

Sarah Pini and John Sutton

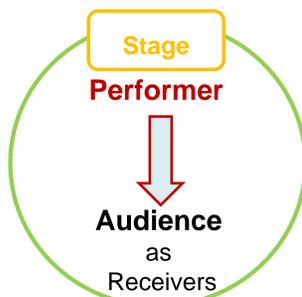
ARC Centre of Excellence in Cognition and its Disorders, Macquarie University, Sydney, Australia

Introduction

Stage presence defined as the impact of a performer on a audience presupposes a **classic model of presence** that considers attendants (audience) without agency, where the performer occupies a position of power (Sherman, 2016).

According to this model, presence is understood as prerogative of the **skilled performer**, resulting from both regimens of training, and intrinsic capacity.

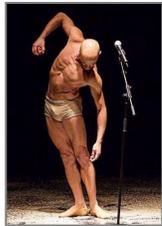
Presence as multidimensional concept encompasses the sense of *being-there* and the experience of agency regulated by sensory perception. To account for such variability, we addressed the lived experience of **three different groups of performers**:



Contact Improvisation (CI), postmodern dance form, duet-system based practice initiated by American choreographer Steve Paxton. Privileging the sense of *touch* over *vision*, CI focuses on kinaesthetic *interdependency* and multiperspectivity.



Body Weather (BW) radical movement ideology derived from Butoh, developed by Japanese choreographer Min Tanaka. BW training fosters *interoceptive* sensitivity and omn centrality.



Contemporary Ballet (CB) in the case of the National Ballet of Marseille (BNM) and the staging of the piece *Passione* by Italian choreographer Emio Greco, performed by seven dancers, consisting in a serie of 7 different solos. CB dancers' expertise is marked by a heightened *proprioceptive* sensitivity.

Aim

Development of an **ecological framework** of stage presence that considers the cognitive ecology of the performance, which includes performers' co-presence, how they construct meaning, the socio-cultural context, and the situatedness of the performative event.

Methodology

We conducted a **cognitive performance ethnography** informed by a phenomenological approach and ethnographic methods. This includes participant observation, in-depth interviews, and researcher's direct involvement with the practices of enculturation and enskillment in these three specific dance forms. Theoretical analysis of the data gathered was based on Grounded Theory (Strauss & Corbin, 1990) and Situational Analysis (Clarke, 2005).

Multi-site fieldwork:

- CI in Italy (Bologna, Ferrara, Arezzo)
- BW in Australia (Sydney, Bellambi)
- CB (BNM) in France (Marseille)

Fieldwork

Moving from a classic model of presence to understand stage presence as **emergent phenomenon** (Zarrilli, 2002, 2009, 2012) in which the sense of presence emerged in the spatiotemporal realm of **experience, embodiment, and perception**:

- Actor optimal state of body-mind readiness
- Dispositional enactment 'on the edge of not knowing'
- Audience and performers phenomenal co-presence

We developed an **ecological framework** based on how performers articulate their bodily perceptions and forms of agency in relation to the specific context of their practice:

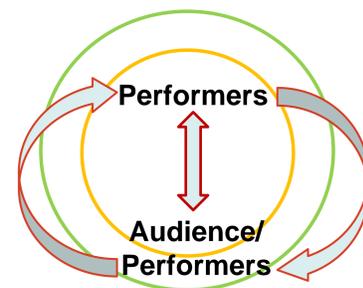
"I think when, as a dancer, you think about being aware of your surroundings, automatically you become one with them..."

(Nahimana, BNM dancer, 2017)

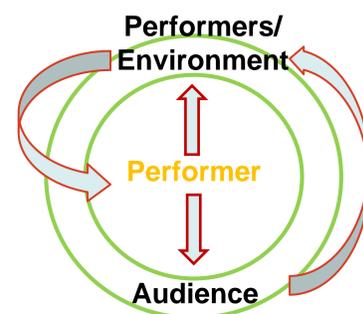
"For me Angel he leaves atmosphere on the stage and then I enter after him, directly [...] the audience also makes atmosphere, not on the stage, but in the theatre"

(Aya, BNM dancer, 2017)

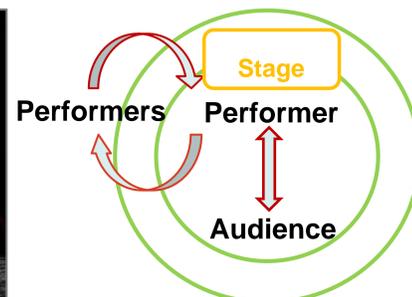
CI Interkinaesthetic Social presence



BW Omniscenced Situated presence



CB (BNM) Collaborative Embodied presence



Conclusions

Phenomenology has stressed the relevance of the physical and cultural environment in the study of embodied cognition. Through a phenomenological and ethnographic approach to three different dance practices, we could isolate specific enactments of the sense of presence. Our framework moves away from a classic model of presence and accounts for a situational, multidimensional, interactive and intersubjective model of stage presence.