

On the Training Value of Contact Improvisation

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ABSTRACT. *Undoubtedly, dance is an art that expresses human emotions, while improvisational dance is a wave in the ocean of dance. Contact improvisation as a training method to open up physical creativity, it lets people begin to seriously look at and perceive their bodies, and has important training value and meaning in stimulating physical potential, enhancing an aesthetic experience, expanding social needs, and promoting the healthy development of physical and mental unity. At the same time, as a driving force of aesthetic education and a bridge connecting cultural exchanges, it plays an indispensable value in dance choreography, performance, and educational development.*

KEYWORDS: *Contact improvisation, Body, Aesthetic education, Value*

1. Introduction

1.1 Overview of Contact Improvisation

“Dance improvisation” is a way of expressing an intuitive action produced by dancers to inner feelings or external stimuli, and it is divided into two practice forms: music improvisation and contact improvisation. “Dance improvisation” is often used in practical creation. Improvisation and creation are combined into one. It is not only the companion of creation but also the method of choreography and the source of inspiration for creation.

“Contact improvisation” is one of the restrictive forms of “improvisation choreography”. In training, contact is the prerequisite and “stimulus-response” is the basic mode of action, that is, Shifting the center of gravity of two or more people ,and react immediately. If “dance improvisation” is an exploration of body, gravity, time, space, human contact, and the relationship between people and objects, “contact improvisation” is a process of recognizing the above exploration.

As a creative method, “contact improvisation” can not only enrich classroom teaching methods and promote effective teaching by teachers but also refine effective expression methods for choreographers' works. At the same time, as a training method, it has important significance in solving physical activity, opening

up physical creativity, redefining aesthetic experience, and expanding social needs.

1.2 Contact Improvisational Development Trends

Contact improvisation originated in the United States in the early 1970s. By then, the postmodernist movement was in its prime, and the younger generation began to challenge authority. As a gathering place for liberals, the Judson Theater, a large number of pioneer artists emerged and began to try various experiments. Among them, Steve Paxton is the core figure of the foundational performance in the Judson Theater. He was once influenced by Cunningham's dance thoughts. He paid particular attention to the body movement and re-examined a dance medium with a radical attitude. He found inspiration from Eastern Zen and Japanese Aikido, awakened the push-pull structure of the human body, and developed the basic pattern of dance movements. In 1972, he formally proposed a concept of "contact improvisation", and promotes the concept of "everyone can dance", conveys the democratic spirit of the body, and spreads the core values of life to all parts of the world through physical practice.

Looking at development trends at home and abroad, contact improvisation has had a greater impact on different groups of people in different fields such as community building, performing arts, and dance education. If contact improvisation is involved in disadvantaged groups in the form of physical practice, through mental and physical training, this not only allows them to feel the charm of contact improvisation but also benefit them, continuously improve their aesthetic experience and promote physical and mental health, then the democratic spirit conveyed by contact improvisation will make popularization more valuable.

2. Contact Improvisation Training with the Mind-Body Dialogue-Taking Irene Course Practice as an Example

Irene sposetti, a cross-border performing artist, educator, and choreographer, has a diversified artistic background in classical music and dance. Using the international organization Being Motion as a platform, he has long been committed to sharing and dissemination of improvisation and art education. Her dance takes contact improvisation as the research object, and takes contact improvisation basic skills training and improvisation as the course training content, continuously expanding the students' physical skills and functions. The author is fortunate enough to get in touch with the course training and combine theory with practice to explain the profound experience and knowledge gained in the course training.

2.1 From Inner Consciousness-to Open External Sense-to Release Physical and Mental Energy

Contact improvisation training starts with everyone takes possession of the space, scattered in the corners of the huge space, accompanied by holding your breath,

letting out your thoughts and breathing, sitting cross, or lying down. Everyone imagines that they are bred in nature and absorb the energy of nature. A drop of water or a ray of sunlight is a source of energy. Dancers feel the flow of water or the touch of sunlight, feel the connection between the body and nature, emphasize the self-consciousness of the body, and form a magnetic field for the communication between the body and the mind.

The subject of improvisation training is the body of the participant. Starting from the inner consciousness of the body, open up the outer sensations in the dance sensation, namely touch, hearing, sight, smell, and taste, and constantly explore and amplify the feelings at each moment, thereby, strengthening the perception of the body. With the body and mind in an open and active state, the participants pay attention to and focus on the continuous dynamics of the body. Through muscle's contraction and relaxation, the fast and slow heartbeat and breathing rhythms, emotional excitement and gentleness, to feel the body and receive information from your partner and the outside world, integrates the inner experience of the body into the outer movement, and incorporates it into the trajectory of the movement, and then starts a self-mind-body dialogue and releases physical and mental energy.

2.2 From the External Form-Return to Self-Awareness-to Achieve Physical and Mental Balance

Every encounter between the bodies is inseparable from proprioception. Transmit body movement information and state to the brain through the kinesthetic and balance sensor in proprioception, stimulate the brain's nerve center and form kinesthesia in the brain, or transmit body balance information to the cerebellum to form a sense of balance, then, to the proprioceptive movement have overall knowledge and grasp.

The practice form of contact improvisation takes the ground as the focal point, establishes a connection between the two bodies and forms a contact point, and delivers off-center body weight to the dance partner. As the contact point continues to change in different positions of the body, the two partners' body conducts the active and Passive relationship conversion, and then complete the center of gravity support and transformation, force interaction, and inertia generation. In the process of dynamic communication, at the same time, it receives information from the outside world and then adjusts its motion trajectory, thus continuously exploring the movement and transfer of weight and energy in space. When the body is working in a disordered energy state, if you do not adjust the breathing rhythm and emotional changes on time, and consciously correct the movement patterns that are contrary to the body mechanics, and consciously recover from risky imbalances and unexpected movements, you will be bound to break the balance between movement trajectory and body state. Based on people's instinct for survival, the trust and tacit relationship between dance partners can be established through physical dialogue, sharing physical and psychological experience, and achieving physical and mental balance with each other.

3. Conclusion

3.1 The Value of Improvisation Training in Professional Groups

3.1.1 Stimulate the Creativity of Choreographers and Realize the Personal Expression

Contact improvisation training has a certain inspiration for choreographers in the practical application of choreography courses. Whether they receive training in various choreography techniques such as improvisational choreography, musical choreography and environmental choreography that combine theory and practice in the classroom or explore different ways and possibilities in life. Contact improvisation training is the auxiliary tools for dancers serve in creative expression, it's also certain nourishment for them to stimulate their physical potential and creative inspiration.

If you compare creation to a “pocket”, contact improvisation is the food in the “pocket”. It provides choreographers with a source of inspiration and sensory space for creativity. The “pocket” of creation constantly releases energy and generates a lot of unexpected dance material, combination method, and composition of the schedule. The choreographer turns the tangible technique into the intangible or is digested or discarded, to assist and promote personal expression. Contact improvisation training is not only used as a creative method by choreographers, it also plays a unique role in stimulating physical potential, opening up creativity, and realizing free expression of personal creation.

3.1.2 Promote Effective Teaching of Teachers and Enrich Classroom Forms

Contact improvisation training to enter the campus has already taken shape as early as in Western universities. According to the article “Rational Reflection on “Improvement Dance” by Teacher Yu Ping, the teaching materials for “improvement dance” training in European dance education mainly consist of the eight training topics of space exploration, physical exploration, gravity exploration, time exploration, human-human contact exploration, human-object relationship exploration, and environment design are all systematic explorations of the relationship about the action constitutive, which are mainly implemented in the choreography and instruction. It provides lessons for domestic comprehensive colleges, and incorporating it into the curriculum .Contact improvisation training not only promotes effective teaching by teachers, perfects the content of teaching courses, but also acts as a supplement to curriculum creation and enriches classroom teaching methods. According to the overall situation of the discipline positioning and development of the schools in each region, the content of professional courses and the quality of students, teachers effectively use the form of contact improvisation training to teach students in accordance with their aptitude, based on solving students' physical initiative and opening up creativity. The teaching difficulty can be adjusted in time, from simple to complex, from easy to difficult, and try to implement a new model of multi-disciplinary cross-integration, and then

optimize the teaching content, and promote the development of the curriculum in all aspects, multiple levels, and flexibility.

3.1.3 Exploit the Physical Potential of Actors and Strengthen Emotional Intelligence

Contact improvisation training is the engine of the body, which promotes the development of the actor's body and the start of creativity. When the body becomes sensitive and the mind becomes open, the perspective and angle of seeing the world are also different. Therefore, to develop the body is to develop the wisdom of the mind. During the contact improvisation training process, the performer needs to keep the body and mind open and active, in the form of two-person contact, starting from the point-line-surface to explore the trajectory of the body movement and find the law, then, transform the active and passive relationship, and Respond freely, autonomously and spontaneously to stimuli at any time, making the senses and body consciousness more sensitive. At the same time, consciously breaking the habitual movement laws, looking for space, time and force effects to flow and intersperse, from double contact to no contact to contact, to achieve the smoothest and most tacit coordination of each other's bodies. Contact improvisation training not only emphasizes the use of physical flexibility but also examines the dancer's kinesthetic recognition ability. It not only trains the dancer's ability to respond in time, but also trains the dancer's emotional intelligence, that is the five aspects of understanding their own emotions, managing emotions, self-motivation, and cognition other people's emotions and interpersonal relationship management ,and reflect the individual's social adaptability.

3.2 The Value of Improvisation Training in Non-Professional Groups

3.2.1 Build Social Multi-Channels

Contact improvisation gathers in informal groups, on a random scale, and everyone can dance. In the early 20th century, represented by avant-garde dancers such as Cunningham, Trisha Brown, and Paxton, they began to dance in non-traditional dance performance spaces such as rooftops, streets, squares, parking lots, art galleries, and cafes. It breaks the traditional mirror-frame theater model, blurs the distance between the actors and the audience, and then brings dance into a wider world, making it return to people's daily life. Therefore, free gatherings called "jam" have gradually emerged for dancers who are keen on contact improvisation. Its open concept attracts people from non-dance fields and different physical training backgrounds to meet together, and everyone dances in close physical contact to share the warmth and happiness of the group, use silent language to soothe the hearts that have been isolated for a long time, and build mutual trust.

3.2.2 Build Cultural Exchange Bridges

With the diversified development of society, more and more people have begun

to engage in the form of improvisation training, so the forgotten body gradually arouses everyone's attention and reflection. Contact improvisation training emphasizes a common body and an equal body, and there is no longer a transgressive relationship between each person's body. Its tolerance blurs the boundaries of gender, breaks racial discrimination, accommodates people with different skin colors from different countries and cities, and redefines the intention of touching the body between the sexes and between different races. It not only uses the body to build a bridge for communication between people, expand social needs, build social relationships, but also promote cultural exchanges between people, cities, and communities. It reflects not only a consciousness of body culture but also a status quo of social changes.

3.2.3 Paly the Role of Education Guidance

Contact improvisation training redefines the aesthetic experience and plays the role of education guidance. In the practice of contact improvisation, Paxton focuses on pure physical experience. Using the most basic "stimulus-response" action mode in the animal world, it opens the dancer's sensory system and body consciousness, and stimulate the People's aesthetic experience by increasing physical experience. Contact improvisation training is to inspire participants to achieve the purpose of aesthetic education, so that they can learn to feel and experience, discover and create, obtain better aesthetic experience from physical experience, help them find their self-feeling and improve self-awareness, and cultivate their perception of beauty, intuitive judgment, and creativity, so that they form a complete psychological structure, and promote the development of physical and mental health. Contact improvisation training emphasizes a common body and an equal body, restores the body's position in the aesthetic field, realizes the person's dominant position in education, and plays a role in cultivating a complete person.

To sum up, most people are suffering from general anxiety in the 21st century. With the development of society, the body and mind are becoming more and more separated. As the carrier of dance, we should reflect on how to understand the body and connect the whole world. Recalling Nietzsche's "everything starts from the body", contact improvisation as a training method to open up physical creativity allows people to start to look at and perceive their bodies seriously, It has important training value and significance in stimulating physical potential, enhancing an aesthetic experience, expanding social needs and promoting the healthy development of physical and mental unity. At the same time, as a driving force of aesthetic education and a bridge connecting cultural exchanges, it plays an important role in choreography, performance and educational development.

References

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