Manual for Video Documentation of a Dance Class

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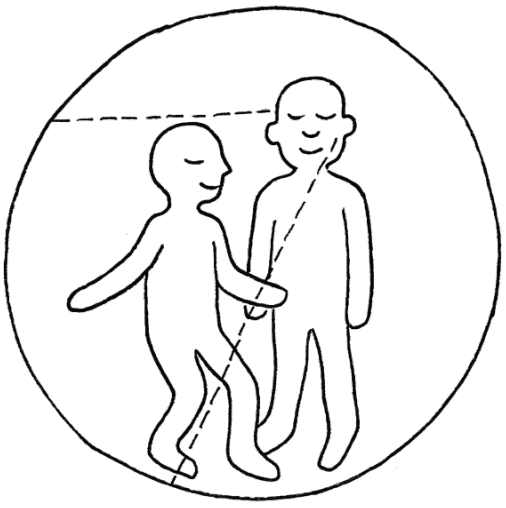
In this brief manual, I will address some questions about video documentation. They should help to clarify your intention to document, to set up the space for recording, and to find the best perspective to support your work. This proposal is aimed at teachers who want to evaluate their work. If you want to have recordings that you can use in order to publish your work, you should involve a professional video maker to receive a result that is representative. At the end of this contribution you will find a checklist that you can take along to the studio to remind you of certain steps.

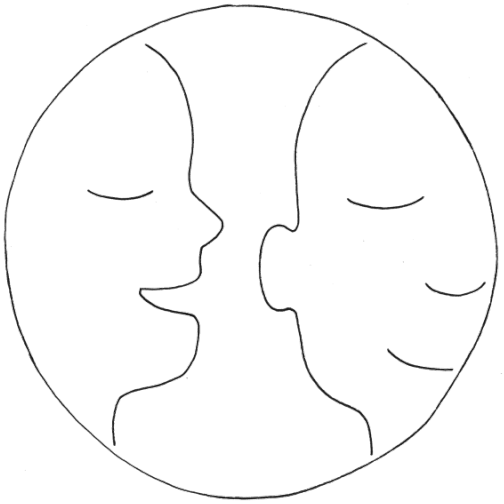
Before You Start

In teaching, documentation can address several aspects:

- What is the teacher doing?
- What is the teacher saying?
- How is the spatial organisation?
- What is the relation between teacher and student?
  - Are you close or are you distant?
  - Are you demonstrating?
  - Are you using touch in your teaching?
- What are the students doing?
- How is information transferred? When is the atmosphere changing?
- How to document/catch a very specific issue? How to make it visible?
- How to give a sense of the scope of the class – beginning, middle, and end?



— Demonstrating



— Verbal input

Make Your Choice

Among all possible ways of documentation, video, as a time based media, makes it possible for you to receive a visual impression of the developments in your class over a certain period of time. Below, I propose three chapters to elaborate on three basic ways to look at your class. The basic questions are repeated in each chapter, so that you can decide to go directly to chapter A, B or C.

If you want to document your class with video:

● Because you want to have a reference of your teaching for your own evaluation (Your ‘performance’ as a teacher)
Go to — Option A

● Because you want to see how students incorporate your exercises and proposals (Transmission of knowledge)
Go to — Option B

● Because you want to get feedback from a participant as a reference to your work (Individual perception as a source for further inspiration)
Go to — Option C

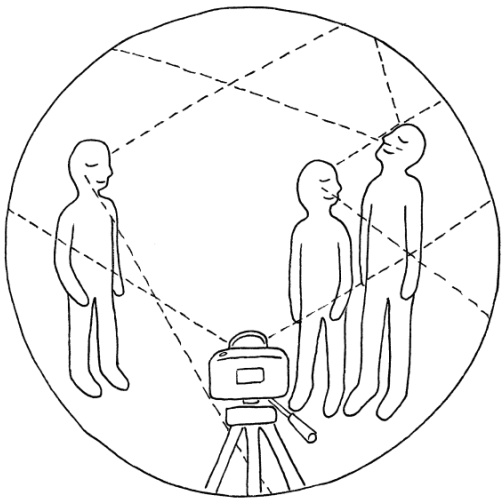
● A.

You want to have a look at your verbal, physical, and vocal input as a teacher along a single class or a series of classes

For recording, use the tool you have: a computer with an internal or external webcam, a smartphone, an action cam, or a camcorder. Watch out if you use a conventional DSLR camera. It might have a recording restriction of 13 min, then you have to restart the recording. If you use a camcorder, action cam, smartphone, or a DSLR camera, make sure you have a stand to adjust so that it is stable and safe. In case you want to leave it standing without an operator during class, you want to make sure it is not run over.

Have a look at the space you work in. Use the recording device to look through and check the frame according to various perspectives. You want to be visible and audible on the video.

- Do you have a specific place in space where you habitually teach from?
- Do you move a lot through space?
- Do you want to show the perspective of the students?



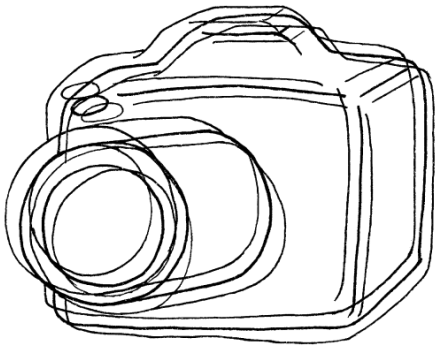
— Perspective

Check the lighting situation. Light from the windows or mirrors might affect the way you have to tune the aperture of your camera. The automatic aperture is measuring the average amount of light that strikes the lens. There is no differentiation between 'important' and 'not important' parts of the image. If there are windows, you might need to switch to manual aperture for making the space and yourself visible. In order to do so, place a body in front of the camera, zoom in on the body, and switch to manual aperture. Then you zoom out again. Outside of the windows might be overexposed in this stage as a compromise.

- Is there enough light on your body in the space?
- Are there mirrors in the space? Do they confuse the image?

Focus. The quality of the automatic focus of your camera might ask you to switch to manual focus. Autofocus mostly operates on objects in the centre of the image. If there is no structure in the space, if you have a plain unicoloured wall, then the autofocus will start to 'pump' in order to find a structure to focus on. Furthermore, if your class is very dynamic, it might be better to choose a manual focus on an average distance to the camera.

- How does the autofocus of your camera reach to an empty frame?
- How does the autofocus of your camera react to movement in space?



— Focus

Check the audio recording. The built in microphones of your device might not be sufficient to record your verbal instructions. Make sure to use headphones for listening to the quality and the level of audio recording of your device. Sometimes an additional sound recorder is needed. If you are using music, you may consider having a voice recorder on your body.

- How is the sound in/of the space?
- Is your voice recorded well on the device you use?
- Are you using music? Does this affect the audibility of your voice recording?

Choose a position for the recording device. When you set it up, be aware of possible movements of the participants in space.

Before you start recording make sure to ask permission and tell the participants that you record for your own evaluation. If people don't agree to be videotaped, find a way to respect that wish. If you are planning to use the recorded material later on for more than your personal evaluation: your website or a public platform, **take care of the legal rights of the participants** in terms of privacy and **be aware of the rights of music** according to the laws in your country.

Make sure that you **start voice and image recording before you start class**. If you record on separate tools, 'a clap' recorded with all devices can help to align sound and picture afterwards.

● B.

You want to see how students embody and transfer your exercises and proposals

For recording, use the tool you have: a computer with an internal or external webcam, a smartphone, an action cam, or a camcorder. Watch out if you use a conventional DSLR camera. It might have a recording restriction of 13 min, then you have to restart the recording. If you use a camcorder, action cam, smartphone, or a DSLR camera, make sure you have a stand to adjust so that it is stable and safe. In case you want to leave it standing without an operator during class you want to make sure it is not run over.

— Tools

Have a look at the space you work in. Use the recording device to look through and check the frame according to the various perspectives. Find the best position for the camera in order to catch the reaction of the students to your input. Decide if you want to record the whole group or a specific perspective.

- From which place do you have a good view on the space students will occupy?
- Are you teaching frontal, in a circle, or all over the space?
- Are you teaching on the floor, standing, and/or changing levels?

Check the lighting situation. Light from the windows or mirrors might affect the way you have to tune the aperture of your camera. The automatic aperture is measuring the average amount of light that strikes the lens. There is no differentiation between ‘important’ and ‘not important’ parts of the image. If there are windows, you might need to switch to manual aperture for making the space and the participants visible. In order to do so, place a body in front of the camera, zoom in on the body, and switch to manual aperture. Then you zoom out again. Outside of the windows might be overexposed in this stage as a compromise.

- Is there enough light on the bodies in space?
- Are there mirrors in the space? Do they confuse the image?

Focus: The quality of the automatic focus of your camera might ask you to switch to manual focus. Autofocus mostly operates on objects in the center of the image. If there is no structure in the space, if you have a plain unicolored wall, then the autofocus will start to 'pump' in order to find a structure to focus on. Furthermore, if your class is very dynamic, it might be better to choose a manual focus on an average distance to the camera.

- How does the autofocus of your camera reach to an empty frame?
- How does the autofocus of your camera react to movement in space?

Check the audio recording. The built in microphones of your device might not be sufficient to record your verbal instructions. Make sure to use headphones for listening to the quality and the level of audio recording of your device. Sometimes an additional sound recorder is needed. If you are interested in verbal feedback of the participants, think of using an external voice recorder that you can place close to their voices. If you are using music, you may consider having a voice recorder on your body.

- How is the sound in/of the space?
- Is your voice recorded well on the device you use?
- Are you using music? Does this affect the audibility of your voice recording?
- Are the verbal feedbacks of students part of your work? Do you want to catch the content?

— Headphones

Choose a position for the recording device. When you set it up, be aware of possible movements of the participants in space.

Before you start recording make sure to ask permission and tell the participants that you record for your own evaluation. If people don't agree to be videotaped, find a way to respect that wish. If you are planning to use the recorded material later on for more than your personal evaluation: your website or a public

platform, **take care of the legal rights of the participants** in terms of privacy and **be aware of the rights of music** according to the laws in your country.

Make sure that you **start voice and image recording before you start class**. If you record on separate tools, 'a clap' recorded with all devices can help to align sound and picture afterwards.

● C.

You want to have a documentation from a participant's perspective

Documentation from the perspective of a participant can add interesting information on how your class is perceived. This can feed back to your teaching and create new inspiration. Ask someone who is comfortable in dealing with technology and movement at the same time: to take a camera along during the class. Give them the freedom to catch what is of their interest. Encourage the subjectivity of documenting. The device they take along through the class should be easy to handle. The settings should be done at the beginning and kept the same throughout the whole class.

Check the lighting situation. Light from the windows or mirrors might affect the way you have to tune the aperture of your camera. The automatic aperture is measuring the average amount of light that strikes the lens. There is no differentiation between 'important' and 'not important' parts of the image. If there are windows, you might need to switch to manual aperture for making the space and the participants visible. In order to do so, place a body in front of the camera, zoom in on the body, and switch to manual aperture. Then you zoom out again. Outside of the windows might be overexposed in this stage as a compromise.

- Is there enough light on the bodies in space?
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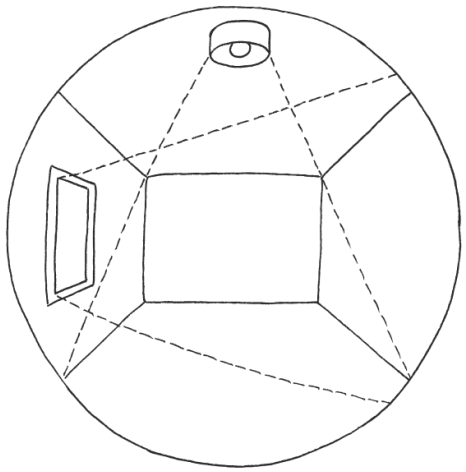


— Space, light

Focus. The quality of the automatic focus of your camera might ask you to switch to manual focus. Autofocus mostly operates on objects in the centre of the image. If there is no structure in the space, if you have a plain unicoloured wall, then the autofocus will start to 'pump' in order to find a structure to focus on. Furthermore, if your class is very dynamic, it might be better to choose a manual focus on an average distance to the camera.

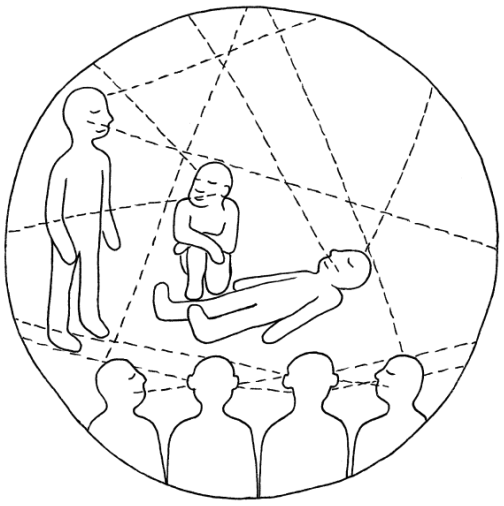
- How does the autofocus of your camera reach to an empty frame?
- How does the autofocus of your camera react to movement in space?

Check the audio recording. The built in microphones of your device might not be sufficient to record your verbal instructions. In the case of a subjective handheld recording, you will hear the touch as noise on the camera. If you want to have a recording of your instruction in addition to what the participant is focusing on, make sure to have a voice recorder on you (especially if you are using music). That also gives the freedom to the participant not to feel responsible for a 'proper' recording of the instructions.

- Are you using an additional voice recorder?
- How is the sound in/of the space?
- Is your voice recorded well on the device you use?
- Is the voice recorded well on the device the participant uses?
- Are you using music? Does this affect the audibility of the voice recordings?

Before you start recording make sure to ask permission and tell the participants that you record for your own evaluation. If people don't agree to be videotaped, find a way to respect that wish. If you are planning to use the recorded material later on for more than your personal evaluation: your website or a public platform, **take care of the legal rights of the participants** in terms of privacy and **be aware of the rights of music** according to the laws in your country.

Make sure that you **start voice and image recording before you start class**. If you record on separate tools, 'a clap' recorded with all devices can help to align sound and picture afterwards.



— Perspective, audience

General checklist for video documentation in class

IMAGE

- ○ Setup the **recording device**.
  - ☐ Charge battery or bring cables to plug in (only possible if the cable does not cause danger for the movement).
  - ☐ Format card before you start.
  - ☐ Reset timecode if needed.
  - ☐ Decide on recording format (low resolution – more hours/ high resolution less hours). Decided in consequence of how the material will be used.
  - ☐ Decide on focus (Manual/auto).
  - ☐ Decide on aperture (Manual/auto).
- ○ Save material, after finishing, on a computer or external hard drive.
- ○ Set up the **tripod**.
  - ☐ Make sure a tripod that is used without operator is stable and heavy enough not to move when there is dynamic movement in space.
  - ☐ You can use flexible mini tripods for smaller devices, which can be fixed anywhere safe in the space.

SOUND

- ○ Check the quality of the **built in microphone** in your device.
- ○ Check the additional sound recorder.
  - ☐ Charge batteries (at home).
- ○ Check the **external microphone**.
  - ☐ Check if it needs a battery (some microphones use the power of the camera, others have a battery included).
  - ☐ Connect the microphone either to the camera or to the sound recorder.
  - ☐ Wireless microphone for the teaching person can help, especially if the position of the teacher is changing in relation to the camera during class.
  - ☐ In case you use an external voice recorder, start recording and then make ‘a clap’. The peak of the clap helps you to align sound and image in the editing.
  - ☐ Always use headphones to test the quality of the sound.