



## Instant Composition: choreographic training of the dance artist and his corporeality

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**ABSTRACT – Instant Composition: choreographic training of the dance artist and his corporeality** – The article discusses the training and development of the dance artist's corporeality drawing primarily from the bodily practices related to the work of instant composition, proposed by the British choreographer Julyen Hamilton. For that purpose, a field study of artistic practice was conducted both in the studio and over the workshops. Some of the categories emerging from the analysis of the data collected - quality of movement, reflective arenas and presence – are presented and discussed. This study further suggests ways of working up the body and the choreographic training that lead to an autonomous body, where exercises become performances, out of normative patterns.

Keywords: **Hamilton. Instant Composition. Training. Corporeality. Dance.**

**RÉSUMÉ – La Composition Instantanée: formation chorégraphique du danseur et son corps-réalité** – L'article se propose à discuter la formation et la préparation du corps-réel de l'artiste de la danse, en partant des pratiques corporelles liées au travail de composition instantanée, selon la conception du chorégraphe Julyen Hamilton. Pour ce faire, nous avons accomplis une étude de la pratique artistique. De l'analyse des données sont issues quelques catégories telles que: qualité de mouvement, arènes de réflexion et présence. Cette étude propose des manières pour travailler le corps et la formation chorégraphique ayant pour but la construction d'un corps autonome, de façon que les exercices deviennent des *performances* qui se dérobent des règlements de normalité.

Mots-clés: **Hamilton. Composition Instantanée. Formation. Corps-Realité. Danse.**

**RESUMO – Composição Instantânea: formação coreográfica do artista da dança e de seu corpo-realidade** – O artigo se propõe a discutir a formação e a preparação do corpo-real do artista da dança, a partir das práticas corporais relacionadas com o trabalho de composição instantânea, segundo a concepção do coreógrafo britânico Julyen Hamilton. Para tanto, realizou-se um estudo de prática artística em que o campo privilegiado foi o próprio estúdio e *workshops*. Da análise dos dados, emergiram categorias como: qualidade de movimento, arenas reflexivas e presença. O estudo sugere maneiras de se trabalhar o corpo e a formação coreográfica, almejando construir um corpo autônomo, de modo que os exercícios se transformem em performances que fujam aos padrões normativos.

Palavras-chave: **Hamilton. Composição Instantânea. Formação. Corpo-realidade. Dança.**

## Introduction

With the goal of investigating dance corporal practices and their relationship with the choreographic thought, the training and the preparation of the *corporeal*<sup>1</sup>, produced during workshops and trainings, this article involves the case study of the contemporary choreographer Julyen Hamilton<sup>2</sup>. Hamilton's pedagogical work is aimed to the performance, that is, to the scene work: his choreographic thought concerns the instant composition. This way, his corporal practices meet since the beginning with compositional elements by means of the work with improvisation. It is an embodied knowledge that is structured around the instant composition seen as choreography.

Thus, it is intended to investigate how this author's corporal practices guide and reflect the art of dance, giving origin to an epistemology of his own, as the preparation of dance corporal practices would not play only the function of building skills, but also the functions of invention, discovery and development of dance (Bales; Nettel-Fiol, 2008, p. VIII). In this sense, the site of the practice is here seen as agency for thought and creation. Luigi Pareyson (1993) defines art as the expressive form of the artist's personality, a factor that seems to be important in the extent that the studied corporal practices are directly linked to the concerned choreographer and, therefore, to his history, experience and cultural background. In this manner, a way to cover the thought in art would be "[...] approaching close to artists and the ways how they engage and think their own art" (Rajchman, 2013, p. 196).

To form here a theoretical reference framework, Pierre Bourdieu's key-concepts of practice and *habitus* were appropriated. According to Bourdieu, the *habitus* produces the practice; thus, the *habitus* produced in the studied context would be linked to the practice of a set of exercises, from the warm-up to the movement sequences, passing by the forms of initiating thought processes and thinking work strategies. Practices that, in turn, are dynamic and open, essential to support the individual himself and the creative work, besides involving a continuous and complex intellectual and psychophysiological negotiation, paradigms and discourses on techniques, corporal preparation, embodied knowledge, corporeality, choreographic thought, im-

provisation and, as well, a relation with Somatic Education and other eastern disciplines of the body, like *Tai Chi Chuan*, *Hatha Yoga* and *Aikido*.

Julyen Hamilton's work is based on contemporary dance corporal practices as generative sites of art and knowledge production. Although little known in Brazil, the choice for this choreographer as the subject of the research happened for several reasons: 1) because he produces a thought in the way of conducting the preparation and the training of the dance artist corporeality, which makes it possible the reflection and production of knowledge that can be shared; 2) for pointing possible ways with respect to the choreographic work that break the relation of obedience and command forces; e 3) for his trajectory, that involves criteria of notability and importance in the history of dance.

In a brief historic-aesthetic context, Hamilton would be affiliated with the North American post-modern dance<sup>3</sup>. Despite his graduation in modern dance and classic ballet in the *London Contemporary Dance School*, he was one of the main artists what was known as the *British New Dance Movement*, having worked, also, in Rosemary Butcher's Company, a pioneer in this style. The researcher Peter Brinson (1991) introduces him as a catalyzing agent for the development of the British New Dance for his choreographic approach by means of improvisation.

Considering that Hamilton's work is situated in the approach field of the instant composition, alongside with other dance artists like João Fiadeiro and Mark Tompkins, they would be instances of works that, even following quite divergent lines, were able to deepen and problematize the concept of composition, choreography, improvisation, dance, movement, amongst others, of the construction of a corporeality that does not copy the choreographer. His pedagogical work directed to the scene with improvisation and instant composition can easily be developed for a creative field and of body performance as an independent artistic practice - that is, having a central role in the practice of the transit between being interpreter and creator of a dance that distances itself from a perspective of entertainment and the construction of a purely athletic or acrobatic body.

Antonio Pinto Ribeiro (1997) introduces the dance, as well as the theater and the performing art, as components of the category "body arts", in which artistic practices would be derived from a "mediated" use of the body

(Ribeiro, 1997, p. 93). In this category, different of what happens in the athletic corporal practices, the body as experience of artistic creation would not have a purpose in itself. The body in dance, as art, is constituted as a *mediality* able to create imageries and fictions that would lead to an artistic zone made explicit by *corporeity* (*corporeité*), Paul Valéry's term, and that Pinto Ribeiro (1997) uses in his book as the form of the body that makes possible the art, "[...] the dance-domain of the already organized physicality, with the purpose of constructing a code amenable to being legible, qualified activity" (Ribeiro, 1997, p. 89). This concept, called by Valéry as *fourth body*, would be different of another term also used by him, the physicality (*physicité*), in which the notions of the athletic, the spontaneous, the quantitative would be included.

However, this study addresses the corporeality, the body that organizes itself to dance, or the *fourth body*. Following Susan Foster's understanding of corporeality, there would be a refusal of seeing the body as a mere vehicle or instrument for the expression of something else that is not the body: "Corporealities seeks to vivify the study of bodies through consideration of bodily reality, not natural or absolute given but the substantial a tangible and category of cultural experience" (Foster, 2005 [1996], p. XI).

It is considered here, however, like Deborah Jowitt, that "[...] the human body guided by its intellect and spirit cannot be a neutral artistic means. It never is unexpressive" (Jowitt 1994 [1983], p. 169). Speaking of expression in dance would be, for this author, to speak also in fiction, in the dancer's ability to express emotions without necessarily feeling them, to be able of also creating characters and to conveying a gesture beyond its actual expressiveness. Although in Foster's conception of corporeality there is a refusal of the use of the body as a vehicle for the representation, she implies the fictions of which Jowitt and Ribeiro speak. That is, paraphrasing Foster, there is the recognition that the gestures produced by the body always point to other fields of meanings; in her own words: "a narration of the physical destinations" (Foster, 2005, [1996], p. X). Consequently, in corporeality there is the understanding of the "[...] approach of physicality as a site of meaning creation and for the reality of embodied knowledge" (Foster, 2005, [1996], p. XI). This way, dance becomes central to (re)think which are the role and the forces of bodies in movement, a *re-imagination* of what

the body can, of what dance can be, of what the dance body can be (Lepecki, 2014).

Creation processes of the making of dance can disclose modes of inquiry and thoughts involved in the construction of works and pedagogies. For the researchers of the Canadian artistic practice Sylvie Fortin and Pierre Gosselin (2014), the creation is, also, seen properly as a site of construction, ideas, images and knowledge.

John Rajchman (2011, p. 97), philosopher and professor of Modern Art of the Columbia University, has researched what he calls “reinvention of the thought in art”, as he considers that there would be many examples of these relations. However, his contribution for this article, as well as his theoretical line, meets what Professor Robin Nelson (2013), from the British artistic practice field, claims, in which the concept would not have the function of supporting or explaining art. Rajchman (2011, p. 97), in turn, explains that it should be avoided the idea of having two extremes in the relation between art and theory, in which art would illustrate a given theory. His considerations guide and strengthen the point of view of this article, which is to think the flow between art and concept. Thus, for instance, does what is done in the studio resound in the theoretical framework? How the “art ideas” can involve other fields like philosophy? (Rajchman, 2011, p. 97).

The dance practices studied are within the scope of a *dance-that-is-thought-about* (Lepecki, 2014); therefore, in the present research it is tried to think on creation, on the corporeality and pedagogical principles. However, it would be in the creative processes and in their critical reflection that tacit knowledge<sup>4</sup> could become explicit, it would be the process of bringing the unconscious knowledge to the conscience (Nelson, 2013). Favoring the transit between art and theoretical framework would be to connect these two fields, finding resonances, observing this process as reciprocal.

The question of the present inquiry would not be, therefore, trying to unify methods or search for formulations, but to approach the wealth of corporal practices in this field of dance and the immense thought that is produced in the context of the studios and in dance itself when it is practiced. The corporal practices are the core of this research and are considered as necessary for the understanding and strengthening of dance as a contem-

porary art discipline. Thus, it is intended to contribute for dance being able to recognize “its own capacity, its own epistemological autonomy” (Spångberg, 2015), without forgetting the problematization of the categories that can emerge from them and of raising certain questionings.

### Methodological Considerations

The methodological considerations start from the author’s corporeality research and her learning of dance corporal practices as a *locus* of a becoming-choreographic, by means of an immersion process<sup>5</sup> in the practice itself. This way, it is the corporal experience itself that is also assumed as data of analysis. This type of research, research in art, is defined by the researcher’s practice itself, by the understanding of its embodied knowledge, its processes and products. It is different, therefore, of a research on art, in which this is the object of study (Fortin; Gosselin, 2014). Being a research of the artistic practice (Fortin, 2009), the privileged field was the *studio* itself and the *workshop* developed in Berlin<sup>6</sup>, in the *Dock 11* and *Radial System V* studios.

The theoretician Deidre Sklar uses as strategy to observe the movement in her studies, the perception of a *kinesthetic empathy* or of a *feeling with*; therefore, she apprehends the field of dance according with a “perspective of the one who practices it” (Sklar, 1991, p. 9). This way, the experience lived and apprehended by kinesthetic empathy, added to all elements of the immersion in the research field, makes the experience ethnographic data (Sklar, 1991). In the same sense, Sylvie Fortin (2009) considers that the participatory observation, so dear to the ethnography, is not only visual, it is also an exchange of kinesthetic amplitude and can raise somatic reactions in the researcher. According to Fortin, “[...] the corporal reactions must be disclosed for what they are: a partial source of information that, combined with other types of data, will facilitate the construction of the researcher’s reflection” (Fortin, 2009, p. 81). The problem of the body is, thus, in a certain way, central, in the extent that the body that dances is the object and the subject of the dance (Louppe, 2012 [1997]).

Fortin understands as “bricolage”<sup>7</sup> the “[...] integration of borrowings coming from multiple horizons [...] integrated to a particular purpose that, often, by the researchers in art, assumes the form of a reflexive analysis of the field practice” (Fortin, 2009, p. 78). A methodological *bricolage* could,

then, contribute with the research that address the artistic practice. By means of this idea, it is prioritized in this study, similarly to what Fortin puts, several types of approaches, for considering that one only methodology would not be enough to conduct the research.

In the present analysis, it was configured a double *insider* perspective, for the researcher is a dancer and belongs to the studied dance communities. Therefore, it is a perspective of somebody from within the art world making a field work *at home* (Jackson, 1987). The participatory observation, in a certain way, brought advantages for the research, as from this perspective it was possible to achieve an understanding under the emic point of view and, thus, to have access to the categories and jargons of dance (*native* categories) and, moreover, as a result of the experiences in dance practices, to have movement as a form of incarnate knowledge in the body.

The outsider or ethical perspective also was considered as part of the ethnographic approach. With this, it was privileged to search for levels of analysis of the collected material, in an emic and ethical way to reach the categories of analysis. As Strathern claims (2014, p. 349-350), the researcher is in front of a puzzle provided by the field work in an isolated period of time. Thus, it was identified words or sentences understood as constituting units of meaning, also known as “smaller meaning units” (Guba; Lincoln apud Dantas, 2008, p. 168) to, next, gather the units of analysis with descriptive scenes, transforming them into categories of analyses (set of wider meanings).

From the analysis of the collected material data, some categories emerged, one imbricated in the others, as it is not about pure categories, but instead syntheses formulated in the way itself of forming and preparing the corporeal that dances. For the scope of this article, the following categories will be discussed: (1) Quality of Movement; (2) Reflexive Arenas; and (3) Presence. As a horizon, there is also their relationship with instant composition, following Julyen Hamilton’s approach.

As Robin Nelson claims (2013), it is intended to connect the theory field, from an *outsider* perspective, with the practice field, in turn, *insider*, finding resonances between these fields, being a process that nurtures reciprocally. From the joint analysis of these categories and dance practices, as Hamilton presents, there is a possible way of resonance to think the relation

between dance and the concept or theory by means of several authors. Like the philosopher José Gil in his inquiry entitled *metafenomenologia* [meta-phenomenology], there is a dialogue with the thoughts of Gilles Deleuze (1925-1995) and a remarkable contribution for the arts of the body, over all for dance improvisation (Gouvea, 2012)<sup>8</sup>. With the performance studies<sup>9</sup>, also represented by Victor Turner and Richard Schechner, resonances with the practical and pedagogical work are found. To think the presence concept in dialogue with Merleau-Ponty's phenomenology, but also with Deleuze and Guattari, authors like Eleonora Fabião, Erika Fischer-Lichte and Hans Ulrich Gumbrecht will be addressed.

## Categories

### 1. *Quality of movement*

The quality of movement category indicates the *how* of the movement. According to Laban (1963), the quality of movement is included in the category of analysis of the movement pertaining to the effort<sup>10</sup>, related with four basic factors of how the individual moves: flow, weight, time and space, separately and in their multiple combinations.

Interested in expanding this category related with Hamilton's work, another way here proposed to look at the quality of movement would be the attention given so that the movement *does not lose its beginning*. For Hamilton, this is an element that favors the precision in any movement that is created. In a certain way, this precision in not losing the beginning of the movement is linked to the time factor, as the mastering or the precision would make possible not to anticipate or to delay the movement, preventing hesitations. Thus, Hamilton speaks of "being in the constant now": "[...] now is the nature of the contemporary. To be able to be in the constant now. Otherwise, it seems that we are dancing ten years ago, not in a matter of style, but in our mind" (Hamilton, 2015a)<sup>11</sup>.

Not missing the beginning of the movement also is seen by him as something linked to another factor, the respect. "Respecting what we do is something beyond. *Re-spect*", describes him in the workshop. Hamilton proposes the separation of the word to mark that the element "*spect*" leads to "mirror" - "look again". Indeed, one of the composition elements of the



root *spect* corresponds to the noun mirror, but also to *spek*, which would be to look with attention, to contemplate, to observe (Houaiss; Villar, 2001). For Hamilton (2015a), the respect is linked with this attention, implying observation of the work that is done. It is this way, therefore, that the analysis of the idea of *respect to the movement* is proposed, linked with the qualities of movement, as this would be a way of reaching more finished movement, since the work with the instant composition is born with the purpose of becoming art. Something that, therefore, is opposed the automatized, dispersed, inattentive or just spontaneous actions.

The quality of the *movement with disrespect* was something pointed by Hamilton throughout the workshop. What happened is that we would be making several movements and abandoning them; when abandoning them, we would be “developing and training the indifference” (Hamilton, 2015a). Disrespect or indifference, besides automatisms, dispersions and inattentions perhaps are signals of judgments that the dancer cultivates quite often on himself, when he is in the dark room of creation. In the instant composition, there are no formulations or steps to be followed. However, it is not intended to deny the technique, it is welcome, when allied to attention, listening, perception and presence.

Another element linked to the quality of movement would be its finishing. In Hamilton’s work, it is important to always search for a finalization, at each thing that one does. And how to know when the movement ends? Hamilton dedicates much attention to the work with the cores of the body, relating them with the end of the movement: “You know that it is the end of the movement because of the core. And one cannot do this from the outside. [This is possible only] inside oneself or if you have a choreographer or publisher who tells you where the movement should end” (Hamilton, 2015b). For him, furthermore, not losing the beginning of the movement would also result in a higher fineness in the corporal system.

The movement of going to the floor or performing a rolling made with conscience are examples of movement fineness for Hamilton and, according to him, another way of achieving this would be having an *internal objectivity* that guided through the ways of the movement. In the relation between objectivity and fineness, it would also be necessary to know how much fineness is aimed by the interpreter, for instance, in the touch. Which

would be, then, the weight of this touch? Which is its temperature? Which is the texture that is drawn? In the instant composition, the actions must be clear so that the relation between the interpreters, or an interpreter and the space or object, can nurture the creativity and construct the composition. The fineness in the touch, for instance, will have to be spread to the whole body, either of the person with whom one interacts, either of the materiality of the object or the architecture present. In the relation between two interpreters, therefore, one must be sure that the touch was received; this is why touching with fineness is as important as receiving the touch from the person. In the same way, the interpreter must have fineness when touching the space, because everything can be information - that is, dramaturgy being composed in real time.

Hamilton's observations are organized by the idea of not assuming *nothing as acquired* regarding the dance that is being created. And cultivating an attention to the movement when it *happens*, as the next one would be born *full*. The idea of full relates with the finishing, the fineness, the objectivity of the movement, to not losing its beginning; categories that are imbricated. In Hamilton's conception, the fineness in a movement is also linked to the idea of "[...] knowing that we know something and, simultaneously, to know that we do not know [...]. We must clearly know what we do not know, especially when we perform" (Hamilton, 2015a). This excerpt is on accordance with a whole ethical position of Hamilton and his responsibility with the craft of dance, with himself, with the audience, as well as with the other interpreters with whom he<sup>12</sup>works.

The idea of the movement as a happening seems to come close to the consideration of the dancer and therapist Flávia Liberman (2008), who observes in the compositions promoted by her laboratories the body/happening as field of forces/flows, excitements and intensities. For her, the body/happening is what affects us and produces sensations, perceptions, actions and agencies in the individuals. In Liberman's case, her participants are her patients, as it is a therapeutic context; in Hamilton's case, however, his participants are, or not, artists of his Company or are in training, and the context is dance as a form of art. But the goal seems to be the same: the movement when it happens or body/happening is the one that makes of the individual the subject of its actions. For Hamilton, it is a

transformation of the dancer in a protagonist, a condition through which he has the possibility to deepen a movement, to develop the ethical position mentioned above and the “respect to the movement”, what consequently will be able to “transform regimes of energy draining” (Gil, 2005, p. 54), elevating the creation/composition to another level of feeling:

A leap, a figure, may not constitute a happening if they come in the continuity of one same regimen of energy; in contrast, a gesture as simple as turning the head or raising an elbow can witness the irruption of decisive events during the choreography. Dance is composed in micro-happenings that continuously transform the meaning of the movement (Gil, 2005, p. 54).

For Gil (2005, p. 54), energy “creates units of space-time”, and the dancer tries to distance himself from a fixed body and to vary, for instance, in different speeds and textures in his movements. According to him, everything will depend “on the space of the body that is born from the energy”, so that what is sought in the training of Hamilton’s instant composition would not be to cross objective distances of chronological time, as Gil calls attention to, but “[...] to dance singular and indissoluble units of space that convey all their force of truth to metaphors like: ‘an extended slowness’ or ‘the sudden widening of the space’, which describe certain gestures of the dancer” (Gil, 2005 54-55). José Gil, as well as Flávia Liberman, speaks of agencies, following Deleuze and Guattari. The agencies create “new connections between materials, new nexuses, other ways of passage of energy”, always demanding new agencies (Gil, 2005, p. 57). This way, the agency, always linked to the desire, would be not only the desire for agencies, but for transformation, *production* and *construction* in itself. For Gil, the danced gesture consists of a particular agency of the body to an object or to other bodies:

What do the dance gestures agency? We can say: they agency gestures with other gestures; or an actual body with the virtual bodies they actualize; or yet movement with other movements. In all cases, the danced gestures experience the movement (its circuits, its quality, its force) in order to obtain the best conditions to perform a choreography. In this sense, dancing is to experience, to work the possible agencies of the body. Thus, this work consists mainly of agency. Dancing is, therefore, to agency the agencies of the body (Gil, 2005, p. 58).

For Liberman (2008, p. 185), the happening also produces “presence”, in contrast with when the body is “[...] physically there, however distant from the contact, the desire or the creation of any type of intimacy with the other”. This, again, is thought in a therapeutic context, but the same could be extended to dance, when the dancer can be only moving “physically there”, by automatism, by indifference or by the logic of discarding the movements, so that, on the opposite, when making of the movement a happening, it would produce presence (Fischer-Lichte, 2012; Gumbrecht, 2010). Without speaking in a concept of presence itself, but in a concept that seems to agree with it, they are José Gil considerations when considering the way how the limits of the dancer overflow his skin. In his words: without paying attention to “in the border of his own body”, as a result of the “projection-secretion from the interior space to the exterior” (Gil, 2005, p. 53), body and its interior are extended.

Thus, the instant composition, conducted by Hamilton, tries to accomplish the enhancement of the interpreter by means of a work that searches for qualities of movement to reach scenic levels, or the scenic body, that, in the Eleonora Fabião’s words (2010, p. 321), would be the one that “experiences potentialized space and time” and that also “potentializes time and space”. That, therefore, searches for the presence or the “present of the present” (Fabião, 2010, p. 322), as the exercises conducted by Hamilton, resulting from the instant composition in the instant composition itself, seem to include “[...] the ability to know and to inhabit this double present, [that] establishes the presence of the actor” (Fabião, 2010, p. 322).

This temporal dimension of which Fabião speaks would be, however, possible when the scenic body or the corporeality is organized as a state of *flow*, according to Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi’s conception. In Turner’s words (1979), and in accordance with Csikszentmihalyi (*Beyond boredom and anxiety*, 1975), the flow is a state in which actions are followed by actions according to an internal logic that seems not to need any conscious intervention from our part. In this way, action and conscience would be experienced as one same attribute, having, therefore, little distinction between the I and the environment, between stimulus and response, or between past, present and future. For Fabião, then, the scenic body in flow “[...] attentive to itself, to the other, to the environment; it is the body of the open and

connective sensory perception” (Fabião, 2010, p. 322); this state of attention would be, for her, what deconstructs habits. However, in the present article, this same state of attention could also be considered as an element that constructs the *habitus*, as well as the qualities of movement.

In any way, it seems to be a link between time, presence and quality of movement whose goal is the creation. In Hamilton’s work, the creation is searched by the now and not by the conditional verb tense. For Fabião, the forms of the past and the future are factors that can happen endangering the quality of the actor’s presence. One way of keeping the quality of the presence would be to conjugate them as forms of the present. But how? Considering a session of instant composition, it can be observed and experienced that a possible solution would be the repetition of a same happening that has occurred in this same presentation, fruit of an encounter between interpreters, or from one solo in that specific space, that happened in a past, either the beginning of the play or seconds ago. Sometimes, precious movements happen, in a certain time and space, as a pause. Then, one can always set them into action as devices of memory, so that, when passing where the movement happened, it will be always possible to follow its trace, to have the memory of what happened, to repeat the same in a distinct way. This way, it is like it were possible to feel and to see the impression of this body and mind being touched as a reenacting of a past moment. The danced movement, its gestures, the use of the voice are materials that happen in the space that can be, however, filed in the body. A material that *becomes an archive*, then, would concern the possibility of coming back to a certain situation, especially when it is a remarkable, clear or even more im-  
agetic situation. In this sense, one can *file* a material in the body to be able to use it in the future, just like there would be the possibility of coming back in time or retracing a past trajectory. The archive notion becomes related here with stories carried in the body, as well as with sequences of movement composed in this time and space of the instant composition.

## 2. *Reflexive arenas*

In a specific exercise, Hamilton asked everybody to make a movement. And to each one he appointed problems regarding the “lack of respect to the movement”, like the loss of its beginning, the automatism, the “throw-

ing out” movements or the lack of finishing. To one of the dancers, he said: “you lost the first one, the beginning” and he advised him to respect the movement from the center. Next, he called another participant, asked him to go to the center of the studio and make a movement “with respect” and went “straight to the movement to savor it in its essence” (Hamilton, 2015a).

In many situations, it was possible to see when the movements were born from a hesitation, losing their potency, seeming, quite often, to occupy a site of doubt, as if the subtext (Stanislavski) were “am I doing it correctly?”, since something in this sense was made visible in the gestures. In another situation, Hamilton placed a participant in the ballet fifth position and said: “now you are ready for everything. When I say, you start”. This questions how much the technique (in this case, the classic ballet by means of the fifth position) would make us *ready for everything* and its relation between the body and the mind in this context. And yet, how the technique dialogues or reconstructs the *habitus* during the practice.

Along the whole workshop, it was constant the procedure of having a person soloing and all the other ones watching, or the division in groups in which some danced and others watched, always taking turns in these roles. However, this never occurred with the purpose of exposing the participants, not even in the innumerable interruptions (questionings, indications, feedback) made by Hamilton throughout the moving of the participants. These moments of interruption were, indeed, ways of sharing and observation in which reflections and the performance itself were generated. In all the experimentations and reflections that followed, many were the testimonies on how difficult it is to develop the perception of what is the center of the body when we move, or on how elusive it is, as “sometimes [it] lives in seconds, but even so it is possible to feel it” (Hamilton, 2015a). The movement repetition would be, perhaps, a form of tuning the perception of the center? To what extent the fineness of a movement, resulting from the perception of the center, would spread to the level of creativity, as Hamilton claimed at a certain point of the workshop?

We would like that the reflexive moments, like the ones described above, and the dance performance as a happening, in solo or in groups could be thought as *reflective arenas*. Following the considerations of the re-

researcher Heloisa Gravina (2010) regarding the framing of Victor Turner's performance paradigm (1987), the researcher analyzed in her PhD that the *roda de capoeira* was configured as a *reflexive arena*. This way, for the author, the *roda de capoeira* was initially articulated as performance, for establishing a distinct time-space of the quotidian, and, second, as a reflexive arena, as, when situating as someone *from inside* the universe of capoeira, the comments she received when playing it could potentialize *her awareness of being observed*, an experience rooted in the experience of observer and commentator of other players. In other words:

Being in the center of the *roda de capoeira*, this conscience is experienced and produces actual effects on the body – tense, at the beginning, relaxing as the comments from the *cantador* and the audience, becoming little by little more efficient in the game. At the same time, this reflexivity, producer of actual effects on the body, points with its own performance (or performativity) as a central dimension, constituent of the *capoeira* universe (Gravina, 2010, p. 147).

For Turner (1987), the performances are reflexive for revealing the individual to himself. Turner observes this in two ways: as the actor, “[...] who ends up knowing himself when acting or ‘re-acting’; or as a human being, by means of the observation and/or the participation generated and presented by a set of other human beings” (Gravina, 2010, p. 81). In Hamilton's work, the participants are performers, but also audience, just like in the *roda de capoeira*, thus linked to a collective, as Gravina considers. It can also be observed in Hamilton's approach the phases of the theatrical performance that were proposed by Schechner<sup>13</sup> and how they can contribute with the concept of reflexive arena, as it disorganizes the total sequence of the performance (Schechner, 2013) when blurring its borders.

Finally, the studio as the site of invention, under the paradigm of the performance, seems to configure itself as a space of possibilities and as a threshold zone, the *subjunctive mood* of the *as if*. For Turner, as opposite to the daily life, in which, for him, it would be the happening in the indicative mood, there would be the subjunctive mood, something that predominates in the threshold phase, as it is: “[...] the mood of the ‘perhaps’, of the ‘it may be’, of the ‘as if’, hypothesis, fantasy, conjecture, desire. [...] The liminality can perhaps be described as a fruitful chaos” (Turner, 2005, p. 183).

It seems important to pay attention to the concept of *reflective arenas*, which are their fields of possibilities, made in the studio, and of taking of positions, which transform along the process by the transformative character of the body itself, of the performance and the involved people. This is also revealed because something rooted in a specific quotidian will always be able to emerge and return, transforming itself (Gravina, 2010); e by its reflexive character. This way, the formation of reflective arenas seems to contribute for a pedagogy of dance that disassembles hierarchies, that re-thinks the qualities of presence of the spectator and the polarities: theoretical and experimental, studio space and body space, individual and group, restriction and possibility, discipline and experimentation.

### 3. Presence

In Hamilton's work, the concept of presence implies temporality. *Being in the now of the scene* is a recurrence in his utterances. In the relation with time, for Eleonora Fabião, as already seen, presence assumes the relation between past and future evoked or glimpsed as a form of present. This form of present, "of present of the present", as she calls, is the time of the attention. For her, attention is a form of knowledge, as it is configured "as a form of sensorial and perceptive connection" (Fabião, 2010, p. 322). Thus, Hamilton comes close to Fabião because the *being in the now* is linked to the listening and the attention, for instance, of where are the other interpreters or the objects with which they interact. In the same way, during the instant composition one tries to observe in this state of attention and listening the structure and the material that is being created as a reminiscence of what happens. However, there are many ways of allowing one to be touched and many ways of dealing with the material that is being created. As it was previously seen, by means of this state of attention and the conjugation of past and future with the present, a material can become an 'archive' with the possibility of returning to a certain situation. One can also allow himself to be left immersed in the material and 'forget' the interpreters and the objects; however, the quotation marks indicate that the connection is felt and kept, as it does not mean that the one who is dancing needs to look at, for instance, his partner the whole time. The result of all of this is the intensification of the presence of the performer, what seems to leave



the interpreters more open for the 'dialogue' between the elements that compose the scene and between them. The creation of more relations seems resulting from the intensification of the presence.

Presence in Hamilton seems to be more linked to the concept of the German philosopher Hans Ulrich Gumbrecht (2010), the theoretician Erika Fischer-Lichte (2012) and the researcher artist Phillip Zarrilli (2012), on the presence of the body in its materiality and singularity. This is related, however, more to the effects of the presence than an attribute that the interpreter may have, that is, presence reduced to something narcissistic, or to a magic power of the actor (Zarrilli, 2012).

The references of Fischer-Lichte and Zarrilli are in *Archaeologies of Presence* (2012), whose editors, Gabriella Giannachi, Nick Kaye and Michael Shanks, thinkers of the performance and the theater, reflect "[...] on the theory of presence in the study of performance as a methodological strategy to deal with the indetermination and speculation inherent to the concept" (Dias, 2015, p. 37). Fischer-Lichte, when defining three degrees of presence relative to their effect (weak, strong and radical), distinguishes as the weak concept the "being here, in front of the attentive look of an another one" (Fischer-Lichte, 2012, p. 9). As a strong concept of presence, she emphasizes the ability of the dancer to command and occupy the space, catching the spectator's attention. Finally, the presence in a radical degree would be related with processes of embodiment and of energy. This way, when the actor generates presence by means of this energetic body, he appears and is perceived as *embodied mind*, what means that body and mind cannot be separate, considering indeed the mutual implication between them. When experiencing this process of body and mind, the actor would be experiencing a constant process of becoming, therefore, of transformation.

For Zarrilli (2012), the work to achieve the presence is always constituted by the training, the experience, the dramaturgy and the aesthetics of each performance developed. The same happens in Hamilton's training, as the way how he operates is always linked to the scene work, while dramaturgy and aesthetics would be more linked to the formation of the work, i.e., to the nature of the play itself and to the "not knowing"<sup>14</sup>. Another factor is the continuous inclusion of the relation with the public, as Hamilton tries to stimulate, whenever the participants of his workshops can, the alter-

nation between the role of performer and of audience - is part of his process, as well as of his Company's, that everybody can watch one to the other<sup>15</sup>.

The philosopher Hans Ulrich Gumbrecht (2010), to understand presence, makes a historical setback until the Middle Age and finds the performance of the theater founded on the body. The context of his work is the criticism to the world dominated by the production of meaning. The presence concept would be, for this author, what the "meaning does not express" (Dias, 2015, p. 21). Gumbrecht also considers that the concept does not refer only to a temporal relation, but to a "spacial relation with the world and its objects" (Gumbrecht, 2010, p. 9). In his analysis, presence indicates intensification of objects "present on human bodies", to which the author calls "production of presence".

For Hamilton, we can better situate ourselves in the space by means of the object and the construction of presence in relation to it. There is also the possibility of being able to expand the conscience to the whole studio keeping the relation with the object, what would provide to find forms of intensifying the presence in an instant composition, by creating relations not established on the meaning, allowing the effect of the presence to be produced when the meaning of the sign will dissolve "in the movement of the gesture"; letting "the gesture-sign drowning in the body-movement" (Gil, 2005, p. 97). A way to intensify the presence, in the relation object and body, happened, for instance, in an exercise accomplished during his workshop, in which the participants were asked to choose an object and carry it while dancing. The focus was not, however, on dancing with the object, but on forgetting it to incorporate it to the body and to the dance. At some moments, it should be exchanged from one hand to the other. With this exercise, it could also be found how to hold an object, observing new gestures that appeared in the hands and arms just for the fact of if being carried while they danced. Moreover, having one hand occupied by the object and the other one free, the perception of the right side and the left side of the body became stronger.

Presence, in Hamilton's work, is also related with the space, indicating the possibility of being established in a relation with the architecture. The work with the space was made from the observation of the objects that

compose the studio *Radial System V* and its own architecture. Following the observation, instant compositions began in small groups; it was curious to perceive that there are architectural details that push us to certain sites, like the window, the door or the floor; such *gravitational* trends, over all in the dancers, seem to weaken the quality of this presence established by the architecture. Thus, would there be sites that potentialize the presence? Does it happen in the same way in the relation with the object? How, then, can the work with the architecture and the object challenge presence concepts? One way could be by *listening* to the objects, as well as to the architecture. Hamilton (2015b) called the attention in his workshop to the fact that the objects *speak*, each one with its special poetry and context. He also called attention to ways of reaching the audience when informing on the tradition of speaking to an object, so that it can reach the audience. An at that concentrates to spread.

In the play *Goat Ocean*, repertoire of the *Allen's Line* Company, of Julyen Hamilton, the presence is also produced by means of the absence of interpreters, without them leaving the stage or the scene. For this effect, Hamilton changed the lateral exits, as is the tradition in theater, for a more or less central cloth. This cloth, a little bit narrow, allows seeing parts of the body of the interpreters, building a game of appearances and disappearances. The black cloth is what will also allow the production of a subjective time. This effect of presence by the absence also seems to create a series of transformations that dialogue with the dramaturgy of the play itself, inviting the audience and the interpreter himself to an expectation of a future movement. Still on the presence from the absence, in the workshop *Working with Objects* it was investigated the relation of dance with the object for the instant composition. This way, each participant chose a new object to work in scene. During the process, what became evident was that the object, left at a certain distance from the body, formed a composition. That is, it was not necessary that the interpreters were always tied to the object for the composition to happen. The emptiness that can be established between the object, the dance and the absence of a body in the outskirts of the object has a compositional force that seems to potentialize the effects of presence. The same can be said when the dancer knows that behind him, where

he dances, there is a window or a wall and, in this interstice, there is the emptiness where he is not.

### A Brief Conclusion

In the process of the instant composition there seems to be space for the integration of different experiences of the dancer, in the construction of the corporeality, concepts that are linked to the elements above discussed, like quality of movement, presence and reflective arenas, conjugating the imagination, the listening, the conscience of the body etc. The reflective arenas, that would be the moment of the performances in class; the other stages considered as phases of the theatrical performance (Schechner, 2013) - like their aftermath or cool-down moments – as well as preparation and warm-ups, all these notions are found in Hamilton's work as categories mixed one to the other. The result of this is the blurring of the borders between the trainings and the scene work. This path is covered along the lessons and workshops so that one moves from exercises of improvisation to composition in a more finished level.

The *habitus* of the dancer is not formatted according to the model of the choreographer, in this case, Julyen Hamilton's. In fact, there is no model in the instant composition proposed by Hamilton. However, for him, even the so objectionable standards are welcome: "Life is full of the habits vibration. Not this type of habit that imposes perceptions, but certain habits of dance. I want these habits" (Hamilton, 2015a).

One possible criticism to Hamilton's work, however, is the existence of a contradiction between two important elements of the method. The first element is the one of *being in the constant now*, of the state of *flow*, and the second is the choreographic characteristic, a work that also involves the intellect, the thought. These two elements do not seem possible to coexist. Foster (2011, p. 30) reminds that, quite often, the choreography notion is constructed in opposition to the improvisation and to spontaneous elements in the dance performance, or is interpreted as scores. The intellectual process of judging and evaluating the decisions related with the performance, like the "choreographic nexus" (Gil, 2005) or elements of composition, seems incompatible with the being constantly in the now. The name itself, instant composition, seems a contradiction, a contradiction between

the presence in the instant and the composition that requires contemplation, outsider moments. A good example of this contradiction is the fact of Hamilton interrupting frequently the flow of the happenings during the workshops to express his considerations.

In its turn, the choreographic thought in Hamilton's work, ally to the instant composition, is closer to the idea of an expanded practice, as Spångberg explains (2015). In this case, for not divorcing from dance (as what happens is the opposite), but instead by recognizing its own capacity and autonomy, its own epistemology, reaching a proper ethics and knowledge. Therefore, Hamilton's work would be a case of how dance can achieve its possibility of being political without necessarily being provocative or approaching a subject that relates with something political, as, for Hamilton, the body is political. His utterances and, consequently, his work indicate the gain of autonomy of dance and dancer's. They carry a political potentiality. A practice that expands until the existence of the choreographer or the commands of obedience are not necessary anymore. In this sense, Hamilton (2015a) considers that his work as director is to share enough information: techniques, emotional practices, metaphoric in any level in which their interpreters are.

In the instant composition, finally, what seems important is the dancer actualize the whole time. A great challenge and work of body and mind. It is always possible to come with a great idea that can become invalid after a few seconds, when everything starts to move. There is no way to say to our co-dancers which is my idea and what they must do.

The exercises and reflections generated in Hamilton's workshop with the *reflective arenas* seem to make possible that nothing is left for later. The idea is that the exercise can leave the potency to produce possibilities. In an intermittent way, and a lot in consequence of these arenas, plays were being created transforming the exercises into performances, that is, in scene work. The researcher's somatic reaction was exhaustion, exhaustion for the impossibility to allow the mind wandering through the studio, intellectual exhaustion. The processes of the instant compositions constituted the embodied mind of Fischer-Lichte. Another problematic resulting from this was the possibility of the dancers become too busy in face of how much the body is capable of being affected. The consequences are the risks of sinking in the

pleasure or the ecstasy of the infinite possibility of what the body can, as the song of the mermaid losing the embodied mind.

It is perceived that we are, indeed, in face of a work that searches for an autonomous body, capable of taking over the control of its formation; and of a hybrid (Louppe, 2000), eclectic (Davida, 1993) body, but that would be different of a body without reference (Louppe, 2000, p. 27) or, as Elizabeth Dempster summarizes (2010), of a post-modern body, the one that would be in process of un-training from its standards of movement. In the case of the instant composition, it is searched the specific corporeality of each one to reach the level of art and to escape from normative standards. A work in which it can be possible to create material and find it as *it speaks*, that is, trying not to decide before the end, perhaps living the serendipity is a way. At last, it is intended, from this study, a contribution for the debate and thought on the practices of dance when linked to art, creation and pedagogy.

## Notes

- <sup>1</sup> We consider that the notion of body is better understood presently by means of the concept of *corporeality*, a category forged by a collective of North American authors, among them, Susan Foster, Mark Franko, Randy Martin and Peggy Phelan. *Corporeality* introduces the understanding of the body as multiplicity, in constant self-transformation, self-differentiation, dissolution, formation and deformation, imbued by the real (Lepecki, 2014).
- <sup>2</sup> Julyen Hamilton is a professor, a dancer, a choreographer, a poet and a musician. Since 2009, he is the artistic director of the *Allen's Line* Company (Brussels). For more information, see: <<http://www.julyenhamilton.com/bio.html>>.
- <sup>3</sup> Here we use the term post-modern more in its historical than philosophical meaning, since it term has been a problematic category, and promoted great debates among dance scholars like, for instance, Sally Banes (1987). However, historically in 1962 and 1964, the post-modern dance comprised the works of choreographers from the Judson Church (New York) and others whose characteristics involved eclectic techniques; amongst other elements, a strong idea of game and the rejection of elements that most marked the modern dance.

- <sup>4</sup> The tacit knowledge would be more linked with the embodied knowledge (Polanyi, 1966). It is a knowledge, therefore, that is more experiential, being able to be related with the feelings, the perception, the proprioception, as well to the performative (Nelson, 2013).
- <sup>5</sup> It is considered the being immersed, involved, full as “condition of doing research of/in art” (Strazzacappa, 2014, p. 97).
- <sup>6</sup> Even though Julyen Hamilton is not based in Berlin, the choreographer is part of its circuits in that city. The field research was developed between January and June of 2015.
- <sup>7</sup> The bricolage concept was resignified by some authors, among them, researchers from the education field, like Norman Denzin and Yvonna Lincoln, Joe Kincheloe and Kathleen Berry, who seem to have expanded Lévi-Strauss’s concept, as they intended to make of bricolage itself a methodological approach.
- <sup>8</sup> José Gil has contributed with the transit between art and philosophy when considering a new theory of conscience in which he includes unconscious processes, what helps us to think the creation process of the artist.
- <sup>9</sup> Performance Studies is an interdisciplinary field concerned with dance, theater and performance art, amongst others, social dramas, performative events and rituals.
- <sup>10</sup> Laban’s Categories of Movement Analysis are: Body, Effort, Shape and Space - BESS. See Laban (1963).
- <sup>11</sup> The references – Julyen Hamilton (2015a) and later (2015b) – are notes from a field notebook (oral information) that were made in different workshops and, therefore, there is no page number. *Rhythm and Placement in Time* was the training accomplished in the studio *Dock 11*, happened in February 16-20. (2015a). *Working with objects* was the training made in the *Radial System V*, in May 11-16 (2015b).
- <sup>12</sup> When working with other interpreters, it is part of Hamilton’s instantaneous composition to respect and to watch attentively all the colleagues, what also configures for Hamilton a work of listening and ethics, but also of discipline.
- <sup>13</sup> The model thought by Schechner for a total sequence of the performance would have at least seven stages: training, workshop, rehearsal, warm-ups, performance, cool-down and aftermath.

- <sup>14</sup> A recurrent issue in Julyen Hamilton's work is the exclusion of conclusions in the work that is being created by instantaneous composition, as the end cannot be anticipated.
- <sup>15</sup> What reinforces, in Hamilton's work, the idea of reflexive arenas of which Gravina speaks.

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