

The school of the digitized dancer: Learning to dance with a virtual partner

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Abstract

The focus of my presentation will be on the intermedial dance work *Falling* (2019), involving live undergraduate dancers who interact and connect with digital video projections of themselves. It is a work where I have explored with the students how, by creating interactions between the live and the digitized dancers, they are transformed into a new place, a world of “of possibilities” (Turner, 1974) – a threshold to something new, a liminal performance through intermediality. Showing selected video clips of the work, I will illustrate how our digital dance lab presents us with a “revolving door of possibilities” for devising in and with new creative spaces. (Brooks, 2010) I will discuss the three-stages of the intermedial creative process I have adopted, that of *preparation, playful creativity and performance*. It is a process to help students (used to dancing in traditional settings where live dancers breathe, make sounds on the stage floor, and with whom physical connections can be made through touch) transition to an intermedial setting with digitized dancers, who are 2D projections on screens that can be seen but not felt or heard. To immerse the dance students in the project they created the soundtracks, functioned as camera operators, film directors/editors. They also helped to shape the movement with their visceral partners. I will outline how together we explored combining and refining the live and the digital to interact and co-exist, resulting in the final and third stage, an intermedial performance. I will consider how ludic strategies are a key part of the devising process and to integrating the live performers with technology and the digital performers. I will share student reflections, firstly on the challenges and frustrations they felt from ‘collaborating’ with digitised dancers. Secondly, I will discuss their reflections on how some discovered “magical moments”, flashes of shared insights and exhilaration when they experienced “order” among the chaos that enabled them to link with ‘other’ (both digitized and live) as well as ‘self’. Thus students were enabled to find a connectedness, bringing them to a place where they could learn to dance with a virtual partner.

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Brooks, P. (2010) Creating new spaces: Dancing in a telematic world, *International Journal of Performance Arts and Digital Media*, 6:1, 49-60.

Turner, V. (1974) Liminal to liminoid, in play, flow, and ritual: An essay in comparative symbology, *Rice University Studies*, 60, pp52-92.

Keywords

Intermediality, intermedial performance, dance, creative intermedial process

Bio

Pauline Brooks is a Visiting Research Fellow at Liverpool John Moores University. She received the LJMU Vice Chancellor's Medal for Excellence for Teaching Innovation, served as Associate Dean for Quality and Assurance and obtained Senior Fellowship recognition by AdvanceHE. She sits on the Advisory Board for the Department of Performing and Digital Arts at the University of the Peloponnese, and is a practice-based researcher. For over 15 years her research involved collaboration in intermedial and telematic performance with colleagues in dance and music in the UK, USA, and Europe. Her publications embrace her creative work in dance performance, technology, pedagogy, and collaborative educational practice, and include:

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