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# Dance Theater—The Physical Art of Perception

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**Dance Theater—The Physical Art of Perception**

by

Jiali Wang

A thesis submitted to the Department of Dance of The College at Brockport, State  
University of New York, in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree

of Master of Fine Arts.

May 13, 2017

**Dance Theater—The Physical Art of Perception**

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Jiali Wang

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by

Jiali Wang

2017

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## **Abstract**

This research analyzes the inner energy of human perception and the invisible effect and influence between perception and physical dance theatre. Not only the insight and interpretation of the relationship between the psychological and physical area, but also the analysis of aesthetics, thinking, and concept from a perceptual process to physical language in different works of physical dance theatre. In this way we come to understand how artists create works as a perceptual process, and how audiences perceive expression in terms of artists' intention and intuition. Through physical movement in the theater and the language on the stage, people perceive creative thought as a reflection of the historical or current state of a society and changeable world.

My thesis is a study of physical language in dance theatre with both psychological and physical analysis. Therefore, in the form of physical dance theatre, we feel the spirit inside their movement language, much like the conversation of a human self through the perception of a physical, theatrical, spiritual, psychological, and unknown world.

## Artist Biography

Jiali Wang grew up in Chengdu, Sichuan Province, in China where she studied Chinese classical dance and folk dance at Sichuan Dance Academy from 1995-2000, and studied Dance Education and Performance at Beijing Normal University from 2001-2003. Wang became a Chinese traditional dancer working for Sichuan Singing and Dancing Company. After that, she attended Beijing Dance Academy from 2006-2010 and received her Bachelor's degree in Contemporary Dance with many national and international dance competition awards, as well as the annual scholarships from Beijing Dance Academy. Wang worked for Tao Dance Theater and then, became a dance teacher at Sichuan Art Occupation Academy. Wang set up her own dance center, Chuan Yi Dance Art Center, in Chengdu from 2012-2014. In the fall semester of 2014, she began work toward a Master of Fine Arts in Dance at The College at Brockport, State University of New York. During her study at SUNY Brockport, Wang worked for Inna Ballet Dance School in Rochester, New York in 2015, and performed her work, *Journal*, for the American College Dance Association Conference in 2016. Wang received a Tuition Scholarship from the American Dance Festival in 2016 and participated in a Footprints dance works, *Walk*, by Vanessa Voskuil as her MFA thesis research.



## **Introduction**

Dance and theater have the potential to build a very subtle relationship like the taste of coffee with milk, which makes a very special flavor with its bitter, sweet and pure taste. The coffee gives us different sensations; sometimes it is strong, and sometimes it is smooth and creamy, giving people a pretty soft taste. Although most of the time, people are attracted by the soft taste of coffee and milk, occasionally they also accept the strong flavor as a special sensation, and so it is with dance and theater.

We are seeing, listening, moving on the stage in the theatre, the place that allows us to laugh, cry, scream, and even fight. Why are we doing these things and why are we moving in this way? The stage has been recognized as a strong place to convey these complicated emotions and actions, visually, physically and spiritually. There are many things that happen on the stage, such as dance, drama, behavior art, and music. They are all languages and information that connect the inside world to the outside world. This kind of sophisticated performing art permeated with innovative concepts and aesthetics is called dance theatre.

The theater is a place where the performing arts were derived from early history. People went to the theater in the past and are going nowadays. Theater throughout time has lasted as an important cultural heritage showing the great development of performing arts. In The United States, the word “theater” often

means cinema, but the real meaning and function of theater has been more diverse than just cinema. More or less, theater has become a form of media transmitting concepts, vision, and sense through different art forms like drama, opera, visual art, behavior art and physical art. There are many things happening on the stage, which can be abstract and dramatic. With the development of physical art, especially in the post-modern age, an invisible link between dance and theater is formed with its innovations of performing form and motion, which directly connects theater to physical art.

“Dance Theatre” or “Physical Theatre,” the combination of physical art and performing art is not only about physical technique and movement, but also about the deeper meaning within communication as perceived through physical language itself. It is like a universe of existing various stars where we can see and perceive the power and possibility of the physical arts in its Milky Way galaxy. Body movement in dance theatre can be very expressive when combined with other performing forms like visual art, drama and music. As the fusion of dance, drama, musical, opera, visual art, behavior and installation arts, dance theatre embodies a multiplicity of performing arts throughout the post-modern age, which are reflections of ideas choreographers perceive. Thereby, when dance and theatre come together, it shows a very noisy world where artists share and express their thinking, emotion and philosophy, or even rebuke reality in their own way through personal style and performing form. The stage is more like a mirror reflecting the

noisy outside world, but also indicating an invisible power coming from human intuition, which we call perception.

Everything around us is perception that connects and relies on other elements, like flowers growing from the soil, fish living in the water, the alternating sun moon cycle. All these materials have the ability of perceiving each other. In this way, the world keeps absorbing, growing, changing, conflicting and existing. Therefore, we see this situation of absorbing, growing, changing, conflicting and existing on the stage as a unique physical aesthetic and expression through the performance of dance theatre. Dance theatre has a magnifying “theater effect” on our society that dance choreographers are experiencing and perceiving. Perceiving the body on the stage of dance theatre shows the energy, relationship and process of perception as artists convey sensory information inside through these body languages. Inside the theatre, actions like movement and behavior are the conveying of the perceptions from different artists, which tells us a truth, a concept and philosophy towards human lives both personally and globally. The relationship between physical dance theatre and perception allows us to think, observe and reflect upon ourselves. Unscrambling the deep symbolic meaning of physical expression between thinking and body as a perceiving process with its spirit and action is like an inner discovery linking self-awareness and enlightenment of self-recognition that allows us to have an insight into humanity itself and the phenomenon of the whole society. Therefore, my thesis will be

focusing on the aesthetic of dance theatre in relation to human perception.

In my thesis, I will analyze the relationship between physical dance theater and perception from different aspects in order to interpret the significance of artists' sensations in physical theatre as well as the perceiving process between performance and audience in the space. Artists' self-expression is also an important part. On the stage, any actions, behaviors, dialogue or monologue result from a kind of self-recognition from the artists. Therefore, the content of my thesis is informative. Of course, the main point of my thesis is concentrated on physical dance theatre with its diverse performance forms, like drama, environmental dance, visual art, and behavior art, based on the perception behind the physical expression. In support, I will broaden my sight to an extensive horizon to bolster my main point with other relevant knowledge and researches, for example: the concept of dance theatre and the interpretation of perception relating to multiple aspects; the perception between dance theatre and environment; the influence of current social issues as a perception on the stage; even the perception of space, movement and color.

This summer, I attended the American Dance Festival (ADF) 2016. I danced and did my research during the span of six weeks and witnessed a lot of amazing shows involving physical theater. During the rehearsal of Vanessa Voskuil's *Footprints*, as a dancer, I started to explore dance theatre when we danced in different places. Voskuil's *Footprints* piece is environmental dance theatre called

“Walk.” During the six weeks rehearsal, we did a lot of physical research in different spaces. Choreographer Vanessa Voskuil emphasized the importance of “perception” in relation to dance theatre, because for Voskuil, perception is primary to dance theater. Physical theater focuses not only on modern dance, but includes a supreme spirit of expression that can lead to deeper thinking of society, environment and our lives.

In addition to this, I was inspired by one of my ADF instructors, Jesse Zaritt, during the discussion of Black Lives Matter in his class. Based on the recent event of the Falcon Heights Shooting in which Philando Castile was shot by police in July, Zaritt mentioned seven issues that he perceived existing in American society. The issues are: Race, Class, Gender, Sexuality, Age, Ability, and Education. He emphasized how choreographers must face and address real issues in this society. I agree, and also I have experienced the issue of gender during my college life. I was reminded to rethink the relationship between body and perception as the main reason we dance, and to ask why we present ideas using theater.

Consequently, my exploration of physical dance theatre, in terms of perception, is the purpose of my thesis. I am interested in the strong expressive voice of dance theatre and the invisible power coming from perception, which creates meaning through movement to theatre. What we are feeling is the truth behind every movement and action, which leads me to deeply see the root of physical theater and the reaction of our body through its perceiving process. My

natural tendency as a mover is to engage with physical theatre and this guides me into thinking about and moving within the ocean of dance theatre, to seek the symbolic in dance, drama, and other performing arts, which makes the work universal.

In sum, the strong relationship between dance theatre and human perception is hard to define because dance is a synthesis of time, space, strength, concept, thought, action and spirit. I am attracted to this area and focus on it as my subject of study. Postmodern dance is movement as perception. We are moving and perceiving the process of physical and spiritual expression just as we taste coffee with milk: bitter, sweet, pure and strong.

## Chapter One

### The Physical Theatre and Human Perception

#### Dance and Perception: The Relationship between Human Perception and Action

It is hard to explain why we have so many different actions in our lives and what makes us have a relationship between our actions and behaviors, but we know that we are all influenced by this world and that it is also influenced with our actions. Reacting to this world, we have shown many ways of interacting with different things. We wave hands to friends, we buy goods in shopping malls, and we jump into the water in summer. Every physical activity seems like a very little thing that easily occurs in our daily lives, but, to some extent, these little things show a strong attraction, a relationship to our sensory world.

A human's sensory nervous system is a very complex factory transferring information through psychological and sensory stimulus. The process of stimulation has been discovered and is still being explored by psychologists, philosophers and physical scientists. There are many studies in terms of the concept of the stimulus and perception that show different argumentations and viewpoints to the field. *Person Perception*, by Schneider, Hastorf, and Ellsworth, explains that:

A number of philosophers and psychologists have conceived of the translation

process as an essentially passive one, completely determined by the physical properties of the stimulus and by the structure of the receptors and sensory nervous system. They conceive of our sensory apparatus as working somewhat like a high-speed translation device. Physical impingements are looked up in an impingement-experience dictionary, and the proper experience is created in the perceiver.<sup>1</sup>

Through the physical property of the stimulus and the structure of the receptors, the function of our sensory nervous system and sensory apparatus provides a favorable condition allowing us to make sense of other people, external objects, and the outside world. Also, it naturally reacts with human actions, just like how we sneeze when we are feeling chill, we sleep when we are tired, and we eat when we are hungry.

“The Concept of The Stimulus in Psychology” by James J. Gibson included in Peter A. Fried’s book *Readings in Perception: Principle and Practice* provides the definition of stimulus through many different psychologists:

This definition of the stimulus is considered naïve by perception psychologists. Stimuli are energies, not objects. In Troland’s words, “the stimulus may be defined as the specific physical force, energy, or agency which brings about the stimulation of the given receptor system.” This conception has the authority of a century’s research on the senses. In 1834

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<sup>1</sup> Schneider, David J., Albert H. Hastorf, and Phoebe C. Ellsworth. *Person Perception*. 2nd ed. Reading: Addison-Wesley Publishing Company, Inc. 1979. P3.



Johannes Müller argued that a stimulus was whatever excited one of the “nerves of sense.” To the modern neurophysiologist, a stimulus is energy that depolarizes a living cell-especially, but not exclusively, a nerve cell. For Jennings in 1906, studying the amoeba, a stimulus was a type of change in the immediate environment that produced a change in behavior, and there existed precisely five types: chemical, mechanical, thermal, photic, or electrical. Woodworth says that “a stimulus is any form of energy acting upon a sense organ and arousing some activity of the organism.”<sup>2</sup>

There are also other psychologists who provide relevant analyses about “the proximal, distal or distant” stimulus:

Koffka wishes to call stimulus “the causes of the excitations of our sense organs,” but he, more than any other theorist, faced up to the contradictory meanings of the term and proposed a formal distinction between the “proximal” stimulus and the “distal” or “distant” stimulus. He made us consider the paradox that although perception and behavior seem to be determined by the distal object, they can in fact only be aroused by the proximal stimulus.<sup>3</sup>

Based on these explanations of human sensory stimulus, we get to know the important factor causing our perceptual activity, which is more like a

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<sup>2</sup> Fried, Peter A. *Readings in Perception: Principle and Practice*. Lexington: D.C. Heath and Company, 1974. P9.

<sup>3</sup> Fried, Peter A. *Readings in Perception: Principle and Practice*. P9.

psychological impulse guiding a series of physical actions. In this way, emotion and motivation such as disappointment, curiosity, sadness, fear, guilt, jealousy, pain, confidence, and success cause relevant physical behaviors and effects such as hitting, laughing, crying, walking, blaming, fighting, screaming, kissing, and so forth. These actions illustrate the result of sensory stimulus. When human movement perceives a psychological impulse or emotion, movement is formed into a special expression, a kind of language with structure, imagining pattern, and notions, which interpret people's psychological activity through the body. Hence, our sensory apparatus is like the engine of a car when it is started; every part of the car works together in order to run with full energy. Sentiency fulfills its potential with visual, aural, olfactory, gustatory and tactile experiences whenever, wherever, and whatever the situation is. Every sensory connection produces different information that allows us to recognize and identify things that happen around us, to obtain diverse ways of knowing. Our senses reflect a world.

“Human perception includes two processes, sensation and aesthesia.”<sup>4</sup>

*Contemporary literary psychology*, by Yuanpu Jin, Risheng Bi, and Ruchun Luo states the relevant information that helps us to identify the definition of perception,

Sensation is the process when objective materials directly act on human's sensory apparatus and produce the reflection of individual attributes to these

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<sup>4</sup> Jin, Yuanpu, Risheng Bi, and Ruchun Luo. *Contemporary literary psychology*. Beijing: China Renmin University Press. 2009. P57.

objective things in the human brain, which is the simplest human psychological activity or process. Aesthesia is an entire form of reflection to external materials, which combines individual sensations into a complete image of everything. From the individual attribute of the reflection of human sensation to the entire response of aesthesia, perception experiences a misty but complete recognition to objective things.<sup>5</sup>

Clearly, when we are acting on the influence of objective material, we are not even aware of the distinction between the objective material and ourselves. By recognizing the difference between sensation and aesthesia, we get further understanding of the function of our perceptual system. In this way, we question how our sensation controls and guides our behaviors, how it constitutes different images in our brain and transmits the energy to our physical actions.

Things that happen are the results of our actions. As the representation of human sensation, our actions not only connect to the objective materials, but also come from our subjective awareness that links to psychological activity. These psychological activities can be easily involved in a series of subjective awareness activities and be varied. In *Contemporary literary psychology*, Yuanpu Jin, Risheng Bi, and Ruchun Luo mention, “Once people’s psychological activity connects to perception, emotion, and imagination, our psychological fact is easy

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<sup>5</sup> Jin, Yuanpu, Risheng Bi, and Ruchun Luo. *Contemporary literary psychology*. P57.

to be changed.”<sup>6</sup> Surely, human psychological activity indicates a situation that people are experiencing or have experienced. With personal perception, emotion, and imagination, our recognition of external objects begins to change which results in the change of our subjective awareness and concept. Under the circumstances, the variation of psychological activities easily leads to relevant mental reactions such as: illusion, imagination, memory, motivation and synesthesia. It is no doubt that the subjective awareness activity is another factor affecting our perceptual system with changeable psychological activities.

For example, many painters commonly use people’s illusion of distance to create a multi-dimensional space in the picture in order to arouse viewers’ appreciation of the illusion and imagination through their visual nerves. Once I was appreciating a picture on the wall in a museum. There were four or five people who were torturing a man in the room, and there were flowers around the violent space, which looked like a very peaceful background in the whole picture. However, as I got close to the big picture, I saw a different view. Actually, the picture is a mirror on the wall in a living room reflecting the violent scene of a tortured man in the room. The flowers around the mirror are symbolic of the blood of the man who is tormented by these people. From my subjective perception, this big picture reflects and presents the aesthetics of violence as a mirror on the wall in the violent room. Therefore, we see that the perception produced by subjective

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<sup>6</sup> Jin, Yuanpu, Risheng Bi, and Ruchun Luo. *Contemporary literary psychology*. P60.

awareness shows its function of imagination and illusion as the personally psychological activity and experience. We are receiving information constantly while perceiving experience.

Furthermore, the concept of perception indicates an orderly system as a transformational process from human brain to physical reaction. The description of the concept of perception is shown through three systems in the essay “Operationism and The Concept of Perception” by Wendell R. Garner, Harold W. Hake and Charles W. Eriksen: “A schematic of the perceptual problem. The three systems operate in a causal relationship, although there may be interdependencies. Each system, however, may have independent properties. The properties of the stimulus and response systems can be directly observed.”<sup>7</sup> Furthermore, Garner, Hake and Eriksen describe that,

We conceive of perception as an intervening process between stimuli and responses, as schematically illustrated in the three systems: stimulus system—perceptual system—response system. We can directly observe only stimuli and responses, and therefore perception can be known only as a concept whose properties are induced from objectively determined relations between stimuli and responses.<sup>8</sup>

Therefore, through the demonstration of the three systems, we get to know how

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<sup>7</sup> Fried, Peter A. *Readings in Perception: Principle and Practice*. P22-23.

<sup>8</sup> Fried, Peter A. *Readings in Perception: Principle and Practice*. P22-23.

we interact with things and obtain information from the process of receiving and being influenced by any sensory activities between outside and inside stimulus. The identification of the concept of perception offers an overview of the perceptual system, which shows an inner structure in a naturally perceptual order; we are influenced by our sensory stimulus, and then become involved in the perceptual process. Finally we respond to what we perceived with our actions.

As a bodily expression, dance is the response system to our initial perceptual system. When the energy coming from the outside transfers to our spirit with emotions, thoughts and concepts, the body is digesting the energy at the same time. Dance is more like a container receiving diverse information through our perceptual system. Also, as a kind of externalization of psychological activity, dance movement forms into a special physical language with logics, aesthetics and thoughts that reflect the demonstration of the three systems. For instance, when dance choreographers are thinking of an approach to interpret different information they received and influenced, the thinking process establishes a vibe of imagination that transfers spiritual energy and signal to body movement. This is the process from the stimulus system to the perceptual system. After that, when dancers are moving, movement shows its function of researching with its effect of space, time, and strength, which embodies a sort of emotion and psychological expression. Even during improvisation, we are also involved in language research, which shows the response system to our perception and awareness relating to the

reaction of others, space and all those external objects without intention. Simply saying, external energy causes motivation, which arouses bodily movement in order to respond to the perceptual energy that we received, experienced and were inspired by through sensory stimulus and psychological activities.

Thus, we dance to describe ourselves with movements, because we are expressing our feelings. As a physical expression and performing art, dance embodies the value of aesthetics with physical performing form. Dance demonstrates the relationship between human perception and action. It allows us insight into the perceiving information that leads us to move with our body language. In this way, dance illustrates meaning.

### **The Perceptual Process –Environment, Space, and Physical Theatre**

Coming to this country, my world has completely been changed because of the influence of environment, culture and language. Due to my serious language barrier, I misunderstand, and my communicating ability is weakened which totally affects my social life. Life is more complicated.

People do not know how awkward it is to stare at a person who just said something to you, either good or bad, while at that moment, you are still working hard to figure out how to respond to this person in a correct way. Facing an unfamiliar environment and culture, I seem like a dumb violent man. No talking, no listening and no understanding in my silent world, I am limited. Under these circumstances, instead of talking with people and having regular social activities

in this unfamiliar place, I pay close attention to others' emotions, attitudes and behaviors, as well as to changes of tone and mood. The only thing I can do is to try to make sense of it all.

Every sense sends an important signal to our brain, making us more sensitive in our daily life. The environment influences our action, behavior, and ability. An unfamiliar environment brings a sense of anxiety to people and can feel threatening. We feel the change in our behavior as a response to different environments and spaces. This experience is based on the perceptual process. Our situation influences us constantly; David J. Schneider, Albert H. Hastorf and Phoebe C. Ellsworth mention that, "perceptions define a predictable world, an orderly stage for us to act on."<sup>9</sup> Surely, I am on the stage, but it does not feel orderly.

When we get into the studio, we change our dance clothes and put on socks or dance shoes. Then we are warming up in a space while talking to others. In this vibe, everything is casual, unofficial, easy and leisurely before the instructor comes into the studio. However, when the instructor comes, the vibe in the studio becomes strict and official, and even tends to reflect a nervous atmosphere. Everyone becomes silent and focuses on the instructor and maybe this predicates what will happen in today's class. Everyone can feel the change after the instructor's appearance. Someone is guessing what we will learn today, and how

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<sup>9</sup> Schneider, David J., Albert H. Hastorf, and Phoebe C. Ellsworth. *Person Perception*. 2nd ed. Reading: Addison-Wesley Publishing Company, Inc. 1979. P7.



we are working together. Before we start to dance, we have questions and impressions in our mind. The class gets started. Then, following the direction of the instructor, we are moving on the floor, across the space, contacting with partners, and listening to the voice of the instructor: “yes... good... beautiful...” in the space. We are reacting to the instructor’s directions. We influence the space and are affected by the space too.

We are always feeling and dancing, seeking meaning in regard to the perceptual processing of environment and space. Human perception is the way we explore the natural activity of dancing.

Dance and the environment form a natural connection when physical movement becomes a natural reaction to the environment. For example, early modern dance pioneer Isadora Duncan developed the concept of free dance based on her perception of nature and the body within a natural environment. Her quality of movement was linked to the movements of trees, wind, flowers, rivers, birds, and so forth.

This summer, I attended the American Dance Festival and performed in Vanessa Voiskuil’s “Footprints” dance work in the Sarah P. Duke Gardens for four days. This dance was called “Walk,” which is a physical dance theatre relating to the natural environment. From rehearsal to performance, this dance was completely different from other Footprint dances. The only thing Vanessa asked us to do for the three-hour rehearsal every day was to work on ourselves as physical

research in different spaces and within the environment, individually and collectively. During the six-week rehearsal, everyday was refreshing. We danced together in the studio, walked on the streets, sang and played in the garden, and even slept on the floor. During the performances, we did not even know what we would be doing before each of the shows. The four performances presented four different dance scenes with different ideas, concepts, movements, and forms of art in relation to the natural environment in the garden. Before the performances, Vanessa just gave us brief implications about the direction, like when she said, “Let’s bring umbrellas for our dance today, in case of thunder and rain” before the third Footprints performance.

Walking into the garden, we passed the gateway and we stopped; suddenly, the atmosphere changed, our steps became slow. The performance started with this slow walking. All together, there was a sensation of solidarity from individuals with these slow forward steps. Anything in the garden served as a stimulus for our physical activity: we experienced the sand underneath our feet, the sunshine burning our skin, the hot wind on our faces in the space. We put clothes in the water and threw them on the ground; we stood on the stones, ran around the fountain, interacted with audiences and walked on top of the wall. The sensation of water, sunshine, hot wind, skin, wet clothes, and the gaze of the audience all happened in the garden.

During the performance, I was feeling the intention of my peers, sometimes

just a brief touch. Coincidentally, while I was feeling the curiosity and confusion of the audience, they were making sense or trying to make sense of our actions and behaviors in the whole view. The garden was constantly changed by the audience and us. Vanessa took off her clothes and moved around the fountain. She threw her wet clothes on the ground and made many loud sounds. We saw big watermarks on the ground, heard the sounds when the wet clothes hit the surface of the ground, and we moved to the fountain and started to interact with the water with umbrellas, clothes, hair, and different parts of our bodies. I laid on the ground feeling the water pouring from my partner's umbrella to my face. The ground was so hot that my back struggled in the pain of burn from the hot surface of ground. I could not see anything because of the sunshine directly in my eyes, but I could feel the water and my partner. At the end of each performance, the whole group gathered together and slowly walked upstairs and left the garden and audiences. The garden became silent after all of us had finished influencing the environment.

The environment transmits a kind of signal to our sensory apparatus with visual, aural, and tactile experiences. We receive these experiences through sensory stimulus in the vibe of space and environment. By being influenced, we are changed and act upon, through internal activity, external action. Hence, we automatically get into the process of becoming a part of the vibe, of being engaged with the particular atmosphere. The process of interaction and reaction speaks a response to our visual, aural, olfactory, gustatory and tactile experiences

in the space or environment.

### **The Perception inside the Dance Theater**

Once, I talked with Vanessa when we had dinner together during the American Dance Festival. I was curious about her rehearsal and wanted to know her thoughts about the meaning of dance theatre. Her response was, “Perception...is the top.” Since then, I have started to think about the relationship between perception and dance theatre.

Theater is a place that presents the interactive process of human perception and action, which carries its development and value in both history and humanity. From ancient times to nowadays, the presentation of theater in different generations shows the progress of theatrical arts along with the evolution of generations and constant development of aesthetic, thought, ideology and concept in all kinds of arts including dance.

Early theatrical arts, dance and theater have demonstrated human activities and entertainment in early society. Based on serious social class divisions, dance in theater formed a solid artistic mode and style serving aristocrats in early western history like ballet. But we can see the evolution of ballet; this high-class dance performance in western theater has become an international performing art along with national and international competitions at present. Similarly, in ancient China, Chinese classical dance presented different performing forms in different dynasties, which showed the particular mode of aesthetics with its reflection of

culture, economy, humanity and society. Thereby, theater is the reflection of the social dynamics and development playing an important role throughout the history.

Otherwise, early theatrical arts like drama and opera were also the mainstream forms of performing arts throughout theatrical history. Since then, the function of theater has been formed and conceptualized through the identification of aesthetics and performing forms as one of the early social activities for people's entertainment. The aesthetics of theatre have been distinguished and gradually blended with other arts forms throughout time. In the book, *The History Of World Theater From The English Restoration To The Present*, Felicia Hardison Londre describes that,

The history of theater in particular must be concerned with interconnecting elements. In no art more than theater is there such a blending of all of the arts. Theater is a nexus of rhetorical, poetic, mimetic, pictorial, musical, and architectural arts and crafts. Never in history has the theater developed in isolation from other human activities: politics, religion, economics, science, and sociocultural norms. What appeared on the stage at any given time and place was the product of a complex of factors that included audience demographics, the theater's system of patronage or management, the physical facility, the intellectual context articulated by critics and theorists, and so on.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> Londre, Felicia Hardison. Preface. *The History of World Theater*. New York: The Continuum Publishing

According to the blending of all of the arts, the combination of dance and theatrical arts embodies a brand new theatrical aesthetic from the postmodern age to nowadays. With the development of multi-functional performing forms in theatrical arts, physical dance theatre as an innovative ideology, aesthetic notion and value of art melted into a constantly evolving dance history.

Inside the dance theatre, there is the complexity of performance with visual and aural experiences. People's actions, styles, behaviors, and movement on the stage have become more abstract expression instead of the stereotype of opera, drama and ballet with specific storylines and the perfect or tragic endings. There are singing, speaking, and screaming verbal behaviors happening during the performing process, which causes audiences to think and perceive diverse languages on the stage.

In *Personal Perception*, Schneider, Hastorf and Ellsworth state that,

We are all interested in learning how we come to know and to understand other people. When you get to know another person you are engaged in a process of perceiving that person. You not only see the other people as a physical stimulus, but you observe behavior; furthermore, you draw conclusions about what you have seen.<sup>11</sup>

Similarly, when we are sitting in the theater watching the dancing bodies on the stage, we are engaging in a process perceiving these bodies moving on the stage,

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Company, 1991. P viii.

<sup>11</sup> Schneider, David J., Albert H. Hastorf, and Phoebe C. Ellsworth. *Person Perception*. P1.

watching the dance and listening to the music while we are thinking about the meaning of the dance from choreographer's intention and thoughts through a series of movement, emotion, and dance forms, as well as the space where we are.

There are different factors influencing us when we are involved in the space of theater. For instance, before we go to the theater, we are dressed up. Then, we are urbane and well behaved to others after getting into the theater, unlike walking into a party or a bar with a glass of beer and wine. When the performance is getting started, we gradually become quiet and pay attention to the stage. After that, we begin to observe the shape of the stage, the color of the costumes on dancers' bodies, even the change of lighting during the performance. Meanwhile, we pay attention to dancers' lines, techniques and facial expressions. Finally, we clap for the choreographer and dancers after the show. All this information is the influence and change coming from the environment to our sensory activities prompting our behavior and manner. We can feel the energy of the theater when we are inside it. Everything in the "box" affects our sensory apparatus and leads our behavior to be changed through the perceptual experience in the space of theater.

Between the physical actions on the stage and the psychological activities in the auditorium, an energy circle transmits and produces an attractive force that guides an audience's attention and intention, imagination and curiosity, change and perception. The "engine" of perception running inside the theater is the subtle

interaction between dance theatre and audiences, as a silent communication, or a perceptual dialogue.



## Chapter Two

### Aesthetics and Perception in Dance Theatre

#### Wuppertaler Tanztheater: Repetition, Emotion, and Incoherent Scenes

The well-known German dance theatre, Wuppertaler Tanztheater, has become the most brilliant symbol of physical dance theater in the world. Since the twentieth century, German dance theatre has made a huge breakthrough between physical and theatrical arts through innovative aesthetics, concept, form and expression. As a twentieth century revolution of dance arts, “German *Tanztheater* seems to have become a historical phenomenon in itself. It covers more than three decades of productions by the first generation of choreographers—Pina Bausch, Gerhard Bohner, Reinhild Hoffmann, Hans Kresnik, Susanne Linke—as well as of following second and third generations”<sup>12</sup> at the turn of the twenty-first century. Philippine “Pina” Bausch, the pioneer of German dance theater and the choreographer and director of Wuppertaler Tanztheater, has become “an artistic trend of remarkable importance in contemporary performing arts, and recently she has been considered the most important choreographer of the twentieth century.”<sup>13</sup>

The book, *Pina Bausch and the Wuppertal Dance Theater: The Aesthetics of Repetition and Transformation*, by Ciane Fernandes states the background and

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<sup>12</sup> Fernandes, Ciane. Preface. *Pina Bausch and the Wuppertal Dance Theater: The Aesthetics of Repetition and Transformation*. New York: Peter Lang Publishing, Inc. 2001. P xvi.

<sup>13</sup> Fernandes, Ciane. *Pina Bausch and the Wuppertal Dance Theater: The Aesthetics of Repetition and Transformation*. P1.

notion of German dance theatre with its origin, and development in the history of dance and theatre:

Aesthetically, as well as socio-historically, *Tanztheater* is posited in the 1970s and 1980s, originating during the initial confrontation with the political and cultural situation of post-war West Germany in the 1960s. American Performance Arts, Happening, or (post)modern dance from the United States, rightly and carefully pointed out by Fernandes, only appear as marginal influences in the German reception of *Tanztheater*.....Dance theater and drama theater did influence each other. Dance took advantage of the new aesthetics of images, the open structure, and the emancipation from a narrative story line. It also used the cinematic principles and the awareness of reality and everyday-life presented in contemporary drama theater. On the other hand, drama theater considered dance theater as a non-repressive, non-hierarchical language, allowing for a physical-emotional way of (self-)expression experience onstage. Besides the aesthetic influences, drama theater again mystified dance and movement language as natural, authentic, pre-expressive, and pre-verbal. This tendency was supported by the fact that contemporary theater was posited in the discourse of the *Frankfurter Schule*, in the theories of Horkheimer/Adorno and Herbert Marcuse.”<sup>14</sup>

The term “dance theatre,” derived from Rudolf von Laban, combined the

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<sup>14</sup> Fernandes, Ciane. Preface. *Pina Bausch and the Wuppertal Dance Theater: The Aesthetics of Repetition and Transformation*. P xvi- xvii.

unique performing form and notion in dance that differs from other performing arts and modern dance. Based on the body language of dance, the verbal elements like drama, musical and opera were introduced in the expression of physical art, which has blended with dance arts and provided multiple sensory experiences to audiences. In Fernandes's book, the origins of German dance theatre and how the notion of dance theatre has been introduced in the dance field is described:

The origins of German dance theatre can be traced back to the works of Rudolf von Laban and his pupils Mary Wigman and Kurt Jooss. In the 1920s and 1930s, Laban used the term "dance theater" to describe dance as an independent art form, based on harmonious correspondences between the dynamics of movement and spatial pathways. Nevertheless, his movement system developed out of "Dance-Tone-Word Improvisations," in which students borrowed from other art forms, using voice, creating small poems, or dancing in silence. The resulting dance pieces incorporated both everyday and pure movement in a narrative, comical, or more abstract form.<sup>15</sup>

As we have seen, the term "dance theatre" was born during the 20s' and 30s' in the early twentieth century. Since then, it has spread throughout the world.

Meanwhile, Fernandes mentions Bertolt Brecht's theater theories and practices, concerned with sociopolitical themes, in this book. It shows that "Brecht's 'epic theater' included concepts such as 'Gestus,' V-effect, montage

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<sup>15</sup> Fernandes, Ciane. *Pina Bausch and the Wuppertal Dance Theater: The Aesthetics of Repetition and Transformation*. P1-3.

techniques, and unexpected comic moments. Brecht's concept of Gestus or 'Gebärde' emphasized a complex and many times contradictory combination of both body actions and decision-making toward change."<sup>16</sup> Thereby, Brecht's theatrical theories and practice indicates the relevant effect to development of German dance theatre as one of the factors influencing and promoting the aesthetics and notion of German dance arts. In addition, as Fernandes states, "Other theater directors who opened up avenues for contemporary dance theater by emphasizing the body were Samuel Beckett and Antonin Artaud."<sup>17</sup> In this way, we can see the explorations and contributions of early artists, scholars and theorists who were devoted to the field of dance theatre with their theories and studies. With a series of brand new explorations and aesthetic notions in the field of dance theatre, these objective factors prompted the growth of dance and theater and became the indispensable historical condition stimulating the potential of German dance theatre. In the meantime, artists perceived these objective conditions and factors as potential motivation and awareness in order to establish a brand new art form in dance. Absolutely, Pina Bausch is a successful practitioner of German dance theatre; and her Wuppertal Tanztheater represents the great evolution in European dance history.

The style and meaning in Pina Bausch's work demonstrate a process of

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<sup>16</sup> Fernandes, Ciane. *Pina Bausch and the Wuppertal Dance Theater: The Aesthetics of Repetition and Transformation*.P3.

<sup>17</sup> Fernandes, Ciane. *Pina Bausch and the Wuppertal Dance Theater: The Aesthetics of Repetition and Transformation*.P3.

constant exploration of reality, humanity and society. Bausch's works include many repetitions, dramatic emotions, symbolic behaviors, and dance scenes. Tracing back to her early dance experiences, Bausch's dance works embody a kind of aesthetic identification and questioning of bodily expression. Therefore, the influences of her early dance experience resulted in her perception and thinking towards dance and theater, which provided an important subjective condition to her perceptual experience of the concept of dance theatre. In *Pina Bausch and the Wuppertal Dance Theater: The Aesthetics of Repetition and Transformation*, Fernandes's statement illustrates that,

Bausch's work combines her training with Jooss at the Folkwang School and as a soloist in his Folkwangballet with her experience in the arts and dance in New York in the 1960s. Bausch's teachers in 1960-1961 included Antony Tudor, José Limón, Anna Sokolow, Alfredo Corvino, Margret Craske, Louis Horst, and La Meri... In 1973, she became the director of the Ballet der Wuppertaler Bühnen, which had its name changed to Wuppertal Tanztheater... During her years in New York, many American dancers and choreographers reacted against techniques of modern dance and joined visual artists and musicians to produce collaborative works. These expressed sociopolitical concerns about civil rights, the environment, and feminism, and also questioned the nature of art. Artists intended to tear down the separation between art and everyday life, and between performers and audience. The

collaborative pieces involved daily body movements and costumes, in a critique of formal and artificial theatrical representation...Jooss and American works of the 1960s emphasize human relations, daily movement vocabulary, and collaboration between different art forms.<sup>18</sup>

Clearly, in Bausch's work, we can see these factors as her subjective awareness, unconsciousness and ideology through many daily movements, behaviors with metaphors, and dance scenes representing the conflicts between male and female. In her works, the relationship between female and male, sometimes with irony in movements and behaviors, always shows a strong violence conveying a kind of despair and resistance against the gender issue. The vocabularies in Bausch's dances present a series of desire, anti-reality, fear psychology, and social oppression, which are all related to her perceptions of early dance education and life, just as Fernandes continuously mentions:

Bausch has been influenced by the collaboration between the arts in both her European and American experiences. As mentioned in Thomas McEvelley's review of 1980—*A Piece by Pina Bausch*, she “revives the Dada performance vocabulary and brings it to life with astonishing vigor.” During the first decades of the twentieth century, the interaction between the different art fields was a main quality of the European avant-garde movements, such as

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<sup>18</sup> Fernandes, Ciane. *Pina Bausch and the Wuppertal Dance Theater: The Aesthetics of Repetition and Transformation*. P3-4.

Dada and Bauhaus. These movements developed close to and sometimes interacted with dance theatre. Laban was an architect and designer, and his notation symbols resemble those of Russian constructivist painting. Bausch's works transcend these influences. Her pieces include the interaction between art forms in a critical manner. As in the works of the 1960s, her pieces present an overall group chaos under certain order, favoring process over product. Unexpected experiences are also evoked by the pieces, involving both dancers and audience. Yet Bausch's works achieve such qualities without rejecting the theatrically grandiose.<sup>19</sup>

As Pina Bausch said, "I'm not interested in how people move but what moves them."<sup>20</sup> I began to think about the same question: What moves me? What moves us? It is a great question relating to the origin of why we dance. In my study, the most reasonable answer is the effect of human perception, which is the strength that guides us to move. The motivation coming from our perception directly acts on our thinking in order to promote our sense of action and expression; in this way, we move and interpret what we have felt as an inspired process between perceptual experience and physical expression. Bausch always tried to break the traditional mode of dance movement and to think about the possibility of diverse

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<sup>19</sup> Fernandes, Ciane. *Pina Bausch and the Wuppertal Dance Theater: The Aesthetics of Repetition and Transformation*. P4-5.

<sup>20</sup> Bausch, Pina. "What moves me." *Pina Bausch Foundation.com*. Accessed November 23, 2016. <http://www.pinabausch.org/en/pina/what-moves-me>

performing forms as accurate expression in her dance theatre. Her works illustrate a critical manner that relates her thinking to body movement and language in order to embody many different contradictions between humanity and morality, like in *The Rite of Spring*;<sup>21</sup> between male and female, like in *Barbe Bleue*;<sup>22</sup> and between people and society, like in *Kontakthof*.<sup>23</sup> The world in Pina Bausch's works is filled with contradictions that reflect her perception and thinking of this world, humanity, and moral principles.

The contradictions in Pina Bausch's works can be unscrambled through three main elements and methods, which are repetition, emotion and incoherent scenes, the power and aesthetics of her dance theatre. As Fernandes states,

Repetition is a crucial method and subject of Bausch's Tantheater. Through repetition of movements and words, Bausch confirms and alters the tradition of German dance theater—exploring the nature of dance and theater, and of their psychological implications.<sup>24</sup>

Many of Bausch's works use the method of repetition that conveys different human emotions and psychological situations. These repeated motions and incoherent dance scenes show strong psychological expression and metaphor, which embody the impulse of emotion and energy from inside the dancers' body

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<sup>21</sup>“The Rite of Spring” Accessed December 15, 2016. [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2w8ww\\_BfQBY](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2w8ww_BfQBY)

<sup>22</sup> “Barbe Bleue” Accessed December 15, 2016. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=J15mFLT-pP4>

<sup>23</sup> “Kontakthof” Accessed December 15, 2016. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4ZbfsLW707I>

<sup>24</sup> Fernandes, Ciane. *Pina Bausch and the Wuppertal Dance Theater: The Aesthetics of Repetition and Transformation*. P7.



movements as well as Pina Bausch's perception and aesthetic concept. Also, visual experience in Bausch's works supports her psychological expression in an abstract way, like Fernandes mentions,

Onstage, the strong visual and auditory impact of her pieces often projects cinematic impressions onto the audience... The use of organic material, such as water, mud, carnations, or salt on the floor resembles the inter-arts of the 1960s, albeit in a larger production scale. These objects are not used to integrate the body with nature, but are obstacles—dancers move gingerly around these elements or even among urban objects such as bricks from a ruined wall (*Palermo, Palermo, 1989*), or chairs and tables (*Café Müller, 1978*)... in Bausch's works such elements are brought onstage as independent entities, stretching the borders of dance.<sup>25</sup>

In my opinion, the aesthetics of Bausch's works are the fusion of visual, aural, and physical experiences conveying and perceiving the different situations within society, morality and humanity.

In Bausch's *Café Müller*,<sup>26</sup> the dance scenes and movement show the complex view of chaos through repetition, emotion, and incoherent dance scenes. The space of *Café Müller* is presented in a quiet vibe with chairs, tables, walls and doors. In the silence, repeated behavior and movement exaggerate different

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<sup>25</sup> Fernandes, Ciane. *Pina Bausch and the Wuppertal Dance Theater: The Aesthetics of Repetition and Transformation*. P5-6.

<sup>26</sup> "Café Müller" Accessed December 15, 2016. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WZd2SkydIXA>

emotions through dancers' body expression and the intricate performing forms. Inside these body languages, symbolic behaviors, and emotions, I see the emphasis of human anxiety and fear being unscrambled through Pina Bausch's implication and perception. In this dance, Bausch's movement connects to the walls over and over again. She reaches her arms out with slow steps and shows up on the side of the stage in the darkness at the beginning of the dance. Everything in the silent scene becomes a reflection of sadness and despair around this chilled and dismal vibe. Bausch's body bumps into the wall and creeps down to the ground revealing a very meaningful sensation, which is different from other movers' actions in the space. With closed eyes and staggering steps, Bausch keeps herself in an unconscious state. Comparing to others' actions, Bausch's movement is soft and quiet but exaggerates the emotion of her body monologue in the chaotic atmosphere as a personal psychological implication that indicates a sense of stream of consciousness differing her action from others'.

Movement emphasizes individual's inner energy as an implicit language. With a series of repeated actions, simple movement becomes sentimental expression that makes audiences question the intentions behind these motions and emotions. Unscrambling the relationship between the emotion, movement and scene seems like a potential purpose of what Bausch wants audiences to perceive from her thinking, aesthetic concept and expression through her performing form and style of dance theatre. Characters, space, time and changeable scenes along

with the sentimental song in this dance create Bausch's contradictory world through its complex portrayal in the intricate and lonely café. We can see the shift of emotion when individual characters break the chilled space with their attendance on the stage. At that moment, the café is separated into different views through the different setting of character's relationships and emotional body language. A man who quickly moves the chairs and tables for a woman walking and running across the stage breaks the silent atmosphere and the sentimental song. This repeated scene forms the strong visual effect conveying the relationship and emotion with the sounds of falling chairs and tables, which adds another sentimental impact in the space of the café. At this moment, the vibe on the stage transfers into diverse perspectives reflecting a sense of the complexity between reality and a perceptual world. The whole view of this silent café changes into another picture of a multi-space of relationships and emotion in relation to the change of repetition and incoherent physical scenes.

However, it also seems like there is no actual relationship between these characters in this *Café*. The woman with red hair keeps running without attention to others and other things happening on the stage. She shows a very nervous, helpless fear and anxiety travelling in the café from the door to different areas and she looks like a violent man. A man in a suit carries and resets these falling chairs and tables; his identity in this dance is unknown. Another man is also an unsure character in this dance, especially when he controls the movement between the

man and the woman in their duet, showing a relationship between the two in a crazy emotional state with constantly repeated movements from a slow contact to a quick repetition of body rhythm. This duet strongly conveys a complicated psychological contradiction between man and woman. With the mess of chairs and tables, the woman keeps falling on the ground out of the man's arms over and over again. The language of repetition reveals a "rush hour" in this piece, which shows the endless despair and human contradiction.

Meanwhile, the music stopping occasionally stresses the shift of emotion and environment. In this way, a subtle change between time and space, characters and scenes is perceived by audience as a kind of aural expression emphasizing the theater effect with spatial and aural experience. Bausch's solo still plays the slow rhythm as an unchangeable monologue. Her movement maintains a quiet quality, a sense of sadness and unconsciousness that attracts the audience to deeply feel the chill and sadness in the chaotic café. In *Café Müller*, Bausch tries to explain and place herself in an intangible despair, a kind of personal perception relating to her thinking and perception of humanity and society.

Perception stimulates different emotions. In many Pina Bausch's works like *The Rite of Spring*, *Kontakthof*, and *Barbe Bleue*, we see the exploration of her perception through emotions and movements, and how she tries to build up these emotions that she perceived through a variety of physical possibilities including the principle of time, space, and strength. The repetition method in her works

becomes a sort of principle of time, space, and strength stimulating, exaggerating and stressing these emotional elements, which causes a powerful expression. In this way, we can see a process from quantitative to a qualitative change composing the language of both physical aesthetics and emotional stimulus. In other words, the effect of repetition causes a kind of rhythm and energy that results in a sense of language with physical time and strength.

In 2007, I watched the performance of *The Rite of Spring* and *Café Müller* at Tian Qiao Arts Theater in Beijing. Pina Bausch and her Wuppertaler Tanztheater brought a brand new experience of dance arts to the Chinese audience. Compared to the chill of *Café Müller*, Bausch's critical manner in *The Rite of Spring* caused a totally different psychological and perceptual experience, which exposed an argument of humanity and morality as a raging fire burning and disclosing the ruthless nature of human instinct. The soil on the floor of the stage reflects the storyline of *The Rite of Spring*. Unlike *Café Müller*, there were not many individual dance scenes in the space, but the movement language perfectly depicted the character's psychological state; one of change, impact, and the fear of death in the female dancer's solo. Based on the storyline of *The Rite of Spring*, I saw Bausch's fear and criticism of humanity and morality, as well as the understanding and unscrambling of her perception from the story to Stravinsky's music, from emotion to movement, from spiritual inspiration to physical description.

As Fernandes mentions:

Through repetition of gestures, words and past experiences, Bausch's dance theater can be defined as the body's consciousness of its history as a symbolic and social subject in constant transformation. She has stretched the borders not just of dance but also of all the arts, creating a space that fluctuates between theater, dance, music, film, performance art, happening. Her works are constructed through and by the body in its proper "logic"—fragmented, multiple, incoherent, and complex.<sup>27</sup>

In *The Rite of Spring*, the overwhelming repetition of steps, motions, and body rhythms not only reflects the soul of Stravinsky's *The Rite of Spring*, but also presents the criticism of humanity and morality in Bausch's *Rite of Spring*.

### **Perceptual Expressions, Forms, and Elements: The Stream of Consciousness Technique and Montage Technique in Physical Dance Theatre**

In literature, characters' psychological description is a significant part that features characters' images and details through the change of characters' emotions, personalities, and psychological activities. In this way, the storyline becomes vivid and layered to the complex plots. The description of characters' psychological states shows a kind of analysis of self-consciousness, which forms an intricate structure of language as a description of psychological perception to the content, plot and character. With the abstract mode of expression to these interior factors

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<sup>27</sup> Fernandes, Ciane. *Pina Bausch and the Wuppertal Dance Theater: The Aesthetics of Repetition and Transformation*. P10.

of characters' psychology and consciousness, this new writing method in contemporary literature is called "the stream of consciousness technique."

The stream of consciousness as a term of literary technique was coined by William James in his *The Principles of Psychology* in 1890. And in 1918, May Sinclair first applied the term in a literary context. Stream of consciousness is usually regarded as a special form of interior monologue and is characterized by associative leaps in thought and lack of some or all punctuation. It is a narrative mode or literary device that depicts the multitudinous thoughts and feelings that pass through the mind. As the psychological novel developed in the twentieth century, some writers attempted to capture the total flow of their characters' consciousness, rather than limit themselves to rational thoughts. With the interior monologue, characters' psychological and conscious activities are amplified specifically.

In Kenneth S. Pope and Jerome L. Singer's book, *The Stream of Consciousness: Scientific Investigations into the Flow of Human Experience*, the introduction depicts, "The stream of consciousness—that flow of perceptions, purposeful thoughts, fragmentary images, distant recollections, bodily sensations, emotions, plans, wishes, and impossible fantasies—is our experience of life, our own personal life, from its beginning to its end."<sup>28</sup> Truly, stream of consciousness

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<sup>28</sup> Pope, Kenneth S. and Jerome L. Singer, eds. *The Stream of Consciousness: Scientific Investigations into the Flow of Human Experience*. New York: Plenum Press, 1978. P1.

is a real process reflecting authors' perception to different people's psychological states and environments as different perceptual fragments. To represent the full richness, speed, and subtlety of the mind at work, the author incorporates snatches of incoherent thought, ungrammatical constructions, and free association of ideas, images, and words at the pre-speech level.

Also, in this book, the article, "A Search for the Sources of the Stream of Consciousness," by Jack R. Strange states the consciousness in William James's principles,

In William James's *Principles of Psychology*, he defined consciousness as mental activities that interact with brain and other body functioning..... For what has come to be called "stream of consciousness," James chose "Stream of Thought" and use this phrase as the title of Chapter IX in the *Principles*. He preferred *thought* because it has a verb form *thinking* that emphasizes activity, whereas *consciousness* does not. James's stream of thought metaphor permitted him to focus on mental activities and avoid the sterile trap of the structuralists, who analyzed the discrete contents of consciousness..... The stream of thought is personal, is always changing, is continuous, deals with objects independent of itself, and is selective, choosing what objects to welcome or reject. Very important among the objects selected are the feelings of relations: 'We ought to say a feeling of *and*, a feeling of *if*, a feeling of *but*,



and a feeling of *by*, quite as readily as we say a feeling of *blue* or a feeling of *cold*' (James, 1890, I, pp. 245-46). Such feelings (and all the other aspects of the stream of thought) are not *things* but are mental activities that allow us to perceive and conceive of objects and things. For example, as contemporary cognitive psychologists now realize, images are not copies of things stored in memory, but are constructed by mental processes from stored information '...just as stimulus information is used in the act of perception.'<sup>29</sup>

Clearly, the stream of consciousness can be interpreted as the feelings of relations associated with human perceptions.

Distinguished from dramatic monologue and soliloquy, stream of consciousness technique is chiefly used in poetry or drama since the twentieth century 20s. However, due to the development of the Avant-guard arts, this technique of literary device has been introduced and used in many other artistic areas, such as: film, photography, music, and physical dance theatre. During the postmodern age, the aesthetics and function of stream of consciousness technique has been seen in German choreographer Pina Bausch's dance theatre through incoherent dance scenes and dramatic behaviors on the stage. These disorder and illogic forms and body languages constructed a series of complicated expressions

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<sup>29</sup> Pope, Kenneth S. and Jerome L. Singer, eds. *The Stream of Consciousness: Scientific Investigations into the Flow of Human Experience*. P12-13.

that indicated characters' different psychological contradictions as the individual interior monologue.

In one of Bausch's dance films, *Die Klage Der kaiserin*,<sup>30</sup> there are changeable dance fragments shifting between different characters and scenes with verbal and physical behaviors. Daily movements, behaviors, dialogue, and intricate relationship between shifted scenes and characters consists of a sense of collage with individuals' monologues. For example, there is a man carrying a big wardrobe walking on the lawn. Shortly, the picture shifts to a well-decorated dance studio where a man, dressed in a beautiful long dress, is walking along with the dance bars. Then, this picture returns to the man on the lawn again, but quickly shifts to a dark and small space where a naked woman can be seen sitting with a black cloth covering on her eyes. Suddenly, the scene changes back to the man on the lawn with the big wardrobe once again. Through these repeated and shifted scenes, I saw the effect and aesthetics of stream of consciousness technique along with the effect of montage technique that edits a series of short shots into a sequence to condense space, time, and information.

Montage is a technique in film editing, which was introduced to cinema primarily by Sergei Eisenstein, and early Soviet directors used it as a synonym for creative editing. The montage sequence is usually used to suggest the passage of

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<sup>30</sup>“Die Klage Der kaiserin” Accessed December 21, 2016. [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JF6\\_5SAiaGQ](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JF6_5SAiaGQ)

time, rather than to create symbolic meaning as it does in Soviet montage theory. From the 1930s to the 1950s, montage sequences often combined numerous short shots with special optical effects dance and music.

In John Edgar Tidwell and Cheryl R. Ragar's, *Montage of a Dream: The Art and a Life of Langston Hughes*, the article "Montage of a Dream Destroyed: Langston Hughes in Spain" by Michael Thurston mentions,

Montage is most directly associated with the work of Russian director Sergei Eisenstein, who theorized, as Geoffrey Nowell-Smith explains, that 'meaning in the cinema was not inherent in any filmed object but was created by the collision of two signifying elements.' ..... The word *montage* (in Russian *montazh*, from the French *montage*) carries as one of its original meanings the sense of machine assembly (one mounts an engine, for example). David Bordwell grounds Eisenstein's theory in this meaning of montage and in the Russian Constructivists' application of this notion to the creation of artistic work. Of particular importance, Bordwell argues, was the Constructivist idea of 'assembling materials in a way that generates a degree of friction among them.' Montage creates a unified impression through the collision of different shots; it combines 'parts' so that they rub against each other to create frictional heat. Behind both meanings stands the

artist as engineer, building a mechanism intended to produce specific effects upon the spectator.<sup>31</sup>

In *Die Klage Der kaiserin*, people in different fragments show totally different states, but the combination of these irrelevant pictures constitute a sense of counterchange of time, space and information with potentially internal perception and intention. Based on the effect and aesthetics of stream of consciousness technique and montage technique, *Die Klage Der kaiserin* brought me into a chronotope of subconsciousness between time, place, people in relation to incomprehensible psychological factors, incoherent expression and implication with characters' real emotions, behavioral metaphor, disorder fragments of scenes, and infinite imagination. Through these assembling materials and different shots, we perceive the bodily narrative with the sense of machine assembly as the function and concept of montage technique.

To further depict the function of montage technique, the article, "Montage in Question" in Jacques Aumont's book, *Montage Eisenstein*, states a lot about Sergei Eisenstein's theory and his concept of montage,

We come finally to the concept of *montage*. First, it should be borne in mind how typically Eisensteinian it is. Critics and biographers are all agreed on this

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<sup>31</sup> Tidwell, John Edgar and Cheryl R. Ragar, eds. *Montage of a Dream: The Art and a Life of Langston Hughes*. Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 2007. P195-196.

one point: Eisenstein equals montage..... those for whom Eisensteinian montage earns the highest praise: Amengual, for example, suggests that in *Potemkin* the use of montage ‘puts ideas into motion,’ that it ‘shapes the poetic form,’ ‘generates power’ and ‘suspense,’ and ‘produces a sense of communion,’ etc., in short, that montage does everything..... it should also be said that Eisenstein himself was unequivocal on this point: montage is ‘the essence of cinema,’ and in case we missed the point: ‘The *essence* of cinema does not lie in the images, but in the relation between the images!’ Eisenstein, then, is the person for whom cinema *is* montage. ‘The’ concept of montage. Everything I have said until now implies and leads up to this sense of homogeneity: a history of the emergence of this concept in the films *and* at the core of the theoretical work. Such a history, of one single concept, traced out in successive theories, would probably be called ‘The Development of Eisenstein’s Concept of Montage.’<sup>32</sup>

The same elements of techniques can be seen in another dance film, *The Dead Dream of Monochrome Men*,<sup>33</sup> by the British physical dance theatre, DV8 Physical Theatre. DV8 Physical Theatre is a physically integrated dance company based at Artsadmin in London, United Kingdom. It was officially founded in 1986 by Lloyd Newson, Michelle Richecoeur and Nigel Charnock. DV8's work is

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<sup>32</sup> Aumont, Jacques. *Montage Eisenstein*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1987. P145-146.

<sup>33</sup>“The Dead Dream of Monochrome Men” Accessed December 21, 2016.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sfkmUSEqG9c>

characterized by the desire to communicate ideas and feelings clearly and unpretentiously, often with a focus on socio-political issues. The work challenges the limitations of dance by using any means necessary to find the most appropriate way to say something, thereby incorporating elements of theatre, dance, film, and increasingly text. In Theodore Shank's *Contemporary British Theatre*, his article, "The Multiplicity of British Theatre," describes the relevant information about DV8 Physical Theatre and their works:

The members of DV8 Physical Theatre create productions collectively with director-choreographer Lloyd Newson. These works put into focus arduous physical movement which often is brutal but can be sensuous or gentle. The movement serves to express a thematic emotive idea around which a work is structured..... The company's work is about taking risks, breaking down the barriers between dance, theatre and personal politics, and above all, about communicating new ideas directly, clearly and unpretentiously.<sup>34</sup>

Aesthetics, thought, concept, criticism, vision and psychological reflection are the elements in most of DV8's dance theatre films, where the description of characters' internal monologue and psychological contradictions are presented through the use of stream of consciousness and montage techniques. In *The Dead*

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<sup>34</sup> Shank, Theodore. "The Mutiplicity of British Theatre." *Contemporary British Theatre*. New York: St. Martin's Press, Inc., 1994. P9.

*Dream of Monochrome Men*, the whole story describes a man's dream that embodies an intricate relationship with other three men. The whole scene of this dance film adopts the effect of black-and-white film that shows a monochrome atmosphere reflecting the man's psychological world and homosexual's fear. Based on the criticism of homosexual's life, the film shows the real psychological state of homosexual's suffering and their internal desire to against to the oppression from social and politic criticism. With helpless emotions, darkness, loneliness, as well as the complicated relationship between the four male characters, the dance presents powerful physical language with many violent and sexual scenes and behaviors in regards to homosexual's fear, struggle, pain, despair and the endless darkness in their world. Absolutely, there is no one can understand homosexual's real situation. Hence, through these intricate fragments of stream of consciousness and montage techniques, we see the intricate relationships between the four men while these incoherent factors and disorder scenes lead us to experience their complicated interior monologues as the powerful language exposing homosexual's real situation as the helpless and neglected social groups.

At the beginning, the picture is a club with many people that shows a scene of public. With rhythmic music, the lens focuses on four men — dreamer, violent man, boy, observer — who are relying on the wall watching others in the space. Later, the dreamer starts to walk around between the violent man and boy and

stays closer to the boy while the violent man moves away and walks into the dancing floor. The observer relying on the wall shows a quiet state standing away from the three but paying attention to the dreamer and boy's actions. With attention to each other, the dreamer and the boy begin some small motions and gestures and shortly the dreamer's action transfers to different physical contacts to the boy with fierce sexual behaviors. Then, the boy breaks away from the dreamer's contact moving to the violent man standing and staring at them in the dancing floor. The focus changes to a new relationship between violent man and boy. The lens shifts into a private space where the violent man and the boy have a slow, violent and sexual duet. The observer keeps relying on the wall in a silent state and gradually moves with facial expression. Suddenly, the music and picture is changed to another space where violent man, observer and boy have a symbolic trio in the dark place. A mirror with venetian blind placed in the space reflects the boy's naked body. Later, the figure in the mirror becomes the dreamer, which presents a sense of stream of consciousness as a psychological change. In this scene, the violent man carries the observer around the space, and when he puts the observer down and lies down on the floor, the effect of montage technique is evident as the picture shifts again. The following scene also indicates a stream of consciousness technique along with a verbal monologue by the boy sitting and smoking in the darkness. It seems like he is talking with someone, but the only one in the space is the observer who relies on the wall behind the boy, who with



struggling movements is reacting to the boy's monologue. After the boy's monologue, the two move together and have an intimate embrace while the dreamer shows up and the picture changes into a dancing scene with rhythmic music. There is a quartet with strong movement and technique between the four characters, which presents a more complicated vibe and emotion with violent and conflicting physical contacts. The time and space keeps shifting and developing through the four characters' relationship with incoherent pictures that describe the dreamer's complex emotions as illogic scenes and expression in his dream. With these illogic fragments, we perceive a scattered language and try to understand the implication and information.

Thereby, through these intricate expressions of stream of consciousness and the effect of montage technique, character's psychological language transferred into many psychological fragments can be seen and unscrambled by audience. As I have seen, the scenes in *The Dead Dream of Monochrome Men*, keeps moving gradually from a public space into different private spaces, and by the end, the scene changes into a real bathroom and a bedroom where the three characters are died in a corner of the bedroom, and the dreamer slightly walks in the bedroom, turns on the music, opens the curtain and looks through the window to the real world. It is the whole experience in the man's dream with pain, violence, sex, fear and darkness, from the unrealistic dream to the reality. Finally, he wakes up and faces the real world.

Nowadays, both stream of consciousness technique and montage technique have continuously been spread over in the field of physical dance theatre. Many dance works include the unreadable psychological fragments as the meaningful monologue and implication stating choreographer's interior perception, like DV8's *The Dead Dream of Monochrome Men* and Pina Bausch's *Die Klage Der kaiserin*. Artist's perception seems like a stream flowing in their mind that accepts sensory information and brings out the intricate consciousness and sensation in their creative world. As the important perceptual element, artist's conscious, subconscious and psychological activities play significant roles in the field of physical and theatrical arts. Thus, both stream of consciousness technique and montage technique can explain the complex process of perception in the artists' psychological activities which cannot be easily interpreted in words, but strongly lead artists to explain these intricate sensations through effective methods. Therefore, physical and theatrical arts become the media transferring the perceptual information by the proper methods, like the stream of consciousness technique and the montage technique. In this way, the performing forms in dance theatre reveal a diverse perspective in relation to the exploration of both physical and perceptual areas, which maintains the constant discover to perceptual expression, forms, and elements with aesthetics, criticism, thought, and psychological expression inside the physical dance theatre.

## **Chapter Three**

### **Theater Effect: The Perceptual Elements in Dance Theatre**

#### **The Perceptual Dance: The Effect of Rhythm and Sound in Choreography**

Up to this day, theatrical dance has developed into a perspective of pluralism. Visual art, multi-media, high technology, installation arts have become the innovative materials supporting the effect of theatrical arts, especially in physical dance theatre.

Theater effect includes an integration of concept and pluralism that influences people's thinking, recognition, and perception through visual and auditory experiences. Through these visual and auditory experiences of theater effect, audiences' sensory activity and consciousness is aroused into a kind of chronotope where they gather various perceptions and imaginings as they are appreciating different performances. In Patrice Pavis's *Analyzing Performance: Theater, Dance, and Film*. The article "Integrating Different Kinds of Perception" describes something about the chronotope of theatrical performance with the analysis of the integration between theatrical arts and different perceptions:

The linking of chronotopes and the overall perception of their groupings confirm the difficulty of examining signs separately, and the need to gather

fragmentary perceptions together in order to form more complete units like chronotopes. However, we should be aware of the distinctive and differentiated ways in which human beings perceive through their hearing, sight, touch, and mental introspection.<sup>35</sup>

In dance theatre, visual and auditory experiences form fragmentary perceptions as information transferring the chronotopes between stage and auditorium. The relationship between the chronotopes and audience's perception demonstrate the integration of different kinds of perception as the production of theater effects.

Rhythm and sound as auditory experience provides necessary information to perceiver like choreographer and audience. In dance theatre, choreographers' works frequently present the effect and impact through different ways of aural stimulus into the physical expression, like monologue, dialogue, verbal statement, singing, and so forth, which transmits the diverse language forms through both physical and aural expression. In Pavis book, there is a statement about music,

Voice and music are clearly rather difficult to analyze, notate, or interpret; imbricated in time, they seem almost immaterial, or at least nonvisualizable in terms of a spatial score. At the same time, they create precisely contoured structures and landscapes like mountain ranges, landscapes upon which the other elements of a production lean and are grounded, in particular space and

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<sup>35</sup> Pavis, Patrice. *Analyzing Performance: Theater, Dance, and Film*. Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 1996. P163.

acting.<sup>36</sup>

Although we all know the importance between music and dance, we also should know how music effects a choreographer's thinking of choreography. As Pavis mentions the structure inside music, I agree with the statement as my personal view because the structure in music provides the necessary sensation as a kind of physical structure affecting choreographer's perception and imagination towards dance choreography.

Rhythm is a stream in music. It flows in a choreographer's imagination and dancers' body movements as a dynamic sense of time and space and a sort of perceptual activity. Through the aural stimulus of rhythm, dance movement is formed into a kind of style with dynamic body reaction. In the book, *Directing Postmodern Theater: Shaping Signification in Performance*, by Jon Whitmore, the definition of rhythm has also been described as an important material element in the performance of theatrical arts:

Rhythm was described earlier as a regularly recurring accent—a rhythmic pattern. Rhythm in movement is relatively easy to produce or observe but hard to describe. Rhythm is usually either symmetrical or asymmetrical, and it is normally modulated by its tempo. Each movement in a performance—be it walking, running, sitting, jumping, dancing, or whatever—possesses and emanates a rhythmic pattern and tempo that signifies a character's personality

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<sup>36</sup> Pavis, Patrice. *Analyzing Performance: Theater, Dance, and Film*. P144.

and/or her emotional state at the moment. Directors and performers use rhythm and tempo to define character and to underscore the flow of the dramatic action.<sup>37</sup>

A dance choreographer's rhythm fuels creativity and imagination. In other words, rhythm brings a perception, a thinking and movement with different styles, concepts, and aesthetics. Therefore, a choreographer's perception in rhythm assists their thinking in terms of dance choreography.

One of my dance works, *A Clock Chaos*, is a great example inspired from the rhythm of music, *In C*, by Terry Riley. The rhythm of music starts with a simple beat, which keeps repeating as a homophony and brings a sense of repetition and pluralism that made me think about the concept of Minimalism. Based on the repeated homophony, many different elements are added as changeable modes and beats. My understanding of this music was also connected to the philosophy of Dadaism as an abstract notion against which normal aesthetics in physical arts, embodies a disorder, a complex of emotion, timing, and symbolism. The use of the image of a clock in this dance presents a process from normal to abnormal, order to disorder, reason to sensibility, and controlled to uncontrolled, like the rhythm of the music. Also, movements, gestures and poses, responding to the rhythm of the music, form an abstraction of performing forms and atmosphere,

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<sup>37</sup> Whitmore, Jon. *Directing Postmodern Theater: Shaping Signification in Performance*. Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 1994. P103.

which shows my understanding of music as perception from the symbolic rhythms to body movement, like how we were dancing with a small motion of head nods responding to the rhythms at the beginning of the music and dance together. The development of movement and tendency leads to repetition of simple motions, steps and travels to a chaotic perspective gradually with changeable performing forms from the beginning to the end.

Meanwhile, the use of sound in *A Clock Chaos* emphasizes the influence of theater effect, which embodies a kind of real emotional and psychological state. As the mimicry of the ringing clock, I asked my dancers to scream on the floor using repeatedly galvanic motions, which indicates the uncontrolled state of human emotion with struggling physical reaction. Clearly, in *A Clock Chaos*, the effect of sound strengthens a kind of aesthetic of symbolism. Combining with the mutinous philosophy of Dadaism, from a stable tendency to a tempestuous scene, as theater effects a developing rhythm, movement, and emotion. In Jon Whitmore's *Directing Postmodern Theater: Shaping Signification in Performance*, the article "Sound Effect" mentions the function of sound in theatrical arts,

Sound effect designers have at their disposal the following elements: rhythm, intensity, pitch, tone, speed, shape, and orderliness. Sound designers can imitate or record natural sounds through mechanical or electronic means, and by creating abstract sounds or distorting natural sounds they can achieve any sound imaginable. They can also combine music with nonmusical sound to

achieve even more complex aural signification.<sup>38</sup>

As I did in *A Clock Chaos*, the sound effect becomes a strong reaction to the audience and also the most effective response from them in a direct way. The screaming scene moment made the abstract “physical clock” more meaningful and pictorial, both visual and auditory experiences for the audience.

Hence, the effect of rhythm and sound in physical arts become the significant material elements supporting physical concept, expression and aesthetics in a real and effective way. As an aural experience on stage, the physical expression with rhythm and sound becomes effective as an approach that embodies a choreographer’s unique perception and creativity based on music.

### **The Perceptual Movement Language: The Effect of Sound and The Physical Principle of Gaga**

The use of sound can be defined as an impact of the quality of movement and energy of perception through the accumulation of strength and the development of emotion. During American Dance Festival, I took the Gaga class with Saar Harari and Jessie Zaritt and watched the dance film *Mr. Gaga* about Israel choreographer, Ohad Naharin’s, dance life and his Gaga movement language. In this way, I become super interested in the unique movement language of Gaga.

In Gaga, movement becomes a kind of consciousness relating to a different

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<sup>38</sup> Whitmore, Jon. *Directing Postmodern Theater: Shaping Signification in Performance*. P182-183.



imagination of objects, environments and strengths. Through these imaginations, the body begins to perceive and receive different information and forms different information into body movements with changeable qualities and diverse moving methods. As I perceived, gaga movement provides a special sensation through its perceptual process between body self and environment, which composes a dynamic state in the transition between people's awareness and body self. And then, the potential of movement is gradually aroused through the moving process. Hence, the style of Gaga is totally different from modern dance technique. As a physical exploration, I see the function of human perception in Gaga, which leads to a bodily consciousness in order to stimulate the potential kinesthetic sense through all parts of the body. Absolutely, Gaga is a brand new aesthetic notion of movement language.

During the practice, dancers imagine their bodies in the water and produce a different perception of strength through imagination and consciousness with the power of changeable water, like flow, clash, wave, shake, fluctuation, high speed, rise, fall, blast, stillness, and calmness. Through these terms describing the quality of gaga movement, I see a strong perceptual environment created by our imagination and consciousness. Movement in this vibe of perceptual environment travels through diverse qualities and styles with dynamic effect, and the most dynamic element is the use of sound and its quality relating to body movement.

After the first experience of Gaga in ADF, I got another great opportunity

learning Gaga in New York City. This time, I was lucky to have a real Gaga experience with Shamel Pitts, the former artists at Batsheva Dance Company in Israel. Shamel Pitts is teaching Gaga around the world as an original gaga artist. Through his Gaga class, I got to know the real principle from Ohan Naharin's exploration of movement language as a process of arousal of physical consciousness. Shamel shared the real "energy blast" of Gaga with the deconstruction movement through self-consciousness to the physical sensory apparatus. Speed and strength in Gaga movement consists of the concept and aesthetics of Gaga principle in relation to different physical researches of human self-awareness. However, I found the introduction of sounds in the process of Gaga practice forms a very strong effect of movement as a powerful "energy blast."

Shamel guided us to experience the relationship between movement and perception through different practices. Every time when he felt the growing energy in the space, he asked us to scream, call out, and laugh out with the growing emotion and perception, which developed the quality of movement and made it grow into an extreme state from slow and quiet vibe to a fast and strong state as a process of high energy accumulation of "energy blast." Based on the sound effect of screaming, calling and laughing, the effect of sound entirely influences the quality of movement as a power added into body movement through its acoustic wave. Also, as an uncontrolled emotion, the sound effects our

movement to a disorderly state, linking us to a development of consciousness of non-rationality. We can see many uses of sound effects as a part of dance movement and expression in Naharin's dance works, which demonstrates a perception of physical strength through the relationship of sound and body language in order to present an aesthetic concept through human inner emotion, state, and dynamic effect. Thus, with the effect of sound, we perceived our inner energy, became crazy, unconscious and uncontrolled, while we were all yelling in Shamel's Gaga class.

All in all, sound provides a perception to our physical power. As a natural strength, it guides body movement to a high-energy state. Gaga is a spontaneous process of interaction between movements and self-awareness. It seems like a media transmitting spontaneous physical reaction, consciousness and perception in different ways of movement. In this way, we get to know ourselves and learn dance from our own body language rather than learning materials from instructors. The melt of sound and movement in Shamel's gaga class inspired me to further think about the possibility of body movement. With the effect of sound, the quality of movement produces an original impulse, which demonstrates the power of perception reflecting into physical reaction.

### **Perception of Color in Dance Choreography**

As one of the perceptual elements, color provides a kind of visual experience to us. The visual experience of color produces information to our sensory

apparatus, which brings us different sensation and emotion with the perceptual stimulus from different colors. The process of color recognition indicates the perceptual process to different things. In the book, *The Psychology of Visual Perception*, by Ralph Norman Haber and Maurice Hershenson, the article “Perception of Color” explains that,

Color is a pervasive part of our normal perceptual experience. Color affects our ability to differentiate among objects, but in addition it changes our moods, feelings, and perceptions, and influences our esthetic experience as can no other single aspect of vision. Most people assume that “color” is synonymous with “hue” — the perceptual quality that differentiates the experience of red from green, yellow, blue, and so forth. As we shall see, there is more to the perception of color than the experience of different hues. But the perception of hue does represent the most important aspect of color perception. In fact, it is often the first attribute that we notice in our perception of objects, and it often appears to be more salient than size, shape, location, or function.<sup>39</sup>

Absolutely, in an artists’ world, color is an important source of inspiration. Color inspires artists’ thinking and imagination as emotion, psychological expression, abstract notions, and aesthetics. Thereby, the effect of color in art plays a crucial role that provides both visual imagination and a sensory stimulus to artists.

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<sup>39</sup> Haber, Ralph Norman and Maurice Hershenson. *The Psychology of Visual Perception*. 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1980. P91.

Similarly, in the dance field, the perception of color helps a dance choreographer to style their dance works with emotion, concept and style. Imagination based on the perception of color sometimes leads to a sensation of layout and structure as an unsure nuance to a choreographer's perceptual activity. Thus, as visual impact, color is also effective in arousing a dance choreographer's imagination and creativity.

In my dance work, *A Clock Chaos*, the function of color became an important part during my choreography. Due to the music style, the special rhythms provided me with a sense of monochrome, which formed an abstract structure and emotion into the movement language. Based on a sense of monochrome to the rhythm, the picture in my brain showed a geometric view with a changeable emotion and chaotic dance forms, from simple lines to a mix of monochrome with black, white, grey, black-and-white stripes, squares and patterns in the space. Therefore, I started to think about the simplest thing and material in physical movement and decided to make a "monochrome dance" as an aesthetics reflecting the notion of Minimalism and Dadaism. Meanwhile, I tried to indicate monochrome into dancers' body movements, in this way, this dance shows a very abstract and geometric style in its performing form in regards to the "monochrome" in body movement and music.

With a monochrome style and movement language, the costume in *A Clock Chaos* also embodies a sense of monochrome with a minimalist notion, which

adds a symbolic expression to movement language, like the symbolic image of “clock.” The visual impact in this dance became a significant expression, and the geometric movement, structure, behavior and costumes conceive a surreal atmosphere and perception to audience. On the stage, the “monochrome dance” with its aesthetics, movement style, and costume form every dancer into a different personality and style with black, white, grey, black-and-white stripes, squares, shapes and patterns. It does feel like different “clocks” running and ringing in the space with a sense of symbolism.

According to the effect of color in dance, we can see the use of color in dance carries a kind of expression that support choreographer’s visual request. For example, in Shen Wei Dance Arts, many dance works emphasize the use of color. Chinese choreographer, Shen Wei, usually uses the effect of color to impress an audience’s visual perception. Color has become a very necessary element in his physical arts. In two of Shen Wei’s works, *Folding*<sup>40</sup> and *Connect Transfer*,<sup>41</sup> were the great physical art works relating to his thinking and understanding in fine arts and the effect of color. In *Folding*, dancers wear long red and black dresses, a naked upper body, and white headgear. With the flowing Chinese opera walking, the flowing red dress on the stage brings a surreal visual impact and imagination to the audience. These slow movements, gestures, and partnering are matched

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<sup>40</sup>“Folding” Accessed December 25, 2016. <https://www.youtube.com/user/ShenWeiDanceArts>

<sup>41</sup> “Connect Transfer” Accessed December 25, 2016.  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UW46mUXu1Cs>

with the color of stage, body, and costumes. All these visual experiences demonstrate a strong chronotope, one in which an audience perceives a vibe and spirit of a surreal world. Another work, *Connect Transfer*, shows a three-dimensional picture on the stage with colorful patterns, lines, and spots on the floor. Dancers' bodies are the brushes drawing different lines and patterns on the stage with flowing motion, traveling, and weight shifting. In this piece, Shen Wei directly conveys his perception and concept in both physical arts and fine arts through movement in which the effect of color becomes a crucial connection from movement and the performing form to a three-dimensional visual perception.

Clearly, both Shen Wei's works provide a strong visual experience with the effect of color, shapes and lines as his paintings with the surreal aesthetics and notion, visually and physically. Hence, as we see, the effect of color shows two functions in dance arts. On the one hand, it stimulates a choreographer's perception and imagination in dance choreography. On the other hand, it presents a choreographer's aesthetic thinking and notion by the use of color. No doubt color is a most important theater effect.

## **Chapter Four**

### **Perceptual Emersion: The Reflection of Society with Physical, Theatrical, Spiritual Expression**

#### **Perception to the “7 and 7”: The Sins and Issues between Humanity and Society**

In the Bible, human nature has been explained into seven different sins: pride, greed, lust, envy, gluttony, wrath, and sloth, which consist of the Seven Deadly Sins as the seven evil instincts inside humans exposing the dark side of being a human being. Darkness is the place where we can see truth more clearly. Therefore, in the darkness, we can see what real human nature is as self-identification and autognosis. Each sin indicates a different energy inside human nature with the strongly wild motivation and unconsciousness of violence coming from a human's dark side. The number, 7, seems to be playing a very special role reflecting human's evil instinct as an as an unexplainable implication and symbol. From my observation, the Seven Deadly Sins are also the seven different perceptions towards a series of social problems relating to humanity.

As we have been experiencing the countless conflicts, wars, and contradictions from history to nowadays, we question why we suffer from our sins all the time. Surely, humans have been encountering many issues since their existence. With contradictions, debates and battles in every generation, those



problems existing in this society have been summarized and classified into different categories of social crisis in sociology. They are Class, Education, Ability, Sexuality, Race, Age, and Gender. We see the clear reflection of human sins as a potential connection to the seven sins of pride, greed, lust, envy, gluttony, wrath, and sloth. Probably this kind of inference is merely from a personal subjective perception of the internal relationship between the “7 and 7.” However, the “7 (sins) and 7 (issues)” has become meaningful. Hence, it is a quite interesting exploration for me to dig into the surface of human perception in the area of social phenomenon, and see what can be found for my personal perception between the “7 and 7.”

Last summer, I participated in American Dance Festival 2016. My research of dance and perception began then. One of my dance instructors, Jesse Zaritt, mentioned seven American social issues in his class. Based on the event of the Falcon Heights Shooting in which Philando Castile was shot by police in July, Zaritt expressed his anxiety towards American society. I was inspired by this discussion. Zaritt mentioned many articles and books he has read in relation to different American social issues, and led us to think about the relationship between dance and society. By the end of the class, he expressed his own attitude towards both dance and society: “We need to know why we dance... And we need to think about our situation when we are dancing... We cannot ignore the truth and our state when we are dancing...” Zaritt’s voice was like a key opening the

gateway of my thinking and the perceptual access to the outside world, like the lights of candles leading us in the darkness when we were doing the solidarity walking around the campus of Duke University.

Social perception is a kind of perceptual experience to our own sins. From the aspect of religion, we see the seven deadly sins reflecting our instincts. From the aspect of politics, we see the seven social issues reflecting our sins. Facing the seven issues of class, education, ability, sexuality, race, age, and gender, these problems have been influencing the social balance throughout history, which demonstrate the unequal relationship between humanity and society. The article, “Racism, Sexism, and Classism: A Set of Social Problems,” by Carson Wendler specifically describes three of the social problems, class, sexuality, and race. In the introduction, he states that,

Racism, Sexism, and Classism are among some of the largest social problems human beings face in the world today. All are caused by various splits in classes and gender roles that are dependent on the abuse of a system in order to put the suppressed group in a state of submission to the older group. Depending on the individual culture, different anomalies within these systems can be identified as being caused for different reasons. The conflicts that result of these difference in Race, Sex and Class can be very costly and damaging to the stability of the system in which these problems are centered

around.<sup>42</sup>

The description of racism, sexism and classism in Wendler's essay helps me to clarify the significance of the three social problems. Talking about the issue of race, Wendler summarizes,

Racial tensions result in more than just small damages. If a single case is able to cause this much chaos, Racism has become a legitimate social problem in more than just one part of the world. In Great Britain, '90% of racist motivated act of violence are committed by white people against ethnic minorities. In 1993 it is estimated that there were 130.000 racist episodes,' and in Germany, 'in 1993 at least 52 persons were killed in racist acts of violence,' showing that though racial tensions may be diverse, but the way in which they are carried out is similar. As shown, these crimes are usually taken from the position of the oppressor on the position of the oppressed. This is carried out in several ways and sometimes organized into groups, or movements in some countries... Though there may not be a direct connection between certain races and how they are treated in similar countries, there is a trend among racially divided cultures. This occurs both judicially and culturally, leading to the collection of various problems as a result of this conflict.<sup>43</sup>

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<sup>42</sup> Wendler, Carson. "Racism, Sexism, and Classism: A Set of Social Problems." Accessed April 20, 2017. <http://rcslol.blogspot.com>

<sup>43</sup> Wendler, Carson. "Racism, Sexism, and Classism: A Set of Social Problems." Accessed April 20, 2017.

In the second paragraph, Wendler's description of sexuality as a problem provides some practical examples with different aspects in the issues of sexism,

Sexism is another social problem troubling human societies all over the world.

Though the roots of sexism are a lot less broad when compared to racism,

there is still a large amount of conflict surrounding the social problems

between men and women... This may include judicial discrimination and as

far politically right as corporate crimes. One example of this is in America,

'the federal government has confirmed that the workplace earning gap

between men and women still persists today.' The recognition of this kind of

persistent problem has lead to situations where 'Women in the workforce are

also less likely to work a full-time schedule and are more likely to leave the

labor force for longer periods of time than men, further suppressing women's

wage.' This kind of discrimination occurs around the world in different forms

and different places to produce social problems as well. For example, 'Only

0.8% of Japanese chief executives are women, compared with 10% in Britain.'

More specifically, the more popular train of thought it terms of women's role

in Japan are, 'A woman's place has traditionally been in the home in Japan'

indicates that sexism takes place not only in western societies, but in Eastern

societies as well, thus defining it as a global social problem...Other example

of sexual stereotypes and social problems that arise from it is the harassment

and oppression of the homosexual community as well. ‘The weight of family obligations remains a more important fact for young homosexuals in countries such as Japan, Malaysia or the Philippines than for homosexuals in Western countries, who are far more likely to live openly with a partner of the same,’ indicating that homosexuality and its discriminates are a world wide trend. This causes much turmoil between not only men and women, but those who carry the burden of facing homosexual and transgender abuse.<sup>44</sup>

From this paragraph, we see the problem of sexuality while we also see the problem of gender through Wendler’s specific analyses and examples of sexism. Sexism directly connects to gender. When I studied, I experienced real matters at a college in the USA. At The College at Brockport, I encountered both sexuality and gender issues that made me feel tremendous anxiety and fear. From these experiences, I saw woman’s anxiety and helplessness. This is sexism and this is a gender problem that directly happened to me. As a Chinese woman, I strongly perceive the two problems along with the issues of racism, which made me feel nervous with pain, helplessness, and anxiety. Truly, there is still something on fire between women and men, anytime, anywhere, and any situations.

In Helen Thomas’s book, *Dance, Gender and Culture*, the author, Ted Polhemus, describes the phenomenon and definition of both age and gender in his article “Dance, Gender and Culture,”

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<sup>44</sup> Wendler, Carson. “Racism, Sexism, and Classism: A Set of Social Problems.” Accessed April 20, 2017. <http://rcslol.blogspot.com>

In any society and at any point in human history there have always been two significant categories of experience which inevitably and profoundly distort any individual's subjective perception of cultural reality: age and gender. In any society a ten-year-old will always perceive his or her culture differently than will a 70-year-old. However, given that a 70-year-old will have had the experience of having been a ten-year-old, the significance of this subjective distinction will eventually be diminished, at least for those individuals who reach old age. Gender, however, is more problematic. No matter how long we may live, no matter how rich and varied are our experiences, no matter how much we might strive to be 'objective', all of us are either male or female and none of us have ever truly experienced life from the perspective of the gender which we are not. Even those few individuals in modern society who have changed sex can never know what it is like to have grown up as a member of the sex which— physiologically speaking— they have become.<sup>45</sup>

During the election between Donald Trump and Hillary Diane Rodham Clinton in 2016, the gender issue was broached by Trump's words towards women's right. His sexism towards women led to the Women's March, in 2017. Women's resistance for their own right and dignity rose up to a massive and nationwide uprising movement. Thinking about issues of gender, sexuality, and race. One can see the contradiction between women and men, white and black, homosexuality

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<sup>45</sup> Thomas, Helen, ed. *Dance, Gender and Culture*. New York: St. Martin's Press, Inc., 1993. P10.

and heterosexuality.

Age, shows an unbalanced treatment between people of different ages. Age evolved into a stereotype. In the article, “The Issue of Ageism in America Today,” from the website, *Disable World from Tomorrow*, the description of ageism has led me to view this social issue. The definition of ageism states in the first paragraph:

A social attitude. It is way of looking at older people that stereotypes them. Ageism is also part of attitudes where people believe that older adults can be treated in demeaning ways. Many people note that as they grow older and reach certain age milestones others begin to treat them differently. Their attitudes change. In many cases, being treated differently means being treated as ‘less’ less valued, less capable etc. Or they are stereotyped. Ageism is also reflected when younger persons implicitly or explicitly act as if they are more entitled to family or social resources than older adults are.<sup>46</sup>

Then, the following two paragraph, “Main Document” and “Ageism, Mistreatment, and Combined Risk Factors,” the analysis of “Ageism” issue is explained in a specific way:

Robert Butler, in the 1960’s, created the term, ‘Ageism,’ which he defined as being, ‘A process of systematic stereotyping of and discrimination against people because they are old, just as racism and sexism accomplish this with

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<sup>46</sup> “The Issue of Ageism in America Today.” *Disable World.com*. Accessed April 25, 2017. <https://www.disabled-world.com/editorials/ageism.php>

skin color and gender. Old people are categorized as senile, rigid in thought and manner, old-fashioned in morality and skills. Ageism allows the younger generations to see older people as different from themselves; thus they subtly cease to identify with their elders as human beings.’ Some advocates for seniors have suggested that ageism is a cause of neglect, elder abuse, as well as exploitation. While others have suggested there is not a significant enough body of valid research into the attitudes of known perpetrators of senior mistreatment and abuse to make a definitive argument, continued reports from nursing homes to crime reports suggest otherwise. Ageism contributes to conditions that marginalize and create disadvantages for seniors in American society... Inappropriate and unequal treatment continues to occur in workplaces in America, in the health care sector, as well as in legal areas that are based in part on age discrimination. Despite efforts to provide a level of protection that might be based upon compassion, ageism continues to lead to dis-empowerment of seniors in this nation. Ageist policies and beliefs on the parts of some in America continue to categorize seniors as one large, homogeneous population, completely ignoring the vast diversity issues and individual needs within the population of seniors as a whole... Ageism and the discriminatory practices that are associated with it can impact seniors in ways that are noticeable by contributing to a reduction in their financial security, poorer health quality, and a subtler and potentially more pervasive



impact-social isolation. Social isolation is a risk factor for mistreatment, poorer quality of life, and lower self-esteem. In combination with other types of prejudices such as racism, sexism, and anti-disability sentiment, the health and well-being of seniors is placed at further risk.<sup>47</sup>

Classism is also a serious social issue. In the third paragraph of Wendler's essay, he focuses on the discussion of classism that analyzes the phenomenon and the influence of class,

Classism is one of the largest social problems plaguing the world today. Varying from the Type of economic society and government regulation, classes are formed accordingly to how the rules of these institutions are set. The scale of economic status ranges from the liberal socialists to the conservative capitalist. While socialism promotes equal distribution of wealth among all citizens, capitalism promotes the separation of peoples based on a system of unequal exchanges of good. Capitalism stresses the separation of people via class, because of a lack of regulation by the government, while socialism relies on full government support to run an entire industry, thus deciding the way in which goods are distributed and consumed... 'Marx saw the development of class conflict, the struggle between classes was initially confined to individual factories. Eventually, given the maturing of capitalism,

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<sup>47</sup> "The Issue of Ageism in America Today." *Disable World.com*. Accessed April 25, 2017. <https://www.disabled-world.com/editorials/ageism.php>

the growing disparity between life conditions of bourgeoisie and proletariat, and the increasing homogenization within each class, individual struggles become generalized to coalitions across factories. Increasingly class conflict is manifested at the social level,' so while capitalism takes on this form of existence, problems are created between classes. This includes, and is not limited too, social riots, social conflict, social ignorance and class riots. Capitalism ultimately concerns that of the socialist perspective in the world's economic positions. Karl Marx was a developer of socialism, providing its political partner, communism, with the explanation of what the difference of between a capitalist society and that of a socialist society. He claims that, 'In relation to property there are three great classes of society: the bourgeoisie, landowners, and the proletariat.' This results in a 'system creates an incentive for citizens to stay out of trouble, get an education, develop desirable skills, and work hard. That incentive is money.'<sup>48</sup>

Based on this explanation, Wendler keeps analyzing the cause of the problem of classism,

So why do these conflicts in class cause problem? Primarily, the conflicts between those who make a certain amount of wealth a year have a higher status and 'better' things than those who do not. This leads some to steal and rob those who have the things that the lower class desires. Also, the lack of

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<sup>48</sup> Wendler, Carson. "Racism, Sexism, and Classism: A Set of Social Problems." Accessed April 23, 2017. <http://rcslol.blogspot.com>

economic regulation in capitalist societies allows judiciary systems to take advantage of those in a lower class, simply because they may not have the funds to produce an adequate lawyer and the rehabilitation fees that might follow. This raises questions relevant to that of problems with socialism, where government intervention and regulation are frequently present. Socialism primarily fails because it cannot compete with the consumer output that most capitalist economies produce... This creates issues of power and maintaining a constantly equal populous while the only other classes are the bureaucrats organizing the communist system. Ultimately, this may lead to the conclusions that capitalism within itself is an unfair distribution of wealth to the nation's populous, while socialism simply cannot exist in a world where they must compete with the consumer based economies of the capitalism, unless it's without great labor and motivation of the citizens occupying the socialist system.<sup>49</sup>

Education as an important part of the social system has many problems. "Negative education" has embodied the problems of race, gender, sexuality, ability, class, and age. The function and effect of education has never been identified and solved very well, and it remains as an unbalanced system. The article, "Education as a Social Problem," by James W. Woodard, states and explores the problem of education,

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<sup>49</sup> Wendler, Carson. "Racism, Sexism, and Classism: A Set of Social Problems." Accessed April 23, 2017. <http://rcslol.blogspot.com>

Education, which in the last half of the nineteenth century seemed so patently the solution for all problems, has itself become a problem... Our educational program has produced the fit individual, the self-reliant, skillful man or woman. But it has neglected the cooperative and social elements; and it is often condemned for neglecting the philosophic interpretation of scientific data in terms of those "spiritual" values which are the basis of ultimate human satisfaction... Nevertheless, research is superficially so important in the education of our day as, in some measure, to overbalance it, giving rise to a number of curious paradoxes. For instance, there are paradoxes in the realm of teaching personnel, at least at the university level. The teacher in the old sense, i.e., the expounder, the interpreter, and the arouser of intellectual enthusiasm, is fast disappearing from the universities in favor of the research worker, though teaching and research are as different as the poles. And this without losing sight of the value to teaching, in turn, of a dynamic and creative approach to the materials to be taught. But the present result of the process is anything but encouraging—on the one hand, miserably conducted classroom teaching by people who at heart are research workers and have neither talent for, nor interest in, teaching, doing the job cursorily, mechanically, and perforce in order to maintain themselves financially so they can have their all too few hours in the laboratories; and on the other hand, pressure to produce upon persons who have no genius for research and

nothing fundamental to contribute... Indeed, for fewer and fewer at the university level does good teaching have any part at all in their conscious objectives. For by publications one may build a nation-wide, even a world-wide, prestige—and cash in on it. But teaching, by its own nature, can yield no more than a local or campus-wide reputation. And even that can be eclipsed by the first balderdasher who will popularize content to the point of entertainment or who will bestow high grades leniently. Thus, because of the subjectivity of educators themselves, and because of their fear of established moralities and belief systems and of interests and institutions which would have to be critically scrutinized, education has failed to carry out courageously, in the realm of the social and the personal, her third major function, that of replacing old falsity with new truth.<sup>50</sup>

Woodard addresses how a “negative education” speaks to problem to different social matters:

Ignorance is a social problem and no social problem is simple, but ramifies out into all the others. Thoroughly to settle ignorance and education, one must also settle inequality of opportunity, must settle poverty, health, political organization, industrial order, eugenics, and so on *ad infinitum*. And reverse phrasings are equally true, so much in the solution of other social

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<sup>50</sup> Woodard, James W. “Education as a Social Problem.” *The Journal of Educational Sociology*. American Sociological Association, 1933. P290-294.

problems depending, in turn, upon education. Take education and eugenics. How can education attain complete realization of its aims, especially the third aim, in one of its aspects that of making the individual the arbiter of his own beliefs and actions, when there are populous ‘levels’ of innate ability in the group to whom seventh-grade content is an unattainable achievement?<sup>51</sup>

Education is a human need. Instead of deeply perceiving the process, we just learned how to get a good grade, how to compete with others, how to obtain and use the knowledge that we are focusing on, and how to meet our needs and become the one that we want to be.

Back to the paragraph by Woodard, the words “eugenics” and “levels” brings attention to another issue in education which links to the argument of an individual’s ability. In the article, “Human Abilities: Meaning and Nature | Educational Psychology,” the meaning of human abilities is interpreted in a specific way:

A human ability is a union of a native process (or processes) in humans and a content (or contents) inferred from relatively permanent changes in behavior. Abilities are of two kinds: Cognitive and Psychomotor. When a child understands the meaning of a statement in acquiring language or

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<sup>51</sup> Woodard, James W. “Education as a Social Problem.” *The Journal of Educational Sociology*. P296.

comprehending a word, his understanding means a process or operation and also certain content i.e. words or their meaning. A psychomotor ability, on the other hand, helps a human being acquire specific skills for specific work, e.g. manual dexterity needs the acquisition of well-guided arm-hand movement while manipulating an object. Persons skilled in this ability are able to perform any specific task involving manual dexterity. Both cognitive and psychomotor abilities are the products of maturation and learning. In turn, possessing a particular ability facilitates further learning. Extensive research conducted on human abilities have yielded beneficial results, so that it is now possible to easily identify and classify different human abilities. As a consequence, important advances have been made in this research area and new formation about intellectual and learning abilities has been obtained. Research shows that abilities develop quite slowly across the years, but once developed they enable the individual to deal with his physical and social world more effectively.<sup>52</sup>

We basically realize the significance of the process as we are growing up, as we naturally develop the ability to survive in the world. School, knowledge, challenges, relationship, failure, success enhance the growth of our abilities;

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<sup>52</sup> “Human Abilities: Meaning and Nature | Educational Psychology.” Psychology Discussion.net. Accessed May 5, 2017.

<http://www.psychologydiscussion.net/educational-psychology/human-abilities/human-abilities-meaning-and-nature-educational-psychology/1914>

helping us to be more capable of everything. However, I still want to know, “What is ability?” Because “eugenics” and “levels,” mentioned in Woodard’s essay, embodies a kind of value that compares “these people” against “those people.” Absolutely, education advocates the concept of equality to every student, but students’ abilities have already been divided into different areas as they are thrown into the complex matrix of the education system. Due to the difference of every student, “level” and inequality have naturally co-existed. Yes, to some extent, education helps us to be aware of our different abilities, which improve our abilities and cognitions through school class and learning process. But it is still hard to identify an individual’s ability in an “objective and measured way.”

The identification of human ability in relation to age and gender is another factor. For example, in many Asian countries, especially in Japan, most women just stay at home as housewife without a job after marriage. Their only job is to take care kids and husband in a modest manner, because it is the responsibility of a woman as a “wife,” which is women’s status based on the thought and traditional customs of Asian cultures. As I have observed, even in dance, male dance opportunities are more prevalent than female. At the American Dance Festival (2016), I found most auditions were just only for male dancers. Relating to ageism as well. Most of the elderly cannot find jobs after they are retired, even though they have more experience working. The labor force of young people has been seen to be more important than those elderly.



In sum, we have realized and understood how serious these issues are. We cannot perfectly settle these symptoms of society; we cannot root out these issues. Back to my perceptual experience: unequal treatment is the main cause of imbalance between male and female, the young and elderly, white and black, homosexuality and heterosexuality. Facing the seven deadly sins and the seven social symptoms, we get to know what we are encountering and experiencing as we perceive the world of “7 and 7.” The number “7” can be a question and can also be an answer.

### **Inside7 – The Unspeakable Implication: What Is Inside of Us?**

To question myself is a good way to reflect and understand who I am; therefore, the core of my thesis research is “What is inside of us?”

With the research of human’s seven sins and the seven social issues, the number, “7,” is quite meaningful to me and when I was thinking about my thesis dance, I found that “7” is an unspeakable symbol or metaphor. Therefore, my thesis dance was named “Inside7.”

Aesthetic concepts in dance theater are supported by an artists’ perceptual transmission. My perceptual aesthetic of darkness inside human instincts along with the seven deadly sins reflects the dark side of human instincts and is what makes us human. From the inside, we see our seven sins; from the outside, we see our seven social issues. Through this dance, I tried to convey the aesthetic of

darkness: pain, silence, hopelessness, and anxiety.

The negative power approaching artists from the darkness is like the stream flowing inside an artists' spiritual and perceptual world. That is the process they are absorbing an energy and stimulation from the outside world as their creative inspiration. Human anxiety and shame in human nature leads us to feel, think, and question ourselves. The perception artists are trying to disclose from their perceptual world to their works is the most real expression of a human being, like the great work, *Ankoku Butoh*,<sup>53</sup> by Japanese artist, Tatsumi Hijikata. Butoh was established by two Japanese artists, Kazuo Ohno and Tatsumi Hijikata, in the 1960's after the Second World War. As a special dance genre combining both traditional culture and the concept of postmodern arts, Butoh, a unique physical and performing art, appeared as a milestone of the revolution of Japanese dance, which can also be called "dance in the darkness." The the philosophy of "Shame" in Japanese culture and Butoh leads to extreme self-accusation and anxiety. In the book, *The twentieth Century Performance Reader*; the essay, "Man, Once Dead, Crawl Back!" by Tatsumi Hijikata described the spirit of Butoh: "We are broken from birth. We are only corpses standing in the shadow of life. Therefore, what is the point of becoming a professional dancer? If a man becomes a laborer and a woman a servant, isn't that enough in itself! That is the essence of Butoh - and

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<sup>53</sup> "Dance of Darkness, Documental sobre danza Butoh." Accessed May 29, 2017. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=N9GtoKGLA6o>

that is how I lead my communal life.”<sup>54</sup> I am enlightened by how he perceived the world as an artist.

In the masterpiece, *Ankoku Butoh*, the concept of anti-aesthetics can be revealed through the whole dance form, which embodies the spirit of forbearance in Japanese culture that consists of the aesthetics of darkness. The dark spirit of *Ankoku Butoh* incorporates scary and eccentric dance scenes reflecting fear, anxiety, sexuality, desire, despair and death, which contextualizes the Japanese spirit of forbearance and Zen, as well as Japanese traditional sexual reproduction worship. During the performance, dancers combine extreme facial expressions with slow motions and their whole bodies are powdered in white. When they are dancing, they appear tortured and assume odd postures and motions; they look like dead bodies or ghosts walking in the nether world. The dancers look like they are communicating with death and the evil coming from a world of darkness. In the book, *Contemporary Theatre Review: Theatre Review, Theatre, Performance, and the Amateur Turn*, Catherine Curtin’s article, “Recovering the Body and Expanding the Boundaries of Self in Japanese Butoh: HijikataTatsumi, Georges Bataille and Antonin Artaud,” talks about *Ankoku Butoh*. Curtin quotes Hijikata: “In the shadowy darkness of the performing space, wafts of white body powder shed like layers of ghost-like images, otherworldly, haunting impressions which possess, however, a strange, harrowing solidity, as though left suffering and still

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<sup>54</sup> Huxley, Michael and Noel Witts, eds. *The twentieth Century Performance Reader*. London & NY, 1996. P196.

unappealed.”<sup>55</sup> I have to say that Hijikata uses the concept of anti-aesthetics in *Ankoku Butoh* to represent the suffering of the human spirit, which makes me appreciate the profound Butoh spirit as a dark performing art and Japanese dance. With fear, sexuality, and anxiety in Hijikata’s performances, we see strong perceptions through his performance. Described in his article:

Anxiety has sown itself everywhere. It lies always ahead of the action, just like the school kid who pisses in his pants just as the whistle blows at the school races. This form of anxiety is growing-anxiety over the present, anxiety over the future. However, there is not the slightest trace of fear in this condition. I wonder how it can be that this situation arose. There is a lot of anxiety present at my dance lessons: one finds there many people festering due to their own turbid eroticism. All kinds gather at the studio, some forlorn, some just passing through. In teaching Butoh my aim is to make them aware of a part of themselves that they have lost contact with, by making them study themselves body and soul. They are inhibited by their anxieties, but through the means of dance they can share their anxieties with each other.<sup>56</sup>

From the spirit of Butoh, I see Hijikata’s resistance to a kind of state of society, and I also see the experiences and thoughts in his own world, which demonstrates the unspeakable implication inside the body language of Butoh. His perception of

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<sup>55</sup> Holdsworth, Nadine, Jane Milling and Helen Nicholson, eds. *Contemporary Theatre Review: Theatre Review, Theatre, Performance, and the Amateur Turn*. Routledge Taylor & Francis, 2010. P66-67.

<sup>56</sup> Huxley, Michael and Noel Witts, eds. *The twentieth Century Performance Reader*. P195.

the world with the bodily expression of anti-aesthetics is formed into a brand new realm of dance. That is what is inside his dance.

The spirit of my thesis dance is one of an oppressed vibe along with a sense of silence and awakening. At the beginning, I have an isolated solo against a group of people. All of my dancers stand on the side of the stage aiming their flashlights on my body and then walk towards me individually. I am like a fallen angel struggling with fear and anxiety and my solo is highlighted in a sense of isolation from others, which embodies a sort of classism in the society. After all the dancers walk past my body, a new paragraph starts with a silent scene in the darkness. Some of us lie on the floor and slightly move and stand up like wild animals waking up from the burned soil, some people walk on stage like lost lambs in the darkness, and some are fallen angels struggling and challenging the silence and gradually being awoken from the power of darkness. After the silent beginning, the dance gradually becomes a multiple view with different partnering dances. Without the visual effect of flashlights, physical contact is highlighted to embody the relationship between human beings: men and women, woman and woman, man and man. In this section, many scenes appear on stage showing relationships between different people, a complex of conflicts and connection using different physical techniques. It also indicates a potential relationship between human and society. In addition to this, on stage, there are Asian, Black, and White people. Three types of people present the different races, colors, and

cultures inside the “7” individuals, but also is indicative of racism. We are all different, but we are in the same world. Duets, trios, solos on the stage demonstrate the invisible relationship between individual problems, as well as a series of unforeseen problems between human and society.

Identity and characters are also key in this work. I asked each of dancers to choose one word from the seven social issues: class, education, ability, sexuality, race, age, gender, which connect them to the “7,” as their own “sins.” What they chose had its own reason.

Using flashlights is a good choice in this “dark dance,” it improves the atmosphere when we are using them with powerful movements and techniques. With the music, the use of flashlights is more effective as a sort of rhythm on our body movement. Especially, after the partnering session, there is a strong group dance with the flashlights. Also, there is a narrative part in which everyone speaks the seven social issues repeatedly as their own identities and character in this dance, The power in the darkness is growing with the lights of flashlights when they are on and off as we are waking up our original power from the inside and perceive the evil side of ourselves in the darkness. Even when we sit on the floor saying the seven words, these lights promote our voices as one part of our body. They are not just visual.

The music, costumes, movements, dance forms and emotions in this dance are inspired from a variety of art forms, principles and theories. For example, the quality of movement and energy in my thesis project are connected to my current research, the Gaga movement principle, set up by Israel contemporary dance choreographer, Ohad Naharin. As a dynamic movement language coming from people's inner energy and consciousness, the practice of Gaga technique guides dancers to explore their own body language with their individual style and perception. Relating to a different imagination, the movement language of Gaga develops and builds up the strengths inside our bodies, thereby, there are plenty of possibilities to dance and express with different quality of movement through Gaga movement practice. That is what is inside our movement and consciousness. Generally speaking, learning technique is basic to training dancers' bodies; however, the most important process is to inspire all of them to find their own way in every movement and sensation. That is why I always encourage my dancers to create their own styles based on my movement materials, and also it is my purpose to see different energies inside the seven people in this dance. Meanwhile, as another key from Ohad Naharin's Gaga movement principle, imagination helps my dancers and me to deeply perceive ourselves in this dance. Significant to the process of rehearsal, I explained my thinking and feeling to my dancers all the time and tried to enlighten them with different methods of imagination regarding to movement, spirit, and emotion. Every time when I made

a change in this dance, I perceived and received different new information with everybody's reactions to the change. This kind of reaction helped me to confirm if it is correct what I want. With these changeable qualities, diverse moving methods, images, and inspiration, I enjoyed seeing the growth of my thinking and perception through my dancers' bodies and the process of choreography. Feeling the possibility of our physical language is a journey with magical sensation. Finally, when we presented this dance on the stage, I saw the most evil instinct of human being inside each of my dancers including myself, and I saw the success of my research inside the "7."

Going into the dark side, seeing the enmity and the desire within us. I present how we are suffering from the evil soil and how my perception to human's original instincts has been built up with pride, greed, lust, envy, gluttony, wrath, and sloth, all of the seven deadly sins. As seven individuals with different sins speaking out the seven words of issues on the stage, we are the seven disclosing the truth of what is inside a human.

By the end of my thesis dance work, the final motion of quick flashlights turning off, this dance ended on a strong beat. Suddenly, everything is back to silence and darkness again.



## **Conclusion**

In fine arts, there are different genres, such as: Dada, Surrealism, De stijl, Superrematism, Constructivism, and so on, which compose the diversity of style and system in the realm of fine arts.

Dance theater leads us to explore and identify different aesthetics, concepts, and thoughts from artists' different expressions. As a process of perceiving and being perceived, dance in the theater shows an invisible conversation between artists and audiences. The connection is not only the visual impact, but also a process of reflection, of thinking from artists to audience. In this process, people appreciate the arts on the stage while they are also appreciating themselves. Hence, this kind of interaction between human's perception and the arts is a very subtle communication allowing us to get to know more about the different thoughts from artists, as well as experiences from other worlds.

Human perception is like a very deep ocean with many unknown things to us, which can also be related to other areas like science, psychology, visual study, biology, philosophy and so forth, as different academic studies.

During the process of my thesis creating and writing, I came to realize how aesthetics engages the process of human perception. As a reaction that people produce from their engagement with the arts, aesthetics embody a kind of critical

standard inside human consciousness. Body movements, language, behaviors, emotions, attitude, and so forth, convey us. In my thesis writing, I tried to convey the different relationships between human perception and dance theater in terms of the aesthetics, expression and the stream of consciousness we call dance theater.

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