

Nordic Journal of Dance

– practice, education and research



Volume 16 (1) 2025

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Cover photo: João Octávio Peixoto/TMP

Original design: Bente Halvorsen

Revised design: Asker Print AS

Publisher: Senter for dansepraksis (SANS) on behalf of Dance Education Nordic Network (DENN),

www.dansepraksis.no sans@dansepraksis.no

Printing: Asker Print AS

ISSN 1891-6708



Editorial

It is a pleasure to present this volume of the *Nordic Journal of Dance*, which contains a research article, an emerging scholar article, one essay and a report.

Christopher Engdahl's article "Theories on Creative Dance in Physical Education and Physical Education Teacher Education—A Narrative Review" is connected to his PhD dissertation "Indetermination in Creative Dance: On Creative Dance Teaching in Physical Education Teacher Education" (2024). By examining research studies, Engdahl explores key ideas and theoretical perspectives on teaching creative dance in physical education. His ambition is to increase the clarity of the pedagogic content knowledge that characterises the teaching area in this educational context.

Dance scholar and practitioner Kajsa Sandström's article "Vision of Adorée Villany: The Naked Dancer's Body as Art" brings a nuanced perspective to the cultural and historical layers of dance. Sandström investigates the overlooked legacy of Adorée Villany, a pioneering figure in early modern dance who positioned the naked body as a legitimate artistic medium. Drawing on archival press materials and Villany's own theoretical writings, Sandström reveals a contested space in Nordic cultural discourse where dance, morality and modernism collided. Despite Villany's active touring in the region, her absence from Swedish dance historiography signals deeper tensions, which Sandström's article seeks to illuminate.

Frode Barkved, an eurythmist and associate professor at Rudolf Steiner University College in Oslo, wrote an essay about how eurythmy was received by the Norwegian public during its early period. He presents his perspective of the encounter between eurythmy and the Norwegian public approximately one hundred years ago. Drawing on a substantial number of newspaper reviews and letters to the editor, Barkved highlights how eurythmy was perceived as a performing art in its era, including what it contributes to and distinguishes it from dance art.

In her report "*Vanishing: Choreographing the Ephemerality of Dancing Bodies Through Archeologically Inspired Practices*," dance researcher Telma João Santos

reflects on the creation process of the dance piece *Vanishing*, a work choreographed and performed by dance artists Beatriz Valentim and Bruno Senune in 2024. In the piece, they explored transitional, undefined spaces, both physical and perceptual, through contrasts between, for example, visibility and invisibility, and presence and absence. The work investigates the ephemeral nature of the dancing body. Using her experience as a researcher and her involvement in the process, Santos presented the project from initial ideas to public performance.

The works in this volume, each in their own manner, provide valuable insights into the art of dance from historical and current perspectives. We see how dance and the dancer's body challenge prevailing norms around morality and artistic expression, tensions between eurythmy and what was considered dance art, and how dance may question conventional understandings of presence and visibility and perspectives on creative dance pedagogy in physical education. The presented studies contribute to a growing interdisciplinary dialogue about the boundaries, histories and transformative potentials of dance as an artistic practice and cultural discourse.

At a time when the field of dance studies is facing significant challenges, with academic programs being discontinued and research communities becoming increasingly sparse, it is more vital than ever that the *Nordic Journal of Dance* continues to be a crucial platform for disseminating dance research. The journal provides an essential space for scholars to share their works and contribute to the development of all aspects of the discipline.

I therefore encourage all researchers and practitioners committed to dance scholarship to submit contributions that would strengthen and sustain the field of dance research within the Nordic region and beyond.

Have a good read!

Elizabeth Svarstad
Issue Editor

Theories on creative dance in physical education and physical education teacher education – a narrative review

Christopher Engdahl

ABSTRACT

Creative dance, part of the teaching area of dance in physical education (PE) and physical education teacher education (PETE), has been thoroughly studied over the last decades. Creative dance risks a reduced educational impact due to unclear notions of what students and pupils learn when participating in creative dance. This uncertainty can reinforce the impression that there is nothing to learn from creative dance and that this activity merely involves directionless movement. The aim of this study is to explore the key ideas and theoretical perspectives about creative dance in PE and PETE, with the ambition to clarify what characterizes this teaching area in an educational context. A narrative review was adopted to summarize, compare, explain and interpret relevant research studies. In total, 29 peer-reviewed empirical studies of creative dance in PE and PETE were reviewed. The narrative review offers insights into the research field of creative dance in PE and PETE, where ideas about various forms of experience of movement are prevalent. It shows different educational qualities of creative dance as well, as it depicts a learning environment in which embodied exploration, aesthetic experience and subjective expression are of central concern, with numerous elaborate pedagogical considerations.

SAMMANFATTNING

Kreativ dans, en del av undervisningsområdet dans inom skolämnet idrott och hälsa och lärarutbildning i idrott och hälsa, har börjat studeras de senaste decennierna. Kreativ dans riskerar att minska sitt pedagogiska inflytande på grund av oklara föreställningar om vad studenter och elever lär sig när de deltar i kreativ dans. Denna oklarhet kan förstärka intrycket att det inte finns något att lära sig och att denna aktivitet bara innebär riktninglös rörelse. Syftet med denna studie är att utforska viktiga idéer och teoretiska perspektiv om kreativ dans inom skolämnet och lärarutbildning i idrott och hälsa, med ambitionen att öka tydligheten i vad som kännetecknar undervisningsområdet. En narrativ översikt användes för att sammanfatta, jämföra, förklara och tolka relevanta forskningsstudier. Totalt granskades 29 vetenskapligt granskade empiriska studier av kreativ dans inom skolämnet idrott och hälsa och lärarutbildning i idrott och hälsa. Studien ger insikter i det aktuella forskningsfältet kreativ dans inom skolämnet och lärarutbildning i idrott och hälsa som visar idéer om olika former av rörelseupplevelse. Den visar olika pedagogiska kvaliteter i kreativ dans eftersom ämnet innefattar en lärandemiljö där förkroppsligat utforskande, estetisk upplevelse och subjektivt uttryck är av central betydelse tillsammans med många relevanta didaktiska överväganden.

Keywords: creative dance, movement knowledge, teaching, learning, physical education

Theories on creative dance in physical education and physical education teacher education – a narrative review

Christopher Engdahl

Introduction

Physical education (PE) exists in various shapes around the world. Different curricula often include forms of PE content like sports, dance and outdoor education, as well as knowledge about health and lifestyle habits. In 23 European member states, dance is a mandatory activity in the PE curriculum in primary education (Konstantinidou 2023). Creative dance, part of the teaching area of dance in PE, has begun to be increasingly taught in Swedish schools (The Swedish School Inspectorate 2018) and has gained attention in research over the last decades. Creative dance in education has the potential to, for example, allow school pupils to develop bodily competence (Ravn 2014), extend their abilities to act (Mattsson 2016) and introduce them to creative processes (Neville and Makopoulou 2021). However, creative dance is sometimes accompanied by a “there is no right or wrong way to move” rhetoric (Larsson et al. 2024; Mattsson and Larsson 2021). This rhetoric is also evident in internet posts on creative dance (e.g. Cardwell 2023; Kalivas 2011). Following this rhetoric, it is unclear what students and pupils learn in the teaching area of creative dance in PE and physical education teacher education (PETE). The uncertainty of creative dance’s educational qualities that this rhetoric brings risks reinforcing the impression among students and teachers, who often have limited experience with creative dance, that there is nothing to learn and that this activity merely involves directionless movement (Larsson et al. 2024). Furthermore, many teachers lack experience with dance and feel uncomfortable incorporating creative dance in their teaching (Mattsson and Larsson 2021). Engdahl (2024) and Orbak (2021) also note that PETE students’ inexperience with dance and vague understanding of creative dance sometimes make them feel inadequate in terms of their dance knowledge.

With the educational qualities of creative dance in PE and PETE unclear and the idea that there is

nothing to learn from it, it becomes increasingly important to elucidate notions of this teaching area, by clarifying the key ideas and theoretical perspectives on this activity outlined in the literature. Orbak and Engelsrud (2019) recently made a comprehensive overview of 87 peer-reviewed articles and six doctoral studies regarding creative dance in a school context, focusing on didactics. Their findings show that creative dance in a school context can be understood and delimited as a research field. Orbak and Engelsrud’s study also reveals how creative dance teaching is a diverse practice that combines elements from both an experience-based teaching perspective that highlights pupils’ and students’ exploration of familiar movements, and a system-based teaching perspective that engages with Laban’s movement framework in exploration of movement (see also Orbak 2021). Konstantinidou’s (2023) systematic search and narrative review of school-based creative dance programs and intervention studies in elementary education (19 studies) further shows how creative dance in elementary schools has the potential to cultivate children’s cognitive and psychosocial skills. Central to this paper, only a few studies on creative dance in education highlight the theoretical concepts and assumptions used (Orbak and Engelsrud 2019). Furthermore, there has been no study that reviews creative dance specifically in PE and PETE. On this basis, the aim of this study is, with the help of a narrative review, to explore the key ideas and theoretical perspectives on creative dance in PE and PETE, with the ambition to clarify what characterizes this teaching area in an educational context.

Before describing the study’s methodological approach, I briefly sketch how creative dance in PE and PETE has been historically depicted to contextualize the results and concluding discussion. From the middle of the twentieth century, there was an ongoing development by female PE and PETE educators of an aesthetic form of gymnastics influenced by an elaborated theory of

body and rhythm (see, for example, Lundvall 2015; Lundvall and Schantz 2013). The basis of this influence included the work on expressive or modern forms of dance by Rudolf Laban (Fernandes 2015). Teaching an aesthetic form of gymnastics aimed to enable women to learn about and enjoy their physicality, based on what today would be called a subjective experiencing of the body (Lundvall 2016; Vertinsky 2010). This teaching highlighted values of expressing emotions through movements, to liberate the body and provide space for self-education (Carli 2004; Laine 1989; Lundvall and Meckbach 2003; Wright 1996). The long and in many ways strong tradition of a female PETE culture, together with school PE-steering documents, have meant the sustained position of modern and expressive dance ideals and creative dance as part of teaching in schools (Lundvall 2015). In the following section, I describe how I methodologically approached this study.

Method

To address the aim of this study, a narrative review method was used. Narrative reviews are useful in education, since they bring many pieces of information together into a readable format (Green et al. 2006). A narrative review comprises summarizing, comparing, explaining and interpreting research relevant to a certain question or aim (Mays et al. 2005). Regularly, this method involves ways of presenting existing research that guide the reader through a complex array of material. Narrative reviews sometimes lack transparency, because they give limited descriptions of how the reviews are conducted (Green et al. 2006). To address this critique, this section provides a detailed description of the current reviewing process for transparency.

This paper consists of a narrative review of empirical papers on creative dance in PE and PETE. To find what has been written on this issue, and to provide my study with empirical material, the first stage of the method entailed an overview of the empirical studies of creative dance in PE and PETE. To identify relevant studies, three databases were chosen for their focus on sport science, pedagogy and education: Discovery, SportDiscus and ERIC. An advanced search was made with the search term “creative dance” used in titles in academic journals; the term “physical education” appearing anywhere in the article; and publication

limited to within the last 20 years. A total of 102 works across the search engines were identified in this process, with the same studies sometimes appearing in all three databases. To be included in the review, the texts needed to be peer-reviewed and concern education. For instance, articles relating to exercise and therapy were excluded. Upon applying these criteria, 33 studies remained. A total of 18 of the works discussed education broadly or did not specify the educational context, and were therefore removed. This left 15 studies that specifically concerned the educational context of PE and PETE. Due to the relatively low quantity of studies found, and to make the study more informative, one further step was made: The existing literature on creative dance, written in English, Swedish and Norwegian, in the syllabi from eight Swedish PETE institutions were included in the search. This search identified the search term “creative dance” as used in titles or abstracts. This added another 14 peer-reviewed works from four institutions, resulting in a total of 29 works on creative dance in PE and PETE (see Table 1). Twenty of the studies were published within the last 10 years.

Table 1 Overview of the reviewed sources.

Author	Type of publication	Journal/publisher	Major themes
Adamčák et al. (2023)	Peer-reviewed article	Pedagogy of Physical Culture and Sports	curriculum preference, physical education, primary education, teacher, teaching preference
Bajek et al. (2015)	Peer-reviewed article	Strategies	dance, physical education, self-expression
Carlgren and Nyberg (2015)	Peer-reviewed article	Forskning om undervisning och lärande	kunnande, knowing-known, rörelsekunnande, dans, fenomenografi
Cleland Donnelly and Faden Millar (2019)	Peer-reviewed article	The Journal of Physical Education, Recreation & Dance	creative dance experience, physical education, interdisciplinarity
Engdahl et al. (2021)	Peer-reviewed article	European Physical Education Review	knowledge in movement, practising, creative dance, pedagogy, physical education teacher education
Engdahl et al. (2022)	Peer-reviewed article	Research in Dance Education	creativity, creative dance, physical education teacher education, Deleuze, experimentation, palpation
Engdahl and Ceder (2023)	Peer-reviewed article	Journal for Research in Arts and Sports Education	movement exploration, materiality, Gilles Deleuze, post-anthropocentrism, assemblage
Erickson (2004)	Peer-reviewed article	Teaching Elementary Physical Education	physical education, team sports, creativity, dance education, elementary education
Frisk (2019)	Peer-reviewed article	Nordic Journal of Dance	dance teachers' experience, physical education and health, phenomenology, interaffectivity, interbodily resonance
Gabbei and Clemmens (2005)	Peer-reviewed article	The Journal of Physical Education, Recreation & Dance	creative movement, movement education, physical education, cross-disciplinary
Gard (2006)	Peer-reviewed article	Sport, Education and Society	ability, aesthetics, curriculum, dance, dance education, physical education
Gard (2008)	Peer-reviewed article	Sport, Education and Society	dance, physical education, masculinity
Jusslin (2020)	PhD dissertation	Åbo Akademi University	creative dance, educational design research, entanglement, intra-action, literacy education, new materialism, performative potential
Keun and Hunt (2006)	Peer-reviewed article	Research in Dance Education	creative thinking skills, creative dance, bodily kinaesthetic intelligence
Lara-Aparicio et al. (2021)	Peer-reviewed article	Movimento	COVID-19, social isolation, physical education, health
Lobel (2021)	Peer-reviewed article	Journal of Dance Education	social and creative dance forms, dance teaching, physical education
Lundvall and Maivorsdotter (2010)	Peer-reviewed article	Designs for Learning	aesthetics, meaning-making, dance education, physical education teacher education
MacLean (2018)	Peer-reviewed article	Sport, Education and Society	dance, physical education, teacher agency, collective agency, policy enactment

Author	Type of publication	Journal/publisher	Major themes
Mattsson (2016)	PhD dissertation	Idrottsforum	aesthetic learning processes, bodying, expressive dance, meaning-making, pedagogical intervention, physical education, practical epistemology analysis, transaction
Mattsson and Larsson (2021)	Peer-reviewed article	Physical Education and Sport Pedagogy	expressive dance, pedagogical intervention, physical education, risk, transaction
Nilges (2004)	Peer-reviewed article	Research Quarterly for Exercise and Sport	curriculum, philosophy, qualitative research
Ørbæk (2018)	PhD dissertation	Norges Idrettshøgskole	body, creating dance, physical education, physical education teacher education
Ørbæk (2021)	Peer-reviewed article	Frontiers in Sports and Active Living	bodily learning, physical education teacher education, creative dance, micro-phenomenology, body memory
Ørbæk and Engelsrud (2021)	Peer-reviewed article	Research in Dance Education	teaching creative dance, physical education, intercorporeality, interaffectivity, participatory sense-making
Rebelo et al. (2018)	Peer-reviewed article	Research in Dance Education	creative dance, interdisciplinary working, primary education, mathematics
Rustad (2012)	Peer-reviewed article	Nordic Journal of Dance	dance, physical education, physical education student teachers, improvisation
Rustad (2013)	PhD dissertation	Norges Idrettshøgskole	dance, improvisation, tradition, interpretation, lived experience
Steinberg and Steinberg (2016)	Peer-reviewed article	Research in Dance Education	Teaching, movement, students' view, physical education, dance didactic
Theocharidou et al. (2018)	Peer-reviewed article	Physical Culture and Sport Studies and Research	creative dance, BrainDance, health-related quality of life, primary education

Once the final empirical materials were determined, I considered creative dance in the texts by extracting all sections that featured the words *creativ**, *creating*, *expressiv**, *skapande*, *skape**, *lage*, *kreativ*, *danc** and *dans*. At this stage, I identified that all empirical materials discussed creative dance in terms of exploration. For that reason, I further extracted all sections of the texts that involved the words *explor**, *discover**, *experiment**, *elaborat**, *problem-solv**, *try**, *search**, *investigat**, *utforsk**, *prov**, *laborer**, *upptäck**, *undersök**, *prov** and *oppdag**. The sections were transferred to a separate Microsoft Word document, with extracts separated according to the titles of the texts.

The next step involved reading and re-reading the literature based on the following analytical questions

(AQs): AQ 1) What central ideas about creative dance permeate the literature?; and AQ2) How are theoretical perspectives used to explore these ideas? Relating to AQ1, this step entailed identifying and highlighting central key terms reiterated in the texts, such as *experience*, *aesthetic* and *expression*, and exploring similarities and differences in how these terms were used. For example, the term *experience* was reiterated often in the texts, and used to depict modes of intelligence as part of kinaesthetic experiences in one text and to explore aesthetic experience in another. Relating to AQ2, this step involved exploring what and how theoretical perspectives were used in the studies.

The last step involved summarizing, comparing and interpreting the extracts in the literature while

considering the AQs. This step also required returning to the full articles for further reading.

Key to creative dance – Various forms of experience

Overall, the 29 studies offer rich insight into the learning and teaching of creative dance in PE and PETE. The majority of the studies (20) make explicit which theoretical perspectives were used in their work. Still, this means that a third of the studies (10) do not. The most commonly considered theoretical perspective in the narrative review was phenomenological (8 studies).

The findings of the study and my discussion are presented in two subsections. In the first, I describe the theoretical perspectives used in studies about the experience of movement in creative dance in PE and PETE. In the second subsection, I discuss how researchers studying creative dance in PE and PETE tend to regard students' previous movement experiences and Laban's movement concepts as resources in creative dance teaching. Also in this subsection, I describe the theoretical perspectives used in the studies.

Experience in creative dance

The sample of studies shows that providing means for school pupils and university students to explore the embodied and aesthetic experience of movement is central to creative dance teaching practices in PE and PETE (Orbæk 2021; Steinberg and Steinberg 2016). The most widely cited description of creative dance concerns students' experience of movement and aesthetic expression, involving intentions to convey thoughts, feelings and moods through movement (Cleland Donnelly and Faden Millar 2019; Jusslin 2020; Lara-Aparicio et al. 2021; MacLean 2018; Rebelo Leandro et al. 2018; Theocharidou et al. 2018). Studies exploring questions of movement experience in creative dance in PE and PETE are most often guided by phenomenology. A phenomenological reading of creative dance in PE and PETE can emphasize experiencing in movement (Rustad 2012). Rustad studies PETE students' experiences when taught dance improvisation and contact improvisation. She notes that the students engaged in exploration that highlighted sensorial awareness, and that teaching gave them opportunities to develop their capacity of "knowing in and through the body, gained through the experience of dancing" (2012, 17; see also Rustad 2013).

Several scholars have engaged with Fuchs's phenomenological perspective to theoretically guide their studies (Frisk 2019; Orbæk 2021; Orbæk and Engelsrud 2021). For instance, Orbæk (2021) explores student teachers' experiences of creating dance as part of their PETE. While considering Fuchs's ideas, she observes how emotional interaction occurs when students move together during creative dance lessons. By putting particular concepts by Fuchs to work, such as interbodily resonances, Orbæk shows how creative dance lessons involve socially interactive situations. Also citing Fuchs, Orbæk and Engelsrud (2021) provide insights into, for example, how students' embodied interactions are significant parts of creative dance teaching. Similarly employing Fuchsian concepts, Frisk (2019) identifies that PETE educators relate more to embodied interaction than teachers of theoretical subjects, that is, studies working with a phenomenological perspective emphasize ideas about experience in movement and embodied interaction in creative dance in PE and PETE.

The notion of experience in creative dance has also been studied with other theoretical perspectives. For example, using Dewey's pragmatist concepts of experience and aesthetic experience can highlight ideas about meaning-making and transaction. This theoretical perspective guides Lundvall and Maivorsdotter's (2010) exploration of how specific aspects of aesthetic experience are involved in meaning-making processes in dance. They identify how positive or negative feelings can inform how students define meanings of embodied experience. Mattsson (2016) and Mattsson and Larsson (2021) are similarly guided by Dewey's concept of transaction when studying which dynamic and reciprocal processes of interplay occur with students and their surroundings.

Steinberg and Steinberg (2016) use psychology of self-esteem to study school pupils' experiences of personal expression in creative dance lessons. They identify, for example, that creative dance can provoke emotions of awkwardness with some pupils, and that the pupils develop strategies to preserve their self-esteem while engaging in movement exploration. Gard (2006, 2008) also assesses learners' experiences of creative dance from a social constructivist perspective to explore how gender norms and preformed ideas about "good dancing" are elements that construct learners' experience of dance in PE and PETE.

A few studies have recently engaged with posthumanism and philosophical concepts by Deleuze and Guattari to study experience in creative dance in PETE. The philosophical concepts of palpation and experimentation guide Engdahl and colleagues' (2022) study, whereby they show how agency in movement goes beyond PETE students' own subjective expressions and experiences when they participate in creative dance lessons. The Deleuzoguattarian and posthumanist concepts of affect and assemblage assist Engdahl and Ceder (2023) to show how PETE educators and students' experiences of movement ought to be regarded as products of agential capacities of human and non-human materialities.

Furthermore, Keun and Hunt (2006) show how Gardner's multiple intelligences theory can be used to explore pupils' bodily kinaesthetic experiences during creative dance lessons in PE. Two modes of intelligence, identified by the multiple intelligences theory, are 1) kinaesthetic and 2) interpersonal or social (between people). Keun and Hunt show how although creative dance in PE essentially stimulates bodily kinaesthetic intelligence, other intelligences, such as interpersonal or social intelligence, are evoked and utilized during lessons.

Summing up, although a phenomenological perspective is commonly used in the studies of creative dance in PE and PETE, a variety of theoretical perspectives can be used as well.

Teaching based on familiar and everyday movement experiences

The sample of studies also reveals elaborate pedagogical considerations: for instance, that listening to children's storybooks (Gabbei and Clemmens 2005), reading poems (Cleland Donnelly and Faden Millar 2019), using words (Carlgren and Nyberg 2015) or music (Mattsson and Larsson 2021) inspire exploratory processes in creative dance lessons. However, a main finding is that previous movement experiences and movement concepts recur in the literature as common points of departure when it comes to creative dance teaching. Previous movement experiences are understood mainly in two ways in the studies: a) as learners' everyday movements, and b) in their familiarity with sports.

Both pragmatist- and phenomenologically inspired analyses find that everyday movement experiences constitute a significant part of creative dance teaching.

Guided by ideas of Dewey's pragmatism, Mattsson (2016) and Orbak (2018) study the importance of creating a safe learning environment by, for instance, acknowledging PETE students' everyday movement experiences, such as walking, in teaching. Another example is Nilges's (2004) phenomenological study that shows that because effort concepts are embedded in all movements, everyday activities such as washing dishes and playing football hold expressive potential and might become expressions of dance. For Nilges, movement exploration is an invitation for school pupils to open up the habitual bodily modes of being in the world (as in washing dishes or playing football). In creative dance lessons, school pupils' common ways of moving in their everyday lives can be affected by movement concepts – for instance, effort concepts – whereby dance is expressed. Cleland Donnelly and Faden Millar (2019), inspired by a modality-based learning perspective, provide another example of how creative dance lessons can involve opportunities for school pupils' to explore habitual modes of moving in their everyday lives. They show, for example, that teaching enables pupils to explore alternative ways to express movement by trying out various spatial pathways and movement efforts.

Laban's work on improvisation and movement analysis, which inspired the form of aesthetic gymnastics developed by female PE and PETE educators over the last century, has sometimes been considered in teaching creative dance as means to experiment with learners' familiar movements. Laban's conceptual framework – often consisting of body, space, effort and relations – is reiterated in the literature (e.g. Lobel 2021; Mattsson and Larsson 2021). In the studies reviewed here, this conceptual framework is not regarded as a theoretical perspective used to guide studies of creative dance, but as a way to inspire didactical strategies and frame teaching (e.g. Mattsson 2016). Sometimes the elements of body, space, effort and relations are defined in terms of the BSER conceptual framework (Gabbei and Clemmens 2005). Again, Nilges (2004) considers Laban's work on improvisation when highlighting exploratory processes that involve pupils' movement experiences and movement meaning. For instance, she describes pupils who are instructed by the teacher to explore skipping by means of Laban's movement effort concepts, that is, effort defined by space, time, force and flow. While exploring experiences of skipping with the movement concept of

strong force, pupils begin to express emotions, such as anger, through movement.

Concluding discussion

The lack of clarity of the educational qualities of creative dance in PE and PETE, accompanied by a “there is no right or wrong way to move” rhetoric (Cardwell 2023; Kalivas 2011; Larsson et al. 2024; Mattsson and Larsson 2021), risks reinforcing the impression among PETE students and PE teachers that there is nothing to learn from creative dance and that this activity merely involves directionless movement. In light of this, my narrative review has illuminated key ideas and theoretical perspectives about creative dance in PE and PETE, with the ambition to clarify what characterizes this teaching area in an educational context. In contrast to empirical studies, my review shows the various educational qualities of creative dance in PE and PETE, as it depicts, for instance, the central concern of aesthetic experience of movement and experimentation, along with numerous elaborate pedagogical considerations.

My narrative review offers somewhat contrasting findings on theoretical perspectives as used in studies of creative dance in PE and PETE compared to the comprehensive overview of the school context made by Orbak and Engelsrud (2019), which notes that only a few studies highlight theoretical perspectives. In the current review, the majority of the studies make explicit which theoretical concepts they feature, with

the most commonly considered theoretical perspective being phenomenological. I paint a similar picture to Orbak (2021), who claims that creative dance teaching in PETE provides students ways to express subjective experiences through dance by creating dances based on everyday movements. This paper also makes visible what ideas that have been – and have not been – explored in research studies. Few studies explore critical questions of, for instance, gender and disabilities. Questions of class are not explored in any of the studies either. This implies a lack of discussions on how aspects of social justice might influence teaching and learning in dance in PE and PETE. Studies engaging with posthumanist and new materialist perspectives have recently found their way into research on creative dance in this educational context as well. Such theoretical perspectives might invite scholars to increasingly explore aspects other than those often key in qualitative research, such as human experience and subjectivity (cf. Brinkmann 2017).

Having provided my arguments, I do acknowledge that this review excludes high-quality work written in languages other than English, Swedish and Norwegian. Other limitations include that, because of the relatively few numbers of papers accounted for in the review, the coverage of creative dance is not exhaustive.

Disclosure statement

The author reports that there are no competing interests to declare.

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Vision of Adorée Villany: The Naked Dancer's Body as Art

Kajsa Sandström

ABSTRACT

This article contributes to the analysis of the naked dancer's body as art in the emergence of modern dance. Using the dance artist Adorée Villany and her extensive touring in the Nordics from 1914 to 1920 as a case study, the article highlights a cultural conflict regarding the view of nude dancing as art. Villany was controversial during her time for insisting that the dancer's naked body is an artistic material and expression. In moral debates, she was accused of 'decadence in disguise'. Despite her frequent touring in the Nordic countries, Villany is largely absent in Swedish dance history. In this article, Villany's dance work and art theory, described in her 1912 book *Tanz-Reform und Pseudo-Moral*, are examined in discourses of dance in the Swedish national and regional press, and her photographs are situated as part of the visual culture of modern dance. It is revealed that there was an opening for a more radical reformation of dance at the turn of the century, in which the naked body was decoupled from being primarily an object of moral indignation.

SAMMANFATTNING

Artikeln bidrar med ett kritiskt historiografiskt perspektiv på nakendans i den framväxande moderna dansrörelsen. Med dansaren Adorée Villany och hennes omfattande turnéer i Norden 1914–20 som fallstudie, belyser artikeln en konflikt i kulturen vid denna tid angående synen på nakendans som konst. Villany var kontroversiell på sin tid för hennes insisterande på dansarens nakna kropp som ett konstnärligt material och uttryck. I den samtida moraldebatten beskylldes hon för dekadens förklädd till konst. Trots att Villany turnerande över hela Norden är hon till stor del frånvarande i svensk danshistoria. I artikeln undersöks Villanys dansverk och konstteori, beskrivna i hennes bok *Tanz-Reform und Pseudo-Moral* från 1912, i förhållande till diskurser om dans i svensk press; och hennes fotografier i den moderna dansens visuella kultur. Artikeln visar att det fanns en öppenhet i sekelskiftets kultur för en radikal reformering av dansen som konstform, i vilken den nakna kroppen frikopplades från att vara ett föremål för moralisk indignation.

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Photo of Adorée Villany in Expressions de la douleur, 1900. Photographer unknown. Image credit: Wikimedia commons/Library of Congress.

By adding a piece to the puzzle of dance history at the turn of the twentieth century, this article aims to shed new light on the naked body as an artistic expression in early modern dance. Taking the dance artist Adorée Villany and her extensive touring in the Nordics from 1914 to 1920 as a case study, the article highlights a cultural conflict at the time regarding the view of nude dancing as art. Previous research has often seen Villany in light of the controversies surrounding her naked dance performances, particularly the reactions of the church and the public indecency debates, on the basis of which she was perceived, to some extent, as a striptease dancer. In this article, I aim to understand Villany as

an actor in the modern dance movement by examining the reception of her artworks and theory in Swedish dance discourse and situating her photographs as part of the visual culture of modern dance. Additionally, the relationship between the centre and the periphery, as well as between fine arts and entertainment, is discussed during this historical period.

Historiographic research beyond the current canon

This article contributes to the critical historiographical writing of dance in the Nordics by shedding new light on a previously undervalued dance form and artist

(Järvinen et al. 2023, 31–47). It builds on previous research on dance in Scandinavia at the turn of the twentieth century, as well as on previous studies about Adorée Villany (Dickinson 2011, 13; Hambergren 2001, 19; Hessérus 2019; Laakkonen 2009; Toepfer 1997; Vedel 2017; Von Rosen 2019). Empirical material was derived from advertisements and reviews of Villany's dance performances and art theory in the Swedish national and regional press. A reconstructed timeline from posters, programs and newspaper advertisements reveals that from 1914 to 1920, Villany toured over 20 Swedish cities, from Malmö in the south to Malmbergen in the north, with additional visits to neighbouring countries.¹ As a historiographic subject of nude dancing, Adorée Villany is of particular interest because her voice is documented in writing. In her 1912 book *Tanz-Reform und Pseudo-Moral: Kritisch-Satyrische Gedanken aus meinem Bühnen- und Privatleben*, she published an art theory in which, according to her, the naked dancer's body belongs to a fine arts culture. The book includes several work descriptions and is richly illustrated with photographic reproductions (Villany 1912). In the present article, her book is used as a source for understanding Villany's artistic vision. Situating her art theory in relation to dance discourses at the time, I argue that the book can be understood to reflect prevailing notions of nude dance in the emerging modern dance movement. How did Villany's dance performances and art theory contribute to the naked body becoming part of the modern expression of dance? In what way do her dance works and photographs offer a new perspective on the art of dance in early twentieth-century culture?

Reformation of dance as an art form

The reformation of dance can be understood as a common point of departure for the modern dance movement. This idea is repeated in Isadora Duncan's (1929) philosophy, which later became canonized in dance history. In her book *Tanz-Reform und Pseudo-Moral*, Adorée Villany advocated for a reformation of dance in opposition to ballet, which she believed caused dance to decay as an art form. Villany meant that the *classic modern style*—in contrast to dance at the opera—required a soulful perception by an audience sensitive to the new dance and its forms of expression, and she argued passionately for a 'realistic'

dance style, liberated from previous ideals² (Villany 1912, 11). According to her, naked dance could reveal a power of expression previously unfelt in the current stage of dance development. Her instrument was the harmoniously built body, appearing as a personal work of art (12–16). Despite her consequent use of nudity, Villany maintained that her dance remained chaste. By unveiling the physical expression of dance, Villany believed that she had revealed her soul. Her naked body was the highest means of expression, and the audience should judge her art by such measures (37).

At the time when Villany wrote her theory, ballet had experienced a downturn in Europe due to its lack of technical and artistic development and the decline in the Paris Opera's reputation. Opinions of ballet as an art form in decay were also present in Stockholm in 1908 (Hambergren 2019, 107; Laakkonen 2009, 116). Karl Toepfer described how Villany's ideas about reform dance were not as much a reformation of art or politics as a reformation of morality. As such, Villany's 1912 book can be understood as an ambitious freedom project. These radical ideas about nude dancing were meant to reform the understanding of the body and its image by looking at the female body with the same seriousness applied to the contemplation of artworks (Toepfer 1997, 22–24).

On her tours in the Nordics, Villany performed several dance works described in *Tanz-Reform und Pseudo-Moral*. In what she labelled her 'ancient dances', Villany believed that she revived a historical dance style, based on scientific and archaeological grounds, that 'captured a cultural image from ancient time' (Villany 1912, 40–45). During this historic time, Villany was by no means alone in seeking inspiration from images of ancient cultures for her dances. Orientalist themes and scenes reminiscent of classical art were prevalent throughout the entire modern dance field. According to Edward Ross Dickinson, the study of motives from art history—embodied in statuary poses and in artistic renderings of costume and music—gave modern dance an aura of cultivation, refinement and authenticity. (Dickinson 2013, 308) Classical and romantic themes could further be regarded as a successful translation of nineteenth-century high culture into twentieth-century mass culture (309). Was the depiction of the female nude in painting and sculpture perhaps a difficult translation to achieve?

Swedish reception of the naked dancer

A search of the daily newspaper database at the National Library of Sweden reveals that Adorée Villany made her debut in Stockholm in December 1914. Upon her arrival from St. Petersburg, a reporter asked what Villany might have offered the Russians that the famous ballet dancer Anna Pavlova had not already in terms of the art of dance (*Stockholmstidningen*, 29 December 1914). As Lena Hammergren showed in her research of Swedish dance culture around 1900, Stockholm encountered internationally renowned dance artists at various theatres and venues. Villany arrived in a cultural and media environment where, among others, Anna Pavlova, Isadora Duncan and Cleo de Mérode had introduced new dance forms to the audiences (Hammergren 2001, 14–15).

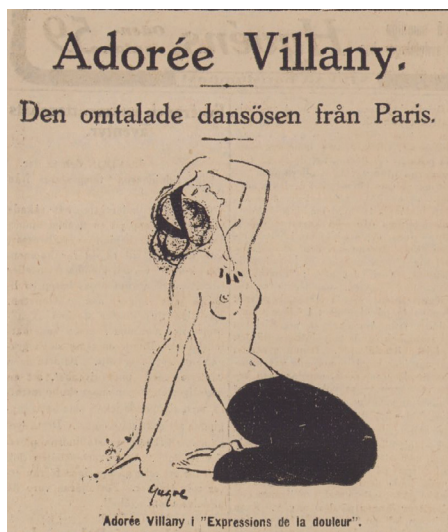


Illustration of Adorée Villany in *Expressions de la douleur*.
Stockholmstidningen 29 Dec 1914.

Villany had a full schedule in January 1915. Advertised as ‘the well-known dancer from Paris’ or ‘the Parisian dancer’, she was dancing matinees at the *Intima teatern* and in the operetta *Solstrålen* at the Oscar Theatre in the evenings (*Stockholmstidningen*, 2 January 1915; *Svenska Dagbladet*, 2 January 1915). For some readers, the name

Adorée Villany might have sparked recognition. In a well-known court case in Munich in 1911, Villany was arrested for public indecency. At her trial, art professors and artists came to her defence: Villany’s nude dance was high art and must be considered chaste. Acquitted of charges but expelled from Bavaria, Villany continued her career in Paris, where the pattern repeated itself, and she was arrested in 1913. The debacle, widely reported in European and American newspapers, reached the Swedish press (Dickinson 2011, 95; *Svenska Dagbladet*, 29 November 1911; *Svenska Dagbladet*, 2 July 1913). However, even if Villany might have been unknown to most people in Stockholm, Paris had been the centre of an artistic avant-garde since the 1890s. As such, a dancer from the French capital created certain expectations.

Targeted for moral debate

In Stockholm in 1915, Adorée Villany once again became a topic of moral debate. Upset by the publicity and large audience numbers, Teodor Holmberg, president of the Swedish National Association of Moral Culture, opined against her naked performances. According to the historian Mattias Hessérus, Holmberg’s agitation was directed as much towards the press as the police, for giving space and publicity to a foreign dance artist who, according to Holmberg, violated the sense of modesty of the ‘noble born Swedish woman’ (Hessérus 2019, 49). The ambiguity surrounding Villany’s artistic intent in reception and the uncertainty regarding the ‘real’ interest behind the unusually large audiences made her, according to Hessérus, a symbol of ‘decadence in disguise’ (50–53). However, more nuanced voices were also found in the press. The critic Carl G. Laurin had a more open attitude towards Villany’s naked performances at the *Intima teatern* in 1915, although he found her art theory to be mainly the work of an eccentric. Laurin reflected on the fact that nudity had been extremely rare on theatre stages historically but concluded that the reasons were too complicated for him to cite (Laurin 1915, 126–27).

Reviews of Villany’s performances at the *Södra Varietén* in September 1915 were inclined towards scepticism. Debates about indecency followed on her heels. One critic was suspicious of the high salary she received; another was amused by the clinking sound of machines for borrowing theatre binoculars (Hessérus 2019, 50). Villany herself was quick to use the attention



Adorée Villani in Dance of Apis, 1910. Photographer unknown. Image credit: Wikimedia commons/Library of Congress.

to sell new performances and turn publicity into praise (*Jämtlandsposten*, 1 February 1915; *Stockholmstidningen*, 30 March 1915). Yet again, a more serious reception was also present. Villany's performances at the *Grand Hôtel* in October 1915 were compared with Isadora Duncan's. Although the comparison was not in Villany's favour, critics attributed qualities to her dance in terms of Villany's expressions and costume changes (*Stockholmstidningen*, 14 October 1915).

A recurring topic in the Swedish press is Villany's body type. Some critics brought her physique to the morality debate. Without forms and curves, she was apparently too skinny to be attractive (*Scenska Dagbladet*, 5 February 1915; *Söderhamns tidning*, 15 February 1915). Villany took an active part in the debate. In 1919, she was announced to give a lecture with a demonstration of 'women's beauty, nudity in gymnastics and dance' at the Royal Academy of Sciences in Stockholm (*Dagens Nyheter*, 31 December 1919; *Scenska Dagbladet*, 30 December 1919). The focus on dancers' bodies can be understood in light of the changing norms of private and

public female corporeality. It also reveals a phenomenon in the reception of dance at the time, in which little, if any, distinction was made between a dancers' persona and the dance performed on stage (Hammergren 2001, 41–53, 58–62). Seen in this light, Villany's emphasis on her body as a work of art—and the naked body as the highest form of expression in dance—eliminated the division between the dance performed and the dancer's body altogether.

The church caught up with Villany after a year of touring in the Nordics, and she was forbidden from performing naked in Stockholm (*Aftonbladet*, 28 March 1916; *Dagens Nyheter*, 31 December 1915). When the ban was imposed in the capital, the doors seemed to have closed like dominoes across the country. However, there was an interesting exception. In the rural north, Villany's naked art was defended in the morality debate. A Luleå paper praised Villany's dance works in a description that resonated with her art theory (*Norrskensflamman*, 12 April 1916).

Nude dance in art and visual culture

The numerous photographs in *Tanz-Reform und Pseudo-Moral* place Adorée Villany within a discourse of dancers who experimented with the new medium of photography. In the Nordic context, the photographs of Vera Fokina in *Salome – Dance of the Seven Veils* by Waldemar Eide in 1919 allude to the same widespread orientalist motif in which Villany depicted herself—in her version of Salome's dance—a decade earlier (Vedel 2017, 147; Villany 1912, 51–53, 81–82). In her photographic series 'Mot ljuset', the dancer Anna Robenne, who was of Russian origin and had an international career in Scandinavia, Europe and America in the years around 1920, is artistically framed nude in diffused lighting. The photos are attributed to a photographer connected to a theatre. (Rosen 2019, 213–215) According to Astrid von Rosen, her research shows evidence that nude dancing was an important component of Robenne's repertoire (221–222).

Another connection between Villany's dance works and nude dance in artistic rendering is the drawings by symbolist painter Tyra Kleen (Laurin 1915, 126–27). In Kleen's estate, sketches of Villany, based on photographic templates, and additional paintings of Mata Hari and Isadora Duncan can be studied (*Norrköpings konstmuseum* 2024). Kleen's drawings are visual proof of how Villany's dance works were not only influenced by but also inspired new images of modern dance in the Nordic culture at the beginning of the twentieth century.

The naked dancer's body as art

The presence of Adorée Villany's naked dance performances in Nordic dance culture in the 1910s reveals a moment when dance became art, and the naked dancing body was recognised as an artistic expression. The reception of Villany's dance performances in Sweden highlights a cultural debate in which different perceptions of nudity were present at the same time. While some critics saw a refined striptease dancer in disguise, others held a more open attitude towards Villany's dance work and artistic ideas.

In her 'Reform Dance', Villany adopted several strategies from the field of modern dance. The reformation of dance as an artform mirrored the general opinion that ballet lacked artistic development, while the

aesthetics of orientalist and archaic motives gave dance an aura of cultivation and authenticity. Furthermore, Villany's idealist consideration of artistic nudity as 'chaste' and her argument for a 'realistic' dance style can be paralleled to modern dance's ideals of 'natural' movements on bare feet and in loosely fit tunics. In her art, Villany envisioned a more radical reformation of dance in which nudity, already present in modern dance, was decoupled from being primarily an object of moral indignation.

Understanding the book *Tanz-Reform und Pseudo-Moral* as a reflection of the prevailing discourses of modern dance, we can—in the same mirror—also see the photographs of Anna Robenne and how Villany's consistent use of nudity as an integral part of her own dancing was part of the high ambitions of the emerging modern dance field. Although Villany eventually lost against the guardians of morality, her art theory and dance works offers insights into the artistic intentions behind nudity in early expressions of modern dance.

History is established through a process of selection and consolidation. With a common theory formation, dance became a *high* culture. Villany toured all over Sweden at the time of the First World War. Her impact on audiences might, in effect, have been more widespread than that of well-known, canonized dance artists. Hammergren showed how Swedish dance culture at the turn of the twentieth century held an openness to embracing different styles and ideas. As the case of Adorée Villany and her influence on dance reception and visual culture has shown, the naked dancer's body as art is one of them.

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Endnotes

1 For a description and analysis of Adorée Villany's dance works and Swedish tours, see Sandström, Kajsa. *Min avslöjade kropp visar min bara själ: Adorée Villanys dansturné i Sverige 1914–1920*. Master's thesis in Art History, Södertörn University 2021.

2 All quotations were translated into English by the author.

Acknowledgements

I thank Astrid von Rosen, professor of art history, visual studies and scenography studies, for the valuable conversations and guidance in positioning this research in the field of Nordic dance studies, as well as Katarina Lion for her close reading and insightful comments during the article review process.

BIOGRAPHY

Kajsa Sandström—dancer, choreographer and dance archivist—holds a master's degree with a major in art history from *Södertörn University* (2021) and graduated from *PARTS, School for Contemporary Dance* in Brussels in 2004. Her choreographic work is characterized by an investigation of movement, image and processes of reflection between the dancer and the viewer in performance. She most recently performed in Mette Ingvartsen's *Manual Focus*. Since 2022, Kajsa has worked at the *Music- and Theatre Library* in Stockholm, where she collects, preserves and makes the cultural heritage of Swedish dance available for research.

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Hvordan tok norsk offentlighet i mot eurytmien i dens første tid?

Frøde Barkved

Innledning

I denne artikkelen undersøkes hvordan dansekonsten eurytmi ble mottatt i norsk offentlighet i sin tidlige fase (1920- og 1930-tallet) henholdsvis i Kristiania (Oslo), Kongsberg, Halden og Lillehammer.

Eurytmien ble grunnlagt som scenekunst i 1912/13 av Rudolf Steiner.¹ Den har fellestrekk med andre danseformer som oppsto i samme tidsspenn, eksempelvis hos Isadora Duncan og Ruth St. Denis: Dansen skulle være arenaen for et samspill mellom kroppslig bevegelse, musikk og språk. Steiner formulerte eurytmien som en synliggjøring av ord, sang, toner og rytmer gjennom bevegelse. Han målbar dessuten ideen om at skaperkrefter i verdensaltet og i mennesket korresponderer, at mikrokosmiske og makrokosmiske form- og skaperkrefter samvirker (Schjønby 2012, 61, 163). Denne esoterisk-hermetiske idébakgrunnen, formulert som «as above so below», var følgelig integrert i Steiners eurytmi som han noen ganger beskrev som en fornyelse av den gamle tempeldansen. Steiners poeng var

imidlertid at ikke bare eurytmien, men *all* kunst hadde sitt opphav i en åndelig verdens- og menneskeopplevelse.² I et foredrag han holdt i Norge våren 1923 hevdet han at «det kunstneriske alltid [er] tilsynkomsten av det oversanselige her i vår sanseverden. Det kan vi se i alle kunstarter [...]» (Steiner 1999, 16). Det hører med til saken at Steiner før Norgesbesøket i 1921 ikke bare hadde initiert eurytmien, men også skrevet og regissert skuespill, arbeidet med treskjæring, skulptur og billedkunst, og ikke minst vært arkitektonisk pådriver for det særegne jugend-pregede bygget, Goetheanum, som ble oppført i Dornach i Sveits. Steiners intensjon var at bygget skulle flette kunstartene sammen. Slik sett kan man se Goetheanum-bygningen som Steiners bidrag til tidens idé om *allkunstverket*. Han står «midt inne i en kulturell brytningstid [hvor det] som har vært adskilt skal føres sammen igjen» (Tharaldsen 2010, 40–41). Ifølge kunsthistorikeren Mona Pahlke Bjerke var Steiner «en radikal kunstner, formgiver og estetisk teoretiker» som «formulerte ideer som var forbløffende fremsynte» og foregrep «den konseptuelle vendingen» (Bjerke 2021).



Eurytmiensemble ved Goetheanum, anno 1921 (Fra boken Selbsterlebniss in Zusammensein mit Rudolf Steiner und Marie Steiner av Ilona Schubert, 1977).



Eurytmister anno 2021. Duoen Milton Camilo og Thomas Feyerabend er opptatt av å skape en forbindelse mellom eurytmien og moderne dans. Foto: Niklas Stålhammar. Hentet fra Quo Vadis Impresariat, 2018.

En prostitusjon for teateret

Goetheanum-scenen var et naturlig første hjemsted for eurytmistiske fremførelser³, men fra og med 1919 dro Goetheanum-ensemblet på omfattende turnéer i Europa. I 1921 fikk så et norsk publikum på 1200 personer se eurytmi for første gang, på Nationalteatret i Kristiania.

Forestillingen fikk en samlet negativ, for ikke å si ilter, respons i pressen. *Morgenbladets* redaktør Nils Vogt skrev i sin anmeldelse at han en gang hadde overvært en dervisj-dans i Sarajevo, men da danserne «begynte at skrike og rive klæderne av sig», flyktet han. Også nå fant han det «tryggest å forlate eurytmiforestillingen i pausen» (Vogt 1921). *Dagbladet* prydet førstesiden med skandaleoverskriften «En heslig forestilling i Nationalteatret». Redaktøren Einar Skavlan mente forestillingen var «et høidepunkt av forvirrende og anmassende dilettanteri». Ikke bare bevegelsene til «en rekke damer i gevandter av forskjellige farver», men også dikt-resitasjonen fra «damen» Marie Steiner (Steiners kone), «var helt igjennom heslig». Eurytmien, fastslo Skavlan, er «et kunstsurrogat for mennesker med lengsel etter kunst, men uten kunstnerisk følelse eller evne». Med kjønnsstereotyper, som det skulle bli mer av,

fremstiltes eurytmien som «rytmisk kvinnegymnastikk» med «ensformige og hjelpeløse armbevegelser» og «det avskyeligste vrøvl» inkarnert i «bevegelsene av disse kvinnelegemer». Dette er intet annet enn «falskt føleri som begynner ved uskyldig affeksjon og som ender ved lummer perversitet» (Skavlan 1921). Senere publiserte samme avis et referat fra Nationalteatrets generalforsamling med overskriften «Rudolf Steiner skal aldri faa Nationalteatret mer!» Her refereres det til at styremedlem Nils Vogt – den samme som flyktet i pausen – «vilde ha greie paa hvordan det kunde gaa for sig at Nationalteatret søndag blev overlatt til Rudolf Steiners eurytmiforestilling. Var det forretning, velgjørenhet eller propaganda? Kunst var det iallefall ikke». Styrets medlemmer svarte at de nok hadde vært skeptiske til å låne ut Nationalteatret til Steiner, men «de hadde ment at Herr Steiner representerte en utbredt bevegelse som det kunde være morsomt aa se nærmere paa, selv om det viste sig at mannen var en vrøvlebøtte». Vogt repliserte at «Nationalteatret ikke [maa] laanes ut til aandsvrøvl. Forestillingen var en prostitusjon for teatret» (*Dagbladet* 1921).

Da Steiner hørte om slakten av forestillingen ble han «mer enn noensinne besluttet på en ny forestilling»

(Christensen 2008, 155). Istedenfor å resignere søktes det om å leie Nationalteatret på ny. Det ble avslag. I den forbindelsen intervjuet *Tidens Tegn* forfatteren og «de danske bladets hitsendte eurytmikorrespondent» Johannes Hohlenberg». Leseren ble opplyst om at «Nationalteatrets styre klokkelig har avslaaet en anmodning – undertegnet ogsaa av adskillige kunstnere – om ny utleie i eurytmistisk øjemed». Hohlenberg, som fremstår som temmelig avmålt til forestillingen på Nationalteatret, bedyret at eurytmien fremdeles var ufullkommen og i sin startfase; han hadde dessuten sett langt bedre forestillinger i Goetheanum. Avslutningsvis ble han spurt «om ingen av de mandlige antroposofor begaar eurytmi. - Jo, det hænder nok, svarer han, men i opvisningene deltar de sjelden». Avisen konkluderte med en mannsjåvinistisk schwung: «Vi vil ikke skjule at vi ut fra vaart vantro standpunkt nok nærmest synes, dette taler til fordel for mændenes forstand» (*Tidens Tegn* 1921b).

Avslaget førte til at man leide Casinoteateret til en ny oppføring med et nytt program, seks dager senere. Men også her oppsto dramatik, denne gang av andre årsaker: På grunn av en brann i elektrisitetetsverkets dampstasjon ble store deler av sentrum liggende uten lys og generalproven måtte foregå ved hjelp av stearinlys. I etterkant av forestillingen skrev avisen *Dagen* i en kort notis med overskriften «Gaar paa med dødsforagt» at eurytmistene «ikke har latt seg avskrekke av pressens knusende kritikk» (*Dagen* 1921). Anmelderen i *Tidens Tegn* skrev at applausen var «betydelig sterkere» på denne forestillingen enn på den i Nationalteatret, og det sikkert fordi «publikum hørte til den Steiner'ske menighet». Forestillingen var «unegtelig svært kjedelig» og ledsaget av Marie Steiners «uhyrlige deklamation». Denne gangen vil «neppe nogen [...] interpellere om, hvordan Casino har kunnet stille sin scene til disposition for noget saa ukunstnerisk». Oppsummerende ble det henvisning til at «eurytmiens forkjæmpere» hadde det travelt med å forklare at eurytmien ikke er fullkommen: «Vi tror dem saa gjerne. Vi spør bare, hvorfor ialverden de da ikke kan vente en stund med aa vise frem sine kunster» (*Tidens Tegn* 1921a).

En uke etter denne andre og siste eurytmiforestillingen – og etter Steiners avreise – publiserte *Morgenbladet* et dikt, signert *Eurytminimus* med overskriften «Eurytmi – hvad vil det si?». Og svaret var:

Ikke dans,
men svins og svans,
ikke mimik
og ikke musik,
men stumme nik.

Ikke kunst, men aande-dunst.
Og naar anden er væk -
arme opad stræk!

Og dertil en dame som læser.
Hun hæser er,
og fræsere:
Ach du mein Gott und Vater!
Ja, slikt kan man se
paa matiné
i norsk Nationalteater!
(*Morgenbladet* 1921).

Kjønnsstereotyper

En del av den kritikken som kom, både mot Steiners antroposofi og mot eurytmien, var dominert av kjønnsstereotypiske trekk. Etter Steiners død våren 1925, utløste en ensidig negativ nekrolog fra *Dagbladets* Einar Skavlan – hvor man blant annet kunne lese at Steiner var en sjarlatan som snart vil være glemt – en langvarig og het debatt for og i mot Steiner (Skavlan 1925). Her dukket det opp en rekke sarkasmer som knyttet feminitet til åndelighet. Et sted skrev en debattant som sto på Skavlans side, legen Rasmus Hansson, at det ikke var noen tilfeldighet at spesielt kvinner ble tiltrukket av Steiner, for «en en mengde av tilhengerne hans nok var psykastenikerne. Det nå utdaterte begrepet psykasteni ble den gang brukt for å beskrive «permanent forstyrrelse, tvangstenkning, fobier og tilstanden av vedvarende og nesten alltid irrasjonell angst» (Barkved 2023, 24).

De samme stereotypiene så man når det gjaldt resepsjonen av eurytmien. På nyåret i 1922, publiserte Nils Vogt (*Morgenbladet*) en sak kalt «Eurytmihysteriet». Vogt skrev at avisen nettopp hadde mottatt et «privatbrev fra en, som personlig var interessert i at studere eurytmien på nært hold [i Goetheanum], men som blev dypt skuffet». Så fulgte selve brevet hvor leseren fikk vite at Vogts tidligere eurytmi-kritikk var blitt oversatt til tysk og publisert i en sveitsisk avis. Den anonyme brevskriveren «fikk høre at artikkelen var læst



Steiner og kvinnene, det var en tydelig kvinndominans i antroposofien. Bildet er fra 1910 under oppføring av et av Steiners såkalte mysteriedramaer hvor flere mannlige roller ble spilt av kvinner. Hentet fra <https://www.anthroposophie-muenchen.de/geschichtliches/die-mysteriendramen>

med stor fornoieelse». Videre informerte brevskriveren, noe skadefro, om at Marie Steiner ble «pepet ut» på en av turnéene sine. Brevskriveren konkluderte med at Steiner «synes at ha en mystisk, næsten hypnotisk magt over skjørhodede personer, især kvinner, - noget i likhet med Rasputin, som jo ogsaa øvet herredømme uten at eie nogen virkelig aandelig overlegenhet» (*Morgenbladet* 1922).

Steiners påståtte «hypnotiske makt» over kvinner, kan man også lese om i en roman fra 1924 av den norske forfatteren og teologen Einar Edwin. En av karakterene, Fru Schøyen, hadde besøkt Goetheanum før den brant ned til grunnen, nyttårsaften 1922. Om eurytmien forteller hun at den «var et syn for guder! Ja, for mennesker var det ialfald ikke et syn [...]». Og om Steiners makt over kvinner: «De skulde bare se ham naar han staar der omringet av sitt aandelige harem [...] Vil De tro mig, det stod mindst tredive kvinder omkring ham, og næsten hver eneste én av dem, om det saa var gamle hurper, saa hang de med smegtende og sugende øine fast i ham» (Edwin 1924, 150-51). Det var forøvrig ikke bare kvinner som merket seg Steiners utstråling. Forfatteren Stefan Zweig skrev at han opplevde Steiners utstråling som «forførerisk» med en «hypnotisk kraft». Derfor «hørte jeg bedre og mer kritisk etter når jeg ikke så på ham, for hans asketisk-magre ansikt kjennetegnet av åndelig lidenskap var ikke bare velegnet til å virke overbevisende på kvinner» (Zweig 2019, 103).

Forsvar for eurytmien

Det hører med til historien at forestillingen på Nationaltheatret også ble forsvart i norsk presse,



Marie Steiner (Steiners kone) ble ofte hardt kritisert, også i Kristiania, for hennes måte å resitere på. Bildet er hentet fra https://en.anthro.wiki/Marie_Steiner

blant annet av arkitekten Christian Morgenstjerne, i *Aftenposten*. Han minnet om at «ikke bare det er kunst her i verden, som ved sin fødsel bliver hilst af forstaaende og venligsindede fædre» og hevdet at «en overfladisk beskuelse av det som er én fremmed bliver aldrig værdifuld kritik». Han var selv kritisk til enkelte element fra forestillingen, eksempelvis var Marie Steiners opplesning «lidet tiltagende», og han kom også med innvendinger mot Steiners innledning for selve forestillingen: Den var «for lang og kanskje i et for filosofisk plan for et forventningsfuldt publikum». Også selve forestillingen syntes Morgenstjerne var for lang. Han er, skriver han, ikke «tilfreds» med det han har sett av eurytmi, «men aner likevel noe nytt som er vanskelig å sette ord på». I stedet sammenligner han eurytmistenes bevegelser og formuttrykk ved å vise til «eksperimenter fra fysiksalen [og] metalpladen med sand» som gjennom at man stryker en buc mot platen, danner «klangfigurer [av] besynderlige stjernemønstre og former, alltid nye for hver tone og alltid det samme ved en tones gjentakelse» (Morgenstjerne 1921).

I ukebladet *Urd*, et tidsskrift som siden 1897 hadde som formål å formidle folkeopplysning, kunst og kultur (mest myntet på kvinner), ble det publisert en mer sympatisk innstilt artikkel forfattet av Halldis Stabell, en norsk gymnastikklærer, sykegymnast og forfatter som i 1920 utdannet seg til eurytmist ved Goetheanum. Hun kontrasterte eurytmien mot det hun anså som en overfladisk dansekultur, en kulturkritikk hun forøvrig ikke var alene om. Etter at grammofofonen førte til en demokratisering av dansen, med moderne selskapsdans og såkalt «dansenoro» dominert av amerikansk foxtrot og swing, lot kritikk som snakket om dansens degenerasjon ikke vente på seg. Bedre ble det ikke på 1920-tallet da radioen kom og den britisk-amerikanske musikken og dansen økte i voldsomt omfang og ble karakterisert som «vulgær massekultur». Til tross for denne noe kulturelt-elitistiske kritikken som altså også tilhengere av eurytmien ofte inntok, fikk den foraktede massekulturen bredt nedslagsfelt hos folk flest, den ble både adaptert og virket transformativt inn i den europeiske kulturen (Dahl 2001, 40–41; Behrends et al. 2005). Det er på denne bakgrunnen Stabell skriver at man gjennom eurytmien «blir stillet overfor en helt ny opfatning av dansekunsten, noget som menneskene instinktmæssig har tørstet efter, som skulde og kan frigjøre fra det dansevanvid som siden krigens slut har



Den kjente kabaretsangeren Bokken Lasson var en av dem som forsvarte Rudolf Steiner og eurytmien, dels i pressen, dels som medvirkende i enkelte eurytmiforestillinger. Bildet er hentet fra https://snl.no/Bokken_Lasson

behersket store dele av verden». Hun konkluderer med at «eurytmien skal føre dansekunsten tilbake til dens utgangspunkt, til urkunstens eget væsen» (Stabell 1921, 21).

Den kjente kabaretsangeren Bokken Lasson forsvarte også eurytmien. I et leserinnlegg hvor hun reagerer på *Dagbladets* karakterdrap av Steiner (gjennom den nevnte nekrologen), innrømmet hun at det å benytte Nationaltheatret til en eurytmioppføring, muligens var et feilgrep fra arrangørens side. Men at *Dagbladets* Skavlan fire år senere brukte denne indignasjonen til å skrive «en nekrolog full av skjellsord», fant hun forkastelig (Lasson 1925). Samtidig viste hun sin støtte til det eurytmistiske nybrottsarbeidet ved å være fast innslag på en rekke eurytmiforestillinger som ble vist to år etter Nationaltheatret-skandalen: «I mellomaktene optraadte den alltid like ungdomsfriske og charmerende Bokken Lasson og sang» (*Smaalenes Amtstidende* 1925). I en notis i forkant av en forestilling på Kongsberg Teater ble det opplyst om at det som for

en tid siden var en dominerende samtale i Kristiania, eurytmien, nå skulle vises i teateret, og «der er ogsaa adgang for herrer (*Kongsberg Tidende* 1924). Fra samme forestilling i Fredrikshald Teater (i Halden) skriver anmelderen at det ble holdt en innledende tale der det ble sagt at «de optrædende damer [bortsett fra én profesjonell eurytmist] var diletanter i faget», men likevel ville gi publikum «en prøve paa hvad eurytmien bestod i». Anmelderen mente at de «til at være diletanter [var] svært flinke» og la til, i stil med det vi så hos Stabell: «Det er noget klassisk enkelt, kjølig og kyskt ved eurytmien som burde gi den en mission i vor dansedeGENERERTE tid» (*Smaalenes Amtstidende* 1925).

Forestillinger i Lillehammer – nye forsøk, ny kritikk

I Kulturhuset Banken i Lillehammer ble det oppført en del eurytmiforestillinger fra 1927 og i flere tiår fremover. I forkant av den første forestillingen, kontrasterte antroposofen Einar Lunde denne mot degenerert dans. I *Gudbrandsdølen* skrev han at «alle bør se denne ædle kunstart [som en sunn motvekt] mot sydens negerdanser [...] som bare taler til menneskets lavere instinkter» (Lunde 1927). Sammenlignet med den slakt Nationalteatret-forestillingen hadde fått, må anmeldelsen fra Banken-forestillingen betegnes som mer nyansert. Poet og revytekstforfatter Ingval Bjølvin skrev i *Lillehammer Tilskuere* at dikt fra Haugtussa ble fremført «ypperlig» og med «stor virkning». Han hadde likevel innvendinger når det gjaldt eurytmistenes ansiktsuttrykk (eller mangel på sådan): «[...] dansene blev fremført med et stivt, stirrende, glasagtig blik. Det virket sovngjængeragtig og uhyggelig» (Bjølvin 1927). 10 år senere, i 1937, fikk Lillehammer besøk av scenegruppen fra Goetheanum, med «eurytmistjernen» Elena Zuccoli i spissen. Denne gang ble det mer spektakkel. Den profilerte musikkritikeren og journalisten Hallvard Halvorsen skrev i *Laaen* at de tyske og engelske diktene ble «messet frem [...] omtrent som fra en prest». Når det gjaldt de eurytmistiske tolkningene av musikken mente han at musikken kunne stå på egne ben i stedet for å gjennom eurytmien bli «degradert til en slags dansemusikk». Halvorsen måtte likevel «innrømme at fru Zuccolis fremføring av Griegs e-moll sonate var av *storslagen virkning*». Han ga også programmets mer humoristiske del og spesielt den norske eurytmisten Eva Lunde (forøvrig datter av den allerede nevnte Einar

Lunde), en mer positiv omtale. Interessant nok avsluttet han anmeldelsen ved å si at «forestillingen minnet om gammel-egyptisk eller orientalsk tempeldans», muligens uvitende om nettopp en slik karakteristikk også kom fra Steiner; eurytmien som «fornyelse av den gamle tempeldansen» (Halvorsen 1937; Steiner 1999).

Etter forestillingen utløste et avsinnsleg signert den kjente arkitekten Bjørnstjerne Albert Bjørnson-Langen, reaksjoner. Ifølge ham var det – til tross for at eurytmistenes «bevegelser ofte var myke og harmoniske» – en «tynn diletantisme» og «en usigelig og sjelden kjedelig» forestilling publikum fikk oppleve. Og kulturkritikken fra eurytmiforkjempere, hva var det annet enn å «maskere sin egen anakronisme [gjennom] å kalle utviklingen for dekadens, og kamuflere sin egen dekadens bak dadaisme!». Videre mente han at det ble resitert med «tomt og hult [...] pathos» som «den dansende [symboliserte] ved å snurre rundt sig selv», noe som gjorde inntrykk av at man var vitne til noe «infantilt og ufrivillig komisk». Oppsummerende: noen var «helt henført over så megetsigende kunst, andre fikk hysteriske latteranfoll, de fleste visste ikke om de skulde le eller gråte og forlot lokalet med desorienterte ansikter. Keiserens nye klær en gang til!» (Bjørnson-Langen 1937a).

Bjørnson-Langen fikk to responser. Først fra sykegymnast Katty Sandberg som i *Gudbrandsdølen* skrev at Bjørnson-Langen drev med «nedsabling, ikke kritikk» (Sandberg 1937). Deretter fra den profilerte antroposofen og forfatteren Ingeborg Møller som i samme avis argumenterte for at all ny og stor kunst møter motstand i sin samtid, eksemplifisert ved «Wagners første operaer som ble møtt med en strøm av raseri fra de tradisjonstro musikere i samtiden» (Møller, 1937). Bjørnson-Langens svar åpnet, en tanke patroniserende, med «Mine damer!» før han bedyret at hans artikkel ikke var ren nedsabling, for han hadde også sagt noe positivt om eurytmien: «Men tro meg! Jeg kunde foiet adskillig av negativt til min lille kritikk». Han avsluttet innlegget med å opplyse om at han hadde liten tro på at eurytmien bare trengte tid på seg for å «komme til heder og verdighet [...]». Den slags resonnemang har til alle tider vært alle diletanters fattige trøst» (Bjørnson-Langen 1937b).

Mens leserinnleggene ble publisert på løpende bånd i Lillehammer, reiste Zuccolis ensemble videre til Oslo og Centralteatret. I *Dagbladets* forhåndsomtale (signert Hast) ble skandaleforestillingen fra 1921 trukket frem:

«En som så Eurytmiopvisningen på Nationaltheatret for mange, mange år siden, går enn omkring med mordlyst i øinene hver gang ordet Eurytmi nevnes» (Hast 1937). I etterkant kom det likevel ingen anmeldelse fra *Dagbladet* eller noen andre aviser, bortsett fra en tekst i *Nationen*, signert J.A. Her var det en blanding av nøytrale beskrivelser av forestillingen speid superlativer om eurytmien som «harmonisk og beåndet bevægelseskunst» med «en dyp åndelig innstilling til de kraftskapende kilder». Den fremstår mer som en panegyrisk motvekt til 1921-slakten enn en saklig-kritisk anmeldelse (J.A. 1937).

Eurytmien – et syn for guder og ikke for mennesker?

Et interessant aspekt knyttet til diskusjonen er skepsisen Bjørnson-Langen kommuniserte når det gjaldt den kultur- og tidskritikken han mente var knyttet til talpersoner for eurytmien. Det å uten nyansering karakterisere den allmenne kulturen som overfladisk og dekadent er en gjenganger i konservativ-elitistisk samtidskritikk. Steiners behov for å avgrense eurytmien mot dansen kunne få utslag i meninger som at i dansen blir bevægelsene gjennomtrukket av «lidenskap» og «sjelen mister seg selv». Et annet sted heter det: «I dansen er mennesket egentlig helt dratt ut av seg selv. Det er ikke mer i seg selv, men har blitt helt kropp. Kroppen danser sammen med andre kropp og gjør bevægelse som om det ikke finnes en sjel i den lenger» (Steiner i Fors 2015, 82).

I eurytmien skulle kroppen være «instrument» for musikken og lyrikken m.m. Den kunne riktignok, ifølge Steiner, også inkludere pantomime, mimikk og dans i sitt bevægelsesrepertoar, men sjelen måtte kontrollere kroppen (instrumentet); «dersom eurytmien faller for sterkt inn i mimikken blir den ukysk» (Steiner i Fors 2015, 83).

Ordet *ukysk* er interessant. I eurytmien er intensjonen at mennesket gjennom bevægelsen blir *instrumentet* for det som lever i materialet som formidles. Det kan være intervaller, rytmer, harmonier og melodiføringer i musikken, konsonanter, vokaler, lydklanger, rytmer i lyrikken, eller også «objektive» sjelsgeberder, og stemninger samt geberder hvor kroppen, som mikrokosmos, skal spille kosmos i form av planetenes og zodiakens bevægelse og formkrefter. Det sier seg selv at dersom kroppen skal være instrumentet

for alt dette, må vilkårlige, personlige og «ukyske» elementer som ikke har noe med musikkstykket eller diktet eller kosmiske krefter og bevægelse å gjøre, tones ned. Anmelderen fra eurytmiforestillingen på Kongsberg tolket en slik intensjon positivt: «Det er noe klassisk enkelt, kjølig og kysk ved eurytmien som burde gi den en mission i vor dansedegeterte tid» (*Smaalenes Amtstidende* 1925). Ellers ser det ut som om intensjonen om at kroppen skal være kysk og renstemt instrument for det musikalsk-poetiske, hovedsakelig fremkalte negative reaksjoner; eurytmien fremstår som «ensformig» og som «et syn for guder og ikke for mennesker». Et annet sted het det, som vi har sett, at «dansene ble fremført med et stivt, stirrende, glassaktig blikk. Det virket søvngjengeraktig og uhyggelig» (Bjølvin 1927).

Ovennevnte kritikk går igjen også i senere resepsjon av eurytmien, helt frem til vår tid. På 1970-tallet og fremover ser man eksempler på mer eksperimentelle utprøvinger hvor tradisjonelle eurytmiuttrykk ble utfordret. Noen av disse ble også omtalt og anmeldt i norsk presse. Men det er en annen historie.

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Sluttnoter

1 I 1919 ble eurytmien integrert i steinerpedagogikken, og i forbindelse med den antroposofiske legekunstens fremvekst i 1921, ble den også brukt terapeutisk. En senere form for eurytmi finner vi i den såkalte sosialeurytmien som tilbys bedrifter, institusjoner og organisasjoner, hvor målet blant annet er å styrke kommunikasjon og samspill. I denne artikkelen begrenser jeg meg til eurytmi som scenekunst.

2 Disse ideene er bærende i Steiners antroposofi. Av plasshensyn behandles ikke antroposofien nærmere i artikkelen.

3 Goetheanum ble offer for ildspåsettelse nyttårsaften 2022 og brant ned til grunnen og ble bygget på ny ut fra nye arkitektoniske skisser fra Steiner – denne gang i betong i stedet for tre.

BIOGRAFI

Frode Barkved er utdannet eurytmist og har arbeidet på steinerskolen i Stavanger i 20 år. Siden 2007 har han arbeidet ved Steinerhøyskolen, som førstelektor i antroposofi og steinerpedagogikk. Han har publisert en rekke artikler og gitt ut boken *Hjemløshet og jeg-er-faring* (2017). Barkved har også en bakgrunn som trubadur og songwriter, og gir ut sitt første album høsten 2025, i samarbeid med produsenten Juhani Silvola.

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Vanishing: Choreographing the Ephemerality of Dancing Bodies Through Archeologically Inspired Practices

Telma João Santos

ABSTRACT

Vanishing is a dance piece featuring the possibility of a choreographic structure of non-defined and non-classified transition spaces—from the daily cycle of dawn-nightfall to the transient spaces in between the perceptions of what is seen and who sees it. Between visibility and invisibility, virtuous and insignificant choreographed movement, presence and absence, seeing and un-seeing, there is the development of a set of ‘vanishing acts’ as representative of the ephemerality of dancing bodies. From the experience of participating in the creation process as a researcher, I present here some concepts that helped me navigate the process, from the first ideas to the public presentation.

Keywords: Vanishing; dance; choreography

Vanishing: Choreographing the Ephemerality of Dancing Bodies Through Archeologically Inspired Practices

Telma João Santos

Introduction

Vanishing is a dance piece created and performed by Beatriz Valentim and Bruno Senune. I have known Senune personally since 2015, and I have been collaborating with him since his first solo piece in 2016, *Kid as king*, when I participated as a researcher and dramaturgical supporter. Since then, we have cooperated on several projects, and I have been present in almost every dance piece in which he participates, particularly as I am highly interested in his path to becoming performer and choreographer. Senune and Valentim have been dancing together as performers for several choreographers since 2018 and, as they told me in conversation, they had been feeling an urge to create a piece together since the beginning. However, they were always so busy that it was not until 2023 that they were finally able to sit down and formulate an initial idea for *Vanishing* and propose it to Palcos Instáveis, a joint initiative by Choreographing Center Instável and Porto's Municipal Theatre. The piece was chosen as one to be supported and presented in 2024, and a joint venture between these two artists finally came to fruition. They invited me then to follow along with the process, helping them to consider concepts, create meaning, share references and write about the experience and process.

As choreographers, Valentim and Senune have demonstrated individual concerns that intersect with each other and naturally reverberate within their piece. For instance, Valentim has been dedicated to research and creation based on the discussing and choreographing from questioning the origin of concepts and movements, as in *VADO: a solo about empty stuff* (2018), where she addresses the concept of emptiness, how to deal with it as a dancer and the limits of confrontation with the empty space;¹ in *Self* (2021), where she questions the relationship with her reflection in another body, the mirroring, its differences and its dualities;² and in *What is a problem?* (2022/2023), where she develops a

path from the question 'What is a problem?'³ towards a choreography of possibilities of approaching what is a problem, from individual to more collective perspectives. Meanwhile, Senune has dedicated himself to researching the transitions within changing states of the body, emerging from the confrontation and anguish towards life and the emotional changes we must accept and manage. This is exemplified in *Kid as king* (2016), where he explores states of almost-explosion, on the edge of collapse, in an imploded landscape on the brink of suffocation;⁴ in *Drift of the eyes* (2017), where he explores states of post-explosion, post-ecstasy and, simultaneously, slowness, tiredness and the construction of a path to a possible metamorphosis;⁵ and in *Presage of a profound melancholy* (2019), where he explores the desires of arriving and of regenerating as an impulsive response to a voluntary departure.⁶

The process of creating *Vanishing* was mainly dedicated to developing a collection of choreographies of the sensitive and of what I like to name the 'un-seeing'. The movement analysis explored in this piece is centred on details and mis/conceptions of normativity of dancing bodies as notions of body, time and space, as well as on practices related to sensitivity/perception, that is an observing body, the concept of which will be approached later. Their interconnection leads to an important step within the creative process: astonishment as a transitional space and place of hope. Throughout our discussions of how to place *Vanishing* within contemporary practices and artistic landscapes, the idea that astonishment with the world is resistance arisen: the focus on the ability to be surprised and enjoy daily cycles in continuity, from day to night and during its transitional moments.

I also introduce 'ephemerality of dance' as a concept and as part of my approach to *Vanishing*, and I introduce the notions of 'archeologically inspired practices' and 'participant observation', not only as concrete movement-based but also conceptual facets entangling this piece within a broader artistic contemporary landscape.

Some preliminary concepts

Un-seeing

The concept of 'un-seeing' was inspired by a moment when I was searching for a way to explain to Valentim and Senune how I was perceiving their movement-based interpretation of *Vanishing*. This is because they were searching for spaces in between seeing and not seeing themselves and between the other and the audience, as well as opportunities to be concrete in their interpretation by using their gaze and eye movements, as well as by being more abstract in searching for varying distances between themselves and between them and the audience. Thus, 'un-seeing' involves creating micro- and almost invisible movements inspired by one another that, through repetition, become potent, that is when each of the choreographer-performers un-sees himself from the other's perspective and from the several interferences and interdependences within the process.

Mis/conceptions of normativity

This concept was always present when discussing the process, be it when sharing meanings, physical sensations or more formal thoughts. Eventually, mis/conceptions of

normativity became the idea chosen by both Valentim and Senune as the mechanism for creating different forms and presences as performers (see Giannachi, Kaye and Shanks (2010) for more insights on archaeologies of presence). They were committed to creating a movement vocabulary inspired by one another and to being focused on how to disturb normative conceptions of a dancing body: the notion of the body itself, such as considering how to do a plié with the back arched as if it was the standard form; the notion of time, such as how to create stillness in unexpected intermediate moments as if they were expected; and the notion of space, such as how to create a geometry of space with a set of imaginary spots as if they were there concretely.

Observing Body

In *Vanishing*, Valentim and Senune shared practices related to the sensitive/perception to create a space between them infused with a shared presence and togetherness but without concreteness, focusing on the eyes and the gaze that travels through several parts of the body, as if they had observing hands, observing hips, observing legs, observing arms, an observing head and so on.

Vanishing – a dance piece as a project

Valentim and Senune met in 2018 in Azores, Portugal, while participating in the first artistic residency for the dance piece *IO – Landscapes, Machines and Animals* by Portuguese choreographer Né Barros. In this piece, they performed a duet and underwent a highly intense creative process, becoming closer and, in doing so, realising they shared common artistic interests. From that point, a collaborative spirit started to emerge and make sense, and they began to search for an opportunity to create a piece together.

After many conversations and some artistic pieces on which they worked together as performers, they started to design an idea for the collective and choreographic premise they wanted to pursue: a solo dance piece, where the first part is danced by Valentim and choreographed by Senune and the second part is danced by Senune and choreographed by Valentim, interconnected through an aesthetic and dramaturgical development with a unique and continuous sound and light design. The goal of this specific strategy and



From *Vanishing*, Beatriz Valentim in the solo choreographed by Bruno Senune. Photo: João Octávio Peixoto/TMP



From Vanishing: Beatriz Valentim and Bruno Senune encounter each other and change roles.

Photo Credits: João Octávio Peixoto/TM

device selection was to question the rigidity of dance approaches and of the roles of choreographer and performer, seen classically as hierarchic and fixed. In this piece, Valentim and Senune decided to question movement as a glorification of visibility and identity, to turn disappearing moments and movements visible, as well as transitions between body states and daily cycles.

One of the main inspirations for *Vanishing* was the notion of daily cycles as a metaphor for the continuous, never-ending cycle of life, referring as well to the iconography of ourboros, the figure of the serpent—or dragon—that bites its own tail, which is a mystic symbol representing the concept of eternity. In consideration of the dichotomy between dawn and dusk, Valentim and Senune intended to dive into the poetics of night and day as conductive materials for both solo pieces, reflecting on the concept of time and its constant movement as a life catalyst. This was achieved through detailed and focused observations of the other's body, gestures and particularities to collect information and propose the resulting choreographic scripts. From this starting point, they intended to identify recurrences that could be unveiled, broken, rethought, redirected and attentive

to an infinite spectrum of changes and possibilities of seeing, un-seeing and vanishing on stage. Further, the sound design, a continuous proposal, reinforced the idea of cycle and repetition: averting one's gaze, hiding, approaching, straying, balancing, shrinking, fixing small choreographic scores through clear and explicit repetition and developing a dramaturgy for the body are additional elements in this dance piece.

Valentim and Senune decided to place themselves within a transitional landscape and confront the challenging question, 'What is this apparently empty space in each of us and in between us?' In effect, they made visible the complexity and density of what is usually invisible because it is considered 'less important': the metamorphosis of the visible, the fixed and the apparently unchangeable. The conceptual transience and the intermediate spaces found within what was originally fixed as a normative or hegemonic conception of dance and its validated movements are also part of what motivates the construction of this piece, from the search for movements in between the virtuous movements belonging to dance to the search for movements that characterise the dichotomy of day



*From Vanishing: Bruno Senune in the solo choreographed by Beatriz Valentim.
Photo Credits: João Octávio Peixoto/TM*

and night, delineating a landscape for their transitional states, dawn and dusk. Valentim and Senune thus transformed the stage into an exploratory environment in which they are archaeologists of the ancestries that configurate ephemerality, transience, intermediate spaces, boundaries of the contiguity of concepts and concrete movements. They destroy the binary concepts of the origins and place of dance, affecting the virtuosity or collapsing of the binary nature or connection with the exploration of the scenic space.

Writing-wise, I was devoted to considering and delineating concepts and methods to identify the words that could best describe how I was experiencing rehearsals, conversations and documentation videos⁷.

Valentim was devoted to narrating and describing movement, while Senune was devoted to creating scripts using words and random thoughts on pieces that could also be read as poems, as in the following:

Appearance and vanishing of the form
Body in a constant metamorphosis
Appearance and vanishing of the 'selves'
Get lost in myself
I forgot myself in you
To embrace these notions
I don't know. Did I ever know?
(Bruno Senune, from his personal notes)

Notes on the ephemerality of dance

The transient and ephemeral nature of dance is one of its most commonly accepted features, but also one of the most interesting and complex aspects of this performative art; even though a dance piece is defined in the first place and, even if it is thoroughly prepared, it is unique to each public presentation—in fact, it can never be performed exactly the same, not only due to the impossibility of an exact replication of the same event, but also due to the impossibility of guaranteeing the same connection with the audience or space. As performance studies professor and researcher Peggy Phelan states, ‘It can be performed again, but this repetition itself marks it as different’ (1993, 146). Further, following dance studies professor and researcher André Lepecki, ‘Dance always vanishes in front of our eyes in order to create a new past. The dance exists ultimately as a mnemonic imprint of what has just lived there’ (1999). Moreover, in considering photography as a method of creating memory in dance, Carrie Lambert-Beatty writes, ‘Images of dance never capture the energy, dynamism, or power of a live performance. They are pale representations at best, of an inherently ephemeral art’ (2008, 132).

In *Vanishing*, the ephemeral nature of dance is not only a conscient feature, but also a tool of dance; as such, choreographic scripts are constructed using the ephemerality of the visible moment, accounting for the desire to create ‘disappearing acts’ through choreography, employing ‘disappearance as a performative strategy, pointing to the construction of performance and in this way critiquing and dialoguing with performance theory’s discourses of re/presentation and dis/appearance’ (Phelan, quoted in Flexer and Sandiland 2020, 2). Just as day and night repeat themselves daily but not in the exact same way, this piece highlights the fact that dance traverses a transient space within templates of repetition that allow us to recognise it as standard, but we never observe its definite and repeatable final form.

Notes on archeologically inspired practices

One of the starting points of *Vanishing*’s creative process towards choreographic construction, particularly in the connection established between Valentim and Senune,

was participant observation, a well-known qualitative data methodology used in field work, especially in sociology and anthropology/ethnography.

Participant observation is used across the social sciences, as well as in various forms of commercial, public policy and non-profit research. Anthropology and sociology have specifically relied on participant observation for many of their seminal insights, and for most anthropologists and many sociologists, conducting a participant observation study at a field site is an important rite of passage into the discipline (Guest, Namey and Mitchell 2013, 75–76).

Participant observation is a methodology in which ‘a researcher takes part in the daily activities, rituals, interactions and events of a group of people as one of the means of learning the explicit and tacit aspects of their life routines and their culture’ (DeWalt and DeWalt 2011, 1). Similarly, Valentim and Senune, who already knew each other and shared a common interest in the ways their bodies inhabit scenic spaces and artistic creation, decided to defy themselves individually as participant observers to research ways in which the other’s body inhabits several stages (life, imaginary, choreographic and so on), including how it reverberates existence and the experience of observation from the one who proposed the movement scripts. The field work of participant observation occurs not only in the studio and in concrete rehearsals, but also in their efforts towards production and communication, for which they are both responsible in this dance piece⁸. Nevertheless, two factors are important to highlight, as they are dissident from a more formal perspective on participant observation: first, there is no rule that participant observation must have result in a speech about the other person or a description of the differences from the other; the main goal of participant observation in this specific case is to provide insights so that what is choreographically proposed results from these observations and allows the other to be challenged by movements already in their movement vocabulary, even if not used frequently as choreographic material. Second, it is also important to note that choreographic proposals involve the challenge of being archaeologists searching for two main things: memory and astonishment for what is presented; that is, there exist several layers of participant observation, where the relationship between observer and observed is not standard in the sense that the observer researches

and the observed pursues their routines. Rather, it is a more dynamic relationship where the observer and the observed research simultaneously, propose ideas, discuss them and try them out without definite roles. Valentim and Senunc also wanted the audience to be close to them, even if seated in one direction (there is a front), assuming another layer of observation. Here, observation is not simply a participant regarding the audience in the sense that the connection is established only through the dance piece, and from sharing the same floor and the same space, we are not interested in analysing the connection established with the audience or how its participation influences the piece.

Vanishing was an interesting process in which to participate as a researcher, from the proximity to the choreographers/performers, as well as the fact that I find their individual universes interesting and it was deeply insightful to follow constant negotiations and doubts along the way. I believe in the importance for researchers to be part of the artistic creative process, dealing with difficult and fragile moments, as many of the resulting questions were central to considerations of concepts, and they teach us to become more aware of the continuous metamorphosis of life itself.

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Endnotes

- 1 <https://beatrizvalentim.pt/VADO>
- 2 <https://beatrizvalentim.pt/Self>
- 3 <https://beatrizvalentim.pt/O-que-e-um-problema>
- 4 <https://brunosenunecontact.blogspot.com/p/kid-as-king.html>
- 5 <https://brunosenunecontact.blogspot.com/p/a-derivados-olhos.html>
- 6 <https://brunosenunecontact.blogspot.com/p/melancolia.html>
- 7 see PhD dissertations by O'Sullivan (2007) and Longley (2011), for instance.
- 8 This dance piece was choreographed and performed by two Portuguese dancers and choreographers, and even with financial support by GDA Foundation and Setúbal's city council, to accommodate a team with a light designer, a musician who creates original live music, a researcher, a videomaker and a costume designer, it was impossible to hire a producer and a person to work on the communication, so Valentim and Senune worked together in both roles, defining in the beginning what each would do for which task and negotiating new tasks along the way.

BIOGRAPHY

Holding a PhD in Mathematics and in Performing Arts, **Telma João Santos** has taught at several universities for more than twenty years, developing performance pieces and focusing on the multidimensionality of self-re-presentations. Her work involves intersecting mathematical discourse and movement analysis, and she has worked with several artists as a researcher throughout their creative processes. She is now developing the documental autobiographic project titled *Between Struggle and Mourning*. Her research focused on the intersections between scientific research and artistic creation, participating as a researcher in several processes. Her book *On Performance Art: Conceptual Approaches, Creation and Research Methodologies*, and an Encyclopedia of Artistic Practices was published in 2025 by Ethics International Press.

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Vi gleder oss veldig til å introdusere koreograf Sigurd Johan Heide og verket *An dran drin drekt* (2021) til elever og lærere skoleåret 2025/26. Gjennom verksted på skolene får man bli kjent med koreografens kunstneriske uttrykk og utforske verket gjennom ulike praktiske øvelser og oppgaver. Verket *An dran drin drekt* kombinerer norsk folkedans med rim, regler, fellesskap og lek, og er særlig relevant for fagene kroppsøving og musikk.

Skolebesøkene er støttet av Sparebankstiftelsen DNB.

Meld interesse her: <https://dansepraksis.no/kursogverksteder/>

Pedagogseminar i samarbeid med PRODA Oslo!

Årets pedagogseminar ledes av vår styreleder Annette Brandanger, som har lang erfaring som utøvende dansekunstner og kunstnerpedagog. Sammen med dansekunstner og forsker Laura Navndrup Black, vil Annette ta seminardeltakerne med inn i metoder for hvordan kunstnerpedagogen kan jobbe performativt og være en døråpner til dansen for barn og unge. Seminaret passer for dansepedagoger som ønsker utvidet kompetanse om kunstnerisk og kreativt arbeid med og for barn og unge, men også dansekunstnere som gjennom kunstneriske prosesser arbeider med barn og unge.

Mer info kommer!

Tid: 18.–19. oktober



Annette Brandanger

Nytt fra:

Nettverk for dans og helse

Til høsten inviterer vi til to digitale nettverkstreff.

Vil du dele litt om deg selv, ditt arbeid eller et prosjekt du jobber med?

Send en e-post til sans@dansepraksis.no

Hver presentasjon skal maks vare i 10 minutter, og det blir rom for spørsmål etterpå.

Datoer for høstens treff:

18. september kl. 18–19.30. Frist for å melde inn innlegg: 1. september

18. november kl. 10.30–12. Frist for å melde inn innlegg: 1. november

Bli med i nettverket? <https://dansepraksis.no/nettverket-dans-og-helse/>



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Christopher Engdahl

Emerging Scholar

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Report

Vanishing: Choreographing the Ephemerality of Dancing Bodies Through Archeologically Inspired Practices

Telma, João Santos

Nordic Journal of Dance—practice, education and research

ISSN 1891-6708

<http://www.nordicjournalofdance.com/>

Supported by: Senter for dansepraksis (SANS) and Norges Forskningsråd (The Research Council of Norway).
Member of Norsk Tidsskriftforening.

