shinkansen

Reports

Issues raised from summary discussions

"Dance and New Technology"

**Cross Fair '99 Symposium, CZNRW,
Essen Germany. 27 - 31 October 1999**

The **Cross Fair '99 Symposium** organised by the **Choreographisches Zentrum NRW, Essen** concentrated on the subject of **"Dance and New Technology"**.The five day event mixed individual inputs from artists working in the sector, a day trip to local institutions, small group discussions and networking opportunities.

The event was curated by **Ghislaine Boddington (shinkansen/ResCen Middlesex University, London),
Soke Dinkla (Wilhelm Lehmbruck Museum, Duisberg)
Stefan Hilterhaus (Tanzlandschaft Ruhr, Essen)**

Process and moderation by Ghislaine Boddington.
Documented by Tanzdrama Hamburg.

The speakers, all working with new technologies, included:-

> * **BLAST THEORY - theatre artists, London**
> * **KURT DAHLKE - sound artist, Dusseldorf**
> * **NIK HAFFNER - dance artist with Forsythe Company, Frankfurt**
> * **MARTIN KUSCH - video and installation artist, Vienna**
> * **DETLEV LENKE - neurologist, Bonn**
> * **WAYNE MCGREGOR - choreographer/dancer, Random Dance Company, London**
> * **RICHARD POVALL- multidisciplinary composer, London**
> * **BILL SEAMAN - installation artist, Los Angeles**
> * **LARS SPUYBROEK - architect, NOX, Rotterdam**

On the Sunday morning (31st October), as a farewell event, a brunch was arranged and the participants and speakers sat down in **five small summary groups** to discuss and share practical ideas for the onwards development of the area. The following notes are the summary of these debates. The emphasis was placed on the **topical needs of professionals working and researching the interface between dance and developing technologies**.

1. Training and Professional Development

Training was seen at present as rudimentary with few opportunities on offer. The

main difficulty is **access to up-to-date equipment and resources**. Opportunities need to be created which are **strategic for the individual - "life needs led"** - and which allow a variety of types of access.

The difference between **'taught skills' and 'shared learning'** was noted - both options are required at various points in an artist's development. It was felt that the best teachers for software learning are other artists, lending a creative edge to the learning, rather than business led courses, which are expensive and often creative or conceptual.

Shared learning and **process workshops/residencies** can be especially productive for mature artists. They can allow the development of deeper understanding of both the equipment and the working methodologies. This enables **the integration of diverse skills of the artists and the tools**. Access to equipment (hardware and software) beyond these situations is still an ongoing problem but opportunities like these do offer a chance for artists to decide where to invest for their own projects and ongoing research.

Longer term access to high level resources can be enabled through links to universities and colleges. Also, the arts centre circuit upgrades and the new media centres open up, **partnerships for training** and access should be encouraged. It was noted that there are several interactive studios for dance globally now and many other plans are known to be in discussion. These need to be linked up to allow the development of remote stage methodologies (live to the web) to be researched.

A **flexible/adaptable network**, information led and facilitating both local and international opportunities for the individual would be helpful. Funding information is also required and funds allowing artists to travel to a particular workshop or course internationally, if not available at a local or national level, could be pinpointed.

2. Research and Development

The most imperative area for research was felt to be the **development of content** alongside/emerging from the new technologies/live performance interface. Funding for the **dissemination and transmission of research and development outputs**, output presentations and documentation processes would also greatly help the visibility of this evolving sector - enabling links into further funding for the creation of final products.

Research and development is most effective in small bursts of time followed by a lengthy (thinking) pause and then back into process and practice. This time scale was agreed as the best model. It was felt that the most effective way to enable this is **through collaboration with a range of partners** who will network together. This can provide the variety of resources needed to enable research advances. These partners for artists can be universities and institutions, new media centres and commercial businesses. **The artists must also be involved as a partner,** not only as a guest.

Some examples where discussed linked to the Symposium day trip when we visited KHM (Kunsthochschule fur Medien Koln) - a high school for new media, and GMD (Forschungszentrum Informationstechnik GmbH) - an industry linked research organisation. Other residency examples such as ISA at Arizona State University and Banff in Canada were commended.

Communication platforms like Cross Fair were also felt to be very important in allowing the **exchange of information, ideas and concepts** alongside people networking.

Where can information be gathered to show opportunities that are on offer? How can we encourage further opportunities of this type? Do we need a centralised broker/network or can we link into the existing networks?

3. Production

This debate took place under three headings

The Venue

When working with advancing technologies **the need to know the space, physically and technically**, is far more imperative. It is also a huge help if the venue itself has an understanding of some of the complexities and there is knowledge of new technologies within the venues own technical crew. **Extra time for rehearsal and technical set up** is one of these extras - for example, motion sensor equipment does not just plug in and play. There is a gradually advancement of the needs above as venues upgrade their stage equipment and retrain technical staff. However **information on the space and its full technical details in an online site** would help artists to know which venues may suit their work.

Touring

Many new ideas are emerging regarding touring in this sector. **This need for the 'stage' is not necessarily relevant to the new forms emerging for dance** in its interface with evolving technologies. Galleries and shopping centres, clubs and outdoor sites are all attractive propositions allowing unusual concept developments and wider audience access, as does the web - a new site for new forms and concepts.

Ideas that emerged:-

    * Core equipment - a black box studio that is **mobile/compatible** and contains
    * all needs or a travelling Internet access unit allowing remote control
    * Physically **"on-road" models** - mobile venues, ships, circus model etc
    * Content simulation models - **3D space/body representations** (to see how things start to work)

* Exchange across **web - virtual dance stages** - remote stage transmissions mixes

By-products

It is clear that the potentials for new forms for dance also enable by-products in a way that dance has not had access to before. For example **an awareness of the medium of documentation** has and can enable access and can fire a much needed development of the sector. Documentation can lead promotions, creative documentation is in itself an art and a by-product enabling education.

The **evolvement of extended forms**, the diversification of processes inherent in these and an analysis of the status quo of technology - uses of "what is around" at the present time - will all enable a deeper debate about the body and dance in general.

4. Equipment

The group discussing this area put joint information and an access point at the front of their need list. **A mailing list, a pool, where all can share and help each other through the complex and topical hardware and software developments**, is the answer. This list should have open access - allowing all in - and should be integrated into the existing lists/pools in the visual and digital art worlds and the music and film sectors. Special needs and questions maybe can be answered by someone out there who has previously encountered the same problem e.g. the dance-tech mailing list (dancetech@lists.acs.ohio-state.edu), the film list - shooting people (help@shootingpeople.org), a list for up-to-date information on bundles/combinations of products is www.infusion.com.

Some institutions (like Steim in Amsterdam and ZKM in Karlsruhr) are developing their own products linked to research and can be places to access for help/advice on purchases and on development plans.

It is good to keep an eye on **special operating system and software developments** in the commercial and arts sectors and see if you can link in the creative conceptual needs you have. Linux and other innovative evolutions are well worth keeping an eye on - in the Linux pool one can announce a certain programming need and the mailing list pulls in help from users worldwide. The use of open systems is where creative tools can be developed for special concepts and ideas. Also, if one acts as a mentor to students, you can get research help from them to solve particular problems.

Further **practical tips on stage set-ups and production design** were exchanged between members of the group. Visions for the future also emerged e.g. a micro controlled keyboard where one key changes the complete set-up - allowing live to be very live.

5. Networking

Today there are many types of networks in existence, both physical people based and/or virtual online based. They often work the best if they are neither too big or too small, if they are targeted at a particular need and if they are linked into other compatible networks. **They can stay informal and still be very effective**. The target of this group is the emerging cross over between dance and new technologies of the digital age. Networks are the place for **cross sharing ideas, problems and information**.

To draw on situation and needs of this Symposium

Cross Fair opened a listed club at the Symposium and has, more recently, changed this contact point to amalgamate it with a larger group of networked performance and digital artists. **Connectivity** is a shinkansen network site for sound, movement and image artists.

It contains a library, an excellent hotlinks page, a chat room, hot topics sections for setting up debates, a notice board and other features. You need to visit the site, click on **'Register**' from the drop down menu, fill in the registration form giving yourself a user name and password and wait for confirmation of your registration. The site is being relaunched in April 2000 and will be targeted at people interested in sound, movement and image integration through the use of new technologies.

The www address is :-
www.connectivity.org.uk - a membership based network debating technology, live presence and performance

This networking exchange can help the visibility of this evolving research

- through the expansion of ideas on how natural forces, such as the human body, meet new technologies
- through broader application - we need to make a much clearer awareness of the importance of this innovative research both in the dance and digital arts sectors

To access this report online and for further information on the organisations involved in Cross Fair 99
Choreographisches Zentrum NRW - www.cznrw.de
shinkansen - www.shinkansen.co.uk

Final summary notes written up from the group input by Ghislaine Boddington (shinkansen and ResCen Middlesex University, London) with help from Jessica Miller (Middlesex University) and Estelle Neveux (shinkansen).
Copyright -shinkansen/ CZNRW 1999/2000