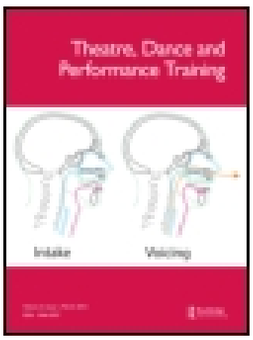

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Theatre, Dance and Performance Training

ISSN: 1944-3927 (Print) 1944-3919 (Online) Journal homepage: https://www.tandfonline.com/loi/rtdp20

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To cite this article: Rachel Sweeney (2012) Distilling principles – an investigation of the role of consciousness in butoh training, Theatre, Dance and Performance Training, 3:1, 68-80, DOI: 10.1080/19443927.2011.646294

To link to this article: https://doi.org/10.1080/19443927.2011.646294

Theatre, Dance and Performance Training,
Vol. 3(1), 2012, 68–80

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Taylor & Francis Group

Distilling principles – an investigation of the role of consciousness in butoh training

Rachel Sweeney

This essay provides a personal and critical approach to the Japanese contemporary performance expression of butoh through an investigation of the role of physical consciousness in contemporary performance training. Butoh is presented here as a performing entity containing its own existential movement aesthetic as well as reflecting social, political and cultural debates which surround the body in performance. In aligning butoh to certain initiatives within contemporary western dance theatre pedagogy, the article considers the shift from a range of contemporary form-based movement techniques which can be copied and accurately replicated in the body of the student, towards a conscious expression of movement that is cultivated out of a dialogue existing between internalised sensibilities and externalised movement forms. In comparing the author's own performance training experiences in Decroux Mime technique and contemporary dance with those in butoh, this paper aims to locate the distinct relationship between physical and aesthetic consciousness in the interface between butoh training and performance practice.

Keywords: Decroux Mime technique, Butoh, physical consciousness, anatomical imagery

Receptive states: performance training methods and their application

> Butoh training can be seen as the gradual forming of a question in the body. This question does not seek answers as found in the articulate aesthetic forms of ballet or other shape-shifting movement languages, but rather the long term process of butoh training serves only to expand and deepen the length of that question. (Baskerville 1997, p. 37)

In examining the distinctiveness of physical training processes in butoh, this paper will isolate certain features that I argue are inherent to butoh training to include the application of language and physicality, the activation of

Theatre, Dance and Performance Training ISSN 1944-3927 print/ISSN 1944-3919 online
 http://www.tandfonline.com
http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/19443927.2011.646294

multiple sets of physical engagement and the articulation of imagery through the body. Initially, I point to certain embodied processes within contemporary mime training that, similar to butoh, directly describe anatomical imagery in order to access specific performance characteristics. In order to foreground a debate on this application of imagery, it is helpful to investigate those individual receptive processes engaged through kinaesthetic-based movement training. Dance theorist Susan Foster (2000) locates the shift away from singular form-based movement created within professional companies for the purposes of stage production, towards an engagement in the processes surrounding the creation of dance as occurring within postmodern dance:

> Unlike modern dance pioneers such as Martha Graham and Doris Humphries, whose vocabularies seemed to issue from pan-human psychic dynamics, choreographers from the mid 1960s shifted the focus away from psychological origins and toward the physical matter of dance-making. (Foster 2000, Foreword in *My Body, the Buddhist*, p. x)

The emphasis on dance creation as opposed to production which occurred during the late 1960s and 1970s arguably destabilised dance's smooth ontological ground (Lepecki 2004), blurring traditional distinctions between choreographer and dancer – and between training and performance. As such, many postmodern dance performances relied on a particular sensibility or application of energy in the performer, rather than a level of technical competence, arguably shifting the emphasis away from the aesthetic presentation of dance towards an exploration of the role of consciousness in dance training and performance. If dance training in its widest definition refers to the digestion, appropriation and physical acquisition of particular movement techniques or sensibilities, certain 'hidden' receptive activities are arguably contained within the immediate experiential learning environment, where individual physiological processes such as corporeal memory, muscular control and kinetic coordination prioritise visual and sensorial stimulation over cerebral understanding. In such a way, the cultivation of formal dance learning practices can be described as dependent on a series of physiological and cognitive processes.

> The codified dance performance techniques have brand names such as Cecchetti (ballet), Russian ballet, Cunningham and Graham. Each training technique is also the performance form, the training being a compilation of adapted phrases of movement from already performed and dated choreographies. Dancers learn each technique by embodying the external representation of the performed language. These are the mirror-reflected languages, working from the external images to the internal kinaesthetic. (Claid 2007, p. 80)

Claid's debate on the pedagogic application of individually contested signature practices within conventional western theatrical dance training here suggests how the acquisition of a performance aesthetic in traditional dance methods must follow a reflective process, working from an externalised (visual) process to an internalised (sensorial) one. Where the

cognitive process starts externally and moves inward, becoming embedded through disciplined repetition, the above description implies a reciprocal engagement in the dancer which presupposes already present sensibilities that are enacted upon through a reflective process, where the dance student initially copies or mimics those external forms presented. However, where the majority of training processes surrounding formal western dance pedagogy follow such a process, I propose that the role of the dance student might remain predisposed towards certain evaluative mechanisms aligned to individual modes of recognition within the physical acquisition of any new movement technique. Claid's use of visual metaphor above suggests that the dance student might strive initially to produce an exact replica of those taught movements through a mirroring process. Arguably, where Claid's observation might also involve interpretative and assimilative strategies on the part of the dance student, in the case of western traditional dance studies, the cognitive process in which the dancer-student is engaged must also contend with a set of assumptions regarding the trained dancer, often underpinned with a set of aesthetic ideals that are arguably governed by conventional attitudes to physical alignment and technical exactitude. Conversely, as Baskerville suggests at the start of this section, certain processes surrounding butoh training can be seen to operate through applying specific imagery through vocal description in order to access movement forms, the external or aesthetic presentation of movement results from an interior articulation.

Before developing an inquiry into the nature of butoh training, the following section will initially consider my own formal training experiences in Decroux Mime technique, considering the relationship held between physical and aesthetic consciousness within kinaesthetic training processes. For the purpose of this writing, the term 'consciousness' is defined, in the context of physical performance training, as a physiological inquiry into the internal expression of the performer, drawing from Valery's description of Isadora Duncan's dance as 'a kind of *inner life*, allowing that psychological term a new meaning in which physiology is dominant'.[1] Consciousness is also linked here to Abrahms' concept of expressionism as that which 'signifies the internal made external' (Abrahms in Franko 1995, p. 1) and will be further located in the cultivation of the performer's body within mime and also butoh training that prioritises a particular movement sensibility. Thus, the term physical consciousness points to the internal dialogue held by both the mime and butoh student between a range of visual images, as suggested primarily through anatomical description while aesthetic consciousness refers to those means of physicalising certain images and experiences within compositional movement.

1. For a further critique on the role of consciousness in dance see Valery (1964, cited in Franko 1995, p. 1).

Kinaesthetic learning in Decroux Mime technique

Similar to the codified gestural language of classical ballet, Etienne Decroux, working in France during the early part of the twentieth century, cultivated a highly refined formal movement expression, based on the technical presentation of a range of precise bodily articulations. The architecture of Decroux's mime body operates from an axial structure, dividing the

three-dimensional frame into a series of body parts all operating both independently and interdependently within an overall governing system of kinetic logic. These, he argued, could be ascribed to distinct emotional and psychological states, as represented within the context of theatrical expression.[2] Decroux developed a precise gestural repertoire based on a series of scales which worked on the various anatomical axes of head, chest, torso, solar plexus and pelvis. His divisive anatomical analysis emphasises the mime artist's own muscular control over the individual joints and limbs of the body, in order to articulate specific physical states which might convey a whole repertoire of theatrical expressions as well as establishing a performer's status on stage. By assigning the role of each body part and their interrelation to a specific emotion or psychological condition, the external attitude of the body can be seen to correspond to an equivalent internal attitude of mind. For example, Decroux identified 32 distinct articulations of the neck, each inclination denoting a particular emotion or attitude. Elsewhere, he would ascribe elemental or animalistic terms to reference specific movement states, for example, 'Salamander' (lizard) and 'Coquillage' (shell) denote two opposing positions of the hands – one concave and one convex. By asserting that each movement enunciation corresponds to a particular human condition, as informed by his close observation of socio-cultural physical behaviour, Decroux's methods provide his audience with a thorough anatomical dissection of the performer's body. Thomas Leabhart (1989, p. 50) describes the exactitude of each physical gesture on stage achieved by Decroux's company members in performance:

> Each second of the approximately seven minutes required to perform each piece was exactly choreographed in terms of line, dynamic quality, facial expression, breath and weight, and not a single placement of head, hands, or feet was arbitrary.

My own training experiences in Decroux Mime technique, participating in daily classes over a three month period in Amsterdam, reflect an equal balance between the externalised cognitive process of mirroring movement and the development of certain internalised kinaesthetic sensations. Through detailed observation and disciplined repetition, this movement repertoire gradually became cultivated in my body, while my dependence on the role of the visual and aural (i.e. external) stimuli lessened as my kinaesthetic understanding of the movement increased. Such a shift would appear to subscribe to Claid's earlier identification of certain receptive processes that occur within western classical modernist and expressionist movement training processes, where the dance student can be said to be 'working from the external images to the internal kinaesthetic' (Claid 2007, p. 80). Decroux's method implies that the cognitive process might operate, in the mime student, as a fluid translation between inner consciousness and outward bodily expression. Notably, however, my perceptive awareness was challenged, following three months of daily training, when our teacher proposed to include the use of a wall mirror as a visual reference. In this instance, the effect of witnessing my projected image served to confuse any kinaesthetic understanding of those movements in the moment of their

2. Studies of this form are taken from my undergraduate training experiences studying Decroux Mime technique at the Amsterdam Theatre School *Hoge School voor de Kunsten*, August–December 1995.

execution, thereby engendering an immediate sense of mistrust in the reflected image (and a subsequent doubting of my own internalised learning methods). Indeed, the apparent separation I experienced between the image presented and the corporeal gesture now reflected appeared to signal a loss of authorship in the translation between perception, kinaesthetic sensation, muscular articulation and performance expression. This somewhat unnerving experience was formative in cultivating a strong belief that, in order to progress further in my dance training, I needed to expand and to strengthen the role of physical consciousness as a way to mediate between generating movement from an internal kinaesthetic sensibility and projecting movement through external (reflected) image.

At first observation, many of the processes involved in training the mime student can be regarded as similar to butoh in developing a constant dialogue between internal image and external form. However, whereas the mime artist delineates a particular landscape by tracing its outlines, its depth, texture and surface details, the butoh performer might allude to a landscape by associative means – through its smells, colours or atmosphere. Imperative to the distinction of butoh and mime is the process of transformation surrounding the production of imagery and movement forms in butoh. The mime student aims to relay in aesthetic terms the close transmission of a particular object, character or emotional state as displayed through movements which can be readily interpreted according to their conscious articulation or formation in performance.

> Through relentless analysis and reflection on the human body and on the body of the mime artist, [Decroux] succeeded in building a theatre whose sole means of expression was the body, and in training the actors, the mimes, who were able to bring this theatre into being, using only silent gesture. (Perret 2006, p. 44)

Where butoh exceeds the theatricality of the performance gesture, however, is where it can be seen to vary in intentionality, engaged in an ongoing dialogue between internal and external movement. Dance ethnographer Nanako Kurihara outlines the relationship between externalised image and internalised kinaesthetic below, contrasting to Claid's earlier description of western dance training methods (Claid 2006, p. 80) in prioritising the role of internal perceptions.

> There is no mirror in the studio. In butoh, unlike western dance styles, the dancer's inner sense of the body is emphasised over its outer appearance. Using the teacher's eyes as a mirror, the student learns the movements through his internal sense of body. He defines his body from its internal perceptions, and controls it in this way, concentrating inwardly instead of being concerned with his outward visual appearance. (Kurihara 1996, p. 109)

The following section proposes how butoh training might operate through a reversal of those conventional training processes found in the kinaesthetic learning practices in mime and contemporary dance techniques above, in seeking to identify further the role of image, sensation and memory in dance.

Translation and transmission: a brief history of butoh training and performance

If, as I suggested at the start, training refers to the appropriation and physical manifestation of a previously 'unknown' form, then Baskerville's (1997, p. 37) above analogy of butoh training as an evolving question for the body to engage with might be seen to follow a lateral rather than linear progression. The following sections aim to isolate and critique points of discovery surrounding the confrontation of the butoh student with different living matter, advocating a radical remapping of the dance body based on its ability to change perception of its three-dimensional form.[3] While there is still no formal pedagogy that can be ascribed to butoh since the death of Hijikata in 1986, Japanese butoh artists have evolved the dance from Hijikata's teachings to encompass various new forms. Where butoh can be seen to develop in Japan within small ensembles during the 1960s–1980s, following its dispersal in the late 1980s, second generation butoh artists have sought to follow different performance pathways away from Japan, blending first generation butoh traditions as established through Hijikata's legacy with other somatic practices and performance media. Nowadays butoh has found its roots within a widely scattered lineage, as the early 1980s saw many Japanese butoh artists seek new directives in Europe and the US, while many visiting western artists spent several years undergoing strict training and mentoring programmes with butoh artists in Japan. Such individual directives and exchanges have not eroded Hijikata's legacy, but rather can be seen to reflect the strengths of those autonomous and independent responses that this particular movement expression demands of its dancers.

Much debate has been generated during the past two decades on the lineage of butoh from its roots in post-nuclear Japan to what has become a gradual dissemination of this art form into western theatre and dance practices, finding resonance within the currents of experimental dance, dance theatre and performance art. During the 1960s artists were highly politically active in Japan, divided between nostalgic tribute, as found within the increasing valorisation of traditional arts practices, and the desire to construct a modern expression which rejected established performance traditions such as Noh and Kabuki. The years immediately following the end of World War II brought about increasing urbanisation within Japan. Coupled with a newly imposed aspiration towards an Americanised democracy, new constitution and new civil law, this radical cultural transition caused opposition among those artists searching for a new way to express some of the concerns of the time. It is perhaps worth considering butoh in the context of late twentieth century performance practices as a migrating art form in order to help identify some of the intrinsic paradoxes and contradictions that occur in the transplantation of certain defining influences of the western avant-garde to Japanese butoh.[4] Its emergence in the Japanese dance community in the late 1960s served to sever butoh from within its own cultural climate while, following the death of Hijikata, Japanese butoh artists sought more supportive structures, migrating to Europe and the US. Thus, while butoh's migration from within its own cultural theatrical expression is clearly evidenced through influences from contemporary western literary and dance movement, any further speculation on butoh in

3. I refer here to choreographer Deborah Hay's description of the relationship between the dancer's three-dimensional form and its sensitivity to both the surrounding the relation to space and to other dancer's bodies, based on the perceptions of their own physical limitations: 'Thank Heavens for the limitations of the three dimensional body that allows us to play' (Taken from workshop with Deborah Hay, The Connected Body Symposium, School of New Dance Development, Amsterdam, June 2005).

4. The notion of a western avant-garde is of particular relevance here as butoh can be considered a relatively 'short-term' tradition whose legacy is determined by what Kuniyoshi terms a

'variegated genealogy' (Kuniyoshi 1989), and whose evolution spans just four decades and as many continents since its arrival in what was arguably a volatile and culturally fragmented climate. According to Hoffman et al. (1987), while forging a new identity for butoh within Japan, German expressionist dance was to play an important role in the cultivation of Ohno and Hijikata's corporeal expression where both were initially influenced by modern dancer Takaya Eguchi, one of Mary Wigman's disciples. A student of pioneering modern dancer Rudolph Laban, Wigman's preoccupation with eastern mysticism prompted her 1926 solo performance, *Witch Dance*, which explores the raw expression of dance, echoing primal rhythms in natural movements which reflect a similar aesthetic to those found within butoh.

5. The development of butoh from its roots in communal training cultures towards a universal dissemination in the form of international symposia, workshops and training programmes is representative of a wider shift in both eastern and western performance training practices. Here the ethos and the appeal of individualised and idiosyncratic expert disciplinary practices can be seen to have lost favour in contrast with informal mentoring programmes, interdisciplinary and collaborative research methods and hybridised training approaches as illustrated within formal higher education mixed mode Performing Arts courses as well as through individual directives.

6. While acknowledging the importance of site-based practice and training in butoh, the current writing

the context of the European and American postmodernist movement must acknowledge the literal migration of a fractured community of artists during the decade immediately following Hijikata's death. While Hijikata's own performance legacies can be traced within writings, photographs and filmed documents, the focus of the current writing project is to locate certain movement training principles that I argue here are inherent to butoh.

Whereas western institutionally established dance education methods might presume a clear evolution from student to paid, contractual performer to teacher/choreographer, there is no one school of thought or formal pedagogical structure surrounding the evolution of butoh. Throughout its 40 year history, and following the migration of Japanese butoh artists to Europe and America in the late 1980s, the prevailing teaching methods of this dance form have developed through collective workshop training experiences. Second and third generation butoh artists continue to make work in isolation, often within small interdisciplinary contexts, while spreading their respective knowledge practices through both performing and teaching internationally in intensive workshop programmes.[5] One such artist is Swedish butoh dancer SU-EN who, following almost a decade of living and training with butoh artists in Japan, transferred her dance practice to her native Sweden, where she continues to develop her own butoh training and performance methods at her artistic headquarters in Almunge, Uppsala – a small, remote village just north of Stockholm. Throughout her training in Japan, SU-EN spent five years studying under Tomoe Shizune, artistic director of the Hakutobo group, originally formed by the founder of Butoh, Tatsumi Hijikata. In Hakutobo, she trained under Hijikata's long term collaborator Yoko Ashikawa and was a member of the company Gnome that was directed by Tomoe Shizune and Hakutbobo. Following this period of intensive training in Japan, SU-EN has spent over a decade developing her own performance training and research through regular workshops and performance festivals in Sweden as well as steering international touring programmes. Notably, my own exposure to butoh through SU-EN's teaching is confined to a European context, where the work has arguably continued to expand butoh's legacy to encompass new directives and performance sensibilities. In particular, SU-EN's own practice and performance prioritises the role of the senses, where the majority of her training takes place outdoors in the surrounding forest. The following section will address my individual experiences of attending regular intensive workshops between 1998–2002 with SU-EN, where the daily training activities were equally divided between studio- and-site based movement exploration.[6]

Animated tensions: the role of gravity in Butoh

SU-EN describes how the learning processes of butoh might take up to 10 years – five years to understand a movement philosophy and another five to evolve this understanding physically.[7] To engage in SU-EN's physical training might be described as an attempt to consciously reverse the normative proprioceptive functions of the body's socio-physiological construct. Her specific treatment of the proprioceptive functions requires an investigation

remains focused on the role of physical consciousness within SU-EN's studio-based butoh training. For further guidance on the role of the sense in site-based movement training practices please see Orr and Sweeney (2011).

7. Taken from unpublished statement by SU-EN disclosed within her butoh training workshop, Haglund Skola, Sweden, 2001.

into the conditions of our socially constructed patterns of daily movements – how the body orientates itself in society where it 'possesses the power of reacting to gravity, inertia and momentum, the primary forces of the physical world, by means of that part of the nervous system known as proprioceptive, or "perceiving the self" (Todd-Elmsworthy 1973, p. 27). SU-EN's first stages of training, 'The Natural Body', aims to create a heightened awareness of the body's relationship to gravity through attempting to find a paradoxical state of passive alertness by allowing natural gravitational forces to work on the muscular structure of the body. Through investigating everyday movements such as walking, sitting and lying down, the student is encouraged to find a sense of neutral balance – a kind of 'emptying' of all unnecessary muscular control to utilise the bare minimum effort required for these positions. For example, in her daily training SU-EN would encourage us to find a way to move to the floor at the slowest possible speed, in order to fully investigate the structure of the legs and pelvis which might find a way to fold underneath the body. Here, the dancer is forced to confront directly their individual physical barriers, reaching their 'limit' of flexibility, or strength. At this point, the application of further imagery served to create the sensation of lightness, such as the image of the space around the body consisting of water or dense molecules, so that the body might continue to move downwards, connecting the natural fluid systems in the body with the imagined buoyant and supportive states in the surrounding atmosphere.

Hijikata once described his movement practice as deriving from a sense of crisis in the body, where constant physical tension is maintained between opposing states. He described how, when his body would fall to the floor, his dead sister would stand up in his body – when he stood up, her body would lie down (Hijikata paraphrased in Masson-Sekine and Viala 1988, p. 88). In contrast, the use of falling within Release-based contemporary dance technique provides support for the dancer by emphasising the use of suspension and lightness in the body as well utilising momentum in order to fall to the ground.[8] In my experience, the two approaches are diametrically opposed, as the release-based approach resists the impact of gravity until the last possible moment through applying the sensation or image of suspension, then uses the natural return of weight in the form of rebound, to regain a standing position. Conversely, Hijikata's above description applies the contrasting image of standing/recovering simultaneously to falling which produces a physical paradox or dichotomy. Yoko Ashikawa once described Hijikata's process of objectifying the body in butoh, where he would encourage his students to study the functions of the body with the innocence of a young child in investigating the physical limits of each separate body part and its function in his training:

8. Eric Hawkins and Doris Humphries represent two defining signature practices in twentieth century dance technique, where common to both is the establishment of a conscious relationship with gravity that emphasises the use of breath, contraction and suspension in moving down to the floor and returning to standing.

> He used the metaphor of a meal for dancers served on a plate, on which were placed the dancer's liver, lungs and heart. The plate was wide and shallow, and the dancer was encouraged to play with the organs and examine them. This is something that children do unconsciously; they play with the parts of their bodies in order to recognize them … He would often say 'let your hand do this' or 'let your leg do this' in contrast to the usual designated functions of the limb. (Ashikawa cited in *Hoffman* et al. 1987, p. 16)

By de-familiarising the body with its usual physiological functions, the student must relearn the maximum physical possibilities of movement in every limb. Such an emptying out subscribes to Hijikata's notion of the 'objective body', following a Japanese phenomenological approach to the body, as outlined here by Yasuo Yuasa, who develops the minimalist concept of Japanese Noh theatre performer Zeami's 'no-mind':

> In the state of no-mind, the subjective-objective ambiguity between one's mind and body disappears, and the body as an object is made completely subjective … The bodily form dancing on a stage signifies, at the same time, the mind just as it is. In the active state of body-mind identity, the ambiguous dichotomy of the body disappears. (Yuasa 1987, p. 109)

The butoh student is encouraged to interrogate the body's conditioned kinetic responses in order to relearn potential movement patterns. Such a reassessment of the body's capabilities has implications for how the student perceives his or her own body, as Japanese butoh dancer and writer Nanako Kurihara describes of her training experiences with Yoko Ashikawa's butoh company, Hakutobo:

> As infants we do not perceive our own body distinct from other things. Through interacting with the world, our perceptions become differentiated. In butoh one must question not only one's own institutionalised movements but also one's perception of the body itself. (Kurihara 1996, p. 99)

The Japanese character for butoh consists of two elements: *bu* (dance) and *toh* (step), or, literally, stamping dance. Such a body appears directly opposed to western classical dance movement where, as Claid (2007, p. 21) points out, '[t]he abstract imagery of the upward vertical line moving from the 'lowly and bad' pleasures of the body to the 'high and good' conceptual pleasures of the mind is a concern that travels through the centuries of western philosophy and culture. In contrast, the butoh dancer uses the central force of energy lying low in the body, the legs spreading like roots into the ground, while the arms are controlled by imagistic impulses that move through the body from beneath the ground. Such an inversion of western classical architectural forms found in Claid's description above, has implications for the role of the mind or intellect in relation to its corporeal counterpart, as the head is given less significance in proportion to the pelvis and 'roots' of the body. Subsequently, the thinking body in butoh could be said to take its direction from the proprioceptive role of the muscles, nerves and senses as from a cognitive understanding. Such a distribution of energy is similar to many East Asian dance and martial art forms, where the focus as the centre of strength is situated just below the navel, and the legs are slightly bent to connect hips with knee joints; knees with the soles of the feet, and the feet with the earth.

In order to further achieve a sensation of lightness in her training method, SU-EN would apply the image of a mosquito, with soft hanging legs on a supported, light frame. She would suggest threads connecting the limbs out into space, so that the image was one of suspension, being moved by the surrounding air or wind. A distinct realisation of the separation between

body and mind arose one day as I was fully immersed in the sensation of this hanging, weightless body, yet at the same time I registered the sound of my feet as they impacted on the floor. The sound of my feet hitting the floor at that moment appeared to completely contradict the sensation of weightlessness that I was experiencing – as though in fact the body's materiality was conflicting with what the mind's understanding of the body was at that point, turning Yuasa's statement around, so that I had the impression of the body as subject made completely objective.

The role of consciousness in butoh training

The study of consciousness in performance is the subject of many writings on contemporary actor and dancer training. Phillip Zarrilli has written at some length on the synthesis between sensation, muscular or corporeal memory and cognition within the context of registering new movement systems and principles through what he terms the 'psycho-physical' body.

> Perhaps our task, then, in the studio, is to 'practice metaphysics,' i.e., to thoughtfully tease out in our specific modes of embodiment the assumptions and presuppositions about the body, mind, 'self,' and 'action' that are at 'play' there, informing what we do and how we do it. That means systematic exploration of the nature of the bodymind, our consciousness, and our 'selves,' not as an empty 'academic' or intellectual exercise, but as an active experience 'on the edge of the absent' – that place where we risk losing our craft, and our selves. (Zarrilli 2002, p. 164)

The role of perceptual consciousness inferred here by Zarrilli implies a variety of authorial roles for the individual practitioner. The internal series of dialogues that exist between 'body', 'mind', 'self' and 'action' put forward by Zarrilli indicate clear reference points from which to engage those separate yet interrelated processes of generating and refining movement material. The processes involved in the production of movement material can be said to engage constantly in a double exposure between those movements generated within improvisatory states and those means of physicalising or actualising these images and experiences in movement. However, Zarrilli's suggestion that in order to systematically explore the nature of consciousness we might arrive 'on the edge of the absent', presents a paradox where he equates self-identity with form or 'craft' – the lack thereof thus implying an absence or loss. At this point, the term 'physical consciousness' might provide a useful site on which to further debate such a dualistic notion and, furthermore, as a premise from which to explore more fully the role of consciousness in butoh training. The ability of the dancer to maintain an acute awareness of the perceptive mode through pertaining to explicit kinetic and distilled perceptual modes of behaviour is, I would argue, a prerequisite in the context of both butoh training and performance. Perceptual consciousness, on the other hand, can be described as reciprocal sensorial perception, occurring in the present moment while also implying the emergence of further (future) sensations or forms in the body. Theatre practitioner Rebecca Loukes, researching into Eva Gindler's psycho-physical

movement training methods in the early twentieth century in Germany, describes how the speculative proprioceptive mode employed by her dancers does not necessarily separate the present from the future: 'Being fully rooted in the action of a certain movement allows for the potential to reflect in that same moment – the reflection need not be disconnected' (Loukes 2003, p. 56).

Both Loukes and Zarrilli point to the necessity in performance to remain fully aware at all times of the internal processing of a series of images, their manifestation in physical form and the presence of the audience. A hyper-consciousness is called for here, in order for the performer to mediate between internalised sensations, movement impulses, choreographic composition and communicative processes. These interrelated sites of engagement can be argued to operate within a distinct dissipated temporal state, not dissimilar to the ability of the butoh performer to address many images simultaneously in performance, whilst activating separate movement impulses and sensations – a process that I term here 'physical synaesthesia'.

The role of physical synaesthesia in butoh training

Cultural theorist Brian Massumi suggests how a body in motion creates multiple sites of potential movement directives, signifying any number of possibilities for movement in any direction:

> Take movement: when a body is in motion, it does not coincide with itself. It coincides with its own transition: its own variation. The range of variations it can be implicated in is not present in any given moment, much less in any position it passes through. In motion a body is an immediate, unfolding relation to its own nonpresent potential to vary. (Massumi 2002, p. 4)

The 'emptying out' of the body that takes place within SU-EN's 'Natural Body' training methods is favoured towards stillness, slowed movements and the application of specific imagery in order to transgress physical limitations. This process does not necessarily imply an unconscious or diminished movement state, but rather, by minimising the muscular control of the limbs, daily actions such as walking, sitting or standing still are revisited and interrogated to find the most effective way to move. In effect, achieving an available and hyper-aware movement state in seeking to 'cultivate the differentiatedness of body – the many distinctive possibilities for physical articulation – and the attentiveness required to track and take note of the body's inclinations' (Foster in Hay 2000, p. xiii).

By investigating multiple movement possibilities and coordinates in every limb, kinetic impulses found in the organisation of the musculature structure are interrogated, facilitating certain gravitational directives that enable the dancer to attain momentum, balance and coordination in articulating shape and rhythm in space. I argue that the particular tension that is apparent in watching a butoh performer's movement can be said to occur as the result of this reappraisal of the physiological and kinetic conditioning of the body's normative proprioceptive functions. To achieve this awareness in movement requires an ability to discern multiple sets of movement possibilities as in

Massumi's description of multiple movement above, from limb to limb, or from skin to bone, with the aim of producing an available body that can adapt to any situation, sensation or suggestion that might arise in training or performance circumstances. Unlike the mirroring process surrounding the exact physiological acquisition of certain animalistic states described earlier in relation to mime training, both image and form can be said to be in constant dialogue within a transformational process in butoh. In such a way, physical consciousness occurs where the butoh performer can be said to be *in dynamic operation* with imagery. Similarly to Massumi's proposition here for potential multiple movement variations, when the butoh performer *does* communicate human states, it is as a result of the aesthetic consciousness created, or what Zarrilli (2004, pp. 654–655) terms the 'aesthetic-bodymind', rather than his/her engagement with descriptive images.

Conclusion

The development of butoh from its roots in communal training cultures in post-war Japan towards a universal dissemination in the form of international symposia, workshops and training programmes is representative of a wider shift in both eastern and western performance training practices. While there are certain similarities raised here between mime and butoh practices, both of which are dependent on internal imagistic processes and their externalised representation, articulated in physical form, the butoh performer does not allude to distinct emotional or humanistic movement states in performance. Rather, the butoh performer animates forms in the body through a phantasmagorical parade of mineral, animal and elemental matter. Thus, physical consciousness requires the performer to constantly engage in a double exposure between the internal image, as fed through language, and those external forms presented. In mediating between poetic description, anatomical imagery, perceptual nodes and multiple movement states, butoh as a late twentieth century movement expression can be seen to exceed the limits of theatrical representation or somatic practice; as Kuniyoshi (1989, p. 6) suggests:

> 'Butoh is not only performance, but also the embodiment of one of the most precise critical spirits in the history of the consciousness of the body.'

The ability of the butoh performer to maintain an objective handling of his/her own anatomy (Hijitkata's 'objective body') while directing a focus toward those tensions and counter-tensions that exist in the dialogue sustained between internal and external movement processes, articulates an acute awareness of the body's movement potential. Within such potential, the particular relationship of language and physicality held in butoh activates an ongoing dialogue between image, sensate description and physical articulation, thus minimising the distance between internal awareness and aesthetic form, between the dancer and the dance.

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