

Centre for Dance Research, University of Roehampton Research Seminars 2013/14

Movement, Media & Material Thinking

Dr Maaïke Bleeker, Professor and Chair of Theatre Studies, University of Utrecht
Wednesday 13 November 2013, 6pm

Media and information technologies are not merely instruments that extend how we already perceive and think. Actually, these technologies are integrally part of how we perceive and think. I will show how this relationship between media technologies, perception and thinking provides a perspective on the dramaturgies of contemporary dance, and in particular on the changed status of movement in these dramaturgies. I will show how an enactive approach to perception and cognition illuminates how these new dance practices may be considered material practices of thinking movement.

Face-to-Face: Form, Relation, Apparition

Dr Carol Brown, Dr Emilyn Claid, Dr Simon Ellis, Dr Efrosini Protopapa, University of Roehampton
Tuesday 5 November 2013, 6pm

'I am made and remade continually. Different people draw different words from me' (Virginia Woolf). We will sit facing each other and draw on our individual, current choreographic research projects to think through the uncertainties of presence in collaboration, and the ways in which as artist-scholars we extend out into the world. Given the social nature of choreographic practice, we seem ready to be 'made and remade continually', as we encounter the other in the excessive nearness of friendship (Giorgio Agamben). We alternate between form and formlessness, as we engage in fragile processes of collaborative making. If we accept that different practices of relating start shaping the various choreographic contexts we work in – be they aesthetic, pedagogic, theatre, video, writing – at what point, we might ask, do we turn into some kind of hard-to-see apparition? This is a roundtable discussion by artist-scholars at Roehampton Dance.

MA Student Presentations – Performance Philosophy: The Young

Kyle Bukhari, Hamish Macpherson, Ryan Rockmore, University of Roehampton
Thursday 30 January 2014, 6pm

In February three postgraduate students from the Dance Department at Roehampton University will present at the conference 'Performance Philosophy: The Young' at the University of Groningen, The Netherlands. This research seminar is an opportunity for them to share their research with the Roehampton community and rehearse their presentations in order to receive feedback in preparation for the conference.

Kyle Bukhari will examine Andre Lepecki's recent proposal of 'parasitic noisification,' a conceptual model based on the work of Michel Serres that looks at how communication theory and semiotics as presupposing a space devoid of interference, or parasitic and disturbing noise. Bukhari will attempt to unpack Lepecki's provocation and see how it both poses problems and raises questions for dance practice and theorization. He will address questions such as: How does Lepecki's suggestion of a "non-semiotic, non-expressive, and non-creative" theory of dance impinge on meaning? Is the re-appropriation of the disavowed expressivity of

the postmodern dance in the 1960s an appropriate aesthetic stance for today? How does the writing of dance history impact on contemporary approaches to practice and theory? Bukhari's presentation is a lecture/performance that will synthesise his current diverse research interests, while considering both the aesthetic implications and disruptive potential of this form of intellectual enquiry and presentation.

Hamish Macpherson will examine the space between intuition and analysis. The presentation will take the philosopher Henri Bergson's definition of the two terms, and contrast them with a third point, that has arisen from recent fields, such as Social Choreography (Andrew Hewitt), Existential Anthropology (Michael Jackson) and Non Representational Theory (Nigel Thrift). This third point, argues Macpherson, is a form of knowledge that is experienced from within, yet points towards things beyond the immediate experience. Such embodied knowledge is exemplified by dance, performance and choreography. This paper, which in Groningen will be accompanied by a practical-workshop, suggests how these theories of embodied and performed knowledge might sit within Bergson's original conception of analysis and intuition. Macpherson will make reference to his own emerging practices and other artists, suggesting how choreography can then be applied practically as a mode of political thinking and action.

Ryan Rockmore has a history of training and performing as a flamenco dancer. In this talk, he will discuss his experiences of balancing masculinity and femininity within his particular style, while framing it within a larger 'feminisation' of the male flamenco dancer. Grounded in theories on performance, gender, dance, and masculinity, he will address various intersections of dance and gender in flamenco.

'Performance Philosophy: The Young' is an Interim Event of the Performance Philosophy research network. It is hosted and supported by the University of Groningen and ICOG (The Groningen Research Institute for the Study of Culture), in association with Performance Philosophy. Participating institutions are University of Antwerp (BE), ArtEZ Master of Choreography (NL), Justus Liebig University Giessen (DE), University of Groningen (NL), University of Roehampton (UK) and University of Utrecht (NL).

Culture as Realised in Dance Research: A Primary Enquiry *[click to listen online]*

Dr. Chifang Chao, Associate Professor, Dept. of Dance, Taipei National University of the Arts
Thursday 20 February 2014, 6pm

The study of dancing is essentially a study of humanity. The questions, approaches, perspectives and exegeses all differ from culture to culture, however, and even from time to time under the same academic tradition. In my presentation, I shall try to reflect upon the questions that I have asked in terms of how culture can be realised through the research of dance, and how, mainly through the approach of contemporary anthropology, culture can be realised in exploring the knowledge of dancing. I will compare briefly the East Asian perspective to personhood manifested in dancing as both the practice and knowledge through examining some early Chinese Mandarin literature. The presentation is aimed to open cross-cultural discussion on how dance research has played an integral part in the expansion of our knowledge of the world and human beings.

Choreographies of Resistance: Dance and Social Justice

Professor Ananya Chatterjea, Department of Theater Arts and Dance at the University of Minnesota, Artistic Director of Ananya Dance Theatre
Monday 19 May 2014, 6pm

Broadly speaking, dance is often associated in the popular imaginary with fun, entertainment, and virtuosity. Yet dancing models some crucial practices of building solidarity and community, while simultaneously offering space for claiming self. What might it mean to harness the tremendous energy generated through dancing to issues of social justice? What might it mean to reframe the trajectory of concert dance in this way, at a time when dance is so strongly located in easy accessibility and a kind of hypervisibility through a plethora of television reality shows? I will speak about my own journey as a choreographer and artistic director of a dance

company of women of color, making dance at the intersection of artistic excellence and social justice, to illustrate some of the challenges and difficulties in this work.

Performance, Art and the Performing Arts

Dr David Davies, Professor and Chair of Philosophy, McGill University, Montreal, Quebec
Thursday 12 December 2013, 6 pm

What makes a person's actions a performance, and what makes a performance artistic? I explore these questions using examples from the performing arts and other artforms. Rejecting 'aestheticist' and 'institutional' answers to the second question, I advance a general thesis: that what makes any intentional product of human agency art is the kind of cognitive activity required if it is to perform its intended function. I then consider how such a thesis would apply to the performing arts, and how it might deal with apparent art objects or art performances that don't seem to call for the kind of cognitive activity in question.

Step Dancing in Ireland: Embodiments of Culture and Identity [*click to listen online*]

Dr Catherine Foley, Course Director MA Ethnochoreology and MA Irish Traditional Dance Performance, The Irish World Academy of Music and Dance, University of Limerick
Thursday 6 March 2014, 6pm

Economic, social and political circumstances shape notions of culture and identity and in Ireland, as in many other cultures around the world, this has been particularly expressed through dance. In this talk I will focus on one dance form, step dancing, and I will discuss how transformations in Irish culture have been witness to different embodiments and expressions of culture and identity through the step dancing body. I will also explore how the transnationalisation of Irish step dancing has ensured a multiplicity of voices and identities which have also contributed to current discourses and cultural understandings of Irish dancing.

Dance Breaks, Dream Ballets and Other Perils of the Musical: An Analysis of Form, Function and Liminality in Dance in Musicals

Dr Mary-Jo Lodge, Associate Professor, English and Theatre Studies, Lafayette College, Easton, Pennsylvania
Thursday 21 November 2013, 6pm

The Broadway musical is often roundly critiqued because its characters suddenly begin to sing and/or dance. These moments of transition - ones which move from one mode of communication to another (singing to dancing, for example) are defining ones for musicals and are fraught with challenges for their creators. In this presentation, I examine those transitional moments in representative stage and screen musicals which involve dance - ones in which characters begin dancing and stop singing, typically mid-song (the dance break), or sometimes mid-show (the dream ballet). I explore the ways in which dance is used as a mode of communication in various musicals and the ways in which certain shows navigate both the introduction of dance into a song or show, and the transitions, after a dance ends, back to song or speech. I explore specific musicals that have been successful in introducing choreographed movement into a show in order to theorize about how other musicals might achieve this. I suggest that when dance in musicals works well, creative teams usually have employed one of three approaches: using dance with a diegetic function, using dance in a deliberately unrealistic way, or using dance in a pre-integration (structurally speaking) fashion. For those musicals with a less successful justification of dance written in to their structure, I suggest that choreographers most often try to manufacture a diegetic approach to dance sequences. Regardless, however, all of these approaches to dance in the musical require careful handling of the shifts between the various modes of communication, and specifically require thoughtful analysis of how dance is used and how the liminal spaces will be addressed. If history is any indication, it seems that taking great care in crafting these dance moments can yield a musical that achieves both creative and commercial success.

If You Have No Time to Read the Book, Come and Listen to Frederick Ashton's Dances: Style, Performance and Choreography

Dr Geraldine Morris, Reader in Dance, University of Roehampton

Thursday 5 December 2013, 6pm

In this seminar, I talk about my recently published book which examines the choreography of Ashton from three perspectives: style, performance and choreography. Beginning with a brief discussion of my approach to style in dance, I then consider what kind of dancing bodies Ashton worked with by looking briefly at the ballet training in the first part of the twentieth century. The second half of my seminar will focus on a couple of the works mentioned in the book.

How did Dance and Mime Separate? Jean-Gaspard Debureau in Nineteenth-century France

Dr Edward Nye, ELF Fellow and Senior Modern Languages Tutor, Lincoln College Oxford

Thursday 13 March 2014, 6pm

Historically, mime and dance were closely related. From Lucian's famous 2nd-century treatise 'Of Dance' to early modern genres like the Commedia dell'arte and to the more recent genre of Romantic ballet, performers and spectators expected a close relationship between narrative and non-narrative movement. Modern scholars invariably discuss the divorce between the two in terms of dance choosing to separate from mime, but in fact it was mime which first established itself as fully autonomous from dance with the advent of the seminal mime artist Jean-Gaspard Debureau, who performed in Paris at the Funambules Theatre in the first half of the nineteenth century. In retrospect, he invented the image and character of the white-faced Pierrot which has endured to this day in one form or another. If the image has become a cliché, Debureau was in fact cutting edge in his time. He essentially invented what we think of today, generically, as mime. This seminar will focus on what he did, and how it relates to contemporary forms of dance in which mime played a large part: Romantic ballet and the ballet d'action.

Young Dance Troupes in Post-Genocide Rwanda: Tradition, Generational Rupture and the Construction of a New Nation

Dr Carine Plancke, Postdoctoral Research Fellow at the Centre for Dance Research, University of Roehampton, Research Associate at the Laboratoire d'Anthropologie Sociale, Paris
Wed 30 April 2014, 6pm-7.30pm

The last decade has witnessed a revival of 'traditional' dances in Rwanda, which has manifested itself in the proliferation of dance troupes for young people. This renewal reveals the dynamism of this East-African country in the drive to reconstruct itself after the devastation of the 1994 genocide. It is stimulated by the project, launched by the RPF since it took power by putting an end to the genocide, to create a 'New Rwanda'. The latter is conceived as a de-ethnicized unified Nation-State, which while being 'modern' and open to socio-economic development and globalisation remains rooted in its 'tradition'. My presentation will focus on the troupe Inganzo Ngari, created in 2006 and nowadays considered in Kigali as the first of its kind. It will explore the way this troupe came into being and reconfigured the dance repertoire, highlighting hereby the rupture with the previous generation of dancers as a constitutive feature of its emergence and success. It will further examine the changes in the dance dynamics that have been introduced by Inganzo Ngari in order to fully embody the image of a new Rwandan nation.