

Embodied Knowledge and Dancers' Dance-Making: Solo Dance Improvisation and Phenomenological Perspectives

Hilde Rustad and Gunn Engelsrud

Abstract

This paper illuminates the existing lack of knowledge concerning how dancers work in creative processes in contemporary dance. The material is produced from a period of sharing and elaborating upon dance improvisation practices. Two improvisers used solo improvisation, one performing and one watching, and invited another researcher in when analysing the material. They identified the theme "dialoguing with your material" and two situations called "returning home" and "the eye moment". Through conceptualising the not-yet-conscious, the lived expressive body, the attentiveness and bodily intentionality, the material illuminated the practice as something that dancers could gain new perspectives on. Analysis revealed the knowledge dancers embody as both vague and clear, as well as expressed in the dance improvisations' mutual sharing between the watching of the watcher and the dancing of the dancer. Bodily, social, and inter-affective relationships play out, and dancer's knowledge is visible in dwelling and expressiveness as a source for exploration of the dancer's subjectivity, voices, and tradition. Phenomenological literature supports how language plays a part in dancers' dance-making. This article exemplifies how creating material from improvisations contributes significantly because it is felt, known, bodily available, and should be pursued, not dismissed. Dance improvisation, regarding dance-making, needs to be further investigated, discovered, and articulated.

Key-words: Dance improvisation, phenomenology, creativity, shared knowledge.

Biographies

Hilde Rustad works as professor at Kristiania University of Applied Sciences in Oslo and teaches within dancer- and theatre- education. She is educated dancer and choreographer at the School for New Dance Development/Amsterdam School of the Arts and did her PhD "Dance to your own music; an analysis of contact improvisation and dance improvisation as tradition, interpretation and lived experience" [Dans etter egen pipe?] at the Norwegian school for sport sciences. Rustad focuses on artistic and academic research; her research is mainly on professional contemporary dance, dance and age, improvisation, contact improvisation, and dance in physical education and teacher education.

Email: hilde.rustad@kristiania.no

Gunn Engelsrud is a professor at Western University of Applied Sciences (HVL), Norway and a member of the Faculty for Pedagogical Practices, Culture and Sport at the Institute for Sport, Nutrition and Sciences. She has a PhD in pedagogy from the University of Oslo from 1991. Her professional field of competence is within pedagogy, learning and teaching in higher education, phenomenology, and qualitative research. Her current research interest focusses on phenomenological studies of PE and aspects of learning, meaning making and communication. She is an experienced teacher and supervisor for students (MA, PhD) within Health Sciences, Physical Education, Dance- and Movement studies.

Email: gunn.helene.engelsrud@hvl.no