

**A Dance Theatre Workshop for the Center of Study of the World Civilisation (CSWC),
departement of the Tokyo Institute of Technology.
(from Friday, May 16th. 2008 to Wednesday, June 4th. 2008)**

Tomorrow will be my first day of teaching at the “Center for the Study of World Civilizations”, a departement of the “Tokyo Institute of Technology”. This project has been initiated by Professor Noboru Hidano, Dr. Economics Program at Department of Social Engineering, Tokyo Tech. Professor Hidano did contact me and proposed me to have a thirty hours workshop session with some of his students with the goal to introduce them to the world of dance and dance-theatre, and propose a public presentation at the end of this Workshop.

I did study myself during a few years Mathematics, Physics and Chemistry, and even if I did not finished my study, because of my decision to become a dancer, I always kept a scientific curiosity about those subjects, and the proposition of Professor Hidano mached perfectly with my desire to find a way of understanding between my passion for body movement, dance and performing art and my old interest in this scientific way of thinking. My first question to Professor Hidano was:

- “why did you and your colleges created the Center of Study of World Civilizations ?, in which sense do you believe that “creating works of art and exploring the most basic and important aesthetic impulses that underpin culture” can be positive and necessary to University students in Science and Technology ?”.

Professor Hidano’s answer really impressed me:

- “There are two reasons I will tell you about, the first one is that, among our students, through the different workshops that we propose to them, a little percentage of them might discover a special interest in Art and could decide to use their scientific knowledge to become artist instead of becoming ingeniors or searchers, we want to give to those students a possibility to discover their own impulses and realize themselves as well as possible. The second reason concern all the other students. Now a days. the battle to survive in our society seems to get always harder and harder, good ingeniors are well payed and the competition create a strong pressure and new motivation, different then the original motivation which should be the interest in Science and Technology. If this new motivation, created by the financial competition, becomes too important in regard to the original interest in what the students studied, the young professional ingeniors and searchers might loose the sense of why they are doing their profession. The students of our University have a strong and deep interest in what they are studying; It will be a big pity to see this strong and deep interest slowly disapear in their future and be replaced by the motivation created from the financial pressure; this matter of fact is a big danger for them and our society, when this kind of pressure takes too much importance in people’s motivation, it creates a hard and unhappy society. To discover the world of Art and Artistic Creativity is a way to devellope a human sensitivity to emotions and to the various faces of beauty; we believe that giving a possibility to our students to experiment and discover the world of Art and artistic creativity is to give them a good support to go through their life with a strong sense for humanity”.

I heard those words with a great surprise and something in myself did get very happy. Surprise, because I did not imagine that the world of technology and industry could be worried about the developement of their students artistic education. The importance of art in our society is for certain people a clear matter of fact and for others a point of view which has to be discuss and depens of the contexte.

The workshop follows two parallel directions which of course are totally connected to one another. The sense of my workshop in the CSWC is to introduce the world of Dance, Dance-theatre, Performing Art to students which have almost no idea of what this subject is about, as well as to give to those students the possibility to discover a new approach of their own body, body movement and body language.

Why could it be important to awake the student's sensibility to body language and Art expression ?, maybe because a sensibilized soul can help a human to look for the sensible instead then to look for the unsensible.

On one side I propose to the student an every day practice of some exercises to become able to slowly discover the beautiful and magical "machine" they have, and to realise how to place and use their body in the sense of the most "ergonomic" and healthy way possible. This "mise en corps" is composed by myself from exercises inspired of the warming up and preparation work issued from various body work techniques which I studied (dance, Tai chi, Kinomichi, Feldenkrais)

Actually, the exercises in themselves are not the most important point. It is of course important to understand them well and learn how to do them in the right way, but my first source of satisfaction is when the students get interested the idea to look at their body and body movement from an energetic point of view instead then to consider it as a mechanical system. Beyond the body language as artistic expression language, there is the human being with his body in his normal life, and one of my goal in my work, is to propose to each of my student, whatever their professional occupation could be, to build a better relationship with their body because that point is from my point of view the first key to a well being feeling, and the first step to the fact of being able to open yourself to the outside. As well as a student in music will first discover his instrument, how it is build, how it function, what must be done to keep it in good shape, what should not be done to preserve it from destruction etc., I propose to my students to discover their own bodies through the serie of exercises that we practice everyday. That practice matches perfectly with the teaching of the use of body language in the sens of artistic expression. Of course, it takes many years of hard work to become a professional high technic level dancer, but that is defenitly not the point and one of my goal is also to make my student realise that you do not need to be a "dancer" to dance and express yourself with your body.

I will not include here any details of my exercises and concept about body and movement, but if there is any interest for that, I could send some text about it with great pleasure.

What happened ?

Among the ten students (two female and eight male) that followed my workshop, only one female had experience of dance practice. One male student use to practice Japanese drum, another one is a street dancer, and the others do not practice any body training in anyway. The exercise that I propose are simple, organised in a logical order and they will be repeated every day with almost no change (except the fact that everyday, I will progressively add a few details to the sequence); I decide to do so because I want to give to the student the possibility to feel what they are doing and, after a few days maybe to feel some change in their body sensibility, instead of trying to deal with the normal memory difficulties that beginners meet. My experience taught me that, from the moment the students start to notice some positive physical sensation in their body sensibility, then they start to be really motivated to continue discovering and practicing (from this point it is then possible to propose them to start trying to memorize some exercise sequences).

It has been a pleasure to notice this evolution in my little group. Getting slowly conscious about their center line, about the position of their pelvis and its role in the standing position, it is a little like watching people "peu à peu" taking possession of their own body. From day to day, I asked to the student what were there impression about the effect of this body training, every two days I asked if they could notice any change in their body and body attitude; it was of course different from one to another, each person is a personal case but the general impression is that, by the end of the workshop, they were amused to notice that "something" did change in their relation with their body, they were more aware of the unnecessary use of their shoulder and of the muscular tension in shoulder and neck which related to it, more conscious of what could be a wrong use of the body. Out of the artistical contexte, one of the important idea of this part of the work is to make the student aware of the relation that they have with there body, also in the normal everyday life. To become aware of the muscular tension of your body is the first step to avoid future painful experience and very uncomfortable concequences, and I believe that a person who feels good and well balanced in her body, will think and work much more effectively then someone who has to deal with pain.

My big wish is that after this experience, at least one student would decide to start to learn and practice one or another technique that I did introduce to them as Tai Kyo Ken or Aikido or Chi Gong by example.

As I wrote before, the everyday body exercise part is followed by the creative part of the workshop. Once the student is more conscious about his body, the idea is, then, to bring him to start using his body to express himself through form and movement.

This workshop was planed to be a thirty hours workshop, which might be a good length to propose a theoretical teaching. But such a period of time is certainly too short to propose a practical experience with the goal of a public performance at the end, without having by the end the felling that the work is only starting to get to the point.

In the programme of my teaching, the creative part of the workshop is based on an analyse of dance and theatre in the context of stage performance. The sources of my proposition is based o the work of Alwyn Nikolais for the American school and Mary Wygmann for the German school.

This workshop part is based on the study of movement analysis first from an abstract point of view. Five basics elements support this movement analysis.

Those five elements are:

- The Form (a material structure, solid and filling up a certain volume into the space)
- Space (the scenic space into which the dancer or the actor will evolve, from this point starts the notion of motion into space).
- Motion (considered as the bridge between a form and another with the differents qualities of energy which characterize it).
- Timing (rhythm and the choice of intervention which can be fixed by the choreographer or be opened to the interpreter in improvisation).
- The rest and essential thing (or "the little flower" from Zeami, the great Nô Theatre master).

Each of those elements is studied separatly; then in connection with each other. First of all from an abstract point of view (a form representing only a geometric structure by example) then closing more to a every day life situation (for example considering a fashion show pose as a form). From this base a use of movement and gesture evolve, which integrates itself into dance, dancetheatre, theatre or opera.

The largest part of this work is based on improvisation and composition, and start to take his sense after a certain period of at least five days of work...

I find extremely interesting to propose this abstract approach of dance and body language to students in sciences because it allows me to always propose to find a similarity to their own field research, by example the robotic, the computer animation and creation of virtual worlds, etc.. I think that there is a very tiny border between Art expression and Scientific research and it is very exciting to explore how and in which sense is it possible to connect one to another.

Thirty hours of teaching were definitively not enough to propose the complete part of my teaching, so I tried to resume the purpose of my teaching to get soon into the construction of our presentation. It was important to explain to the student that choreographical art was not only about teaching to dancers some movement which will be danced with a musical background, but could be considered as a field of study and search for new language for communication between the artist and the public. One of my student, Mss. Nao Shikanai is preparing a study about "the relation between public and stage performance in the situation of dance and dance theater performance"; we had interesting conversation about this subject and she will in next future attend to the coming workshop that I will teach in Tokyo so we will be able to developpe our work.

In my way of choreographing and directing a dance theatre piece, there is no prepared story board. I have an idea of what I want to express about and I will use the rehearsals to little by little collect elements of "hardware" (gesture, scenes, movement, ideas, etc..) from my dancers, actors, students. This method can be compared to the construction of a house; first I propose to the student to go and collect the elements that we might need to construct our house (there is no architect plan so apart of my indications, the students are totally free to bring the kind of element that there creativity like to choose), then after a period of collecting, we try to build the house with what we have.

In order to collect those "hardware elements" from my students, I propose to them so subject of composition through questions which should promote their imagination and reflexion. The style of expression is open, they can use any form of language (movement, texte, singing, theatrical situation, etc..) and, a very important side of this work, particularly in a teaching situation, they can use any of their colleagues to create the scene that they imagine. To promote team work is a very important point in education and specially in technical and engineering work. It was very interesting to see how those students which were coming from different departement came together and in a ludic way started to work and construct together with great pleasure.

This workshop period which happened between Mai 17th. and June 3rd. has been concluded with a "student presentation" which should not be considered as a performance in the sense that a very much longer period of work is needed to be able to present a work on stage which could be considered as a performance. But from my point of view, the idea of such a presentation is much more to give to the student the possibility to experiment the beginning of the realisation of a dance-theatre piece, to experiment the stage situation as a performer and at the end of the workshop, to show a present state of this work, which is only a "work in progress". One of my big wish is to get the opportunity to keep on working this project in the future to be able to developpe what has been started and maybe awake the curiosity of new students.

So the evolution of this workshop follows three steps:

- 1- the student and his own body, consciousness of the body and movement.
- 2- the body language in dance and theatre, being creative and expressing yourself.

3- presenting yourself in front of a public, experience of the stage and the public.

Maybe 80% of my students were showing a lot of shyness, especially by step 3. It is well known that on stage, someone feels naked. There is no better school than dance theatre stage experience to help someone to feel comfortable in front of a public. Of course a certain timidity is natural and very charming, and also this point is taken in consideration, but the fact of having it in control is very important if you want to communicate something in a life presentation in front of a public.

There are many situations in professional life where it is needed to present yourself in front of a public, and examinations are the first experience that someone has to do at school and then at University. There are certainly many other non-artistic schools which propose some workshop to teach how to present yourself in front of a public, coaching workshop, "how to get into business" workshop, and so on... But from my observation and experience, the result of those kinds of teaching reaches seems to me very artificial; like at a bad theatre school, I see someone getting into a constructed character role instead of seeing someone being himself which is from my point of view the nicest and most interesting way how to present yourself. One of the characteristics of the direction of dance theatre that I follow in my workshop is to bring the student to show himself instead of playing someone's else character, and I believe that before starting to desire to present yourself to a public as a very self-confident person, it is maybe good to accept to present yourself as a human being with all his shyness, his fears and his beauty, then maybe, a more natural self-confidence will appear from itself.

The last rehearsals and the presentation on June 3rd, gave me the feeling that we did reach something in that direction, and the smile of my students in the wardrobe just after their performance did confirm to me that we did reach "something" with our workshop.

On June 4th., the last workshop day, I concluded my workshop the same way as I started it, proposing to answer to all questions that the student had and giving a brief resume of what is Dance Theatre about, its history and telling about some of the most important dancers and choreographers. I was very surprised to notice that only two students already heard about master Kazuo Ohno who is from my point of view one of the most important dancers in the history of dance, in Japan, but also through the world, so I decided to add a video showing of a documentary about this great Japanese master.

about a fourth step: (which could not be developed because lack of time but I will mention it here for an eventual future similar project).

4- The other elements of elaborating a dance theatre performance, lights, sound and stage technic.

On top of what the performers are doing on stage, there are other very important elements which are needed to create a stage performance, Light design, soundtrack elaboration and stage scenery. It is usual to say in the profession that light design is 50% of the performance and in certain cases it is not wrong. Light, Sound and Decor are three very important and interesting artistic elements of a performance and they are directly related to technic and engineering. I asked of course to my students what was the field of their study, and as one of my students (??) said that he was studying light and environment design, I thought that it could be very interesting to propose to the student to also be creative in the conception of the technical elements of the performance. There is maybe not the necessary equipment which is normally needed for a real theatre performance, but that

can even be an interesting point of promoting the creativity of the students. The European East countries as by example Poland and Russia, are well know for creating fantastic scenery and light design with very little technical possibilities and small financial budget.

In short, all about this workshop	
1- Body consciousness	Only a very few student had any knowledge and experience of a body and movement practice. In this sense, this workshop has been a very important opportunity to propose them some practical and theoretical information about a field which could be very positive for their psychological and physical health.
2- Body language and creativity	Artistic creativity and Scientific creativity are similar in many point; particularly choreographic art which is dealing with Forms, Space, Time and Motion. To promote creativity is to promote one of the most important side of what is nowadays demanded in activ professional life.
2b- Dance-Theatre expression	Expressionist dance theatre art deals with the human side of the performer. In my workshop, reflexion on oneself as well as reflexion on ones relation toward the others are requested. To promote team work is the best way to prepare people to work together on one project.
3- on stage, in front of a public	In each profession, people who have a position with responsability will have to present himself in front of a public (teachers, searchers, salers, etc..). The experience of stage and public in an artistical contexte is the most ludic way how to approach this kind of experience.
4- Elaboration of a stage performance	Light desin, sound and stage scenery are the very important ellement of a dance theatre performance were art and technic perfectly meet.
4- History of Dance, Dance-Theatre. Introduction to the different body practice as Tai Kyo Ken, Aikido, Kinomichi etc..	The more you know about Nature, the more you enjoy Nature; the more you know about human activities, the more you enjoy sharing with human. A teacher who tells about what passionate him communicate to his student the desire of discovering.

In wich sense could it be positive to a future scientist to follow such a workshop ?.

1 - About the intuitive one and the rational one:

The intuitive one and the rational one are two different way how to approach a concept. Both are required as well to the scientist then to the artist but in quite different proportion and it is not wrong to think that mainly, the dancer follows is intuition and the scientist prefer to listen to his rational side. As a dancer and choreograph, I am thanksfull to the fact that I had the chance to study for a while science, because it helped me to function through the two different way of considering things and helped me to developpe my work. When "intuition" is the only conductor of an artist work, I noticed that this artist could be a great interpretor of his intuition, but if there is not a little influence and control of rational, then a limit will appear and handicap this artist to deal with his gift. I worked many years (thirty years, since 1979) with the great German choreographer Pina Bausch and I had the time to observe how the "the intuitive one and the rational one" could get along in a genius clever way. I could see how she took care to let enough freedom to the "intuitive one" and protected it against the "rational one", but I also could see that for certain other part of the creativ work, she needed the help of the "rational one" in order to get all that genius together.

One of the first thing that is teached to a student in science is to be rational. It is certainly a very important quality which is needed for everyone who will deal with any of the different departements in Science as well as for any human being who wants to function into our society. We could say even that it is a necessary quality to be able to survive on our world.

But a rational way of behaving is also relative to the culture you are in, the rational way of thinking in sciences is relative to the system your working in. What was irrational a hundred years ago in Physics is now totaly accepted as granted. Ptoleme's explanation of our solar system was based on other "rational truth" then Copernic's modele, Newton had to brutalize a certain rational way of thinking to explain why does the planets stay on their orbit and so on...

My knowledge of sciences is pretty limited, but when I read about the history of science and about the many steps that the human knowledge went through till it did get to the point where it is nowadays, I notice that, if the "rational one" is certainly a very important actor in the world of science, it had and will certainly have, to often make room for the "intuitive one" in order to allow Science to developpe.

The history of science and its dicoveries shows certainly how important is the concept of intuition in science. I do not think that any important discovery could have been done without the great intuition of master like Isaac Newton, Jules-Henri Point-Carré, Albert Einstein, and all the others great "artist" who tried to explain our Universe. And this is maybe the point where a workshop based on the idea of teaching the student how to allow themselves to be an artist, could maybe give those students an inch to, in the future, listen sometimes to their intuition.

At the beginning of the XXth. century, Einstein revolutionized our concept of time by relationing it to space, but this great genius did not want to accept the idea that black holes could exist, even if the equation of General Relativity which he discovered did predict the existence of such object which had a such high gravity that even light could not get out of it. Einstein is one of the greatest "scientific artist" in Human History, and to notice

that even this great “artist” could become a victim of his determinist rationality, show how important it can be to prepare scientist student to be open to the unbelievable surprise that the creativity of the Univers still reserve for us.

In dance-theatre, when you create a world on the stage, nothing limits your imagination. Everything is possible. This is the same for the painter who create and represente a world on his canvas. Dali had no rational limits and the clocks could be soft without disturbing anyone; well it maybe did disturb some people as well as Stravinsky did disturb the listeners of his “Rite of Spring” at the Théâtre des Champs Élysés in Paris at his time, but that shows that the concept of what is acceptable or not, evoluate with time. The concept of beauty change from an epoque to another, and what is ugly today, might be beauty tomorrow.

Nowadays,the artist have almost no contrainst to their creativity. Of course they are certain rules you have to follow if you want to be successful on the market of Art, but those considerations relate more to business management then to artistic censure.

2- about humility and illusion

In its irresistible ascension toward complexity, the Univers created the human being, conscious and intelligent. Stars dust got together, the creativity of the Nature came to a spark of life and made appeared a life being creature able to understand the Cosmos. Poets sing its beauty, artist paint its harmony, Art express the human being emotions in front of it, but it is to the scientifics to understand and explain us its secrets and make us discover this miraculous fact: the fact of living in a rational Univers, directed by precise laws which can be perceived and analysed by the human understanding.

“The most ununderstandable is that the Univers is understandable” use to say Einstein.

The attitude of the artist in front of the Univers is humble. The artist can admire the beauty of the Univers, he can tell and show the complexity, the beauty the perversity of the human fellings and emotions, he can get his inspiration from the harmony of the Univers and produce artistical creation which express the sources of his inspiration, but his position and situation toward the Univers will always be and can only be the position of a puppet who is only one tiny element of a immense puzzle and process that he does not understand. Of course, being a human being, the situation of the scientist is the same, but the role of the scientist is to try to understand why are things the way they are, what are those puzzles elements and how does they function ?. And as incredible as it can be, even for a genius as Einstein, the human being, with the help of the scientist is able to propose always more and more explanation and understanding to all those questions. Of course the human being are far away to understand all about the Univers and to be able to give an answer to each question; we can even say that what we believe to understand is just a very little part of what is there to be understud. Since we understud that the holistic and the reductionist approach are complementary, we can decompose Nature in its part and study each of those parts independantly (which is the base of the reductionist method which serve to build a large part of the occidental science) without forgetting that each of those part interconnect with one another and form a harmonic “all” which is more than the sum of its part (which is the base of the holistic concept which serve to build the understanding of the natural world in the Chinese concept of Nature). Well, you are maybe asking yourself why did I start to write about that subject, and what does this has to do with artistic workshop in a scientific University ?. The search for understanding the Univers and how it function is certainly a very hard and demanding trip, but incredibly satisfiying when it shows results and we all, in our everyday life take profit with great delight of the repercussion of those discovering and steps toward to understanding. But no need to say that the feeling of power that knowledge in science bring, can be pretty dangereous and the history of human civilisation has thousand stories to tell us about it. I am not at all mentioning this point to write about the ethic of the scientist, I believe in the honesty of the seacher and like to see him as an artist, passionated by his “art”, totally involved in his search for uderstanding, the rest is matter of business and political power which has nothing to do with our purpose here. But whatever, dealing with the goal of trying to understand the univers can easily give the illusion that we are getting closer to be able to deal with “God” and his ministers. Why not ?, but keeping a line connected to humility, to what makes us the so fragil human being that we are is maybe not a wrong thing, and our history never showed us that we are the wisest creature that Univers created.

So the question is more to know if the fact of developing the sensibility to Art can help a human being to develop his human sensibility ?, if the answer is yes, than to sensitize students in Science and Technology to Art and artistic Creativity is a great idea, and this project is a very constructive project which should get all the possible support and be an example to follow for many other Science University around the world.

I would like to express my respect and thanks to professor Noboru Hidano, professor Roger Pulvers, Mrs Yukari Yamasaki, Mrs Miyuki Kitera for making all this possible.