

SPACE

AND WORDS

FOR

ARTEFACTS DANCE

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BILLIE

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OUTLINE

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Every move and every word have a specific weight, an emotional load, a geometry from which they are born. In performance they occur in a particular configuration at a particular moment. They are not connected by a narrative, but they have relationship to what precedes or follows. They are not arbitrary, but reveal the poesy of the body and the dancing mind when given their due place and light in the whole of the composition.

It is in composition that the poesy of the body and the dancing mind are revealed.

While there are no clear tools to measure when movement becomes dance and text becomes poetry, it is safe to say that both dance and poetry are condensed and concentrated ways of composing with movement and with words. They have no external motivation but an urgency from within to give dimension to each phrase and line by focussing on them individually.

Metaphor binds mankind. It can lift a stone, it forgives failure, because it provides a wider context in which action takes place. Here the body dancing and speaking in front of an audience is a living metaphor, tender and acute, present in the flesh. One move can evoke a whole world. One word and all has been said. And understood. From this word, from this move, meanings ripple and flood the space with connotations and images. There is no obligation to complete or to be complete, but by being compositionally efficient the audience is invited in into the essence of the experience. Here dance and poetry which take place in front of an audience make an appeal to all the senses. An image, visual, emotional or other, then is sharp and vivid according to how specific it

is and how effective it is in contributing to the composition as a whole.

Focussing on each phrase (dance) and line (poetry) individually then means allowing each phrase and line to crystallise to the extent that is needed so as to serve the piece in action. In doing so their business is not to communicate information, but to share experience. They speak directly and equally to the sensuous, to the emotional, to the imaginative, to the intellectual, to the given wisdom of the body, and therefore they cannot be framed by the rational but must be allowed their full life. The tensions which are there indeed, when permitted, are not conflictual, but the very seed of solidarity in joy and pain, beauty and atrocity, fear, illusion, hope and aspiration, love, life and death.

Along with imagery musicality, even if irregular or largely patternless, occurs through the natural rhythm and melody in verse and movement. The dance and the poetry themselves constitute the music. As such, musicality is a meaningful element in what has been made, rather than something to strive for in itself. It is inherent to what is being produced.

Billie Hanne (September, 2014)

WE ARE ONE

This is the first day of school.
We are one the hills and me.
Late moonlight paints a softness
in the stillness,
and passing a black flag beside
the impassive skull of a squirrel,
the crystal wheel turns to the study
of the polar circle.

(Apr 2015)

BOUQUET

By the orb of recognition,
mild as milked lips,
trance and unity, a nameless star.
The tongue plunged in the pallid
light of piety,
a before impassable ocean
of the mind.
And with water and infinity
a catalogue of wings.

(Oct 2015)

COMMON THOUGHTS

One winter knitted to another
like a last confession.
The lunar hope between
the stars dropped into a stream,
the labyrinth of being moulded into clay.

A long-legged fly upon the mirror of the lake
a water-rider, dreamer of the sunrise pledge,
singing gut and mire in a jewelled voice.

From the earthen womb sprung
the branches of the blessed and the cursed
as also light and rain,
persian patterns dressed in music,
until Thor swam peacefully in the mortal
wound's fragility.

(Oct 2015)

POETRY

JULYEN

KINGDOM

in the middle kingdom

in the wave which reaches the edge
of all waves

a temporary throne,
and on that seat
no-one
sits

save the thinnest bird of freedom
enlightened by work and simple action.

here a sun
here a moon
here a shoe
there a mouthful of honey
collected wordlessly

here spring
not waiting
but knowing autumn will someday ring.

oOo

and yet our eyes were fixed on the planes
the waving majesty of height then distance

a way of seeing perhaps
a way of navigating in absence of maps

then something strange happened
and another mind smiled beckoning
and showed us the direction

nov 19 2015

oOo

in courage
we dare to be

to love
to see
even beyond and inside our eyes

and

in humility
we know,

beyond and in the skins of doubt.

thus we are,
we are thus,

hovering
on shared ground,

tasting the mercy of our truths

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TEXT AND
CHOREOGRAPHY:
BILLIE HANNE

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COSTUME:
ELOÏSE NEUVILLE



May we gather in a cathedral
made of water and mud
where the heart beats like a
drum and the humming is made
devoid of human sound.
The laboratories obsolete now give
away their secrets collected in
iced pearls that once cascaded from
mountains.

In *Deep Brown Sea* the world is simple and enormous. It is a giant vessel that is largely empty and every move and word echo for years. There are no transitions, nothing is to be arranged or to be accounted for. The words they come and they are true, full. They might look to have consequence, but there is no such thing at this underwater level below the mud. Action is devoid of reaction and so there is nothing that has to be done.

PL

A DANCE VOICE
DECOR BY
JULYEN HAMILTON Y

Play is the latest solo from Julyen Hamilton. It follows on from *The Immaterial Wold* and *The Forerunner* pieces which have been shown throughout Europe, in Russia and west centre

and east in the USA. *Play* faces the art of improvisation head-on. It listens to and provides the stream of poetry which is characteristic of Hamilton's work over the past decades. It uses local

architecture and objects, refined movement, poignant lighting and precise action to entertain the very moment, to give it throne and street corner, heaven and basement.



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WORDS FOR
DANCERS
WORK-WEEK

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On the last day of the Space and Words for Dancers work-week I wrote a sentence in my notebook – “that you took the workshop doesn’t mean you have done the work”. What follows is an attempt to delve a little deeper into this personal archive of opinion, which is also informed by my previous experiences with the work of Julyen Hamilton over the years, especially his work as an educator. Considering the working methodologies of Hamilton could offer a glimpse of what the work of a dance artist as performer (rather than dance artist as choreographer) might look like.

Hamilton’s performance work variously exists in a place where poetry and dance co-habit. Yet I want to consider what there is in the specificity of his work that could tell us something about the universality of what it is to be a dancer at work; i.e. the ins and outs of what we might consider the work or artistry of a dancer as performer. I am interested in the following question: why did I draw the conclusion that doing the workshop does not necessarily amount to doing the work? On tackling this question, I need to address Hamilton’s working methodologies as idiosyncratic; i.e. his work is unique and personal. However, I would propose that in the quest of studying Hamilton’s work, the aim is not to replicate it but rather to generate one’s own.

I should describe what the term ‘work’ means to me in this context. Here the differentiation I make between a dance artist as performer and a dance artist as choreographer is important because it acknowledges that in the art of making dance performances, the making relies as much in the craftsmanship of the choreographer as it relies in the craftsmanship of the performer. In Hamilton’s performance pieces, both types of craftsmanship are

intertwined. It could even be argued that they are one and the same because they are dealing with the mode of Instant Composition¹ in which the final choreography of a piece only takes place at the very same time of the performance. Here, craftsmanship and authorship are based in the production of all the embodied materials Hamilton produces. This is what makes the work intrinsic and idiosyncratic – made up of the human capabilities of the performing dance artist. I would like us to understand work in this context as a continuous embodied process that the dancer/performer makes, differentiating it from work understood as the product of that work, i.e. the piece that is presented to the audience.

Of course, the notion of recognition of artistry relying on the work of the performer pertains too to other dance artists. One other representative of this approach is Deborah Hay. So, we could say that Hay shares some common ground with Hamilton but I would like to draw attention to at least one difference between them, as I see it. Hay invites me to think of the notion of performance as practice. However, during Hamilton’s workshops, I have heard him dissenting with the notion of practice in favour of the word work. This apparent difference could exist at a semantic level only, but I believe it goes beyond that. I’d like to propose Hamilton’s work and Hay’s practice represent two different approaches, or strategies toward confronting what a dancer ought to do as part of their artistry. The paradox is that although the artistry of the dancer as a performer is inherently difficult and requires work, it is also important to overcome the sense of difficulty which can be done through practicing.

Let me try to explain this paradox. A working hard strategy can render itself useless as soon

as one figures out how that strategy functions. In my experience, once I worked out a strategy that took me closer to the original aim I had to let go of it. Failing to do so took me further away from the original aim. Here is where the practice strategy seems useful. When practicing there is no need to succeed. Maybe, what we strive for as dedicated dancers is impossible to achieve. Rather than give up, we can let go from achieving it and still practice because after all it is not a big deal, as Hay would say. Hence the paradox: we must work to achieve our aim but this can get in our way, while practice can help us to ease the way and yet it also postpones our arrival there. I believe both Hamilton and Hay are aware of the paradoxical nature of the processes involved in making and performing dances. In a way one strategy cannot function without the other. However, it feels more appropriate to me to use the word work because oftentimes these processes require the dancer to undergo a tortuous journey, at least if one wants to achieve a level of dexterity at the time of performing.

Returning to the Space and Words for Dancers work-week in London, one might then ask: what did the work we were doing look like? In its idiosyncrasy, each person’s work is unique. But if that is the case: how can I know whether I am doing the work if my work is unlike anyone else’s?

Hamilton reiterates through his teaching that he teaches his own work. This statement could be seen to contradict the idea that each person’s work is unique. I think Hamilton means that in his case, teaching and craft are intertwined. He’s acknowledging that it is just his own work, the one in which he is an expert, and therefore it is the only work he has as a reference for teaching.

The first time I studied with Hamilton he started the day by telling us a story from his childhood. When he was a child his grandfather gave him his first Latin lesson by sitting him in front of the Latin book and opening it randomly somewhere in the middle. I think this story gives us a clue about how Hamilton proposes we face working. I think that the idea of opening the book in the middle of it implies that there isn't a beginning – there isn't need for preparation before making the work and we must enter directly into it. To make the work one needs to acknowledge that whatever we do needs to be understood and included as part of the work itself. We only get better at doing those things we do.

As a contrast, preparing oneself for something can only give us access to the aboutness of that very thing we are preparing for, and that simply is a way of postponing the work. Preparing gives knowledge about it but doesn't enable us to know how to do it. Preparing may be useful but it shouldn't be confused with doing the work itself. I don't think this assertion should be understood as though conditioning and warm-up aren't necessary. I think what Hamilton is probably trying to acknowledge is precisely that taking the workshop doesn't mean that we have done the work. Hamilton's Latin lesson allegory points to the idea that whatever you do in the studio should be understood as the work.

But what are we tasked to understand at Hamilton's workshops? If he is teaching his work, and from his work, are we supposed to be learning it? Is it even possible to learn his work? I believe for Hamilton the only thing he can do as a teacher is to lay down what he knows as clearly and as specifically as possible. That's his side of the business. The learning and making something out of it is the student's

responsibility. As a teacher, Hamilton must let go from expecting what the student will learn out of this encounter. Learning to do the work is in this case each individual learning how to generate their own work.

I have heard some dance teachers say several times that coming to class is ninety per cent of the work. If that were true, it is the other ten percent, which is illusive and remains the responsibility of the student; the part that nobody can tell you how to do. The teacher will be there for guidance and demonstration but the leap into the unknown is for the student to take and this is the hardest thing to do... that ten percent.

During Space and Words for Dancers I was reminded again about this. It doesn't mean that I was able to do it all of the time. I couldn't do it from the start, for sure. And when I managed to enter the work it wasn't like I was able to stay there without interruption. But that is probably how the process of working is – and it doesn't stop because you did the workshop.

¹ As defined by dance artist Bettina Neuhaus
"Instant Composition is the art of composing in the moment. In contrast to a set choreography where the process of decision making happens by developing and polishing the material for many weeks in the studio, an improvised piece demands a different way of working: here the dancer has to create, compose and perform all at the same time in the performing situation on stage. An instant composition can be completely open, or be predefined by developing a common language between the performers, or by agreeing on a score, but every time the piece is performed in a very new way. Instant Composition as a way of performing asks of the dancer a specific presence and availability, as well as a high degree of commitment and responsibility." From <http://www.bettinaneuhaus.com/english/teacher-instant.htm>, retrieved on Monday 6 June 2016.

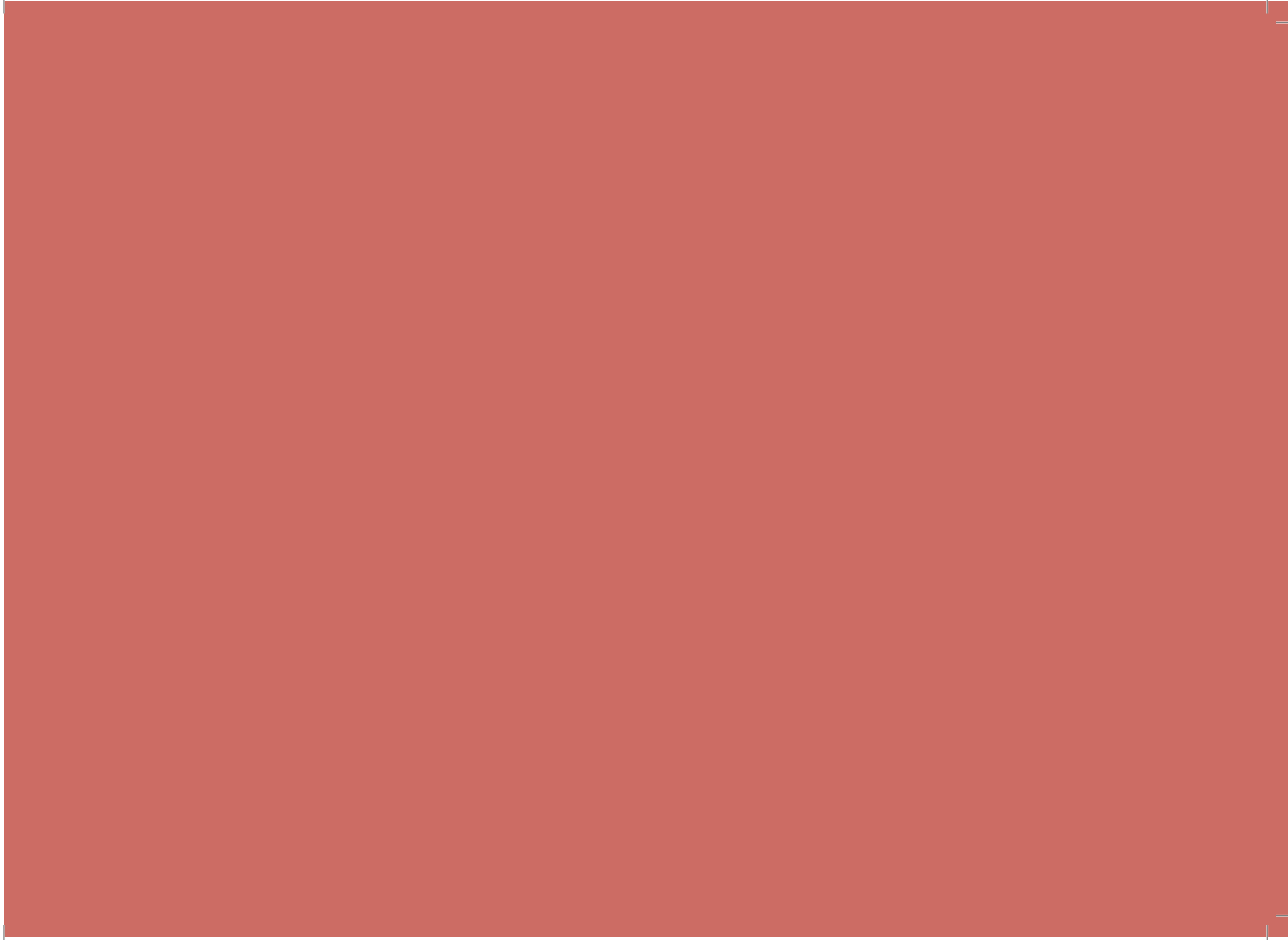


PHOTO S E S S I O N



Billie



Group

MARIA
ANDREWS





Marianne



Aya



Robert, Petra and Martino

Participants of the Space and Words for Dancers work-week:
Makiko Aoyama, Sophie Arstall, Antigone Avdi, Laura Burns,
Mariana Camiloti, Lavinia Cascone, Antonio de la Fe, Kathleen Downie,
Margaret Faith Dewes, Tora Hed, Kate Hilder, Susan Kempster, Sarah
Kent, Aya Kobayashi, Manou Koreman, Inari Hulkkonen, Lizzy Le
Quesne, Jan Lee, Bence Mezei, Stefania Petroula, Martino Redaelli,
Delphine Robet, Petra Söör, Marianne Tuckman, Robert Vesty

Previous page :
Julyen and Billie



Laura



Group



Delphine and Sarah



Group

EXTRACTS
TAKEN

EVE

NIN

WITH JULYEN
HAMILTON AND
BILLIE HANNE

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TALK

CHISENHALE DANCE
SPACE – FRIDAY
17TH JULY, 2015

FROM THE ORIGINAL
TRANSCRIPT EDITED
FOR CLARITY

ON POETRY AND DANCE

BILLIE «I knew I had to move and I had to speak and I did not know where to go. There were things I saw it was not like....I went and I looked where I would go... it was a very strong feeling that I had to speak and move at the same time».

BILLIE «As artists, it's important to understand what happened before us. We must study it deeply to know in our generation where we have to take it, because things are changing. In no way have I concluded that it's going to be that way for the next ten years or later; it's not even important, what is important, is to know the history, the recent history and to go into that - go into that in making. And maybe that proves to be the right way still, maybe not, again it's not important but we have to know it. We have to know about the architecture of space and what it does to the dancing body, and what it does to voice, and what it does to a voice in motion».

ON SPACE

BILLIE «As a dancer you have to have a sensual relationship with your backdrop. You have to have some imagination of what it looks like for an audience. You have to have that sensually, because you're not in the audience but you have to know how to dance in front of that backdrop».

JULYEN «Charlie the drummer of the Rolling Stones, when they asked "what do you do?", said "oh I just play for the other guy in front". But what's very beautiful is that in the front they know how to take from the drama behind and this is the real spatial art. Not just that you are in front...but that you know how to take from it. And how you deal with that in terms of the material... everything like that is part of the art of using space. You might have a good bass player but can you listen to her or him while you are up front singing? Can you receive from it? These are very real spatial things...and when they are engaged with, not only are they problems to be solved but they actually stimulate the body towards its poetry»

BILLIE «It's important when we perform with the body that something in us must own the space, all the way up to the wall to the floor to the ceiling - we must own the space or we cannot move; we cannot be moved by the space. We were making poetry from the body before we wrote it down on the page. It is a spatial art so we must have relationship to the space we're in».

BILLIE «It's very important that we place our work somewhere. That we say «No, I want the



biggest room!» Because to be a body, in space, moving and speaking, I don't know what else there is that's bigger than that?»

ON MAKING PIECES

BILLIE «My starting point for Deep Brown Sea was the image for the flyer. And the image for the flyer - I made the flyer - and I had this jump on video that I did in the studio where I work against the white wall. And then I knew...»

«I took it very literal. There was a deep brown sea. I didn't take that metaphorically. I wanted a deep brown sea. And when I was making the flyer, the first flyer, it had those colours, and when I went to Eloise for the costume, it had those colours, and then when I got to the space I had this image of an underwater cave very deep down and I wanted some running water.»
«Because I trust that it comes from a certain inspiration at that moment, and the first time I do

the piece I really try and carry out what I set out for. Even though when I write the description I don't know yet, but I trust it.»

JULYEN «You see, everything helps everything when you make something. And that's the wonderful thing about practicalities – somebody says «What's the title, we need it for the programme?» and you go «I Smooth Crimson» and you just go «yeah, that's it». But then that bounces back deeply into where it came from in you; it helps you, you help yourself. And we say, «yeah but we don't have an image»; but we haven't done the piece yet, that's the image, that was the first poster for it, and it tells you that nothing is a coincidence, everything manifests

from something along the line of the life of what you're doing. And so you can use it, if you trust it».

ON REPEATING PIECES

JULYEN «The pieces are improvised in the moment they're presented but their anima is already clear enough to be able to title them; and to sign a contract. How they manifest is

not entirely open because once you've got to know the anima of the piece you know a little bit about what it means...it's not a fixed conclusion but it's something you have because you know something about it. And in the same way, in certain contexts, I would go «no, I don't think that's the piece for this context» or «yeah, I think that's going to fit the bill». And it's also personal because it's what I want to say or I can still say it, still go into that anima. That's also an issue of whether one can go back into the same piece and touch that place from which it's made».

ON KNOWING HOW IT WORKS

BILLIE «I go into the material, into the lights and the costume, because I can know that, but there's this other thing where it takes off, I haven't a clue how it works.»

JULYEN «I agree. I've also said as you get older, it gets more magical because you actually understand less and less of what you understand. Although you do understand more and more, or course you do, we're not naïve, you have experience, but at the same time there's this big zone where...it gets more and more wonderful in a way, I mean, full of wonder».



First page : Billie, Deep Brown Sea, Brussels. Second page : Julyen, The Forerunner
Panel : Various works by Billie (Paolo Cingolani also pictured)



DISS

WHAT SKILLS ARE
REQUIRED OF THE
DANCER

AND POET TO
PRODUCE POETRY
AND DANCE
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FULL REPORTS CAN BE FOUND
AND DOWNLOADED AT
WWW.SPACEANDWORDSfordancers.CO.UK

15:45

Margaret | IF THROUGH OUR OWN
PERMISSION TO MAKE, WE
OFFER A CHANCE TO OTHERS,
ARE WE INTERESTED IN THE
EFFECT OF WHAT WE CREATE
IN OUR AUDIENCE AND HOW
DO WE FIND OUT?

ANGELOU
1345-1500
②

Makiko |
What are the elements
that are lost in
translation?

FROST
1345-1500
②

MARTINO |
HOW AN ILLUSION
DEMOCRACY IS AN OBSTACLE
REACHING BEAUTY
IN MY PERFORMANCE?

HUGHES
1345-1500
②

ROB |
WHAT TO DO
ABOUT TECHNOLOGY
?

CRANE
1345-1500
②

How ~~do~~ to create ^{Kathleen}
spaces / platforms
for the work
→

OWEN
1345-1500
②

ANTONIO
via SOPHIE
(How) CAN WE
CONTINUE DOING
THIS WORK (both in the
studio & on stage)
↑ AMONGST US?

billie |
if pretty and for some
What piece would you like
to make next and how?

DICKENSON
1345-1500
②



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DESIGNED BY TOMAS DI GIOVANNI

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**CHISENHALE
DANCE SPACE**