

PERFORM BACK SCORE

*Conditions
for the Emergence
of Poetics*

Reflections

Contents

Note of Intention _____	4
<i>PBScore - Conditions for the Emergence of Poetics</i>	
Lilia Mestre	
<i>Instructions</i> _____	5
<i>Set Up</i> _____	5
<i>PBScore — A way of life</i> _____	6
Lilia Mestre	
<i>The Politics of the Perform Back Score</i> _____	16
Geert Opsommer	
<i>Intimacies in Criticalities in the Perform Back Score</i> _____	20
Philippine Hoegen	
<i>Meta-Pornography of the Soul</i> _____	25
Yaari Shalem	
<i>Liberating Scores</i> _____	28
Elke Van Campenhout	

Note of Intention

PBScore — Conditions for the Emergence of Poetics

Lilia Mestre

The proposal for the Block I / 2015 was to plunge into a study about the conditions for the emergence of poetics. Poetics used here as 'acts' that transform our ways of perceiving, as situations that invite another understanding of 'things'. The block unfolded through the PBScore practice and the workshops around scores and performativity.

If we think performance as the coming-forth of poetics, as a framed re-actualization of what is there (a part of the world), then we can give focus to the relations and tensions between what is offered and what can be perceived in a reciprocal act of exchange, between performance and audience. Following this thought, performance becomes the enhancement zone for a shared inquiry, an area through which attention is created, a place of inter-subjective research.

In the context of a pass, a study of the conditions for the emergence of poetics through the pluri-disciplinary approach of the participants, enabled the possibility to question the methods and strategies each of us used and to observe the impact they produce as forms of share-ability.

By crossing the other's practice we get re-informed about our own ways of doing, one's own methodology, one's own critical approach, one's own aesthetics and simultaneously we contaminate each other blurring the lines between the individual, the collective and the context.

PBScore is a tool to understand and analyze the conditions for the emergence of poetics in a collective environment and to bring to the fore the core of each singular proposal. It's a score that focuses on the performativity of any act of 'framed communication' and wants to get closer through experience and reflection to the ontology of performance. It's a sweet confrontational working zone made of exposures and critical implication.

The Block I / 2015 investigated formats coming from different practices (music, choreography, theater, drawing, philosophy) through workshops with Eric Thielemans, Elke Van Campenhout and Pierre Rubio, Ana Hoffner, Antonia Baehr, Daniel Blanga-Gubbay, Nikolaus Gansterer, Emma Cocker and Mariella Grail.

Instructions

Taking as a principle that the artwork raises questions and doesn't give answers the proposal for PBScore is a sort of Q&A in 9 sessions through performative situations limited in time and space. The series of responses will function as new performative situations that raise (an)other(s) question(s) or problematic (s) and so forth.

The performances can adopt any kind of mediums and strategies.

To play the score the participants have to be present in person. We work with the people present and the score is not interrupted by the absence of participants. It's possible to join for the first time or to continue the score any time.

The first performances that start the score are a gift to the group. This score will also be a documentation practice that questions performance as a document.

The performances will be recorded on video and can be accessed by the group anytime.

The invitation is to meet once a week for 3 hours between January and March 2015.

Set up

First session

→ Every participant will present a performance of maximum 5 minutes.

→ The performances will be shown one after the other without interruption.

→ After assisting to the series, each participant will chose to which performance they want to respond.

→ To end the session there will be a discussion about the problematics that emerged based on keywords every participant singled out. A report will be made each time

→ Together we'll choose for a space and time for the next session.

Sessions 2 till 9

→ Every participant will display her /his response in a 5 minutes performance.

→ After all presentations we'll assign together the next repliers.

→ Discussion about the problematics that emerged.

→ Together we'll choose for a space and time for the next session.

PBScore

A Way of Life

Lilia Mestre

Perform Back Score was a proposal for the block Jan/ April 2015 of the post master program a.pass (advanced performance and scenography studies) in Brussels. The program is developed through 4 month blocks, each of them concentrating on a specific curatorial proposal dealing with contemporary art practices, the present socioeconomic paradigm and the role of education.

As associate program curator for the first four months of 2014, 2015 and 2016 my focus was and is on the way systems of interaction in the arts contribute to the creation of knowledge, first of all in the educational context, and consequently, I believe, in other social environments. I take these systems as scores that, when followed rigorously, demand the individual engagement and resources of the participants, in order to create a much needed share-ability within a system of production and observation.

In the act of giving attention to one's own work, the other's work and also the group and the ecological and social contexts of art making, are reflected and expanded. The inter-subjective bond is formed somewhere beyond the concrete art works and practices, in the act of paying attention, of observing and being observed.

In 2014 I proposed a score for dialogue through writing, titled "Writing Scores", for which the participants were invited to meet weekly for a Q&A session. Writing was the tool to deepen the observation of one's own work methodologies and interests, as well as a resource to develop the act of writing itself. This score allowed for a valuable understanding of the individual and collective practices and stressed writing as a working tool for collaboration. This time, in 2015, the focus was on performance as a discursive practice.

PBScore

PBScore is a score based on performance as a form of dialogue. For every session each participant presented a maximum 5 minutes long performance. All were shown one after the other, without interruption, during our weekly meetings.

While assisting in each other's performances, participants took notes and from those notes key words were selected to start a discussion about our impressions. At the end of each session participants chose whom they wanted to reply to the week after. In between sessions a report was written based on the keywords and the conversation that followed. The 9 sessions took place once a week between January and March 2015.

What happened was that each participant of the score sessions through the performance exposed his/her own semantics, by constructing a response to another participant, which activated a critical position that in its turn became the object of critical observation. The players, by accepting the pre-established rules, agreed to play the game that took them out of their daily routine and transported them into a concrete situation limited in time and space. This specific score dealt with the exclusion of daily life and habitual practice, and the inclusion in a dialogue through singular aesthetics.

The participants, instead of relating to materials they had selected through their own interests and methodology, had to relate to materials coming from the other participants, coaxing them onto unfamiliar territory. The overall format of presentation was also not a familiar one, even though it mimicked stage conditions. A room in a room created by mobile walls, a video camera standing outside the space in the centre, the other participants standing behind the camera (unless it was the performer.) The same situation restarting the following week at point zero. The number and the mood of the players changed each time we restarted, allowing for radical exposure and deep critique. The players changed every week, absences worked through and over. By playing the score there was the acceptance of inconsistency, of moving through blurry waters, of taking care of the spaces and gaps in-between. What kind of attention is given when one spends time reflecting and trying to respond carefully to another's aesthetic proposal?

There is a strong political position proposed in the giving of time, taking the other seriously, paying attention to someone or something that might - and most probably will not - give you anything concrete back. If it were not for the dialogue that is indispensable for the sustainable practicing of being alive, being human.

The score as partner that speaks back/Performance as feedback study

The first impulse to make such a proposal came from my desire to make art speak through its own practice. I wanted to confront theoretical discourse to other forms of language, in this case the performance and its discursive potential itself. Not in a linear, brick by brick, way of constructing meaning, but in an assemblage of atemporal experiences. The performances replied to previous performances, creating another time-space relation to the original questions. The over-time significance was built up through bubbles, linked by affinities, creating a rhizomatic structure for thought and experience. I'm very interested in the idea of emphasising method as a collaborator that foregrounds the dialogue between several elements and layers of the art works. When we consider the structure of a project as an active collaborator, by making its conditions operational and visible, we engage in the observation of those conditions, revealing their intrinsic potential for communication, sharing and learning. PBScore's intention is to invite the structure to be a partner for reflection, by capturing the work in restrictions (time, spatial conditions, technical tools) thus forcing it to spill over its own edges when manipulated, crafted and exposed to others. The score as a structure allowed to set up

the rules of the game and generated a dynamic of encounters that became the container for the performance experiences. In the case of PBScore, the co-habitation of the performances, the observation lens (score), the subjects and the time we shared, were all partakers in the action of learning and constituted the conditions for the emergence of meaning and its share-ability.

For example: some of the participants decided to work with the same material during the 9 sessions, which made the material expose its flexibility, discovering situations that would not have ever existed if the material had been confined to its 'proper' context. In these cases the score worked as a lens, amplifying the potential of the material and shifting our attention as witnesses to the potential inherent in the material. Others worked more intuitively, choosing one element of the performance they had to reply to, and transforming it, giving it another meaning, deviating it from its first sense. Some rather functioned as translators of performances, or in some cases a subject-like, for example, the 'hand' - became the topic for a long sequence of proposals and responses.

Obviously not all these responses worked out. Many questions came up as to the overall sense of some of the proposals. In some cases the non-sensical quality worked critically, at other times as negations, or as empathic gestures.

Laboratory/observatory

As an laboratory/observatory this process raised some questions: "What do we do when we respond to each other? What criteria do we use to select what to respond to? Critical thought? The affect towards another? Philosophical positioning? Political correctness? Desire?"

PBScore wanted to isolate responses in time and space in order to observe and reflect on dialogical mechanisms between the object of observation and the observer, between the one who answers and the one who listens. The process of this observation was individual and private at first, and then became individual and collective in the moment of sharing. The weekly meetings and the time for reflection and constructing responses had quite different qualities in the process of the score. On the one hand the in-between periods in which each participant had the other in mind, living together in a way with the proposal s/he had to reply to, and on the other hand the exposure of each participant during the collective weekly moments. These two divergent poles of activity combined the subjective agency of the participants with the social agencies created by the context of a.pass.

These intimacy and 'extimacy' moments elaborated on the process of learning. Not just as an individual practice depending on each

person's singular perception, but extending it to social and collective environments. In this case the environment of the post-master in performance and scenography studies participants, that work in an environment with a focus on self-education and collaboration. My interest at this point was to practice the construction of art (knowledge) through exposure, share-ability and critical endeavour in a context of plural aesthetics. What happens when one has to engage with the work of another when at first instance there is no affinity? What happens if there is a void, an incapacity of response? Or the other way around, what happens when the work of another seems to speak a language that seems very close to you?

The interest was not in creating a common standpoint for our different perceptual conditions and reflections on the performance objects that we were part of, but in creating an environment where those conditions and reflections could co-exist and be exchanged, allowing for critical observation, empathy, accidental correspondences, nothing, etc. More than a place for common understanding, we created an experimental surface for communication in artistic research where one could observe one's own strategies but also the ones of others, all of them contributing to a singular engagement within a group of obviously heterogeneous beings forming a plurality.

I mean by this that the multi-focal lens of this score / tool is an apparatus for the co-habitation of different aspects of being together, becoming a mirror of the situation itself. A mirror for the sociability implied in art making.

This aspect was also enhanced by some performances that asked for the participation of all people present, breaking the separation between the performance and the audience and engaging in another form of socialisation. But big contrasts happened when the next performance was a dance solo, exposing the phenomenon of being traversed by vital forces, or a video piece with historical concerns on the notion of display, maintaining in both cases a classical relation between performance and audience.

PBScore derives from my desire to use performance practice in the service of dialogical contexts such as schools, art laboratories, performative encounters or any other environment in which the study of art, perception and knowledge processes is at stake. It's a learning-by-doing tool that pays attention to attention, that wants to go beyond the production of art and wants to engage in the production of life through artistic practice. Is that possible?

I'm interested in a 'practice the practice' tool that sustains learning-by-experience and supports the development of our relations towards the world through our

concerns about the practice itself. A way to get closer, to look deeper, and at the end a way to experience present and presence. A way to re-actualise ourselves through the politics inherent in such systems of awareness, collaboration and responsibility.

Theatre

I would like to make an analogy to the theatre apparatus where the performers and the audience use the physical, social and political conditions of that environment as indicators of a way of looking, a frame for the aesthetic experience.

The theatre is an observatory par excellence but maybe one that is a bit too well-known. I don't think the audience presupposes anymore that everyone that sees a performance at the same time would have the same kind of interaction with it. But I want to insist exactly on that point, and try to not pre-suppose anything. Just be there, regardless of the strong drive towards standardisation in the current political climate. I'm looking here at the physical theatre and at performance (in all its forms) as places/spaces of diversity and difference which propose a way of thinking the arts as a perceptual apparatus that provokes singular relations between the individual, the collective and the political.

And with this in mind my attention at this point goes to the question: "What happens when the theatre also allows for forms of non-representation, for states of presence that enhance our sociability, our criticality, our life processing capacities?". There is a lot to say about this and many works lately develop from this question, from the academic realm to the social field.

In the case of PBScore the art maker and the spectator were part of the same group, alternating positions and being knowledgeable of both sides, augmenting exactly the capacity of the feedback machine that art can be, but also making from each of the participants a producer and dissolving the idea of audience.

The PBScore is an individual learning tool in a collective environment, not searching for a conclusion but for a way of working together as neighbours, as important feedbackers, as engaged partners, as critical colleagues, as potential opponents in a process of orientation towards something, towards the communication of perceptual knowledge, towards the political in art making.

Score as ecosystem

As an interface for communication the score allows for the emergence of different voices like ghosts haunting the sensible acknowledgment of knowledge, process and concepts of art. Each participant had the same conditions to draw intentions, design orientations, make statements, have fun, take a piss, etc..., through performance practice. The scores created a force surface for the exposure of multiple existences. But what maintained the desire to come back next week? Was it the responsibility towards the other? The curiosity for the next response? The will to belong to a group? The drive of performing?

PBScore as a horizontal structure brought about the responsibility of the ones involved as far as they wanted to be involved. It's a structure that sustained and renewed itself on the basis of the participants and their presence. Like in any ecosystem, the species that constitute it, are the creators and instigators of the development of the ecosystem itself, their interaction constitutes its sustainability. Interestingly enough, the positions of each participant were not stable and none of them represented a fixed part of the ecosystem, but rather all of them were mutating pieces of a puzzle that constructed itself on the go. Mutual opportunism and generosity are two sides of the same coin, like a parasitic system without aim, living for the sake of living while deepening the understanding of that specific life.

This experience brings to the fore a complex number of elements that are inherent to a way of feeling/thinking. It reveals a universe of interrelations between the chosen elements, forming forces of speech and the sensible that contain political perspectives and ideological concerns. Both aesthetics and ethics are intertwined in a concise moment of exposure and attention. Justification is out of the picture. Observation and the 'being with it' rather are the rules through which feeling and opinion appear. Every participant is a centre with a culture, a history, a socioeconomic reality, a philosophical attitude creating therefor a poli-centered temporary community. In my opinion PBScore enhanced being plural and different as fundamentals of an ecosystem where each of the participants has a voice, where there's no obligation, where the ecosystem can't exist beyond the presence and engagement of who is part of it but exists on the tension of the plural.

It makes me want to write down some formats that were at stake with this group of people. From dream oracles exposed through dance, a historical fiction figure revealed through the lecture performance format, trans-gender being re-actualised through documentary and live transformation, pornography on the internet as the outcome of a random internet research, the self-becoming through the extreme use of theatre apparatus (lights, costumes,

seduction, etc), the concept of the angel creating the availability to receive/ become and much more.

Empathetic, disruptive, enthusiastic, doubtful or convinced forces were 'performing' each time without dominating in an absolute fashion the ecosystem. This experimental format functioned as a study about aesthetics and co-existence in the performing arts, it developed special awareness about ways of thinking, composing, sharing and engaging with a group. It gave focus to the performer, the performance space and the context where it takes place as a micro environment where the language is performance, image, text, sound, action, painting or dance...

Flexible community without aim

This horizontal structure implied a flexible community. A temporary, always different group of people, formed and unformed throughout the weekly meetings. This score allowed for the building of a temporary community that established relations between its members and developed the sense of the doing. Performance became the time we spent together, a language spoken within this community. The system built means for communication and created the conditions for the emergence of poetics like vessels,

bones, particles, all in movement. The 'messages' circulated through those vessels, inciting exchange and therefor producing change as a 'natural' consequence.

The temporality aspect of the event and therefor of the community are very important. The score is performed in time, when it's happening, allowing everyone to work with the present conditions and not aim for ideal circumstances, an idealised future, or for the definition of a stale identity. Following this thought, the system can't be understood as a goal but as a medium, taking care that the ephemeral quality of this particular process produces a vulnerable attitude towards the experience of art. It's enhancing the desire to exchange and share worlds through practice and is not aiming at conclusions. If the system becomes an aim itself, it will just reproduce what we already know, incapacitating the playing as a revelatory practice. It is a process and it exists in the process of just doing it. But why just do it?

Here, I would like to make a parallel between a practice like yoga or dance or a reading group for example, happening in a collective environment, and the need for sociability that brings together the individual and the collective. These gatherings set ups are learning-together tools, based on attention and observation. The knowledge acquired doesn't serve anything else than the vitality of knowledge itself, allowing all

participants to learn through the other. These social environments are like battery centres that inform forms of life sustained by sociability itself. The process of socialisation (spending time together) is endless and is pregnant, as there is a potential for the dissolution of duality between me and the other as fixed territories, the desire to become many/one. Like in a house of mirrors, PBScore was a device for the reflection and refracting of one's own image, opening up ways of seeing, feeling and thinking the self through the other.

The contamination of the one by the other was one of the 'techniques' that appeared throughout the score in different ways. I remember one day someone we didn't know presented himself as someone that was already part of the score group and played her part. Or the physical transformation of someone into another, becoming 2 participants which we never knew, who would come to play.

On the presence of the body

One of the strongest rules of the PBScore is that one can not participate remotely. The presence of the body was absolutely necessary to play and witness the process of dialogue through performance in this score.

As I could observe in the Writing Score proposed in 2014 the fact of gathering on a weekly basis to read the individual writings and continue the 'game', always in the presence and gaze of the others, created a specific dynamics. The collective agreement to meet weekly created a ritualised social time/space in which alliances were built. This way a group of people created an extra-everyday rhythm that allowed us to question and celebrate our practices.

One of the conditions of the performing arts relies on the presence of the performers and of the audience, on the act of exchange between both parties which dissolves once the performance is over. But also on the act of memory that is activated at the precise same moment the performance disappears, which is followed by the action of re-telling or re-processing what has happened. The intimate experience of witnessing resonates in parallel with the distance it requires to process it afterwards, both these factors are indeed of major importance in the study of performance as a critical tool. Digesting the other is of major importance for a becoming of the social body, for the possibility of a future not yet known.

The continuous necessity of presence and distance, of the communal and the individual spaces are the necessary conditions to unravel sense(s), the relation(s) that take place, the conditions for the emergence of directions, orienta-

tions or inclinations towards what is to come. Considering these thoughts PBSScore was proposing performance as rumour, as the re-telling of what has happened in one's own gestures and gesticulations in order to re-actualise the dialogue constantly.

To be able to participate one needs the public and the private, the institution (the score in this case in the frame of a pass) and the intimate. PBSScore was an invitation to all participants to come back to the place of the crime.

An invitation to re-read and re-write presences, to unfold the stories created by the gatherings, to reformulate what remains and transforms in memory and sets the ground for the present to be.

Every moment is unique, this time is not like the next time, what I think and feel now in this situation will not be the same in another situation.

I am here and I am processing and contributing consciously and unconsciously, together and alone, deliberately or not, to what is happening, etc... Performing arts create a ritual of presences, create a contract of attention and response between all parties. Something is unfolding and we all are part of it, we all think it, feel it, share it, though no one owns it and no one is the same. What a beautiful state to be in!

The Politics of the Perform Back Score

Geert Opsommer

“Ce n’est pas le résultat qui est intéressant, mais le machinisme créateur. Les agencements collectifs de désir pourraient contrer les institutions assujettissantes.”

Felix Guattari

Samah's gift is a 5 minutes story about her journey in search of a mysterious Palestine singer, part of her artistic research. Yaari answers to Samah with a poem of her own. Samah reacts with her own artistic tools: a collage. Philippine answers to Lilia's performance with an anthropological description of the cover photograph of a book by Naipaul focusing on the postures of a man with a mask, a woman with a steady gaze trying to stay upright under the pressure of other bodies and finally a woman almost eclipsed in front of the camera. The description meant as a choreography in words. This transversal chain of reactions may go on for a long time. It creates a temporary interactive community of research in performance.

The way Perform Back Scores functioned in the context of a 'pass' artistic research environment, made me dream of direct interaction through jam sessions in dance, jazz and among musicians. As a passionate of theatre and performance I admit I've always been jealous of musicians, how easily they travel all over the world with their instruments, not hindered by language or difficult-to-move-settings and installations. Jealous of how they establish temporary zones of collective creation and jamming in totally different contexts with different musicians.

Of course I can't compare the Perform Back Score (PBS) with these well known practices. Big difference: the reply takes place a week later. Time to prepare, to reflect, to reconsider. Thought precedes action. There is no direct reply, nor a reply-in-action. It is a reflective reaction becoming an artistic practice one week later. Still there's something exciting about it.

There's a kind of thriller-scenario underlying the PBS-machine, which resembles the lines of passion in the theatre plays by Racine: A loves B who loves C who loves D... but they don't come together. The ongoing arrow of desire to reply to A who replies to B who replies to C... guarantees an ongoing process of creations and machines of desire which can only be stopped by interrupting the machine of desire.

A Gift

It all starts with a gift by one of the participants: a 5-minute performance, a presentation of her/his research. From the beginning the practice inscribes itself in a gift economy. The question raised by Mauss in his *Essay on the Gift* is why giving a gift makes the recipient feel compelled to return a counter gift of roughly equal value? His answer is that a gift always contains something of the

giver; it has a 'personality'. Gift economies tend to personify objects. Commodity economies, like our own, do the opposite: they treat aspects of human labour or practice as objects, as things (Verdinglichung). PBSs fortunately prove to be part of a gift economy. Support for art work as a form of gift is particularly important in a cultural atmosphere dominated by consumerism as ours is.

Collaborative Work

The permanent interplay of reactions to each other's work brings me back to older forms of collaborative work and collective authorship. The Amsterdam Theater Collectief Het Werktheater created many interesting performances, which started with a series of short interventions, or 'concerts' (as they were called referring to the 'concerts' Grotowski practiced in Poland) the performers created for each other, interconnecting their own work with the collective research. The PBSs start from a more individualist approach, still find ways to connect to a common research body in permanent re-creation.

An obvious effect of the individualist approach of authorship and the need to brand a mark of creation is the fact that performance and theatre groups complain nowadays about the fact that organisations and curators

tend to individualise the labour of creation and mention the best known artist of the group as the author of any collective piece of art. Many groups have to cope with the fact that one of their members is called the author and the others are not mentioned. The author is therefore an ideological/commercial figure by which we mark the manner in which we fear the proliferation of meaning. The PBSs link up with the medieval collaborative practices in which A would start with the sculpture and B would continue and C... All together they create an anonymous work. But contrary to the medieval context it is not anonymous but created by a multiplicity.

Authorship

In the perform back score the participants create an ongoing shared practice. They are not the only authors of their scores because the origin of the score is an element of the score of another artist they react upon and the final result of their score lies in the reaction of another artist. The authorship is a mobile and communal sign shared by all the participants.

The statements of Foucault and his criticism of the literary author: “what does it matter who is speaking” and “the author is the effect of a discursive practice” could be reworded as “what does it matter who is performing” and “the author is the effect of a performative practice”. As such we speak of a collective authorship guiding the Perform Back Score.

The individual artists participating retain ownership of their gift, their piece of art, but as they share it with others it becomes like an ‘open source material’ which can be used by the community of artists they belong to, and it can be taken further to the net (using the format of documentation) so that it can become a real open source material used by those who want to connect to this specific practice.

The Perform Back Scores feed a desire for a communal practice in the arts.

(A thousand Plateaus by Felix Guattari and Gilles Deleuze starts: “The two of us wrote Anti-Oedipus together. Since each of us was several, there was already quite a crowd.” They are talking multiplicities here; in order to create an ‘agencement’ you need multiplicity. The laws of combination increase in number as the multiplicity grows.)

Perpetuum Mobile

Octavio Paz describes the artwork as “a machine for producing meanings”.

The Perform Back Score proves to be a vital machine but non-productive producing new artistic practices. It makes me think of the machines of Jean Tinguely, a Swiss artist who constructs machines, which avoid becoming an end product. Imagine the process is a kind of perpetuum mobile: every machine is moved by another, one wheel moves another wheel which a cable is linked up with another one and draws another one which It’s a machinery, which produces connections and links with other machines. The moment you try to understand how a certain part functions, the machine is already moving another vital part. Sometimes a mechanic is needed to oil or to adjust the machine or to fix it when it doesn’t work.

The Perform Back Score machine occupies a community with certain spatiotemporal limits or even an Internet community. It fabricates links between artistic works and challenges because of the intensity of a gift economy. A gift is a question that challenges an answer considered to be of equal value. In the meantime something else is invented, a new score which is pregnant of the previous score and still something totally different. It can be read as a passage, an opening

towards something else. It creates an experience which transforms work and artistic intentions by creating this peculiar form of connecting work. It’s a game that makes the participating artists long for another action or reaction to their work, a particular way of practicing and reflecting without too many words, near to a choreographic reaction.

The Perform Back Score might become a practice to share research which escapes total recuperation. As such it is a communal (common/communal?) practice, an anti-dote to alienation in the same way as some decennia ago the artistic collectives were considered to be machines to cope with alienations provoked by bureaucracy and free market ideologies and strategies. The fear to disappear in a collective is much greater today because today’s dominant strategies don’t allow alternatives that could endanger the individual authorship. In this sense perform back scores are subversive and outside the box of ‘entrepreneurship’ and ‘bureaucracy’ which holds the artist within the common neo-liberal frames.

It seems necessary to link this practice with a soft institutional approach changing its identity permanently in connection with the ongoing scores. Instead of policing the interaction and keeping them within the limits of the institute, the institute might be questioned by the score practice as well.

Politics

The flattening out and bureaucratization of arts education and research, its being absorbed by modular systems as ‘studies’ rather than ‘practices’ in order to meet growth and financial targets and the close connection with institutionalization and commercialization have narrowed the territory for an alternative knowledge based on a shared agency, a shared experience. Perform back scores machinery is after all a transformative process for the participant, capable of transforming their work and their research by going through a collaborative process. Moreover it is a practice- and research-led approach, which introduces a re-politicisation of the art work as a state of encounter.

Intimacies in Criticalities in the Perform Back Score

Philippine Hoegen

Introduction

The following text contains descriptions of three performative ‘conversations’ that took place during the Perform Back Score. What they have in common, and the reason I chose them, is that the performed ‘responses’ contained some form of criticism towards the pieces they were replying to, which, rather than setting the conversation on edge, produced an aspect of closeness, involvement, in fact, of intimacy.

To articulate a critique requires an engagement to the object one is critiquing. To confess a disappointment, to articulate a dissatisfaction and an objection immediately exposes a vulnerability. It implies an expectation and a desire: without them there could be no disappointment. Besides that, something is also produced, a position, an attitude or stance that, in its turn, is laid out on the table, itself defenselessly open to scrutiny and criticism.

Specific for the Perform Back Scores in general, and for the three cases I will describe in particular, were also some other aspects. The first is related to performativity, the fact that

we were involved in a practice based on ‘doing’, on an act, we were performing. To manifest a dissatisfaction or a frustration through an act, is quite ‘bare’, because being there, in it, there is little space for distancing oneself from it. You not only have to acknowledge and articulate that dissatisfaction, you have to give it a place in, or shape it through, your body, and then you have to do it, undergo it, be it. On top of that you ask of others to witness that undergoing, or to subject themselves to your address.

Particular to the three pieces I will try to recount, is that each time one performer took from the other an element or aspect, a form or a subject, and created a new piece with that. This means that you take on another’s preoccupation, or their language, and make it your own. You thread a new thought into your own thematics, or twist your tongue around an unfamiliar form. To do so creates a temporary bond, a shared involvement, which may be called intimate but also requires some generosity. It’s like sitting down together to chew on the same bone.

Find A Friend

On the 21st of January 2015, Audrey did a performance, her ‘gift’ to the Perform Back Score, in which she asked us to kneel with our eyes closed whilst holding an object, something heavy and solid, up in one hand. Audrey announced that we were going to experience micro-sleep.

Micro-sleep.

We dutifully knelt, as if in prayer, in total darkness, for 5 minutes. No one slept, no objects were dropped, in fact nothing happened at all.

Being an incurable insomniac, I was deeply disappointed. She had promised me something, something I desired, but which she didn’t deliver. Pathetic as it may sound, I would have given anything for a micro-sleep, or better: to know the trick of how to obtain one.

In response to Audrey the next week, the 28th of January, I sat her opposite me, both of us on chairs, and subjected her to a five minute long uninterrupted monologue, listing all the tips and tricks I could find on the internet on how to fall asleep. They were vague instructions presented as solid guidance, all in the imperative: listen to ambient noise; always choose the right position; try loose cotton pyjamas.

The text seamlessly moved from sleeping advice to indications on how to stay awake, oddly some were the same. Then it slipped back into the list of sleeping instructions, the last one stating rather harshly and dispassionately: Find a friend.

My response to Audrey was critical on different levels. There was a measure of the indignation of one suffering from an ailment, who feels her ailment is being made light of. It was a complaint, against her having not fulfilled her promise, her performance had ‘failed’, nothing had happened. It also pointed out another failure: We had just knelt there in the dark until the five minutes were over, it was boring, and I responded to my dissatisfaction with the performance as a piece. And then there was a dig at her for always making us complicit in her performances, which are often participatory. By making her sit with me ‘on stage’, completely passively having to undergo whatever I unleashed on her, I was magnifying the aspect of manipulation and of being delivered to the performer that comes with many participatory practices.

As Audrey and I were sat there, looking each other intently in the eyes, me indulging in my ‘tirade’ which unfolded as an articulation of critique, a response and a new piece itself, I became conscious of the relationship that I was creating between me, the piece from which this performance had stemmed and the maker of that piece.

It occurred to me that in offering Audrey my objections and dissatisfactions, and in her receiving them gracefully (she looked me steadily in the eye through the entire piece, attentive, amused and engrossed) we had entered a space of intimacy.

So What?

On that same day, the 28th of January, I too received a response. Mavi Veloso collected into the space we had appointed our 'stage' or 'set', a clothes rack holding a jumble of clothes, two mirrors leaning upright against chairs, an old fashioned arm-chair, a small desk on thin legs. The set was theatrically lit by a camel-lamp stretched to its tallest height and a red filtered neon on the floor. Another lamp outside the set bathed the scene in a cold blue light, casting huge shadows on the back wall.

Mavi stood in the midst of these objects which were all placed to face him, both backdrop and mute audience. With one leg stuck in an orange poof that he dragged around as if it were unruly but fashionable footwear, he proceeded to take off and put on items from the clothes rack: a bathing costume over a pair of tights, a pair of trousers tied around one leg, a dress wrapped around his head. He held up different options to us to help decide which layer would come next and a melan-

choly Nina Simone singing the song 'Images' was his music of choice.

To his highly androgynous figure Mavi added layer upon layer, building a body that was theatrical and sculptural, and which was assembled and doubled in the shadow on the wall behind him.

Mavi was responding to my first contribution or 'gift' to the Perform Back Score, which consisted of a transformation. I sat down behind a small table, changed shoes, hair and some accessories, finally adding a beard and moustache. I transformed from myself to somebody who introduced himself as David. David then took a seat amongst the audience and remained there for the rest of the session, joining in conversations and discussions as much as he was able.

It was very clear to me that Mavi's response was pointedly critical. I read his performance as a playful, sardonic, defiant: "So What?!"

Although I objected to the interpretation of David only as an exercise in drag, from a person who lives every day of his life in varying spaces of the intermediate zone between the poles that we identify as defining gender, I understand that for a girl to slap on a beard and hang out as a guy is really no big deal. It was a pertinent critique and not without justification.

This introduction to David was a first, embryonic version of what is now a fully-fledged performance called 'Regarding David'. In developing this project, one of the key concerns was that the piece wouldn't be prone to misinterpretation as 'just another drag-act', that it would reach beyond a question of gender to a question of personhood and not get bogged down in an already saturated field and discourse. In other words, to get beyond the 'So What?'. In fact, Mavi had hit precisely upon that vulnerability, and in doing so he became, within the research, someone by whom I could measure if I was making headway. Wittingly or not, he had taken on the delicate, perhaps intimate, task of a litmus test.

Breathe!

In both my response and Mavi's, a dissatisfaction was expressed by taking an aspect or an element from the other's performance and magnifying it. I detected the same sort of impatience, and the use of magnification and contrast to vent that impatience, in Lilia's response to Elke on the 25th of February.

The week before, the 18th of February, Elke had begun by bringing two orange cushions into the set. She aligned them on the floor, and took off her socks, deliberately folding them, laying them down neatly side by side on the floor.

She then sat down cross-legged on the cushion furthest away from us. She faced the other, empty cushion, put up the hood of her sweater, pronounced the words 'artistic research seven', and sat still. After two and a half minutes the only perceptible activity was her breathing, which was calm and measured. A little while later she began to hum, then she sang very softly what seemed to be fragments of a song.

The next week, Lilia's 'stage' was dotted with all sorts of objects: a plant, a broom, a bag of trash, a wooden structure, a trolley, a lamp and a sheet of plastic were spread out around the set. One of the orange cushions from Elke's performance was there too. Lilia sat down on the floor beside the cushion with her back to us, and put a microphone to her mouth. She began to breathe into that microphone, her body slightly slumped with the effort of the breath, her position rotating every now and then. It was nothing like Elke's measured, quiet inhaling and exhaling. It was a slow, drawn out, audible sort of breathing, a grumbling, rasping, laborious, almost ferocious breathing. A breathing that didn't give air. On the contrary, it made me, as a viewer, claustrophobic, it caused a tightness in my throat and stomach which only stopped when the performance was over. At times the breathing melted into an almost singing, the song-voice mixing in with the harsh, slow panting.

The following is completely my own interpretation of Lilia's response, as I have no knowledge of her actual considerations and motivations: in the first place I saw what she did as an autonomous piece, as more than a response or reaction. But as a reaction I interpret it to be critical especially towards the form, or better the performativity of Elke's performance, which was introverted, all her body language directed away from the viewer, the hood pulled protectively up, the gaze turned inwards, the breath and the song almost inaudible. As a consequence a viewer may choose to go along with her, trying to follow and decipher the minimal information she is giving and interpret freely to see what sense or story can be made from it. But just as easily the viewer can shrug and turn away: because of its introverted nature the performance doesn't really urge or oblige one to watch, nor does it 'give' or 'do' anything without a substantial effort and willingness from the part of the viewer.

By contrast, it is only a slight exaggeration to say that in my perception Lilia's performance bordered on the violent in relation to the viewer. It was something of an onslaught, almost impossible not to undergo in an -indirectly- physical way, it unquestionably 'did' and, whether you wanted to receive it or not, it unquestionably 'gave'.

Lilia took up the subject of breath and breathing which Elke had put on the table, and looked for a different way to handle it, exemplifying and enacting, offering as it were, what else this breathing could do or be. In an act of intimate criticality, she took Elke's breath and heaved it through her body, sucking it in, spewing it out, and laying it back before her.

The technology of the interval

Yaari Shalem

The week I needed to respond to Mala, in writing, I fell in love with a man.

In preparing my performance I was always thinking what I should do with the information I was given, how to receive, how to take that which I saw into myself and let it appear again through me. Then how to give that back, and to whom? It is about the transition of materials through reaction. It is a live study. And I was falling into love. With a poet.

The falling figure that Mala performed didn't find its place. It failed to arrive and yet kept on trying, with raised arms; a body of ceaseless effort, which constant re[-]pulses, wanting to linger, wanting to come, somewhere. While 'reading' this image, an angel came to my mind: *Angelus Novus* from Paul Klee's painting. I wanted to tell my new lover about the articulation of my body, through that body which performed in front of me.

Meta-Pornography of the Soul

Yaari Shalem

*I will use words because they are not mine. To speak.
 About That which can be touched. I will show you mine, and you will show me yours.
 Can you leave your-self and Come?
 I'm kneeling on the skin of Language, lower, lower, adapting my body to its intermissions.
 My mountain had died.
 My mountain re-born. new form from the strata of lava; I; can dance.
 What do you know about the hands when they are up?
 Say -- I know. Enough. about dance;
 In the beginning the animal becomes transparent. Then -
 a passage into the forest of perception, performance personality perlite permanent.
 A tight water vessel, the animal.
 And since then it escapes.
 A creature of the interval. You - came from my future.
 Which time is happening Now? I am afraid of something*

Say -

Say -

*else. The visual dynamic of forms. Will you see my body change? The process must exceed zero, nearly
 touch and then
 the passage; The animal; The dance;
 I was a warrior, full of violence, and all of us we were the Army.
 Who cares if you can kill the material of the void, when your gods are a whore.
 A botanical garden is opening, of fallen logs, from the forest of perception personality perturbation.
 We will eat its erotic protein, the meal of the lips, say:
 Live totems / Nomadic corpus / penetrate each Other / find home.
 To be a place inside a place.
 To be the moment of waters move towards lightness.
 In the remission every portion is random. Breath is noisy in my cry. I will cry.
 - what about the hands above?
 Acid soil against extensive sky
 My mouth, an interval for the landscape of you.
 Basically, I am not alone in having this mouth, but I want it to be like the rest of the landscape.
 Maybe you can come with me.
 I will call you - Tear catcher, Cross-dresser, Messianic poet, are you a new angel?
 Are you the angel of my history?*

Say -

Say -

Liberating Scores

Elke Van Campenhout

Everyday we score life. We develop habits, patterns, trajectories, each of them designed to order our daily perceptions. We use them to make sense of the chaos of information, every day the constant buzz, the , the noise of city life. These invisible scores are the blueprints of an underlying mindset, moulded out of our sense of belonging, cultural embeddedness, and a lot of other, less conscious or obvious elements. Like the geography of the place we live in, ecological and political contexts, etcetera... Different people use different score elements: most of us have time-based scores for life, with appointments and deadlines as the main frames for organisation. Others make encounter-dependent set-ups for their daily practice. Few of us are creative or experimental score writers. This privilege is usually delegated to artists or an occasional paranoid schizophrenic that tries to un-pattern his existence. Un-patterning in this context means: to untie ourselves from the markers of our daily scores, like the corner shop, the coffee break, the bus stop. Our daily scores weave chains out of seemingly unrelated elements and let them sing out the songlines of our daily existence. All together these markers talk about us and the realities we create 'on the way' as clearly as a psychological profile would.

But not only the markers are important, also the rhythm or the attitude with which we move from A to B. And what we consider to be meaningful informations in-between.

And this is where the potential power of the score lies: since every pattern speaks of an underlying, and mostly unconscious organisation of beliefs and belongings, constructing a de-framing score makes it possible for us to realign our being in the world by changing our 'markers' and trajectories to move through it. The 'songlines' of our movement (in reference to Bruce Chatwin's book on the Aboriginal practices to 'sing the world into being' through a topographic patterning of markers in the landscape) bring realities to life. Or, in other words, our worlds are created through our movements. And vice versa: the normalisation that happens in us adapting to our own scores, creates deeper grooves every time we repeat the same habitual pattern. In that sense, our daily life scores create future patterns out of past behaviours and attachments. In the creative approach of the score, these habitual entrenchments are exactly what is being put into question: by limiting the possibilities of movement and action, most of our usual choices are blocked, and a whole new landscape starts

to appear out of our interpretations of these boundaries. A typical example of such a score would be the situationist 'dérive' practice that undoes our territorial use of the city by making it appear anew through otherwise neglected elements, like geometric patterns of windows and cobblestones, the speed of the streetwalkers, the break-up of behavioural prescriptions.

In an artistic practice, to score in that sense is to sketch a path. Not to reproduce a previously set out trajectory, like an afterthought that then is translated into conservative habit. But to creatively think through lines of flight in the act of walking the path. A score is therefore a delicate balancing exercise between discipline and freedom, between the reduction and the opening up of opportunities to rephrase, interpret and rethink the invitation coming to you. But also, to allow for patterns to appear on a transindividual level, through the installation of a common score-for-all, which then starts at an accelerating speed to produce difference between various performances of interpretation and recuperation. In dealing with a diversity of participants the score offers an open framework for coming together in a wide variety of tonalities, textures and aesthetics. To create an impossible common ground out of which to reconsider our togetherness and irreducible difference.

What the score allows for is to come to an experiential territory in which things can be compared without the need for a standard for measurement, like similarity in concepts, aesthetics, medium, etcetera. Since the score's limits are purely formal (time and space restrictions), things are put next to each other that would never meet under any kind of 'logical' organisation. As Rancière points out in his seminal text 'The Ignorant Schoolmaster', knowledge is created through comparison: by putting two sources of information next to each other and comparing the differences, transformations and patterns in both of them, we come to an unmediated and direct understanding of what is meaningful in them and what is not. According to our own desire to learn something that is meaningful to our own practice. The PBS in that sense becomes a perfect learning ground on an unusual terrain of seemingly disparate sources of information. As you could read in the reports of the weekly score meetings, the interpretations of 'what there was to see' or to learn differed widely. Which tells us that the score is but an initial moment of uniformisation in an ongoing line of kaleidoscopic invitation - interpretation - performance - afterthought.

Rather a creator than a regulator of difference, the score is therefore an unpredictable and apt tool in dealing with artistic research practices, and the constant struggle to come up with transindividual knowledge processing systems in which the misunderstanding doesn't stand in the way of a research that surpasses the limits of the individual desire and habit. How can we share without extensive contextualisation, without a need for accumulative research anecdotes, without the demand for story-telling our way through our research trajectories? How can the research undo itself from its individual starting point and start to live its life 'in public'?

It is this public playing around with 'inclusive' and 'exclusive' markers that makes that score a space of intensification of the research environment. There is no score experience without participation. There is no participation without putting yourself in the line of thought of the others. There is no invitation, or future, without a strong interpretation of what came before. Out of the chain of habits, the unilinear line of research of the different researchers, in that way a fabric is woven. That clearly speaks about the environment in which the scores were performed, but that also in the smaller weaving patterns speaks about the varying waves of affects and emotional moods, of critical stances and empathic gestures, of colours of speech picked up from one to the other.

'Commoning' through the creation of diversity. Creating visibility for the quirkiness of the individual by undoing his habitual patterns, by introducing a transindividual time perspective. These are the paradoxes that allow for the complexity and baffling 'illogics' of the knowledge production within artistic research to appear and make sense on a non-prescriptive terrain of interpretation.

