases and creating dance phrases with the choreographer. Forsythe has described his company. 'We are a company working on principles of choreography, on the analysis of choreographic method and the politics of organising structure.' (Nugent 1998, 22). And would we not, as spectators, like to experience a performance which Nugent describes in the following way?

Though Forsythe's choreography in performance feels inscrutable, there is always a sense of dance that is held together by its own inner logic. Moreover, the dancing has a scrupulousness that points to total comprehension of that logic by the dancers. They are no longer ballet dancers who accept what is imposed on them. They think their way through tasks and they do so with a clarity that suggests the choreography is ontological part of them. Hence, at times, they are able to improvise in performance, or to work the material into what Forsythe calls a 'cadenza', because it draws on deeper knowledge. (Nugent 1998, 28)

Nugent describes dancers, who are agents in a strong sense in a democratic working process. Sometimes in situations where I have emphasised the dancer's developing ability to 'own' the movement, his agency in interpreting and co-authoring, the concerned question may have been. 'But don't you think that the dancer needs to carry out the choreographer's wishes in performance?' Yes, I do. The dancer's versatility is logically and undeniably an asset in situations where the choreographer gives the dancer the freedom in interpreting or developing given movement as increasingly happens in rehearsal. In the more traditional situation in which the choreographer expects the dancer to reproduce movements in their given form and quality, versatility is also an aid. In performing the 'classics' the dancer, as has been argued, can keep the tradition fresh by attending to the content. The reproduction, however, is more and more often in a style new to the dancer as choreographers come and go and bring in their own idiosyncratic ways of performing. Exploration of potential qualities and versatility in them is a reservoir of possible qualities for the dancer to choose from and to develop. A versatile dancer is in a better position to find and to be able to perform whatever the choreographer may ask for.

These versatile skills are needed in the profession. Their practice has not as

yet been included in ballet education. The divergent production with dance qualities in multiple embodiment is a first step.

### **Integration of subject-matter**

The organic integration of taught disciplines that otherwise might be kept apart in their own classrooms and sessions, become, in multiple embodiment, one continual process. Learning of the vocabulary, which in training is often called technique class, is integrated with improvisation, interpretation and composition. The expansion of ballet vocabulary and integration of styles in a bigger fashion might add to the list learning dance qualities that are normally introduced to the ballet student in additional contemporary dance classes of various kinds. What might be the benefits of and possible limitations of such an approach?

In additional contemporary dance classes for the ballet student, the dancer learns other dance vocabularies. Often these skills, although different from ballet, are systems of other kinds of closed movement skills. Contemporary dance has been codified in the same manner as ballet (Graham, Limon or Cunningham). To become really versatile by learning many closed movement systems is hard labour for the future dance student who is already taking two sets of education at a time (general and ballet) (Veldhuis 1997). In addition it is partly unnecessary as the need is not to become strongly coded in a few idioms, but to move fluently across, being able to produce a wide range of qualities in dance. In multiple embodiment ballet remains in the centre of learning. From this the dancer's qualitative range is gradually increased.

Integrating disciplines and expanding qualitative range in movement can illuminate the tradition. Experiencing the opposite in quality, or breaking the 'rules' teaches discrimination in dance qualities. For instance the use of free flow was often in the workshops felt as radical in its tendency to break the balanced classical form. Free flow cannot be 'neat' or particular of the spatial pathways or the designs in the body as is usual in traditional ballet. It is not held, but abandoned. It gives the dancer a contrast to ballet as he has known it. Yet it is a quality seen in contemporary ballet performances, for instance Forsythe's work (Hauer & Gardimer 1996). Another example of illumination is spatial. When the upright vertical in ballet is changed, by altering the form into an octahedral or cube form, tilting the vertical central line in the body, the dancer learns the difference in experience of the balanced vertical and the off-balance oblique lines. Also by giving a form-breaking interpretation from a traditionally

classical combination in class, the dancer finds a quality in the traditional movement, say twisting action, and through realising that quality in all its potential, the form is broken and the dancer can compare the old with the new. Drawing the frames tight and teaching each discipline in its own class and in its own time misses this possibility to illuminate. In multiple embodiment, while the dancer becomes versatile in other dance idioms, he also gains in deepening his understanding of the classical tradition. A dancer with this understanding can develop ballet rather than make a dissection to something different. In introduction Jowitt (1988) cited that ballet integrates into the technique elements from other styles while contemporary dance tends to make a break and begin all over again, as a 'revolution'. This understanding is important to ballet professionals who create in the art. One of the concerns in Lausanne in terms of choreography was the question 'How can we discover talented choreographers with a firm grasp of classical technique and still capable of helping styles to develop...' (Rosenblum 1997). Although multiple embodiment in classical ballet is only at the threshold of choreography, not aiming at teaching it, it educates dancers, who are versed in the tradition and its conventions and who can create in the art form.

Multiple embodiment in classical ballet offers a logical continuum from re-vitalising the tradition to creating with it. Rather than sending young ballet dancers elsewhere to learn something that ballet teaching admittedly has not been able to do, why would the ballet field not take pride in preparing its own dancers to the profession as fully as possible?

## Implications of multiple embodiment to the persons involved

### **Lessening the teacher learner hierarchy**

At the end of an anthropological study into the ballet culture including fieldwork with London's Royal Ballet, the American Ballet Theatre in New York, The Royal Swedish Ballet and the Ballett Frankfurt, Helena Wulff writes about the hierarchic power structures both in ballet education and in companies.

The pyramidal appointment hierarchy of classical companies, with a few dancers on top and a mass of corps de ballet dancers at the bottom, is likely to change. ... Contemporary companies have equal ranking, at least formally, and make efforts to include dancers in decision-making about repertory, tours and choreography, as well as shared authorship in the making of choreography. (Wulff 1998b, 162)

Wulff further maintains that ballet needs to change its pedagogy. 'In the long run the classical ballet world will have to open up to the outside world and incorporate modern ideas of pedagogy that recognise individuals into its routine practice. (Wulff 1998b, 164)'.

Authoritarian teaching is not solely typical of a ballet class. Sue Stinson, looking at dance teaching through the lenses of critical and feminist pedagogy and theory, maintains that 'in most technique classes the teacher is the authority and the only recognised source of knowledge.' (Shapiro 1998, 27).

Penelope Hanstein (1990) writes about the future education of dance as being characterised by openness, exploration, discovery and integration. She quotes Doll by saying that to engage in dance as an expressive art form is to engage in an open system, 'a living system responsive to change'. In addition to developing skills of making and perceiving meaning in art works, it includes 'using movement as an expressive symbol system, we are engaged in a process of meaning making, which opens doors to new ways of seeing and knowing the world.' (Hanstein 1990, 56)

In multiple embodiment of classical ballet the ownership of knowledge is divided between the teacher and the students. The teacher practices giving up of authority by creating circumstances in which the dancer's experience of the dance can become a source of knowledge and by recognising that there are multiple solutions and by inviting and accepting individual emerging products.

In multiple embodiment the teacher generates knowledge about the tradition and its vocabulary as well as knowledge about the medium of dance and the potential formal content in it. (In this sense knowledge is given.) The dancer embodies the traditional vocabulary and by intending and attending to its content experiences it as art or qualitative form. In this collision of the objective and subjective, the miracle-like experience of transcendence transforms the roles. Knowledge emerges independently of the teacher within the experience of the learner. The content of this knowledge can not be anticipated. It is out of the reach of the teacher. In that sense the teacher does not direct the learning altogether. The dancer does not simply copy, accept or assimilate what is given. He is rather

invited to explore, test and perhaps take further that which is given. Some people call this testing critical thinking or critical awareness. However, it is not a feeling of being especially critical. It is rather being surprised and the feeling of joy of becoming to understand new things. While this 'new' is surprising, it is also strongly connected to the person's past experiences and value system. It feels 'right' to the person. It is a way to 'see' that what is given may contradict with the experience and thereby lead to further questioning of the tradition. The dancer becomes independent in his physical and artistic development.

The knowledge that the teacher brings into the situation can only be what can be called objective, knowledge that something is the case. This kind of knowledge has also been called propositional or rational. For instance Hirst and Peters have advocated this kind of knowledge as the only possible kind in education and by so doing marginalised arts experience in education. (Hirst & Peters 1970)

The knowledge that emerges in the dancer's experience is holistic. As was evident in the dancers' comments in the ballet workshops, the revelations fused the experiencing of the artistic content (artistic feeling) and cognitive awareness of changing physical skill to be more appropriate for the individual dancer. It is subjective but can be shared and objectified.

### **Independent 'voice' to the ballet dancer**

This knowledge that emerges in the dancer's experience is also creative in the sense that it surprises the dancer, it is new to the experiencing person. Writers about creativity have sometimes stressed the inexplicability of creativity (Best 1986, 1992). We can not explain where from, how and why 'the new something' arrives. With these statements the writers are describing the transcending quality in creativity, the miracle-like and mystical feeling of the moment of revelation. For the dancer this moment re-vitalises the experience of dancing. Although this knowledge is new and unpredictable, it is not arbitrary. Creativity belongs to the particular culture. It has a situation and a history. (Csordas 1994b; Best 1992). Feelings of artistic content, meaning, connectedness are present. Therefore it is the cure for the dancers' experienced lack of intentionality and creativity discussed in the introduction and explained theoretically in the previous chapter. It is a source of increasing independence in holistic development of the dancer. Therefore, when the teacher decides between traditional teaching of ballet and multiple embodiment, he makes a fundamental decision of the kind

of experience he prepares for the dancer. Is the knowing artificially imposed on the dancer, or is it explored and made the dancer's own? He makes a decision between conformism and developing individual artistic authority of the dancer. Different people have called this authority by different names. Mosston & Ashworth call it 'personal locus of evaluation' while Crow & Jackson (1999, 39) speak about 'a personal dance "voice" in which to speak ballet'.

In the teacher–learner relationship this decision shows in the strengthening or lessening the hierarchic structure in the classroom. Going for divergent learning in multiple embodiment means that the teacher gives gradually up the role of the 'know-it-all' and moves towards a dialogic relationship with the dancers and dance students. He voluntarily gives up some of his authority for the purpose of making space for the dancer to develop his artistic authority. He accepts divergent products, multiple personal understanding, and even revolutionary new forms.

Personally I feel that the reward for the teacher in doing so is the joy of witnessing unexpected results and insights in the classroom, coming from both young and older students. Such is also looking at the individual personal differences that emerge from divergent work and the feeling aspect of a dance class when it becomes animated with individual styles and solutions and the feeling of discovery that accompanies them. But there is also the other side to this. Even when given as a serious attempt and appreciated by the dancer himself, the product may not conform to the teacher's set of values. Even then, being true to his intentions and congruent in his actions, the teacher needs to accept these products as legitimate answers to the given tasks. These products may or may not have a seed for the future in ballet. But they certainly have meaning in the maker's process of becoming. The new generation will set the tone for the future, a tone that is still hidden.

Because in ballet, in addition to the soloists' independent interpretations, also a synchronised group performance is sometimes the criteria (*corps de ballet*) the question may arise 'Why educate all dancers to become independent if their task eventually is to obey and conform to the group?' In contemporary ballets, such as for instance Forsythe's contemporary ballet choreography (Hauer & Gardimer 1996), the synchronised *corps de ballet* sections are more and more rare. However, when they are there, I feel, that the product would benefit from individual exploration during the working process. In an educational situation, it certainly feels in place. It is different to just obey and produce than for

instance explore and communicate findings with a group and then decide together on the manner of final performing. There are many ways content can be realised even in the closed form. Are the dancers together in realising it's spatial content, or a certain kind of dynamics, or are they only together in following the pulse of the music? Individual exploration can enrich also synchronised performance. During the working process, the dancers can develop their physical, emotional, cognitive and social skills in communicating their ideas to each other. In performing they develop their ability to adjust to each other as a group and perform a shared vision of the dance.

### **Tension between the needs of the art form and the needs of the person**

The implications to the art form and to the dancer, as discussed above, seem to be congruent. The person benefits from the same things as the art form. A creative dancer, a versatile dancer, re-vitalisation of the dancer's as well as the audience's experience of ballet, a dancer able to co-author is one with artistic authority and self-respect. But to not to give too rosy a picture, it is in place to remind that there are, in classical ballet, further problems that seem to conflict with the needs of a healthy dancer. One of those problems has been and still is the demand for the slim and ideally proportioned female dancer's body. Speaking in NJAB about the effects of perfectionism, which basically is about believing in an ideal 'truth' about dancing and about the body, Sorella Englund, principal dancer, teacher and director at the Royal Danish Ballet suggests that dancers ask themselves 'Who am I in all this?' and resist being made objects and instruments in the dance making process. (NJAB 1999) Perhaps the dancers' increased authority in the art form, having a voice and the possibility to state with confidence 'I am an artist' may begin to change the reality of the dance world, so that dancers have the confidence to claim respect both as artists and persons. However, this question begins to stretch the limits of this research.

# Chapter 7.

## Conclusion

### Summary of the research

In the introduction to the research the imbalance in ballet training between the strong emphasis on learning technical skills and the lack of learning artistic skills, was discussed. Skill acquisition through a narrow agenda for perception (perceiving ballet as a closed movement skill) in an atmosphere of hierarchic teacher-learner relations and extrinsic evaluation, distances the dancer from the experience of content in ballet. The gap between traditional ballet training and the demands made on the dancer by choreographic practices in contemporary ballet was also illuminated. The traditional teaching goal to reproduce given vocabulary ill prepares the dancer for the kind of versatility in movement quality needed in performing contemporary works since they integrate different movement idioms and expand vocabularies. In addition to the ability to reproduce movement material choreographers may also expect the dancer to be able to create in a co-authoring choreographic process. That choreographic styles as well as working methods are in flux has been discussed.

The purpose of the present research was stated as re-establishing artistic intentionality in ballet teaching and developing teaching method(s) that prepare the dancer in the ballet classroom for the evolving modes of performance and choreographic practice in the field. (Chapter 1. Introduction)

The research has shown that the intentional experience of the dancer, which in ballet tradition has remained in the shadow of extrinsic evaluation and feedback, is of vital importance in understanding and developing the ballet tradition by the dancer. The research concluded by explaining the mechanisms of the cultural renewal of ballet and illuminated the understanding of the dancer's role in the process.

The concept of multiple embodiment in classical ballet and broad principles of teaching it were introduced. (Chapter 6) Ballet workshops were undertaken to gather data of the dancer's experiences of the process and to enable analysis of the outcomes of the teaching and learning. (Chapter 4) The workshops were based on an understanding of perception of dance as sought process with the

vocabulary as an open qualitative form, using structural images of the dance as ways to intend the vocabulary in multiple ways, together with a change in teaching style in ballet class. The analysis of the practical workshops and dancer interviews during them, delivered new understanding of the processes of learning through experience, cultural evolution in ballet and the dancer's role in the process. Finally, a rationale for the evolving method was given in terms of its implications to the profession and the attitude towards students as persons essential to it.

Multiple embodiment is based on perceiving the ballet vocabulary as a qualitatively open form, rather than, as was shown to be usual in the tradition, a fixed and closed movement form to be reproduced. The dancer can seek information in the same form in different ways thereby finding the vocabulary a starting point for exploration. (Chapter 2, perception)

Structural images of the dance were defined as inherent qualities of the dance (including ballet) itself, its content. They were discussed as a way to reveal and communicate the inherent content in the ballet vocabulary. Understood as deep structures of the dance and nexial, they were seen as ways for the dancer to intend and attend to the formal dance vocabulary in ballet and embody its content in performance and composition. By changing intention and thereby paying attention to different kinds of content in the same vocabulary, the embodiments of the same movement material become multiple. When the same material was embodied again with the same intention the result was always slightly different, making every performance of the vocabulary a new emergent, a new realisation of the same dance. By realising the same content (as a deep structure) through many surface features, the content could be embodied in multiple ways in composition. (Chapter 2, structural images of the dance as ways to intend formal ballet vocabulary)

The traditional teaching style in ballet was seen, in its emphasis on reproduction of given movement material, as logically incapable of including creative production, either by interpretation of existing movement vocabulary or by composition of new movement material. The purpose and outcomes of applying the divergent production teaching style (Mosston & Ashworth 1994) to open out the formal qualitative content in ballet for creative production by the learners was specified. By seeing the vocabulary as a qualitative open form and the images as deep structures that can be embodied in multiple ways in performance by the dancers made it theoretically possible to design open-ended tasks in the ballet classroom and to develop personal loci of evaluation by the

dancers in class. (Chapter 2, change of teaching style).

These theoretical principles (of ballet vocabulary as an open form, of structural images as revealing and communicating qualitative content in the form and of applying divergent production style into ballet teaching) were put into practice in the ballet workshops. Dancer interviews during the workshops generated information on the dancers' experiences while intending and attending to the content in the vocabulary in multiple ways. Analysis of the workshops also generated information of the effects of applying the divergent teaching style into ballet practice. (Chapter 4)

The emerging information from the workshops showed that the experiences of the dancers while intending the ballet vocabulary with structural images can broadly be categorised into three kinds: obstacles to experiencing ballet as a qualitatively open form, revelations, and stretching cultural limits. The dancers' comments showed that ballet lends itself to multiple embodiments in practice when intended with structural images.

With the divergent production teaching style, it was then possible to invite interpretations and compositional products within and on the basis of the formal ballet vocabulary. The ballet vocabulary was shown to be, not only a technical necessity for future interpretations of roles with narrative content (Chapter 2, images), but can be viewed as inherent dance content to be interpreted in class.

In the workshops four different types of interpretation emerged through the efforts of applying divergent production in ballet: structural interpretation as reproduction, open interpretation, layered interpretation and form-breaking interpretation. Compositional co-authoring tasks resulted in: composing with structural images, mixing vocabularies, altering ballet and open work. (Chapter 4).

Interpretational and compositional emergents showed that ballet vocabulary can be interpreted, extended (form-breaking interpretation, altering), integrated (mixing vocabularies, open work) in the ballet classroom. By these activities and by having the dance content introduced to the dancer in an open-ended way, he comes to practice versatile skills in preparation for contemporary choreographic practices in the field. (Chapter 7, implications of teaching multiple embodiment to the profession)

Csordas' cultural phenomenology explained the experiences of the dancers (obstacles, revelations and stretching limits) as having a cultural perspective. (Chapter 5) The cycle of cultural evolution in ballet was revealed as including

embodiment of tradition, transcendence and objectification or sharing. A pattern of fixing and opening out cultural codes was discerned. The experiences the dancers described, seemed to belong to different phases of this cycle. Rather than speaking of forwarding a tradition in ballet teaching it is regarded as more pertinent to promote the concept of forwarding an evolving tradition, thereby acknowledging the continual flux in the tradition itself.

In forwarding an evolving tradition, the dancer's experience in intentional embodied performance becomes of vital importance. While dancing, the dancer not only manipulates cultural codes, but becomes the codes, experiencing them in performance. Alienation and strong motivation are the opposing modes of this experience. Alienation indicates habitual, pre-existing coding of the tradition, while strong motivation accompanies new revelations and sometimes changes to traditions. The experience justifies the creative new emergents to the maker.

The change from traditional ballet teaching to multiple embodiment holds a fundamental change in attitude towards dancers as learners. The change is evident in the balance between transferring knowledge to the learner and inviting insights by the learner (Mosston & Ashworth 1994) following enlarged perception of the traditional forms in embodied performance. The intentional experience was shown in the practical research (ballet workshops) to be a way to holistic learning combining technical skill and artistry. By being controlled but not determined by the cultural past and situationality of the dancer, the experience has the potential to develop the dancer's artistic authority in ballet. (Csordas 1994b) By being open to and inviting agency (divergent teaching), multiple embodiment of classical ballet not only bridges the gap between traditional ballet teaching and the artistic practices in the present ballet field, but remains sensitive to new developments in the art form. Its methods take account of the reality that the young generation of artists will point the way to the future of ballet. Therefore multiple embodiment of classical ballet - teaching, by emphasising experiencing the evolving tradition and encouraging the dancer to become an active member of the culture, is educating dancers as agents of change in the cultural evolution of ballet.

## Application of the principles of teaching multiple embodiment in classical ballet

I have suggested that the principles of teaching multiple embodiment in classical ballet are open to application by teachers in an individual way. Jarvis emphasises that practical research reports reflect the past rather than the present. They relate to a specific situation and group of respondents who replied at a given time. The report is always a simplification of the complexity of the practice situation and the knowledge in it is merely information for those who read it. It can become the reader's personal practical knowledge through learning and practical application. (Jarvis 1999, 127)

In a sense it could be said that the workshops arranged for this research were the first applications of the principles of multiple embodiment in ballet. It is not a rigid system of rules for teachers and dancers to follow. It gives freedom for the teachers to 'make the principles their own' in developing open-ended tasks and deciding on the specific needs of a given group of students. The emerging products would be expected to look very different when the teacher creates his own open-ended tasks for the dancers and when different dancers respond to those tasks. However, for the teaching to be called multiple embodiment, the general principles, although individually practised, need to comply. The philosophy of teaching shows in the actions in the classroom. For instance, if the teacher is not willing or able to regard the content in the vocabulary as open, but advocates a specific one way of execution, it would be misleading to call teaching multiple embodiment. Also, if the teacher is not openly investigating what formal dance content might be and introducing it in as wide a range as possible, it would narrow the possibility of multiple production. When multiple embodiment is successful, content does not remain logical, known cognitively but not lived in experience. Insights by the dancers are a clear indication of the success of teaching, not only the replication of transferred knowledge content.

Liora Bresler writes that in qualitative research transferability of the findings to new situations in similar contexts has replaced the demand to generalise in research (Bresler 1992, 76). Like Jarvis, she removes the final validation into the future, away from the actual time of research. Therefore, it remains to be seen whether the final criteria of success will be fulfilled. I finish this research report with the wish that dancers and dance teachers, after acquainting themselves with the present inquiry and the information in it, would in their

ballet and dance teaching and learning situations be able to apply the principles of teaching and learning multiple embodiment. I trust that if they have found the rationale for them pertinent in the present dance environment, they will in Van Manen's words 'make it their own' by learning and embodying it in a personal manner and look for its essence in practice.

As explained, the present research is still looking for its long-term validation. The research was also conducted either outside of dance teaching institutions (free-lance dancers) or as marginal (teacher students) or supplemental to ('expression' class) their curriculum. Therefore, it cannot answer specific questions about its implementation to a dance institution's curriculum. Questions whether it needs to be supplemental or integral to the training, to what age-group to introduce it, how exactly to achieve the integration of subject-matter, whether it can replace some other teaching in the curriculum or not, are unanswered. Therefore I suggest that further research would be undertaken as a long term experimental period during which multiple embodiment is introduced, implemented and monitored in a ballet school's curriculum. The research would need to embrace both the broad principles of teaching multiple embodiment as well as the specific needs of the particular dance school.

## Suggestions for further research: Implementation of multiple embodiment into a dance institutions curriculum to determine long-term effects for various stake-holders

It takes an average of six to eight years to train a ballet dancer. In comparison from seven to fourteen individual workshops (for each group) is a short span of time. Exploration and interviews in the workshops revealed the immediate reactions and changes in the dancers' experiences of ballet, when it was motivated with potential formal dance content in multiple ways through structural images. The principles of teaching multiple embodiment were derived from analysis of the dancers' experiences and the interpretational and compositional products in the classroom and showed one way of promoting individual creation in ballet, giving the dance student possibilities to practice versatile skills in the ballet environment. Further research is required to determine long-term effects of multiple embodiment teaching and to find a way to implement it in a dance school's curriculum.

### **What is a curriculum for?**

According to Kemp, Morrison & Ross (1998), the purpose of education and training is to provide a series of structured learning experiences. The term curriculum refers to the subject content and skills that make up an educational program. The emphasis of a curriculum depends on philosophical, social and cultural forces that affect the school in terms of the broad society and the specific community it serves. A curriculum is determined by the purpose or mission of an institution, by specific goals for education and training to serve the mission or plan (against which achievements can be evaluated), and by the way instruction is organised to accomplish the goals. Answering these questions can help in selecting subject areas, courses, instructional themes, or content categories. (Kemp et al 1998, 2) In addition to stating the mission, the objectives and sequencing content to be covered along the curriculum, the design determines instructional strategies and delivery as well as evaluation methods to determine the success of teaching and learning. The plan would have to anticipate and deal with practical constraints before and during implementation. (Kemp et al 1998)

### **Mission of multiple embodiment**

Multiple embodiment has defined as its mission the educating of cultural agents in the evolving art of ballet. The emphasis is on, in addition to dexterity in performing the traditional vocabulary, interpretational and co-authoring skills and readiness in ballet.

### **Objectives**

Objectives would need to be stated specifically in concrete terms of student achievement in order to eventually determine the degree of success.

### **Sequencing the content**

The broad principles of teaching multiple embodiment state the ideals of integration of subject matter as well as integration and expansion of vocabularies. How would these be achieved in long-term teaching? In multiple embodiment workshops, almost every class contained technique learning, interpretation and compositional exercises. Co-authoring often integrated ballet and the dancer's individual movement style or expanded the traditional vocabulary. A continuum does not necessarily mean that each subject area has

to be included in each class. Could the learning of the images and their application into ballet and open use of them perhaps be different steps of achievement during the dancer's progress? The present research showed that the learner has to first understand the image. Occasionally, before the dancer could use the image in an open-ended way, it was necessary for the teacher to lead towards open interpretation of the vocabulary. The teacher suggested multiple ways to embody the dance to begin the process of seeing the vocabulary as a starting point for multiple embodiments rather than a fixed predetermined form. Perhaps, then, a *learning-related sequencing* could be found. Learning would still be a continuum but the continuum is spread along the longer learning period. Or perhaps some other way of sequencing could be found and monitored for student achievements.

Deciding about and sequencing content would also take a stand on whether multiple embodiment could replace and use time in the curriculum reserved for contemporary dance classes given the idea that multiple embodiment aims at expanding the dancers' versatile dance skills while illuminating ballet. What could be left out and how would that affect learning? Would multiple embodiment be sufficient for achieving dexterity in quality of performing across styles in the long term?

### **Strategies and delivery of the subject-matter**

Multiple embodiment embraces principles for teaching strategies and delivery. According to its mission, it aims at realising the openness in performing and expanding the vocabulary. All teaching aims at eventually producing culturally aware and active agents in ballet. This does not mean that students spend all classroom time interpreting and composing. But it does mean certain attitudes in teaching. It means keeping the goal in mind from day one. It means opening attention to various motivations in the same movement as early as possible in the learning. It means always respecting questioning of the tradition when the experience of the learner so demands. It means a dialogical relationship between teacher and learners so that individual voices are accepted. The present research has shown how the experience can make a traditional teaching situation open and give the learner means for critical awareness.

### **Anticipating and dealing with constraints in implementation process.**

Curriculum change involves the whole staff of the dance school, the administrators, the curriculum planners, the teachers and the students. It is likely that a change is

felt for different parties as threatening and resistance may occur. Managing the implementation of change needs to lessen this anxiety by open communication of plans and by offering training in new areas. The needs of the different parties, to be able to handle the change, need to be taken care of. For instance the teachers would need training to learn the structural images and to apply them to ballet teaching. They would need information and practice on how to deal with the change in teaching style and attitudes towards learners.

### **Evaluation**

The success of instructional design or change is measured in achieved learning outcomes. To be able to evaluate success, the criteria of excellence or standards of achievement need to be determined. The objectives and evaluation need to match. (Kemp et al 1998, 165 – 166) For instance, the student learning can not be measured in terms of the spectators artistic inclinations if the objective has been to develop the learner's individual taste. Similarly, when the criteria is defined as 'insightful learning', the measures can not test or pay attention to simply measuring how much of the given material is memorised or in case of dance, perhaps reproduced. A way of indicating success independently of the evaluators' personal (artistic) preferences would have to be found.

Evaluation can be both formative and summative. (Kemp et al 1998). Formative evaluation can correct or improve the implementation of change into the curriculum while the process is going on. Summative evaluation measures the final benefits of the instruction plan. (Kemp et al 1998, 162 – 163)

### **Evaluation instruments**

The traditional numerical evaluation has proved to be an unreliable and non-informative measuring device to determine learners' artistic achievements in dance (Hämäläinen 1999, 188). In the present research dancers' experiences and interview data was emphasised in finding information of learning experiences. The reliability of evaluation can be increased by including the perspectives of different benefactors of instruction (administrators, instructional designers, teachers and students). This can be done through triangulation of assessment through observation of student performance and teachers' work as well as student, teacher and staff interviews (discussions).

### **The role of the researcher in the process**

In the present research I have acted in a double role of teacher-researcher. In the curriculum implementation the researcher would act as the curriculum designer and reporter of results. As required he can involve expertise into the project's different phases: assessing needs, designing instruction, subject-matter experts, evaluators, and so on.

The instructional design process could show the most beneficial manner of implementing multiple embodiment of classical ballet into the teaching curriculum of a dance school. Formative evaluation devises might expose needs to revise the original plan during the process of implementation. Summative evaluation would eventually give information of the long-term effects for all parties. Student achievement and motivation will always be the core of success. Administrators need to be assured of 'hard facts' of learning in 'an acceptable period of time' (Kemp et al 1998, 274 - 277) and cost, the designer needs to see evidence of learning from implementing the curriculum model, teachers' benefits are dependent on students' achievements and pleasant relations with them.

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# Appendix 1.

## **Themes in workshops**

### Theatre Academy, Dance department 15.3.1995 - 6.4.1995

15.3.1995

Perceptual strategies and ballet.

22.3.1995

Movement actions and ballet.

23.3.1995

Articular awareness in creating spatial forms.

29.3.1995

Manner of Materialization of Choreutic Unit (ChUMm) and ballet.

30.3.1995

Preparation for open interpretation of a ballet/dance combination.

5.4.1995

Breath-rhythm in ballet. Accenting. Rehearsal of individual interpretations of ballet combinations.

6.4.1995

Presentation and discussion of individual open ChUMm interpretations in class.

### Free-lance dancers' workshops 5.9.1995 - 2.1.1996

5.9.1995

Actions: travelling, transference of weight, stretching and diminishing, overbalancing.

12.9.1995

Movement actions and ballet. Mixing ballet with individual movement actions.

19.9.1995

Ballet and ChUMm. Mixing.

26.9.1995

Octahedron kinesphere model. Interpreting ballet and making individual dance movements with the octahedron-image.

10.10.1995

Ballet with the image of icosahedron kinesphere model. Making individual movement in cube kinesphere model.

17.10.1995

Movement dynamics: force and flow. Individual movement in the cube.

24.10.1995

Movement flow and ballet. Mixing.

31.10.1995

Dancers' relationships through spatial directions. Duet rehearsal.

7.11.1995

Perceptual strategies and ballet.

14.11.1995

Articular perception and ballet. Duet rehearsal.

21.11.1995

Image as the dancer's own free choice. Exploring new spaces for the dance.

12.12.1995

Rehearsing a classical variation with images of flow.

19.12.1995

Movement flow and movement actions in dancer's individual movement.

2.1.1996

ChUMm.

The Finnish National Ballet School 7.3.1997 - 11.4.1997

7.3.1997

Movement actions in structured improvisation and making individual movement phrases.

14.3.1997

Exploration of movement actions in ballet vocabulary.

21.3.1997

Manner of Materialization of Choreutic Units (ChUMm)

4.4.1997 group I

ChUMm in individually created movement.

4.4.1997 group II

Exploration of ChUMm in ballet movement.

11.4.1997 ChUMm, continuation of previous workshops.

## Appendix 2.

### **An example of transcription from video and corresponding analysis pages.**

(journal page 20)

Ballet workshop for free-lance dancers 19.9.1995.

Theme of the workshop: Forming space through Choreutic Unit and Manner of Materialization (ChUMm)

Five dancers present.

D: dancer

T: teacher

We began by improvising with ChUMm components: body design, spatial progression, spatial projection and spatial tension.

...progression with a chosen body part...changing focus from one part of the body to another, and another ... stillness in a body shape...awareness of progression, the shape I am drawing while moving...straight lines or curves... projection into space, awareness of where in the body it is initiated... focus can be a projection...tension between two points, two body parts, or perhaps the floor or wall and the body, or two dancer... More than one thing can happen at the same time. Body design, progression, projection, spatial tension...

Half of the group goes on while others watch ..... Second group joins in gradually while first group finishes and begins to watch.

T: Would you like to comment on this? What did you see in each others dance or how it felt for you to do?

D1: This was very difficult task, as they all (ChUMm) are bound to each other. It is hard to separate them. The last one was the easiest as we could combine them.

D2: The last task was for me the easiest as we could combine them all.

D3: It was difficult when the others began to watch. It makes you try hard to make these things in your dance to be seen... are they really clear?

The class went on with *barre* exercises:

*Plié* combination with the images of spatial progression and body design.

D2: In some way more conscious ... I don't know.

D4: More playful, lighter.

D5: One notices the form in a new way...the pathways you are used to...within them you find new things.

ISSUES	METHOD	IMAGE	COMMENTS	REFLECTIONS	OTHER
	<p>TUNING IS IMPROV. WITH IMAGE</p>	<p>ChUMm</p>			
	<p>TRAD. + IMAGE</p>	<p>BALLET &amp; ChUMm progression body design</p>	<p>ChUMm clustering</p> <p>EXPERIENCES</p> <p>CONSCIOUS PLAY</p> <p>NEW FINDINGS</p>		
		<p>PAGE 20.</p>			

(journal page 21)

*Battement tendu* combination with the same images (body design and spatial progression). While repeating to the other side I specified the poses and where the movement is continuous.

*Battement tendu jeté* with the image of projecting into space.

T: What did you project with?

D4: My body is aching. It is really difficult to feel anything else today.

D2: Difficult again in separating and thinking about one thing at a time. But I did feel many projections at a time, head and foot especially (indicates hand also).

D5: The direction of the projection changes all the time when the movement is going on. I felt it very much through the chest and also through foot, head, hand. Head when coming back to balanced vertical stance...

D4: My expectation of what would happen to me was very different from what really happened. When I projected through the foot forward, I got a terrific pull down into the earth by the supporting leg. It was surprising.

I introduced the *rond de jambe* exercise at the *barre*. I suggested that it can be done with different images in mind. The first was done thinking of it as twisting action. The second so that it was spatial progression (with toes). The third so that it projected to the surrounding space. I asked the dancers to look for possible difference in my execution of the three *ronds*.

D5: I would not have understood twisting without your demonstration. (She also noted that I had changed the dynamics of the movement in twisting.)

D5: The twist is inside the movement. It is hard to show a difference between twist and progression...

T: Is the experience different of the two ways of doing the movement?

D5: Yes.

D1: In twisting the feeling is very much in the hip-joint, in progression my feeling is in the toes and weakens the feeling in the hip. It was also good to think of the *rond de jambe* as space enlarging between the legs.

*Fondu, rond de jambe en l'air* and *frappé* combination with the image of spatial tension.

D3: I found tensions between the legs in different positions and between the arms in second position.



(journal page 22)

D2: I found more tensions in the vertical direction between the floor and the hands and feet.

D1: In the *rond de jambe en l'air* the space opened out between the legs and it was lighter to do.

D3: Something good happened also in the *frappé*, though I can not really say what it was.

*Développé* combination with four possibilities of ChUMm suggested to choose from.

D: When technique gets more difficult it is harder to notice these things.

D3: ...saw possibilities in the hand for projection, progression. Anything really is possible.

*Grand battement* combination with the same four images (ChUMm).

This prompted a discussion on dynamics. D5 noticed that she can do ChUMm in the *grand battement* with different qualities (dynamics) and asked if there is a different thinking for that. Is it something extra?

*Temps lié* forward and to the side with choice of ChUMm: progression, projection, body design or spatial tension. Continuation with own movement, *temps lié* to the other side and again individual improvisation with the image. The theme or image can change when beginning a new *temps lié*.

T: Looks very concentrated. How does it feel to change from ballet to your own movement?

D3: It feels awkward. If the own is similar, balletic, it feels better.

D1: That is not the difficulty for me, but it is when I want to change my theme, the old idea gets stuck in my mind...does not go away.

Dancers perform in two groups and look at each others performance.

T: Thank you...what did you see?

D2: There are lot of differences, actually.

D3: I think I distinguished your first one.

T: How does it feel to join the two different kinds of movement, ballet and your own, or are they different?

D5: Well, somehow it was difficult for me to co-ordinate...At the *barre* you can sort of organise the combinations...they don't slip away, thinking being late. if I think of the theme like this, the theme does not go through, it is already gone. one does a little this and that and maybe it worked sort of.



(journal page 23)

D4: Even if you decide to do this and that and you try hard, in the body, there are so many things, it does not...

D2: Somehow it is easier if there is limited form in which one is doing it.

D3: I find *temps lié* easier.

T: You said that changing from ballet to own felt awkward to do, that it was not balletic. When you look at this, how does it seem then?

D3: It did not look difficult the transition, now. It looked really smooth now, the own movement.

T: I was thinking about what D2 said last time when we were doing the same thing with the actions that there the meaning remains the same. When you go out of ballet to your own movement you still have the content, the idea. That is the idea when I give the exercise. Sometime in class I just ask dancers to make their own ending to a combination with the image.

D2: That might be easier as it is still more limited situation. In here we have so unlimited possibilities to act on.

D5: I think it is also getting more clear...the more we find in simple uncomplicated exercises these, different things clearly...they are basic experiences...

I explained octahedron kinesphere model for the next time. The vertical, horizontal and forward-back dimensions as the inside of the kinesphere and the connecting lines on the surface, the two centres in ballet...

D2: asked a technical question about the execution of the movement *failli*.

I thought about her question and later phoned a ballet teacher at the Opera Ballet School to ask if she would be interested in coming to one of our workshops to talk about how in different kinds of combinations *failli* is used and she could see how we apply our images to the combinations, whatever we are working with at the time. She was positive, though working at the time of our classes. She might have some exceptions, in which case she would call me and come. That would be great.



(journal page 24)

26.9.1995

Theme: Interpreting ballet and making individual dance movements with the octahedron-image.

Four dancers present.

D: dancer

T: teacher

I began by explaining the octahedron, vertical, horizontal and forward-back dimensions, pathways connecting these directions, two centres. Spatial orientation in body cross.

Dancers had lots of questions.

Is this model made for ballet?

Was this were you have two centres?

Is this a kind of joke, the legs and arms going to the side from different height (centres)?

How about when the leg can not be taken quite to the side?

What about when I need to take the leg up, it is not possible, is it?

T: Maybe not for me, but for Sylvie Guillem it would be OK.

Are they places or directions? When I think of two centres I feel that they are places but when I move I feel that they are directions.

T: You take the octahedron with you when you move, front is always in front of you. Let's dance and talk afterwards. There is no one single right experience, there are lots of possibilities for individual experiences. I am interested in the difference of moving as usual in a ballet class and now with this image? Is there a difference? If so, what is it like?

*Barre* exercises.

D1: Difficult to do fast, need to go very slowly.

D2: I became aware of the centre as staying in place and periphery moving more and now the connection. Easier to connect different body parts.

D3: Fascinating experience, but different from D2. Directions everywhere, the hand on the *barre*, realised the need to keep elbow down, bending back there was something I was going to, easier, *plié* up and down and the widening sideways, more three-dimensional.

D 4: I felt a supporting structure in space, there was something also behind my back, safer, helped balance.

We continued the barre exercises without music or counts.

CULTURAL ISSUES	TEACHING METHOD	IMAGE	DANCER COMMENTS	TEACHER REFS. & JOURNAL TIPS	OTHER
<p>NO MUSIC OR COUNTS.</p>	<p>TUNING IN BY EXPLAIN.</p> <p>CLARIFYING QUESTIONS</p> <p>TRAD. WITH IMAGE</p> <p>&amp;</p> <p>DISCUSSION</p>	<p>OCTAHEDRON</p> <p>BALLET &amp; OCTAHEDRON</p> <p>PAGE 24.</p>	<p>GETTING TO KNOW THE OCTAHEDRON</p> <p>LIMITS OF THE BODY</p> <p>EXPERIENCES OF TIMING</p> <p>CENTRE &amp; PERIPHERY</p> <p>CHANGING MOVEMENT BECAUSE OF IMAGE</p> <p>EASIER</p> <p>3 - DIMENS.</p> <p>SHARPER BALANCE</p>	<p>VALUING DIFFERENCES</p> <p>ATTENTION TO CHANGE "USUAL" &amp; WITH IMAGE</p> <p>NO MUSIC NO COUNTS</p>	

(journal page 25)

T: How did it feel to do *allongé*?

D2: It was like, HELP, what is this? But *attitude*, exactly like the form (octahedron).

D4: Front was easier to hold. Supporting leg had stronger feeling.

D2: Easier to do many movements at the same time like going into *plié* and stretching leg forward at the same time.

Centre exercises.

*Battement-tendu* – combination with *pirouettes* from second or fourth positions.

T: Any problems with the image?

D1: Yes. I have been thinking which should come first, the image or if I need to think of muscle work?

T: Maybe if you feel the need to think of muscles, then you do.

Adagio.

D4: When I look at the mirror, I tend to find the balance with the eyes, so that that is what dominates... I stay because I see. When one thinks of the figure (octahedron), one can balance just as well, the image helps there (the combination included a turn *attitude tour lent* in which you have to turn away from the mirror).

T: Shall we do it once more all together?

D3: I do not remember this. All my time goes into thinking of what I am supposed to be doing.

T: Yes. That's why I think we can repeat the same movement combinations a lot so we do not have to spend so much time doing that (remembering).

The teacher shows the combination once more and clarifies some things about it. The hands, and when and where to do *plié* and so on.

T: Two groups so you can see it. ...Next group immediately, no pausing.

T: How did *ecarté* feel?

D2: Awful lot of diagonal directions! (not in the image). It is sort of hard to include it in this figure (shows octahedron directions ... shows the lean in *ecarté*) the basic support sort of disappeared from there...

CULTURAL ISSUES	TEACHING METHOD	IMAGE	DRAWING COMMENTS	TEACHER COM. & JOURNAL TIPS	OTHER
	TRAD. + IMAGE  &  DISCUSSION	BULLET & OCTAHEDRON	movement contradict with image  holding front  many motion together     octahedron image muscles  looking in the mirror imaging	INT.       INT. I REGRETTED THIS ANSWER    INT.	OBSTACLE
	REPETITION	PAGE 25.	contradicting image  space orientation	INT.	

(journal page 26)

T: Could we imagine that the 'ideal' (model) sort of stays in there, but we move away from it?

D2: Or through thinking that the vertical is exactly the same it just changes (leans to the side)... in relation to the rest of the body.

D4: I do this first standing upright, I only lean when that is settled.

D3: I only do it to the side without leaning.

D1: It is good to have an image of the basic directions. It is not diverting a lot from them.

T: Also when doing *battement tendu* behind we need to let the body slightly forward.

D3: I become larger in my own mind when I think of this image around me, it helps somehow...

D2: Not just mechanical, brings in something else. It softens the idea that there is only the technical movement execution (shows making sounds), one thinks of how one is situated in space.

D3: One is clearly situated in space. Brings in something more to the visual image.

*Grand battement* –combination.

T: One could think of the space around us (kinesphere) as larger than normally...or that it could grow or become smaller (shows how it can be small in standing) ...that it does not have to be always the same size.

...clarification of the combination and its execution...

Let's do it in two groups into my counts.

T: Let's think of a large image or changes in size if you can get that.

D4: When I cannot even make the *grand battement* leave the floor, then the fancy image certainly disappears.

D3: The idea of in which direction one needs to be going and then thinking on which foot you need to change balance to might help...

D2: The beginning was all right, then to the side the image dropped.

D4: I was so ambitious, I tried to throw the leg as high as possible, and then it did not stay in this good (shows vertical, horizontal directions in the body)...

T: So your ambition broke it.

CULTURAL ISSUES	TEACHING METHOD	IMAGE	DANCER COMMENTS	TEACHER COMMENTS/JOURNAL TOPICS	OTHER
	TRAD. + IMAGE  &  DISCUSSION	BALLET & OCTAHEDRON	SPACE ORIENTATION		
		SIZE OF KINESPHERE (OCTAHEDRON)	SUCCESS SIZE OF KINESPHERE MORE THAN TECHNIQUE (expression, artistry?) clarity in space		
			DIFFICULTY level of difficulty technical execution		obstacle
		PAGE 26.			

(journal page 27)

D4: Yes. Wrong kind of ambition.

T: Did you all get the idea that the image could be large or small?

—occasionally...

D1: ...it is a question of time...one should have time...if there is time then one uses it. There has to be intrinsic timing.

T: I see. Now I was counting.

Play with the octahedron directions and body parts.

Dancers called out directions...backwards, down, up, etc... and body parts ...head, hips, right hand, right shoulder, torso...

In body cross, the dancers each made their own dance combination by taking the body parts into the allocated directions: head backwards, hips down etc.

Dancers practised first for a while and then performed together.

T: Looks really good, as if there is a mutual idea hidden, but everyone has different movements and timing. A hand gesture happens several times into the same direction in different way and at different time, everyone does it at some point.

Performance in groups.

Next we do the same in constant cross.

Dancers performed first the body cross combination, then the constant cross.

D4: This looked delightful. It is exciting to think like this.

D2: It creates its own kind of movement language. People do different things, but one can see that there is something mutual in it. It is an exciting element, the same thing in different ways.

D4: Last time you asked if it is difficult to move in one's own style. Through these tasks it is easy to get to this own something.

T: Was it the difficulty last time when we were doing ballet and then I asked you to transfer to your own in the same combination?

D4: Yes. This task limits it a bit, but even so there are lots of possibilities.

D1: Well, ballet can be all the time that 'own', it depends how you do it.

CULTURAL ISSUES	TEACHING METHOD	IMAGE	DANCER COMMENTS	TEACHER REFLECTIONS JOURNAL TOPICS	OTHER
	MAKING OWN DANCE MATERIAL WITH IMAGE = COMP. TASK PRACTICES TIME	OCTAHEDRON & BODY PARTS CHANCE body orientation stage space orientation	intrinsic timing Coerced		
			observing others neutral idea def. mov. task/ own style limits/ open possibilities ballet as "own"		
		PAGE 27.			

Paula Salosaari's doctoral dissertation posits the ballet dancer as an experiencing artist into the core of the evolving tradition and dancer's artistic identity. The dancer is seen as an experiencing agent of change within the art of ballet, rather than an object, material or an instrument to perform the dance.

The research proposes a way to teach ballet which acknowledges and gives space to this agency by introducing divergent teaching and structural images of the dance as tools to create with. The teaching provides a continuum from revitalising the performing of the traditional vocabulary to creating with it. It enhances interpretation and expansion of the traditional vocabulary as well as composition of new dance material having the tradition as a starting point.

By juxtaposing tradition with the developing forms of contemporary ballet, it illuminates the connection between them and shows a way to include both in the education of a contemporary ballet artist.

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