

Analog and digital folds

1st. activity - brainstorming



What are the main concerns about dance/theater documentation? Is there a suitable way to document dance/theater? Are digital tools for documentation showing superiority to analog procedures, and if so, is there a possibility that digital tools will prevail over analog tools any time soon? These topics opened the discussion of our seminar which was meant to review different tools and mediums for dance/theater documentation, followed by a methodical approach on how to use these tools for research purposes.

After a short introduction by our instructor, Elizabeth Waterhouse, and ourselves we moved to a brainstorming exercise where we were engaged to reflect on performance documentation itself. The parameters for the brainstorming were defined by four questions.

For the discussion, the class was divided into groups consisting of two to three persons. Each group got the task of gathering thoughts around each of the questions and to write

them down on post-it stickers that were collected at the end of the discussion round and exposed for a open dialogue in the classroom.

The main questions with some of the discussed answers are presented hereafter:

- What is dance/theater documentation?

It is a compilation of traces, references and reminders of a dance/theater event. The compilation itself can constitute dance/theater history.

- Why is dance/theater documented?

Some of the reasons why dance is documented base on the necessity of tracking the process of creation itself in order to review the process, to access routines, improvisations and elements that were created or improvised during rehearsal time. Consequently performances are also documented as a proof of existence. This documentation can be used to keep the work alive. Furthermore documentation can be also used for purposes of marketing and communication.

- How is dance/theater documented? What tools and mediums are used?

Some of the mediums for dance/theater documentation are pictures, videos, dance notations/scores, interviews, drawings, lectures and reports. In addition to the reflection on those mediums, also the fact of seeing the body as a living archive was discussed, in which the information would be carried and learnt from body to body.

- What are the qualities of excellent vs. troublesome documentation?

Qualities of an excellent documentation are accessibility, legibility, multifaceted (pictures, notes, videos, etc.). An excellent documentation offers deep information on the performance work and is presented in a respectful manner. On the other hand a troublesome documentation is documentation that contains information gaps.