

Program

***Queer
Contact
Improvisation***

Symposium, Hamburg 2018

Diana Thielen

feminist, safer space! What's that about?

On Empathy- Empathy is a feeling and an enactment of intentional regard for others. It is a positively antagonistic and radical energy in an isolationist culture that promotes self-centeredness. (...)If love is the elimination of the expansive spaces that may separate us, then empathy might very well be understood as the position we must take when the distance is cleared: the movement from the position of egotism to thoughtful concern of the other; the movement from our contented social locations to that of dislocation; the examination of our excess, access, and privileges as possible contributing factors for the denials, lack, and experiences of marginalization in the lives of others; analyses of our various oppressions and the ways we might also oppress. (2014, Darnell L. Moore)

What does queer empowerment mean in the current social, political, economic context for "us"? Who are "we" and why do we meet in a symposium / festival, that positions itself as "queer"? Chris Tedjasukmana writes in the essay "Feel Bad Movement- Affekt, Aktivismus und queere Gegenöffentlichkeiten"(2017) that queer politics are particularly tied to intimate, biographical questions of body, identity, gender, and sexuality. Does Contact Improvisation, as a form, offer us an object of research, to reflect, question and reinvent social, embodied norms? Can we create a space that embraces these intimate, biographical questions of body, identity, gender and sexuality?

Let's create a radical, queer, feminist utopia. A utopia in which vulnerability, empathy and consens can be discovered. I want to give room for queer questions, doubts and experiences that create both overlaps, connections and controversy.

"Axis Syllabus in Contact_Consent Improvisation"

Let's get back to the question of consent: Do we need or want to include verbal communication in Contact Improvisation? What are the possibilities outside verbal communication? The Axis Syllabus Lexicon offers some tips and tricks to examine and read our own body and movements and of those of our partners. It may support an empowered and self-determined improvisation, that seeks for consensual touch and lifting and provides some tools to improvise in contact.

Bio

I am fascinated by the human body in all its expressions: how we move, how we present ourselves, how we position ourselves socially, how we change and adapt over our lifetimes in response to various challenges. As a teacher, I see my strength in my genuine wish to support each individual's journey. Their experiences, as well as, their curiosities, doubts, vulnerabilities and lust to move and study are invited, to create a safe learning atmosphere. Sharing the time and space, rolling, crawling, turning, running and jumping, sweating together is one of my biggest passions, especially when it includes reflection upon social norms and embodied societal behaviours. My passion for networks has intensified in recent years, as I am involved in various networks, collaborative groups and collectives. The "Radical Contact" network is a network of embodied activists and dancers for example. "Poppy" is a curatorial and artistic collective organising events and occurrences at Ponderosa and "Altes Finanzamt" is a collective of artists, creators and performers based in Berlin- Neukölln. And of course, let's not forget the Axis Syllabus International Research Network... all networks feed and challenge my genuine desire to collaborate with diverse creative bodyminds. As well as it regularly ask me to stay with the trouble, to question socialized, embodied behaviours and structures. It enables to experience joy in struggle.

movementactivism.com

Sigrid Bohlens

Contact Improvisation and different qualities of touch

We always touch two at the same moment, ourselves and an object in an simultaneous way. Touch is one of the principal elements for our body, and our life, necessary for the development and functional organisation of the central nervous system. We need it like food, breath and water. While dancing Contact Improvisation we get know the partner, who we touch through the touch. As babies we communicate with touch and we learn to be in balance and wholeness with ourselves and the world around us. Less touch as a child should can bring illness. Touch in Contact Improvisation can provoke perception, the possibility of new ways of feelings and thinking in daily life.

In this workshop we experiment with the different layers of touch, based on Body-Mind Centering, developed by Bonnie Bainbridge Cohen. Beginning with a light hands-on work on the partner's skin at the leg or the forearm we feel the skin and through our mind (trying to sense the tissues and the bones in our own body) we make contact with the partner, letting the focus sink deeper through the layers of the soft tissue between the skin and the bone and then including the bone, without pressing or holding.

After that body-work we begin to stimulate and increase awareness through the skin of our whole body by rolling in and out on the floor. Keeping our mind focused on the meeting with the ground and the area of changes in the body-tissues we develop the movement through all level in the space. We integrate and respond to different body-tissues and qualities of touch in our Contact dance. Touch is supporting energetic levels from the skin into the body in resonance with our own touch and we can integrate this feelings in our Contact dances.

Bio

Movement pedagogue, teacher for sports and dance, dancer, studies of New Dance with release, improvisation, alignment, performance inter alia in Amsterdam, education in yoga and meditation.

I studied Linda Hartley's 3 years Integrative Bodywork and Exercise Therapy (IBMT), based on the work of Body-Mind Centering (R) with the completion of the diploma. I contributed as an assistant to her program of education in Hamburg for some years. My approach in my work is Somatic Movement, based on dance, Yoga, Feldenkrais, Aikido, Tai Chi and Capoeira. I have been teaching Contact Improvisation, New Dance and Performance for many years. My heart beats for the peculiarity of the mediation as well as "being in the moment", forming the process of creativity in my improvisation- and performance-work.

I am a founding member and member of the artistic organization team of the association Triade Tanzforum Hamburg and part of the artistic direction of the Nordtanzfestival and the supraregional Contact Improvisation Jams in Hamburg.

Frédéric Holzwarth

Responsive Clarity—queering dominance & submission

“As a dance technique, CI challenges us to embody a diverse range of qualities and skills that draw from across the gender spectrum. All CI dancers are encouraged to support and be supported, to initiate and follow, to be soft and to be strong, to sense and to act. In combining both masculine- and feminine-coded qualities, CI technique actively queers gender, inviting us all to play beyond the confines of the binary.”

Kristin Horrigan in: “Queering Contact Improvisation – Addressing Gender in CI Practice and Community”, Contact Quarterly winter/spring 2017

queer dominance =? sensitive control <?> queer submission =? alert softness

Polarities can create a productive tension. In a contact duet we can meet in contrasting roles and enjoy this tension. Leading and following is a classic dichotomy. It is characterized by giving impulses and manipulating on the one side and softness and yielding on the other.

Like in a fractal, these polarities are nested and each pole contains its opposite. An impulse for leading contains a direction, a force and that it can be understood: also clarity. Clarity and force contain understanding and softness! Softness contains consent and trust – and thus again: clarity in the contact and self-empowerment.

No matter, which roles we typically assume in the polarity of leading and following – in a contact duet we can explore both – and sense to what extent the opposition reveals a unity.

I propose to call the quality that links these poles: responsive clarity. With the group, I want to explore, sense into, and discuss this quality and to ask to what extent we can switch roles fluidly and how polarities may be enriching to us.

Performance Lecture: In a duet (Katya and Frederic) we play out these roles. A is completely passive, and lets herself be moved, yields in. B moves and directs. Spontaneous changes of roles. Dancers speak out from the experiences of the moment. Format from Heike Pourian and Eva Daubert.

Class: We play with each other and with: becoming soft, being passive, being moved and lead. Yielding to the forces and submitting to the lead. How does it feel to be moved, manipulated and lead? How does that match your self-image? How does it feel to take the lead and to control, to exert force, direction and power? How does it taste? And which common quality links both? Can we connect to this quality and then be available for switching roles in each moment? To switch from submission to dominance and then giving impulses – and in the dominance to sense every slight impulse and then to instantly yield to them?

Bio

Since 2013 I teach continuous classes and workshops of contact improvisation. I have a deep trust in form, which to me is a transformative and emancipatory practice that can empower people and communities. In practicing it, we can update our self and body images, rethink our social roles and gender relationships and also research any kind of individual questions.

In teaching, I create an environment that allows for varied personal experiences. Since 2017 I am learning Gestalt Therapy and am in a 4-year training. This and the philosophy of the mind influence my view on teaching.

solego.wixsite.com/frederic-ci

Alessandro Pedori

Contact impro as a tool to explore non-monogamous and queer dynamics

This lab will focus on what happens when a couple (of dancers) interact with others: other single dancers, other duets, groups. Contact improvisation, being non-verbal and physical, is an amazing way to very quickly create a very strong, at times emotionally intense relationship: it can last only a few minutes, but sometime it covers all emotional palette, from "oh, you also like dancing with me" to "why did you stop, what did I do" to "I need more space, it's not you, it's me (it's you)", and more. Additionally, it is intrinsically queer: the roles are not dictated by anything but the spur of the moment, the capabilities of the bodies, and the reciprocal intentions.

This will be an exploration of relationship questions

"I also want to dance with that person, but I don't want to stop dancing with you"

"I only want to dance with you, I don't want anyone else"

"I want to dance with that couple, do they welcome others, or would they prefer being alone together?"

"I want to dance with that person, they are in a duet, I will join the duet"

"Can I join that duet?"

"Does my partner want to dance with others, and me? Only with me? Only with others?"
and more.

These questions naturally arise in interactions, and probably have been present in many dances, and social gathering we participated in. We will put the focus on them for once, keeping an eye on deconstructing any expectation of fixed gender and role, and partly questioning the boundaries of the selves: we will consider what happens to individuals and groups as they join, split, rejoin, negotiate boundaries and unions. The lab will start with some simple tools to enable strong duets (and more), and to note if other people are welcoming or not, welcomed or not, wanting to join, or not. We will then explore, and sometime stop to verbalize what we feel has happened, and compare notes.

Bio

Alex spent the last 15 years putting together being an engineer, a mover/dancer/performer, and a non-monogamy activist. He proposes projects with names like "body for brainiacs", "relationship cookbook" and "adult playground project", likes showing body stuff to geeks, and geeky way of thinking to body practitioners, and exploring the techniques that make "being in relationship with others" flow better. Sometime, he even succeeds.

body4brainiacs.com/playshops/

relationship-cookbook.com

Olaya Aramo

QUEER CONTACT IMPRO - BEYOND CONSENT

For queer contact impro practitioners, the questions related to eroticism among the contact impro community are particularly important. But, the question about eroticism in contact impro could be already contextualized in an heterosexist framework we might not assume in the first instance. So we, as queer contact impro practitioners should reframe it beyond hetero-centred, genital-centred, coito-centred, romantic/gender-centred assumptions. This opens up the question: what is it a queer eroticism? And what is a queer eroticism in connection with contact impro practice? Is it any different from what we have identified as eroticism in regular contact improvisation contexts? How is it different? How deep can we commit with these differences? How they divert a virtual queer contact impro community from the general one? Or, how can we commit as queer contact impro practitioners to affect the contact impro community so it engages with our shared broad political values? To put this in physical terms, we will focus on the issue of consent to touch. Who is responsible for consent? What is it to consent in physical terms and within a practice where spoken language is not the first nor the more used way to communicate? ¿What is it to express consent in movement terms? ¿What is it to ask for consent in movement terms? Is it 'consent' a concept that helps us to understand the politics of the movement in contact improvisation? Or is it not enough? Can we depict concepts which cluster agency, limits, eroticism, respect, empathy altogether? As queer committed dancers, we need to face these issues with both a physical, political and emotional approach, believing that this serves to the reinforcement of the roots of contact impro practice itself.

Bio

Aramo Olaya is a feminist and queer activist and a contact improvisation and tango dancer who has spent the last 15 years researching in gender and dance. They hold a phd on sociology of gender, a degree in philosophy and have formed part of the queer and feminist political movement in Madrid for many years, apart from teaching history of feminism and gender theory at Universidad Complutense de Madrid. They organized the first International Congress on Philosophy of Dance in Madrid last June 2017, they form part of the Queer Tango Project platform and they have studied contact impro in Madrid with Cristiane Boullosa and Diana Bonilla. Olaya is currently working with contact impro and tango in Valencia, always from a queer approach.

Beate Absalon

Lustvolle Verobjektivierung in der Contact Improvisation

Andere Menschen als Mittel zum Zweck zu nutzen und ihre Kräfte, Eigenschaften und Äußerlichkeiten zu versachlichen, wird für gewöhnlich als unerwünschtes und moralisch verwerfliches Verhalten problematisiert. Nicht nur als Phänomen in der Kapitalismuskritik, auch in feministischen Theorien wird Verdinglichung als Effekt der Geschlechterungleichheit kritisiert, der zur Degradierung von Frauen zum (Sexual-)Objekt führt. Im Spannungsfeld dieser bedenklichen Tendenzen steht jedoch auch die Möglichkeit, Verobjektivierung als produktive, wichtige, sogar wohltuende und lustvolle Erfahrung zu erleben. Diskutiert werden soll, inwiefern Contact Improvisation auf ästhetischer, philosophischer, und persönlicher Ebene als experimenteller Erfahrungsraum für positive Verdinglichungen verstanden werden kann. Der Vortrag möchte dazu einladen, Erfahrungen auszutauschen darüber, wie empowernd es sein kann, wenn man mal nicht als bestimmte Person, sondern einfach als physikalische Masse wahrgenommen wird, die ein anderer für Bewegungsimpulse nutzt. Aber auch, welche ambivalenten, vielleicht schwierige Gefühle und Situationen dadurch entstehen. Und letztlich, inwiefern das Identifizieren als „Nicht-Mensch“ auch zur Queerness gehört, die mit klassischen Rollenzuschreibungen bricht.

Bio

Beate Absalon lebt in Berlin und arbeitet als Kulturwissenschaftlerin an den Schnittstellen von Theorie und Praxis. In ihrem Studium widmet sie sich Themenkomplexen um Körper, Affekte und Sexualität und ihrer Repräsentation in diversen Künsten und Popkultur und fragt nach ihren Techniken und widerständigem Potential. Neben der Leitung von Seminaren im akademischen Umfeld bietet sie im Kollektiv „luhmen d'arc“ (www.luhmendarc.de) körper-, spiel und bewegungsorientierte Workshops zu BDSM, kink und conscious sexuality an.

Ali Schwartz

[Filling] the GAP?

„Relaxed and alert, with a sense of concentration and humor is a useful stance.“
The Underscore, What it is (N.S.Smith)

A study of the unknown.
The inbetween is a space. It's nature indefinite.
Be in awe.
We will play with scores and fuck with our stimulus-reaction patterns.

Bio

I am a dancer based in Leipzig and involved with collaborative projects connecting art, education and activism. I studied Philosophy, English and Physical Education and Contemporary Dance, CI and Hip Hop in NYC and Jerusalem. I have worked in formal education, in inclusive settings, with refugees, with seniors and NGOs in Palestine, Israel, Iran and India. With "contact bewegen e.V." I am researching the potential of CI for self-empowerment and community building for a more diverse body of people.



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