

Unspeakable

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During my practice as a director, choreographer and actor the operation of the body as an entity has been a driving force. Throughout the pieces I have created the body has been a subject of taboo, religion, constraint and mystery. Coming from a speech oriented background I was confronted with controversy when staging silent bodies. What did they mean? What did they signify? What spurred me on was the implementation of a rigorous daily practice in order to enable a unity between mind and body. An attempt at unity was necessary due to the fact that I experienced such separation in the mind-set of contemporary man, noticeable both in the theatre and in society at large. From the Enlightenment until today the Western society has firmly planted this idea that body and mind work on different levels. In the performative act this becomes a hinder because it divides the person into sections which should be truly whole.

Entity; *ens, esse* (Lat.) *ousia* (Gr.): the roots of entity speak of an *essential* being, whole upon which attributes/qualities can be superimposed. This is how I see the body in its purest form. In representations of characters/elements/abstractions on stage the body takes on several meanings. They could be social, cultural, religious and so on, these attributes build a frame of constraint around the body. Being as matter has been polluted with these attributes and the attributes begin to speak for the body instead of being itself. Because of this I approach the entity of the body from a philosophical viewpoint asking questions about being rather than using the terms in political terms which pushes the body back into the frame of attributes. These frames are most visible in categorization of theatre being for adults, children, disabled or ethnic minorities. All these categories are political, not philosophical because they deny the very fact that we all share a basis of being aware which runs as a current underneath physical dis/advantages, age, gender or race.

What language can I use to speak about a child who has been torn apart in an explosion in the market near his school?

From here on nothing in theater has any meaning before or after.

Meaning is now.

Even my own arms, deep inside my body feel foreign to me, feel like they do not belong to me.

The unknown is deeply felt.

The current of being has two defined points; birth and death, both a mystery to our understanding. As a new-born child we have no knowledge of why we were born, suddenly we are here. Later in life we understand the mechanics of how life comes to be but we never fully understand or even remember how we came to be. Later in life the process of degeneration in the body tells us that we will not be here forever, a darkness awaits similar to the one we came from. Theatre as a reflection of life must therefore acknowledge this brief light that exists between the darkness of birth and death. This necessitates an inclusion of all categories of human life. Yet the mind set, the intellect, is so shaped by previous generations' and centuries' ideas that it becomes difficult to let go of judgments like good/bad,

beautiful/ugly and elegant/vulgar. In theatre as a microcosm we have the possibility to re-shape those values, to try them out in different ways. All the different components in theatre; working with light/darkness, stage design, focus, composition, action and so on, help to “design” a world where mind/body is no longer separated but appears as the “whole aware performer” in total control of his/her entire being.

In order to begin thinking of what an entity of the body in the theatre might entail I have to begin with examining what the body that inhabits the self might be. The question of the self, the “I”, arises. In daily life the common understanding of the self is that “I am”. That can be I am a man, I am a believer, I am a body, I am an actor, I am a director and so on. These questions lead me to question the nature of acting and whether or not “I” can actually “be” an actor—just as “I” believe that “I am Anmar.” What I have come to understand through years of theatrical research is that the actor is as illusory as the conception “I” have of “myself.” The notion of Anmar is founded on impressions that do not constitute the pure awareness of being. Take, as an example, sleeping—we say that “I slept well last night”—but how do we know that? We make an assumption that the waking “I” subsisted throughout a state that I actually cannot put into qualitative nor quantitative terms—I don’t know the quality of how my body was placed throughout the night nor do I know how many hours I might have slept. Yet I remain aware that I did indeed sleep based on the fact that when I wake in the morning I have an awareness of being aware—that my sleep was good, bad, long and so on. This awareness of being aware brings me back to the actor and the absolute necessity for the actor to be aware of his own awareness, sometimes called presence. I’ve found that the use of the term presence has sometimes not been the most efficient term to use because of its possible vague nature. To be aware of one’s awareness is more easily accessible because it heightens the levels of attention immediately. Once I am aware of being aware the “I” that I presumed was a man, actor, director, believer and so on, cannot be qualified as aspects of myself other than thoughts of myself. In the same way the hypothetical actor has to abandon the thought of himself in order to become aware of being aware. Only then can the entity of the body in the theatre blossom into its full potential.

I try breathing with a rhythm that is different from my daily breathing.

I try strange breathing as another creature.

Twist my mouth; change to another face.

Find body sounds that are different from my daily human voice.

When I have found them, they continue for a long time.

Enjoy the voice.

Finding another self, another creature.

There are so many hidden selves in the darkness of the body.

How many hidden selves can one meet?

Dance with them.

It is the present that travels in the whole self world.

These practices are important in the process of becoming a possessed body.

The awareness is not self-expression at all.

You do not dance by yourself; something else moves your body.

Another being who comes from an unknown dimension possesses your body and mind.

In Western movement practices, it is believed that you can possess your body and control it.

This is a misunderstanding about life and the body.

The awareness is not known about or understood, neither is the fact that life began four billion years ago.

Being aware that I am aware of my experiences I am not in control of anything.

I am in the present and only the present matters to me.

Normally, my daily ego believes that it is the owner and director of my body.

When the body is moved by another power, the ego feels this as an intrusion.

When I try to clear out my body, I feel fear and resistance.

It is the edge between ego and an egoless state.

I taste the edge deeply.

I taste the reason why my ego feels fear and resistance.

I try to listen to what my life feels.

If I can catch the difference between ego and life, I notice that my ego doesn't like the feeling, but that my life enjoys being moved.

In order to eliminate the daily life “I” rigorous practice is essential in order to quiet the current of thoughts and urges that permeate our existence. The daily practice that has kept me invested consists of various techniques, such as butoh, acrobatics and yoga but also mime—these bodily techniques support and nurture the blossoming of the flower that I seek to make possible. Mime is a tool that I use to create stylized forms of movement that focusses on the isolation of all the body parts and that works with holding tension in all the limbs in order to create suspension in the body. The mimetic aspect can be used both as an aesthetic and as a tool for theatrical staging. The aesthetic aspect includes the mimetic properties of recreating common gestures through poetic abstraction and sculptural images while it emphasises the essential element of the body on the stage to be completely aware of every gesture and the appropriate tension of those very gestures. When Marcel Marceau said that “Chaplin made me laugh and cry without saying a word. I had an instinct. I was touched by the soul of Chaplin — mime is not an imitator but a creator” it seems to me that he found a resonance pattern whereby silence creates that which is unknown but deeply felt.

Daily practice is indispensable for the secret to unfold. The daily practice attunes my being which opposes the distinction between mind and body—the two are the same: transient. I want to try to touch upon the heart of the matter which is our awareness. This is not a transient aspect, awareness doesn't care if the actor is involved, detached, internalized,

externalized or any other qualifier that one might think of. Awareness remains. It is therefore not a question of “getting into character” in any psychological sense—my body already is the various characters that can find their outlet in a gesture, a mask (face), posture, gait and so on. All I can do is allow what various tendencies that have, and continue, to guide me, so that I can approach the poetics of the unspeakable.