

Critically evaluating and comparing the process of collaboration between two professional artists

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Within this essay, I will be hoping to gain a clear understanding of the approaches both Gwyn Emberton and Moya Michael use, to create their work. I will be critically evaluating the differences and comparisons of their approaches, and outcomes for the pieces they have created. By researching the different theories and philosophies that both artists use, I am able to thoroughly compare the outcomes. It is also interesting to understand that Gwyn and Moya both started their training together within the same company. As both of their careers took different routes and paths as they grew and evolved as artists within the industry, this helps us understand where their influences and inspirations stem from.

Of the Earth, from where I came;

This work created by Gwyn Emberton was originally inspired by the late Welsh poet, Dylan Thomas. The poem by late Thomas reminded Emberton of his childhood, and how his living situations have completely changed since being a young boy living on a farm away from the city. As the process of this piece evolved overtime, Gwyn learned that the work was actually directing towards a different route due to a severe injury. Emberton's approaches towards this work was firstly abstract but overtime it became more narrative and semi-autobiographical in the sense. An online review explains 'Emberton chooses not to set movement to Thomas's words but with composer Benjamin Talbott delves into the sense of exploration in the poet's memories of spending youthful days on his aunt's farm.' (Minns, Minns and Minns, 2019).

Our first lesson and rehearsal for this was packed with this information. We were aware that the piece was completely set and that there was a clear attention to detail within the movement. As well as the progress of learning this piece was physically demanding it was also mentally demanding in understanding the specific movement choices. It was important to understand that the movement was not supposed to feel comfortable or stereotypically beautiful, as the aim was to represent a youthful body as it makes its way through life facing challenges and the curiosity of aging and being aware of what you're restricted to doing when you grow older. Gwyn also realised that a big influence came from his father, who was discovering his restrictions due to having arthritis. Having this information in mind, it was helpful and easier to understand the meaning and intention behind the movement, I was able to portray the real struggle caused from these situations and apply it into the movement. Another important element within this work is the relationship to the music, to help it gain the narrative structure that Emberton was not firstly looking for, but realised that it actually needed to become. The music includes a distinctive clock that ticks throughout the whole length of the song, relating back to the original intention of the work. Interpretation of the music and movement together, we are able to clearly see the narrative of the piece and the ideas behind it. An example of when the music and movement was set to perfectly respond to each other is towards the end of the piece. Sixteen movements were set to the ticking of the clock, as the clock ticked unevenly it was important that the understanding of the music was clear, so that the intention to the original source was visible whilst performing it. An online review explains, (Dance Roads 2016 (Chapter et al., 2019) "The

choreographic experience Gwyn has brought is palpable, as this is a nuanced and beguiling piece. The solo performer becomes an animalistic creature. Where we see the sprouting from the earth, then wheeling and cavorting through the freedom of life upon the earth, and finally returning to the earth from whence it came as death takes hold.”, We can also learn that Emberton’s theories and influences have come from the likings of choreographers such as Akram Khan, where the relation to speed in movement is an important element, and the dynamic structure is a key factor that helps relate to the original source and interlinking with the narrative of the piece. Embodying the movement and the intention of the struggle through life helps gain a successful understanding of the work. An online article on Humanities and social science explains that dance is an expression of feelings, others see it as a transformation of ordinary movement to extraordinary movement. As I would agree to an extent that Emberton is influenced by both of these ideas, I would like to think that for this creation in particular, this work is from a personal experience, and the outcome is just as important as the progress, in order to show the narrative carefully thought through out the progress of this work.

Creating a work with Moya Michael

Moya is a respected artist based in Brussels originally from South Africa. Her inspirations and influences stem from many things such as mathematics, geometry and the companies she has worked with throughout her career. A big element within her creation of work is focused on the connection to the breath, inspired from Rosas, which was one of the companies she was once apart of, along with Akram Khan company. Michael wanted to break free from being another body in a dance company, and truly express her identity through exploration of movement. How we embody the breath through movement is also another philosophy of hers. Michael’s approach towards her work is heavily influenced by the progression other than the final outcome. ..’Now a Belgian citizen – Michael is able to deeply consider personal curves and layers of identity’. As the creation process evolved, Michael would constantly remind us to be sensitive to the movement, and own it. Another constant reminder from Michael was to not perform as a dancer, but as true to our self as we could be. This was to show our individuality, personality and identity, as she argues that this is far more interesting than just another body dancing on stage. Another quote from her website explains, ‘to take risks, to stop being a machine and to avoid lugging from one company to the next’ (Kvs.be, 2019). Despite the fact that Michael and Emberton both started their training in the same company, it’s interesting to have worked with both artists, and understand that their methods and approaches towards dance are very different. Within the process of creating this work there was a lot of improvisation tasks. Every warm up was interpreted through improvisation, unlike Emberton, where every warm up was technically set. One of the first things Moya asked us to do was to create eight different poses, including levels, throughout the process we constantly kept going back to these eight poses and played with them but the whole piece was based on these eight different poses. Another structure and theory Moya used to adapt the work was using the ‘Magic box’ theory. Michael also had an interesting philosophy about the middle finger, and that most energy is held and

passed through it. A constant reminder to always be thinking about the energy moving through the middle finger. Responding to the energy around her, letting her body go instead of being so held and precise, gains a more organic outcome throughout the process. Another philosophy she uses is to constantly be imagining the viewer's perspective, and if there is any type of narrative being delivered through the eyes of the audience. In this case of creation, the body is the instrument, rather than the music or the choreography, and the aim here is to not have a relation to the music. The most important thing is the clear showing of each dancer's individuality and identity, and by playing with the process and learning about the individuals she collaborates with is a key element. Within the process of the work we played with retrogradation, discluding of the arms from each pose, speech, unison, canon and many others.

To conclude the comparisons of each artist and their different methods and approaches towards creating work, I have gained a better understanding on how their influences have shaped them both as artists, dictating their progression and outcomes. Emberton is a respected choreographer within the dance industry, and also takes pride on turning narrative subjects into dance form and even won choreographer of the year in 2016. Embodying and understanding the true intention behind the movement created by Emberton is extremely important to him. His relation to music is also another huge element within the approaches and philosophies, where as Michael's approaches and philosophies stem off the energy from the individuals she is collaborating with. Emberton has an intention and a vision for his outcome, but in Michael's case she is working through the space and feeding from the energy to create the idea. The outcome is not important, the progress is. After working and collaborating with both artists, it has positively influenced my outlook on how I now create choreography and how I see myself as a dancer within the industry.

Bibliography;

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