

Lasting Impressions - A Dance Experience

Written by Farida Fahmy, Master of Dance Ethnology UCLA - November 2008



So many things in life are difficult to explain. As a child I always, for a reason beyond me, knew that I would be a dancer, completely unaware at the time, what an impossible feat it was because of the social taboos that surrounded dance at the time. Meeting up with the Reda family and sharing the same ideas and artistic ambitions was truly magical in the sense that the times were appropriate, the persons involved were talented, as well as tenacious in their commitments towards fulfilling their artistic ambitions. To be a star in an illustrious dance ensemble of both Egyptian and international fame was beyond my furthest dreams. I savored every moment of it. When I look back now, after many years, I still can recall, like vivid dreams, various impressions and feelings. The following text is inspired by an assignment that I had written for a phenomenology class during my studies at U.C.L.A.

Recalling a Dance Experience

A painter uses paints and brushes to bring what he perceives into existence that, in its turn, speaks to the beholder directly. Paint and brushes are the medium of his creations. When a dancer performs pre-set, pre-designed movements, he or she is the mediator. The dancer becomes the instrument that brings forth the choreographer's perceptions into existence. Can a dancer be regarded as a creative artist if she or he is interpreting another's creative work? Unlike a purely improvised dance, in performing a choreographed piece, the dancer has to conform to the form created by the choreographer. The dancer beholds the given movements, responding to what it provides of immediate sensuous experiences, which is subsequently transmitted to the beholder (audience), thus transcending the mechanical process of the movement. This response from the mediator (dancer) involves the merging of body and mind. The means of expression remains the body language first perceived by the choreographer. The dancer does not add formation, movements or gestures other than the pre-set, pre-composed movements given. The dancer's creative process should be the **way** she or he presents these movements. It is **How** it is presented.

Talented Dancers

Talent is a natural endowed artistic aptitude that is innate in a person. The dancer who has these innate qualities stands out among many, not only through her skills and technique, but rather by the intangible qualities that are gifted to him or her. It is the energy that flows out from the response to the sensuous experiences and in the reaction to it. It is the powerful contact that is conceived and is transformed from dance to dancer.

Recalling a Dance Experience

I stand in the wings backstage. I wait for my turn to enter the stage proper. I smell the ever familiar, lingering smells of wood, canvas, paint, glue and grease paint.

I feel the warm glow of lamps and projectors on my neck and my shoulders. I hear the quiet talk and movement mingled with the resounding music issuing from a few feet away.

I sense a feeling of elation that gradually encompasses me and grows as the seconds pass. I am enveloped with a calmness under-toned with excitement.

I stand in a twilight zone, between the real world outside and the world I am about to enter. I direct my attention to the stage and leave the semi-darkness behind me.

I feel my senses tuning up, my muscles tensing. I breathe a little faster, as I look in front of me. I see the dancers on stage, I know them well. They are be-coming faceless figures, abstract shapes and forms, They are re-acting to the sounds, beats and rhythms that are issuing forth.

I now monitor their every move....stepaction. A few seconds more I will merge consciously aware of my body I move, take a stepand....

I merge into the Experience

My body-being re-enacts the pre-deigned, pre-determined actions. My sensuous being encounters the pre-composed sounds, rhythms and beats. I advanceretreatturnstep and unfold.

My body-being folds ...unfolds ...swaysside to side ...once ...twice ...slows down ...picks up speed ...faster ...faster ...gradual... sudden...

My body-being re-enact, acts and react. My body-being receives the movement. My senses receive the music. My body-being reacts to and with the movement. My senses react to and with the music. My body-being displays the reception. My senses activate my body-being. I act the movement. I be-come the movement. I sense the music. I live the music. The dance ends.

I was aware

My body-being perceived the pre-conceived. My body-being beheld. My body-being be-came. My body-being displayed what it be-came.

My beholder received what I was becoming. My beholder received what I displayed. I felt what I was be-coming. I sensed my beholder as he received.

I was aware. Of my body-being. Of the movements. Of what the movement meant to me. Of the music. Of what the music did to me. Of the audience. Aware of time...Seconds...Minutes...An eternity of elation, sublimation, an incredible sense of well-being.

Euphoria

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