

THE KINSHIPS OF TOMORROW: NEW FORMS OF RADICAL TOGETHERNESS IN AUDIENCE- PARTICIPATORY DANCE THEATRE

STEFAN JOVANOVIĆ

Embodiment as knowledge production

Modernity has produced an unwavering faith in progress, defined through rational, technological and scientific methods. This progress stands on the graveyards of multiple alternative epistemologies of knowing the world and knowing ourselves. Can we imagine a tomorrow that is based on feeling, therefore being; rather than Descartes' *knowing, therefore being?* (Descartes, 2003). As Somatic Experiencing® founder & trauma-therapist Peter Levine writes:

Most people, if asked the question, "How do you know that you're alive?" would speculate with something like, "Well, because..." But that just isn't the answer, it can't be. The way we know we're alive is rooted in our capacity to feel, to our depths, the physical reality of aliveness embedded within our bodily sensations-through direct experience. This, in short, is embodiment. (Levine, 2010, pp.286-287)

In relation to the dichotomous construction of the rational over other ways (such as feeling) of knowing the world, architecture too is one of the products of this epistemic loss, and remains complicit. So, a question becomes, how can



Figure 1. *Constellations*, directed by the author, the show opens with the audience being invited to waltz by a cast of seven archetypal characters. This image features performer Sara Ruddock with a member of the audience, photographed by Camilla Greenwell and presented at Sadler's Wells Theatre, June 2019, London, UK

architecture integrate models from disciplines like dance, somatic therapy, and theatre, to make spaces for alternative orientations to the world and to cultural production? This paper explores how the combination of sensing into the history of existing spaces and the method of generating social choreographies proposes a new way of creating dance and theatre; one that gives priority to affect, empathy and resonance.

The contemporary dance scene in the United Kingdom is made up of makers working at the edges of critical dance practices that explore questions around what an audience is, is asked to do, and what a performance is and can do. In *Spirit Compass* (2019), choreographed by Lucy Suggate, audiences are invited to dive into deep existential reflection over three 45-minute drumming meditations, watching performers “slip through the cracks and re-integrate, repurpose and reorganise in order to be more-than-human” (Suggate, 2019). In their work *Slug Horizons*, Florence Peake and Eve Stainton explore “the expressive potentialities

of queer bodies through intimacy, touch and collective reclaiming. Promoting an emotional landscape of bravery in response to restrictive attitudes to the sensual and visceral body, *Slug Horizons* elevates the marginalized affection, sexuality, power and energies within non-normative relationships” (Peake & Stainton, 2018).

All three of these artists, and their respective works create unique proposals towards how a space of encounters, oftentimes within a museum or gallery, can be used and re-purposed towards the needs of the collective experience. As choreographer Mette Edvardsen writes:

I think dance is not primarily a visual art form. It is also about other senses, and how the senses are working together. Seeing, listening, feeling, but also remembering, imagining and thinking. I think of choreography as writing, which doesn't mean that it needs to be language, but also not an opposite to language, and maybe not as visual. (Edvardsen, 2017, p.217)

I have often wondered about the ways in which architectural and choreographic methodologies may overlap in a meaningful way; beyond the trends of creating representations of ritual in visual arts spaces. Show after show, I observe that our current relationship to technology is, perhaps paradoxically, moving in step with a need for sensation, for empathy, for resonance, and so the notion of ritual as artistic practice is emerging with every curatorial turn¹. In this instance, Peter Levine’s work acts as an interface linking these needs to bodily experience:

As social creatures, it is through empathy that we make our deepest communications. To do this we must be able to ‘resonate’ with the sensations and emotions of others; we must, in other words, be able to feel the same things

¹ See for example Sarah Shin’s talk ‘The Ritual Turn from Tarot to Tantra’ at Tate Modern (January 2020), and her co-curation of ‘Tender Intervals’ at the ICA (February 2020).

as those around us feel. The way we indicate this is primarily nonverbal; it is through our postures and expressive emotions. (Levine, 2010, p.42)

In my practice, the purpose of architecture and the performing arts is to craft experiences within spaces where guests can participate with empathic resonance towards history and towards each other.

As a choreographer and architect, I prompt you with the following question: what can our disciplines do to bring audiences closer to more tangible experiences of connecting to their ancestry, of connecting to belief systems that are different to their own, of creating meaningful relationships with strangers, and with the unknown? I would like to accompany you through the reflection and description of the key milestones of my latest research project, *Radical Togetherness* (2017-18), and the dance-theatre show that emerged out of it, *Constellations* (2019), in which I explore these questions and concerns.

The contracts of consent in being radically together

In 2016 I joined choreographer Meg Stuart in a series of interventions in the city of Vienna during the ImpulsTanz International Dance Festival. Churches, hospitals, museums and public swimming pools became sites of improvisational encounters responding to the choreographer's brief of practicing "love (as) the agreement". Museums quickly became hostile environments, policed by security guards scared that century-old artwork would get damaged, whilst churches turned a blind eye towards what could have easily been read as ritualistic practice. Once the director of the Kunsthistorischen Museum Wien learnt that acclaimed choreographer Meg Stuart was in the museum's jurisdiction, performing a guerrilla-choreographic-intervention, an invitation was immediately made for us to come back the following day, to do it all again. Refusing the invitation, Stuart prompted us with the question "What is radical togetherness?".

This is how *Radical Togetherness* was born, a series of London-based interventions bringing diverse artists into unconventional performance spaces, questioning

which artistic practices are allowed within non-theatrical institutional spaces? Based on the research in Vienna the previous year, I recognized that churches and museums sat on opposite ends of a spectrum between freedom and censorship, respectively. The model I based my method and research on was a body of work called *Crash Landings*, which Meg Stuart and her collaborators produced between 1996 and 1999:

Three choreographers, Meg Stuart, Christine De Smedt and David Hernandez, joined forces and visions to devise an interdisciplinary improvisation performance series that became perhaps the most daunting and definitely biggest improvisation series in the still recent history of European contemporary dance. Interdisciplinary in nature, this collaborative project entailed in total the participation of 80 artists who came from disciplines as diverse as dance, music, performance, theatre, scenography, industrial design, visual art, light design, costume and writing. (Imschoot, 2009, p.104)

My first action was to make an open call to professional performers, artists, and students² at the Architectural Association wanting to take part in a series of experimental and unannounced choreographic interventions in the Turbine Hall (Tate Modern), Curve Gallery (Barbican), and The Store (180 Strand). I invited the participants to use the artworks on display, ranging from film to multi-media installations, as inspirational starting points for creating non-violent improvisational interventions. It soon transpired that the perceived *otherness* of these sessions was either an intrusion and we were asked to stop, taking away

² During the Research & Development phase of *Radical Togetherness*, the following dance artists, choreographers, and performers were invited to partake: Roni Katz, Alice Heyward, Jen Rosenblit, Nassia Fourtouni, Cécile Tonizzo, Lynda Rahal, Katharina Hölzl, Robert Malmberg, Emma Zangs, Eva Recacha, Siobhan Ni Dhuinnin; musician Liam Byrne, artists Pati de Souza Leão Müller and Pete Qiang Dong; and the following students from the AA School of Architecture: Andreas Stylianou, Joyce Chen, Tamara Rasoul, Ziyad Mourad, Chuck Wang, Marion Delaporte, Leticia Dadalto, Daria Moussavi, Jack Hardy and Oliver Savorani.

the attention from the *actual artwork* that was on display, or we were ignored all together for it was all too queer to make sense of. It was the moments when *the other* members of public in the space were invited to join in with us, sometimes to participate in a touch exercise or a moving train³, that affect became more tangible. I come to the question of what constitutes an invitation in audience participatory performance?

The last decade of work by choreographer Raja Feather Kelly introduced me to the notion of the agency of spectatorship. In their most recent work, *We May Never Dance Again* (2019) audiences confront the uncertainty of being spectators within a space that is deeply occupied by its own cultural production. Audiences are invited to question what it means to be voyeurs and watchers, and at what point silence becomes as complicit as loudness. The transactional nature of purchasing a ticket no longer stands in for either an invitation or consent, and this was central in thinking through the implications of *Radical Togetherness* which neither sought an audience, nor entered into clear transactional agreements.

In the museum, we soon began to identify the difference between participating by watching versus participating by moving. When members of the public were able to visually recognise certain socially choreographed forms, or resemblances of gatherings, the invitation to participate was easier to negotiate and accept. What further facilitated joining in was the scale of anonymity in the space, the difference of hosting at least a hundred individuals, a mass, rather than a handful of spectators. Once repetition was witnessed, such as a line of twenty people facing the same direction, walking or crawling with hands on each other's shoulders, more people would join in. What emerged from these interventions was a suggestion that the invitation for *social* choreographies was much more accessible

³ A human moving-train involved one participant placing their hands on the shoulders of another, both facing the same direction. Gradually the line of people kept growing, until the direction of movement and manner of interaction was clear to follow. Once a fully formed train of people was formed, the first person would initiate a series of movements that would escalate down the line in a domino effect. This exercise, when performed without touch, is often referred to as *flocking* in contemporary dance teachings.

than *individualized* modes of authentic movement expression. Despite audience agreement and affective participation, the impermeability of the museums' rules and regulations still remained, under the watchful eyes of ushers and security staff. In 2019, visual artist Anne Imhof presented *Sex*, a compilation of her most famous works at The Tanks at Tate Modern. What was presented as an exciting possibility to explore atmospheric environments was curtailed by security guards continuously escorting audience members out of the venue, that is, those who attempted to engage with the work by responding to the cast's physical provocations. Audience-participation in this context was validated so long as it abided by standards where the performer replaced the art-object: *Don't touch the art, keep a minimum distance of one meter from the art, do not film, do not photograph with flash*, etc. As critic Adrian Searle writes for the Guardian:

The performers in Sex make you feel uncertain whether your presence is welcome. Meet their eyes and you get a good hard stare, or an expression of disdain. Poking my head into a dark corner, a woman gives me a baleful look, and a young man's implacable expression tells me to fuck off. It's like being in a darkroom at a sex club. There is an etiquette. Don't get too close, don't interfere, no touching without consent. And then some guy pogos into me, and elbows his way between the viewers. What are the limits? Where should I be? Is eye contact allowed? (Searle, 2019)

These experiences of the institutionalizing gaze of the museum led me to reflect on what spaces are void of protocol but whose foundations, walls and roofs still hold the semiotic history of protocol, ritual and spirit? This is what led me to choose repurposed or de-commissioned churches as the sites of future exploration. The architectural structures in this instance become the art-objects themselves, absent of rules and regulations regarding contact, distancing, media presence and audience-engagement.



Figure 2. *Radical Togetherness*, directed by the author, the first of three public sharings of Research and Development for the show *Constellations*. This image features performers Pau Aran Gimeno, Roni Katz & Charlie Catrall, photographed by Moad Musbahi and presented at Asylum Chapel, August 2018, London, UK

The g[hosts] that live on when an architecture is left to die

In the summer of 2018, I began working on a group-show entitled *Constellations*, a two-and-a-half hour gathering in the round, a piece of unconventional dance-theatre that sat at the crossroads of a travelling circus, a dark comedy, ballroom, and phantasmagorical club hosted by ghostly archetypes. In the atmospheric settings that we designed, audiences were invited to reconsider who holds marginal and dominant roles within social spaces. Who leads and who follows? Who is in charge? Is the choreographer always directing? Is the lighting designer always fixed behind a lighting desk? Are the technicians only meant to operate behind the curtains and wear black attire? Can the theatre's staff be part of the show in a socially meaningful manner? Can the audience decide which route the show will take? Gender fluidity and social dancing were called upon to explore new ways of understanding contemporary social politics and the idea of radical togetherness. This involved not only the invitation for audiences and performers

to interact in a direct manner, but also for artists with radically diverse artistic practices to share airtime and stage-space at the same time while finding a way in which to perform through their artistic differences.

Our concern was not only focused on how to engage audiences in theatre, and how to advance notions of *immersive* performance within existing non-theatrical spaces, but rather how to bridge the conventional theatrical experience with the site-specific histories of the spaces and cities that lie outside of the black box. Representation is inescapable, so what does it mean to embody the stories of the characters we dance and narrate? How does architecture serve the embodiment of a story's context? How does choreography serve it? What is the purpose of costume and drag in this instance?

The beginning of our creation period for *Constellations*, involved the inhabitation of two derelict church-sites in London for the presentation of the work's early development. The first event took place in Caroline Gardens Chapel, located in a former early-19th century almshouse estate, "*a house where paupers are supported at the public expense; a poorhouse. Also a house set apart for the aged poor free of rent*" (Brewer, 2001, p.35). This specific almshouse once housed disparate, mentally ill and retired members of Peckham's Victorian community, who could seek refuge and sanctuary. Today, the space is known as Asylum Chapel, and is offered as a dry-hire venue, rented by an arts organization from the local council, sub-let to artists for performances and weddings. It is a very current example of a space that was once an asylum and is now easily monetized for its semiotics and *alternative* appearance.

The second space we inhabited was the Welsh Chapel, a former Presbyterian Church in the heart of London's Soho area, formerly known as the nightclub Limelight. Today it's run by a non-for-profit arts organization, looking to advance the fringe dance and theatre scene. As one could imagine, Asylum Chapel and Stone Nest are merely two, grade-II listed buildings; out of a handful of others of the kind that one comes across in a large metropolis like London. It's not a coincidence that performing arts organizations have found



Figure 3. *Radical Togetherness*, directed by the author, the second of three public sharings of Research and Development for the show *Constellations*. This image features performers Katye Coe, Roni Katz, Charlie Cattrall and audience members photographed by Moad Musbahi and presented at Stone Nest, August 2018, London, UK

these spaces, transforming them into theatrical stages without much need for restoration or engineering works. The presence of stunning natural lighting and faded, withered, ecclesiastical scenography prove to be quite the seductive backdrop to most contemporary performances and arts practices dealing with notions of ritual and ceremony. I recognize that my own practice has played a part in this trend, and so I'm beckoned to dive deeper into questioning what that does; occupying spaces that represent paradox, safe harbors of once-dominant religions but also homes to the more quieted, underground, queer, and spiritual orientations of society?

What if we were now to examine the notion of audience participation in the performing arts through a psychogeographic lens as we address questions like: how do we arrive to empathy, resonance, and connection through spatial sensing? How do we safely negotiate contracts of *consent* in black box spaces when treading the delicate line between therapeutic and performative practices?

What's the difference between offering these practices in a church and offering them in a theatre? What changes? What remains the same? Which boundaries are transgressed and what new possibilities emerge?

Questions that surfaced whilst visiting these sites were about the coercion between ourselves as performers and the site, that is "a relationship of violence in waiting for the 'spectacle'" (Castellucci, 2007, p.204). We thus had to distance ourselves from the learned history of the churches in that very moment and explore the internal volume through purely animalistic awareness. This method of creation takes inspiration from the theatre of Societas Raffaello Sanzio, and works such as *Tragedia Endogonidia* (2003). As Romeo Castellucci described:

In this project, the relation between space and the city is very important, and the theatre we perform in is like a metonym of the particular city we are visiting, so the relation to the space is fundamental. In every instance, there's a sort of animalistic response to the space as volume; it's not an architectonic space but a volume, a cavity, like a volume of a sculpture. I mean that facing any space you can have an animal, infantile reaction to its volume; it becomes very clear and evident how this volume can speak. (Castellucci, 2007, p.203)

The storyline of *Constellations*, follows the archetypes of the witch and the fool and questions their historic relationship to gender representations and the spaces that they historically occupied in society. What would happen to our contemporary biases if pop culture presented witches as men and fools as women, or abolished gender all together in the presentation of these fictionalized and aestheticized figures? We cannot reverse centuries of gendered patriarchal depictions, from Dürer's etchings⁴ and Goya's paintings⁵ to Disney's animated films⁶. We can however be relentless in exercising an alternative portrayal of

⁴ E.g. *The Witch*, etched by Albrecht Dürer in 1500.

⁵ E.g. *El Aquelarre (Witches' Sabbath)*, painted by Francisco Goya in 1798.

⁶ E.g. The Evil Queen, also featured as an old hag in Disney's 1959 production of *The Sleeping Beauty*.

archetypes and folklore in the 21st century, if we are first able to understand them as genderless entities. In visiting Asylum Chapel and Stone Nest, I asked my collaborators to use their felt-sense⁷ to feel into the history of the rooms, neither of which were foreign to the *witches and fools* of 19th century Victorian society or the queer club-scene of the 1980's. We channeled the spirits of the 19th century fool and witch to bring more tangible experiences closer to our nervous systems' perception.

Constellations' enquiry into the architectures we inhabited drew equally from the traditions of psychogeography, and therefore invited us to sense into the stories that may linger on in buildings that have been abandoned, lost function and/or purpose. As Guy Debord states in his Introduction to a Critique of Urban Geography, "Psychogeography could set for itself the study of the precise laws and specific effects of the geographical environment, whether consciously organized or not, on the emotions and behavior of individuals" (Debord, 1955). We consciously sensed into the spirit of the churches, whilst tuning inwards to the bodily sensations arising from dancing in such environments. We tracked our own excitement, fear, curiosity, anger, and love that arose amongst us and later our spectators. We also learned to recognize that which does not belong to us but instead belongs to the stories of the materials that surround us. We left these spaces honoring the experience and further crafting our relationship to the archetypes we evolved into throughout the project.

These research findings often led us to heated discussions around the split between the personal and the political, the personal and the artistic; could they ever be separate, or are they always one and the same? In these moments I often reflected on the way that the repetition of representation features in works such as those by Pina Bausch/Tanztheater Wuppertal, where "by incorporating dance's

⁷ To use one's felt sense often means to observe the quality of sensations emerging from the gut, rather than the brain. Felt-sense is a common term in most somatic-based therapies, relying on information created by the body's Vagus nerve, then perceived by our neo-cortex. Please read Stephen Porges' *The Polyvagal Theory* for a more in-depth and fuller understanding.

inherent split and incompleteness, dance theatre brings frightening moments of ‘non-representation’ on to the stage” (Fernandes, 2001, p.84). I encouraged the performers to stay with this tension of channeling fictional archetypes and also staying present with their own non-representation. During the first public sharings, the spectators were equally invited to question their own role, real or imagined, within the performative field.

The creation of this piece was very much fuelled by the personal practices of my performance collaborators and artists. And so, I draw a parallel to the choreographic enquiries of Katye Coe, a dance-artist and dance-agent who has spent a year⁸ harvesting and catalyzing public forums and sharings about what it means to dance as a way of understanding *living*, often rooted in unspoken epistemologies of knowledge, specifically inviting audiences to witness the moments during and immediately after the *dancing* has taken place. Coe recounts:

This enquiry is rooted in my own and shared experiences in performing dancing. The two affirmations at the root of this project are:

...that performing dancing can be experienced as an act of surrender. These experiences may be shared with other people, communities and working practices for which witnessing the act of surrender is part of the everyday. These might include people who experience and support human processes like birth and death.

...that in the period of time immediately after dancing, either in performance

⁸ Katye Coe was the first Torchlight Artist at Siobhan Davies Dance, whose investigation from her position as a dancer of the themes of surrender and the afterwards led her to meaningful encounters with many of her peers, but also with midwives, hospice workers and many others. Siobhan Davies Dance’s Torchlight Artists Programme supports dance artists and choreographers with one year to investigate something of urgency to their practice, which resonates with the interests of other artists or professionals in the dance field and beyond, and can engage diverse publics.

or in periods of intense rehearsal or research, dancers can embody rich and important material and information. This material is often left unspoken, not shared or not given a value or the right resources to meets its complexity. Capturing and describing this information is crucial to realizing and sharing the value of experiencing performing and watching dancing. (Coe, 2019)

Eventually, we too invited the audience into our process. The question we occupied ourselves with was how a group of performers can transfer and convey the transgenerational meeting and somatic sensing to a stranger while channeling the ancestral lineage of a historic site? Resourced by Coe's call to share 'the value of experiencing performing' and Pina Bausch's methods of repetition and non-representation; touch and conversation in movement was one of the ways we approached this ambitious prompt. That is, by introducing structured forms of social dancing, principally waltzing between audience and performer and later audience and audience. In engaging in such a way, audiences were asked to occupy the perceived stage space in the churches and enter into unknown territory as the performers whisked them away from their seats. It is hard to fully transcribe what happened in those moments. The performers, decked out in drag, make-up and costume, were not only present as themselves, but were also embodying the spirit of the space that we were in. In that moment, when the members of the audience were being invited to dance, they were also engaging in a social dance with characters long gone, fools, witches, ancestors who live on in the floors and walls of a derelict architecture.

The soft edges between the therapeutic and the theatrical

What I had learned from the Vienna interventions and *Radical Togetherness*, was that the way an invitation is made can be the single most important act in a show. Through trial and error, we discovered that it could take very little to trigger individuals not expecting such a demanding encounter, or worse, re-traumatize them. When working with the effects of audience participation on

audience's nervous systems, safety comes first. Breaking the fourth wall can often involve entering uncharted territory, especially when operating in buildings not designed for theatrical interventions. *Constellations* sits within an artistic climate where re-negotiating the contracts of consent in audience-participatory dance and theatre is definitely in need of urgent debate, especially when protocols of consent are easily overlooked. In her review of *10,000 Gestures* (2018) by Boris Charmatz, writer Lauren Wingenroth states:

Those who've experienced trauma shouldn't have to relive it by having strangers aggressively invade their personal space. No one should have to dodge getting feet or genitals in their faces. And some people simply don't want to be touched by strangers for reasons they shouldn't have to explain. (Wingenroth, 2018)

We're a society that's becoming increasingly aware of personal, social and ancestral trauma, so any audience participation needs to come from a clear invitation. This is where therapeutic modalities around consent lent themselves well to a rehearsal and performative process, testing how strangers could be invited into intimate spaces without feeling overwhelmed or pressured to perform in a certain way. In our case, a hand gesture or sentence were used as bridges from the outside into the inside, with direct intention and clarity.

The show was completed in June 2019, when the piece was presented in the black box setting of the Lilian Baylis Theatre at Sadler's Wells. We had incorporated full theatrical lighting, transformative costumes, and a mechanized set. In full bliss and magic of what was created, I often reflect on that which was lost from the initial church performances. The compromise of using all that the theatre could offer in the creation of this *dreamtime*, we lost the imposing backdrop of the church, the natural daylight, the stained glass windows, and the silence of death that lives on in the materiality of the built. What remains is the embodiment of these spaces and their [g]hosts through the performers' felt experiences, their somatic memory and choreographic recounting.



Figure 4. *Constellations*, directed by the author. This image features performer Sara Ruddock, Pau Aran Gimeno, Roni Katz, Charlie Cattrall and Katye Coe performing the ritual sacrifice of the Fool, photographed by Camilla Greenwell and presented at Sadler's Wells Theatre, June 2019, London, UK

A couple of weeks before *Constellations* premiered, I was at a loss as to how all of these varied practices and fields would weave their way together. It had become a challenge to integrate all the collaborators' varied artistic practices into one cohesive show, whilst retaining an abundance of content generated from each of our site-specific church improvisations. What did we learn by performing in the churches? How could we possibly convey the immensity of the stories we felt in an ever-changing neutralized theatrical space? How do we negotiate what are often unspoken contracts with audiences that we have never met before? At

this stage I facilitated a Systemic Constellation⁹ in service to the work, where the piece as a meta-physical entity became the client, the cast became participants to their own performance, and I acted as facilitator. Twenty volunteers acted as representatives—characters featuring in our process so far, being invited into the deep end of our group process to help the ensemble discern what material, both personal and fictional, to keep and which to let go of.

After four shows, the question still remains: how little or how much audience participation does one need to arrive to meaningful modes of resonance, both with the individuals and with the collective as whole?

I position this enquiry by referencing two different dance & theatre works dealing with notions of time and knowledge production, addressing audience participation in very different ways. The first is *No-How Generator* (2019) by choreographer Matthias Sperling, which explores the neuroscientific and hypnotic effects of looped sound & voice and carefully constructed lighting design. Over the span of an hour, audiences are somatically transported into deep energy wells of contemplation, spiritual dissociation and expansion. The second is *A 24-Decade History of Popular Music* (2016) by artist Taylor Mac, where “the audience participation is almost constant, pushing us way out of our comfort zone and ensuring that we remain engaged”. After 24 hours of staying awake in a show, a different state of spectatorship is achieved, for “staying up for such a long time has a strange effect on one’s state of mind”. These two enchanting opuses made me reflect on our methodologies of incantational duration versus quick fire participation. I decided to look for a way to titrate the show’s mood between moments of high activation and moments of subdued relaxation.

⁹ The labels “sculpture”, “reconstruction”, and “constellation” are often used synonymously. They refer to a method in which persons are “set up” as representatives of elements of a system in a space. When present this way, observers or therapists can elicit information about a system that would otherwise be nearly impossible to gather at the same level of complexity through verbal means. Depending upon the theoretical model used by the therapist, the information gathered has to do with the quality of the relationships between members or with the structural characteristics of the system. As with psychodrama, situations can be reproduced in various time periods, including the present, the past, and a possible future through the use of sculptures (Franke, 2003, pp.27-28).

Whilst the systemic constellation achieved a depth of empathy and resonance in a short period of time through constant physical audience-participation, the actual shows relied on durational intermittent participation to reach similar wells of emotion. The choice I had to make was between therapeutizing a theatrical experience or theatricalizing a therapeutic context. The former lent itself better and more unobtrusively to our creative process. What resulted was a two-and-a-half-hour medley of vignettes where audiences were in constant flux between scenes of trance-like meditation and dynamic social dancing.

What I propose in conclusion is an invitation towards re-thinking the ways in which we gather and the practices that we share when we do. In hindsight I might say that the more radical performances dealing with architectural historical resonance were the ones that happened in the church-sites with more intimate audience numbers. These moments held a level of improvisation and honesty through non-representation that were made possible by the environment and context we were in. On the other hand, when these ancestral stories were shown at Sadler's Wells, translated through the spectacle of set, costumes, lighting, and technology, the entire experience was elevated technically, whilst placing the non-representational narrative under greater strain. What I observed through the audience-participatory lens was that the audiences in the churches were invited to embody the felt narrative of the space through a more literal experience, conversation, and contact with the performers. The architecture of the churches did away with the need for theatricality, leaving us in service to the sunlight, weather, temperature and g[hosts] of the edifice. The difference between the performances and their respective venues was almost incomparable, leaving me with even more questions about the ways in which we might theatricalize unconventional performance sites, or perhaps not at all.

Architecture serves a central purpose here. It is a container that holds performances, human encounters, and social choreographies disguised as the systemic constellations of our lives. The research and performance work I have done so far suggests that we must look to the spaces that we currently have



Figure 5. *Constellations*, directed by the author. This image features performer Roni Katz with a member of audience, photographed by Camilla Greenwell and presented at Sadler's Wells Theatre, June 2019, London, UK

access to, the built and unbuilt environments that have served one or many purposes and now sit waiting or slumbering. Sensing into the geo-social ancestry of these spaces offers an effective way of telling a story, of creating theatre. Translating those stories from performer to audience holds the possibility for empathy to be generated between the living and the dead, the forgotten, and the missing. It is this moment of translation which is key. What I learned from *Radical Togetherness* was that the unpolished storytelling of felt experiences and exchanges brought greater humanity to the methods and processes of public engagement. To achieve similar impacts within the black-box required a greater level of trust-building, as we competed with the inherent social protocols of what the theatre traditionally allows for or doesn't. I end with an invitation. In the extraordinary times that we are currently living in, don't be afraid to risk updating the traditions of spatiality, orientation and audience engagement. One definition of trauma is the fixation of an idea, structure or protocol, and without

that fixation, we might just be surprised by all the possibilities that the unknown can offer us.

This paper is self-funded by Studio Stefan Jovanović. The research project *Radical Togetherness* and dance-theatre show *Constellations*, depicted and referenced, was funded by Arts Council England. A special thanks to all the participants of *Radical Togetherness* and *Constellations* including performers Roni Katz, Katye Coe, Charlie Catrall, Sara Ruddock, Pau Aran Gimeno, composer Domenico Angarano, singer Bliss Carmxn, garment artist Curtis Oland, mask-maker Damselfrau, Sadler's Wells artistic programmer Eva Martinez, project producer Robyn Cabaret, production assistant Christopher Haddow and technical team, Siobhan Davies and Lauren Wright, Asylum Chapel and Maverick Projects, Stone Nest, and the dramaturgical support of Frank Bock and Jonathan Burrows. The photographs featuring in the paper were taken by Camilla Greenwell and Moad Musbahi and are copyright of Stefan Jovanović.

References

- ANDERSSON, Danjel; EDVARDSEN, Mette & SPÅNGBERG, Mårten (eds.) (2017). *Post-Dance*. Stockholm: MDT, p.217.
- BREWER, Ebenezer Cobham (2006). *The Wordsworth Dictionary of Phrase and Fable*. Based on the original book by Ebenezer Cobham Brewer. Hertfordshire: Wordsworth Editions, p.35.
- CASTELLUCCI, Claudia; CASTELLUCCI, Romeo; GUIDI, Chiara; KELLEHER, Joel & RIDOUT, Nicholas (2007). *The Theatre of Societas Raffaello Sanzio*. Oxford: Routledge, p.203.
- DAVIES, Siobhan (2019). *Torchlight Artist Programme*. Artist's Website.
<https://www.siobhandavies.com/work/torchlight-artist-programme/>
- DEBORD, Guy (1955). *Introduction to a Critique of Urban Geography*. Translated by Ken Knabb. Paris: Les Lèvres Nues #6.
- DESCARTES, René & DESMOND, M. Clarke (2003). *Discourse on Method and Related Writings*. London: Penguin Books, p.25.
- DONALDSON, Gaye (2018). *The Centre for Systemic Constellations*. London: Applied Training Book, pp.36-27.
- FERNANDES, Ciane (2001). *Pina Bausch and the Wuppertal Dance Theatre, The Aesthetics of Repetition and Transformation*. New York: Peter Lang Publishing, Inc., p.84.
- FRANKE, Ursula (2003). *The River Never Looks Back: Historical and Practical Foundations of Bert Hellinger's Family Constellations*. 2nd edition. Heidelberg: Carl Auer International, pp.27-28.
- KELLY, Raja Feather (2019). *We May Never Dance Again* // the feath3r theory*. Artist's Website.
<https://www.theinvisibledog.org/all/2019/5/2/we-may-never-dance-again-the-feath3r-theory/>
- LEVINE, Peter A. & MATE, Gabor (2010). *In an Unspoken Voice: How the Body Releases Trauma and Restores Goodness*. Berkeley, CA: North Atlantic Books, pp.42, 286-287.
- NEEDHAM, Alex (2016). "Taylor Mac review-24-hour-long pop show is everything" in *The Guardian*.
<https://www.theguardian.com/stage/2016/oct/10/taylor-mac-24-hour-history-of-popular-music-review>
- PEAKE, Florence & STANTON, Eve (2018). "Slug Horizons / Kneading Paradise" in *Artist's website*.
<http://www.florencepeake.com/http/wwwflorencepeakecom/rite-on-this-pliant-body-we-slip-our-wow>
- PEETERS, Jeroen & STUART, Meg (eds.) (2010). *Are We Here Yet? Damaged Goods, Meg Stuart*. Dijon: Les Presses du Réel, p.104.
- SEARLE, Adrian (2019). "Anne Imhof: 'Sex, But Not As You Know It'" in *The Guardian*.
<https://www.theguardian.com/artanddesign/2019/mar/27/anne-imhof-interview-sex-performance-art-tate-modern>
- SUGGATE, Lucy (2019). *Spirit Compass – Where There is Movement There is Change*. Edinburgh. Online
<https://www.lucysuggate.com/#/spirit/>
- WINGENROTH, Lauren (2018). "We Need To Talk About Non-Consensual Audience Participation" in *Dance Magazine*. <https://www.dancemagazine.com/we-need-to-talk-about-non-consensual-audience-participation-2611218336.html>