

Workshop: Dance as Peak Performance

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Abstract:

Key words: experience; awareness; state of mind

Every performer can report they have entered a state of being, or a 'zone', while executing their greatest performances and personal bests (Hefferon, 2006, p. 141). It seems therefore that there is a particular state of consciousness associated to a *peak performance*. At the same time, although theatre directors and choreographers seek different qualities from their performers, no matter which discipline or part of the world they come from, they seem to agree that one essential priority is for the performer to fully commit to his performance. e.g. Constatin Stanislavski used the Russian word, *przeżywanie*, translated as 'live the scene' to describe what the actor should experience in performance (Carnicke, 1998, p. 109); Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi coined the term 'flow' to describe an optimal state of experience; and Deborah Hay defines her performance as consciousness of movement. The states described by these three authors might have been pursued by different methodologies and they might even have different connotations, but all of them require an exceptional state of concentration and awareness. During the last years, first as a professional choreographer and then as a lecturer in performance studies at London Contemporary Dance School, I have been devising a studio based practice that through dance aims to reach the total concentration of the individual during the continuous present moment of the performance. During this workshop it would be possible to explore some of those physical exercises which, in a very simple way, help the performer to enter into a deep state of awareness, not only of himself but also of his surroundings. The innovation of this practice lays in the simplicity of the exercises. The participants will experience a state of mindfulness state in such an unsophisticated way, that it will be very easy for them to identify it and ultimately, incorporate it into their practice.

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