

# **Choreographing Spectatorship**

**The vibrant, metaphorical and micro mobility of the spectator in performances of contemporary choreographers**

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*Für Papa, und dich, kleines Wesen Jonah.*

## Summary

This Master thesis functions as an exposition of how performances of contemporary choreographers stage movement and the mobility of the spectator. The mobility of the spectator by means of the spatial displacement of the spectator is staged explicitly within ambulatory and participatory theatre. However, it is my intention to facilitate a more nuanced vocabulary on mobility and with it the participation of the spectator. I investigate the potential of performances from the discourse of dance and choreography to stimulate an understanding of participation beyond the bias of 'passive' and 'active' spectatorship. Performances by Arno Schuitemaker, Katja Heitmann, and the duo Andrea Božić and Julia Willms exemplify such understanding by presenting a paradox: These performances address the spectator within the frame of a seated audience and explore ways in which the spectator can participate through (internal) movement. Thereby, rather than asking whether the spectator is seated or moving through space, I am curious about the ways in which these performances address and position the spectator to participate in movement.

Building on Susan Leigh Foster's method of unravelling how a performance 'choreographs' behaviour such as 'empathy', I combine choreographing as a relational concept with methods of performance analysis by Liesbeth Groot Nibbelink and Maaike Bleeker that allow for exploring spectatorship as an embodied and embedded practice. By these means I argue that the performances *WHILE WE STRIVE*, *Pandora's DopBox* and *The Cube* choreograph spectatorship in ways that invite the vibrant, metaphorical and micro mobility of the spectator. I investigate how the overall composition of staged actions, sequences and qualities composes patterns of sensorial address and/or (metaphorical) positions of the spectator. A particular quality of these patterns and positions staged for the spectator is that they disturb a continuous identification with a (human) performer and bring the attention of the spectator towards her/his own process relating to, perceiving and engaging with the performance. Thereby movement in various appearances, intensities and dynamics accumulates in specific means. Such means of movement I relate to the notion of moving 'freely' by dance theorist André Lepecki.

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## Acknowledgements

This is it. This is my Master thesis. The words that you are about to encounter could be seen as an end product. While you start reading I am at that final moment of 'Yay, I did it.' Yay? There is also some sentiment in me, similar to that moment when boarding a plane after a long journey. In such moment of completing a journey no words can quite fit the intensity of the adventure. In that sense this thesis remains an approximation and not the equivalent to the journey. On the bright side, just like looking at the pictures of a journey, this thesis for me is the start of a new process as it gives views and insights I had not expected.

Expectations are a funny thing. They can keep me from noticing what is really there. In that sense the process of writing this thesis has been a confrontation with how I deal with structures and how I expect to fulfil them. I expected of myself to make the 'perfect' thesis only to realise, again, that aiming for perfecting a structure blurs what you can find along the way. As a dancer moving through space started to 'make sense' when I felt free to work with given structures and test their demarcations. In writing, again, I easily get caught up in trying to do it right. However, in retrospect writing about the works of the choreographers Arno Schuitemaker, Katja Heitmann and the duo Andrea Božić and Julia Willms is a great reminder to practice staying open to the sensory qualities of a journey, to question the structures and beliefs one follows, and to follow these structures and the expectations that come with them more like coordinates in a foggy landscape. I want to thank these choreographers for their openness in sharing their processes with me.

While I let go of what this thesis supposedly could be, should be, or will be for you, I am reminded of the choreographers, teachers, colleagues and friends that I shared journeys with in dancing, discussing, and devotedly involving in theatre and life. As the product of a journey this thesis is a most welcome way of expressing my gratitude.

I am especially thankful to the inspiring staff of the University Utrecht for providing maps to explore grounds and skies and spaces I have not known to exist. Especially I thank Konstantina Georgelou and Laura Karremann for their positivity and constructive advice and Liesbeth Groot Nibbelink and Maaïke Bleeker for being such humbling examples in moving between theory and practice. Moreover, I want to thank the choreographer Krisztina de Châtel for being a continuous reminder to persevere and Andrea Leine and Harijono Roebana for never growing tired of changing the rules of the game. Last but not least, I want to thank my partner Andreas and my mother for reminding me to balance. So this thesis is what it is: Another step in life, an end, and a beginning.





## *Introduction: Initiating a move*

The mobility of the spectator by means of the spatial displacement of the spectator is staged explicitly in participatory theatre and discussed extensively in the discourse of such theatre. However, mobilizing the stage and displacing performers and spectators seems to not necessarily result in a move beyond the bias of 'passive' and 'active' spectatorship. After all, as cultural theorist Claire Bishop postulates, it is still necessary to generate a more nuanced vocabulary with which to address the 'vicissitudes' of spectatorship.<sup>1</sup> It is my intention to contribute to such nuanced understanding of spectatorship through investigating a paradox: I discuss performances from the discourse of contemporary dance and choreography that explicitly address the spectator within the frame of a seated audience. Yet, seemingly de-mobilizing the spectator, these performances can be seen to invite the spectator to various ways of involvement through (internal) movement. Thereby, rather than asking whether a spectator is seated or moving through space, I am curious about the ways in which performances can be seen to choreograph the mobility of the spectator.

Choreographers and dance theorists alike claim that dance invites the mobility of the spectator. Attending dance, one can be under the impression of feeling what the moving body on stage is feeling. After all, as dance theorist Susan Leigh Foster shows, dance can stage the unmitigated connection between the spectator and the dancer adhering to the understanding of subjectivity in the social and historical moment of its occurrence.<sup>2</sup> Complementary, 'performances of choreography' contest such notion of mobility by disturbing the connection between movement and the body.<sup>3</sup> As dance theorist Bojana

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<sup>1</sup> Claire Bishop, *Artificial Hells, Participatory Art and the Politics of Spectatorship* (London: Verso, 2012), 8. Bishop contributes with alternatives to the bias of active and passive spectatorship. Moreover, Liesbeth Groot Nibbelink's investigation of ambulatory theatre closely inspects the theoretical movement implied in the displacement of the stage, the performer and the spectator. These researches encourage me to investigate into participation in the reversed theatrical situation with a seemingly de-mobilized spectator.

<sup>2</sup> Susan Leigh Foster, *Choreographing Empathy, Kinesthesia in Performance* (New York: Routledge, 2011), 19.

<sup>3</sup> Bojana Cvejić, *Choreographing Problems, Expressive concepts in European Contemporary Dance* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015). In its most extreme form such performances completely dispose of movement and/or human bodies. For this thesis I focus on Cvejić' observation on movement 'in its own right'.

Cvejić argues, performances in a historical moment where choreography becomes the frame to reflect on dance inhibit recognition and ‘force’ the spectator to think.<sup>4</sup> Situating the performances discussed in this thesis between the phenomena ‘pure dance’ and ‘conceptual dance’ I suggest that performances of contemporary choreographers neither solely position the spectator to move and feel with the dancer nor solely to move in thoughts. Rather they invite the spectator to participate in (internal) movement regardless of conceptual and physical terrains.

Addressing the senses of the spectator the performance *WHILE WE STRIVE* by Arno Schuitemaker exemplifies an invitation to the spectator to participate in movement as a means to relate. As the performance challenges proximity it can be seen to stage interiority and to invite the spectator to a vibrant mobility.<sup>5</sup> After all, theatre theorist Liesbeth Groot Nibbelink argues, even though a spectator can be quite restricted in her/his seat, an address to the senses can invite such spectator to be part of a *vibrantly* mobile constellation of the spectator, the performer and the stage.<sup>6</sup> In *WHILE WE STRIVE* three dancers traverse the stage addressing the spectator directly. Playing with distance they guide the awareness of the spectator towards her/his presence in the theatre space. Similarly sound waves emitted by handheld Bluetooth speakers continue to foreground the ever-changing spatial relation between the spectator, the performers and the stage. I intend to show that by interweaving seeing with hearing and touch this performance disturbs the identification of the spectator with the performers. Instead the internal movement of the spectator investigating the staged constellations within the tangible physical space as well as across a multiplicity of terrains relating to ideas, thoughts, and feelings is highlighted.

*WHILE WE STRIVE* is not the only performance from the discourse of contemporary choreography that brings to the fore the process of the spectator engaging with the world through (internal) movement. Over the last decade there is an increasing interest of choreographers in spectatorship.<sup>7</sup> An example of a different strategy is Katja Heitmann’s

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<sup>4</sup> Cvejić, *Choreographing Problems*, 2-3.

<sup>5</sup> *WHILE WE STRIVE*, directed by Arno Schuitemaker, Theater Kikker, Utrecht, 2015.

<sup>6</sup> Liesbeth Groot Nibbelink, “Nomadic Theatre, Staging movement and mobility in contemporary performance” (PhD diss., University Utrecht, 2015), 114.

<sup>7</sup> I suggest that this concern of contemporary dance with spectatorship coincides with the upcoming of dramaturgical work in dance and participation in theatre. From my own working experience I have come across considerations about the ways in which the spectator can become involved in the performance in the dialogue of Dutch contemporary choreographers and their dramaturges such as Anouk van Dijk and Jerry Remkes and the duo LeineRoebana and Peter Delpout in the early 2000’s. In the discourse on contemporary dance several dance theorists such as Bojana Kunst argue that the upcoming role of the

*Pandora's DropBox* as the performance invites the spectator to perceive what is there in multiple ways.<sup>8</sup> Wondering whether the six performers are humans striving for perfection or robots pretending to be humans, the spectator is invited to take on diverging attitudes and assumptions towards what is there. After all, as performance theorist Maaïke Bleeker suggests, when no longer presented with a fixed perspective the spectator is free (at least metaphorically) to wander.<sup>9</sup> Through an exploration of perspective in performance I intend to show that this performance can be seen to stage the metaphorical mobility of the spectator and movement as a means to perceive. Moreover, *The Cube* by Andrea Božić and Julia Willms subtly plays with spectatorial movement on the rim between the internal and the external and invites the spectator to movement as a means to engage.<sup>10</sup> Through unravelling the alternation of constellations of multiple viewpoints and their attitudes within the space I will elaborate on how this immersive video installation foregrounds space as a performer and choreographs the micro mobility of the spectator.

All in all, with this thesis I argue that the performances *WHILE WE STRIVE*, *Pandora's DropBox* and *The Cube* choreograph the vibrant, metaphorical and micro mobility of the spectator. I do so by exploring the ways in which the overall composition of actions, sequences and qualities of these performances choreograph patterns of sensorial address and/or (metaphorical) positions that invite the spectator to participate through (internal) movement. I investigate how movement in various appearances, intensities and dynamics in these performances accumulate towards movement as means to relate, to perceive and to engage. To answer to the overarching question as to how such facets of mobility contribute to the vicissitudes of spectatorship, I relate such facets to the notion moving 'freely' by dance theorist André Lepecki.<sup>11</sup>

To pursue the aim of my research I elaborate on a notion of choreographing spectatorship and use three case studies to demonstrate the potential of this notion. Prior

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dramaturge in dance in the last 20 years is related to an increase in interdisciplinarity, self-reflexiveness and more process oriented methods 'in the proximity of the spectator'. At the same time Clair Bishop points out a preoccupation with participation and collaboration in theatre from around the 90's and 2000's- even though not unprecedented- as a 'social turn' (*Artificial Hells*, 3).

<sup>8</sup> *Pandora's DropBox*, directed by Katja Heitmann, Theater Kikker, Utrecht, 19 mei 2017. This thesis discusses the theatre version of the performance. *Pandora's DropBox* as a museal version takes into consideration the displacement of the spectator.

<sup>9</sup> Maaïke Bleeker, *Visuality in the Theatre* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008), 15.

<sup>10</sup> *The Cube*, directed by Andrea Božić and Julia Willms, Marci Panis, Amsterdam, 11 march 2017.

<sup>11</sup> André Lepecki, "Choreopolice and Choreopolitics: or, the task of the dancer," *TDR: The Drama Review* 57.4 (2013): 13-27.

to the analyses of the case studies in chapter 3,4, and 5, I utilize chapter 1 and 2 to prepare the ground for such analyses. In the first chapter I situate the three case studies in the context of contemporary dance and I point towards the importance of movement in these case studies. I then elaborate on the potential of the notion of choreography to trace movement in between the spectator and the performance. In the second chapter I discuss existing methods of tracing movement in a performance and I show how these methods cut short on the appliance of movement in performances of contemporary choreographers. Thereby I create a niche for the notion choreographing spectatorship. Building on Susan Leigh Foster's method of unravelling how a performance choreographs behaviour such as empathy, I combine choreographing as a relational concept with methods from performance analysis by Groot Nibbelink and Bleeker that allow exploring spectatorship as an embodied and embedded practice.<sup>12</sup>

In chapter 3 I investigate how the notion of choreographing spectatorship can unravel *WHILE WE STRIVE* to choreograph an address to the senses of the spectator and to challenge proximity. By means of the concept 'nomadic theatre' I expose how patterns of sound waves and moving bodies as patterns of 'de and reterritorialisation' stage the vibrant mobility of the spectator by provoking the territory of the spectator and staging interiority.<sup>13</sup> Thereby this performance foregrounds movement of the spectator as means to relate. In chapter 4 I investigate how *Pandora's Dropbox* choreographs spectatorship through a 'multiplication of frames'. Thereby the relation between alternating viewing positions foregrounds movement as a mode of looking and a means to perceive. By means of the concept 'focalization' I trace movement in the subject of vision and expose how such performance stages the metaphorical mobility of the spectator by creating multiple (metaphorical) positions for the spectator to move between.<sup>14</sup> In chapter 5 I explore how *The Cube* choreographs spectatorship by provoking physical movement of the spectator. Thereby I suggest that an alternation of (metaphorical) positions towards the performance foregrounds movement as a mode of engaging with such suggested positions and stages the micro mobility of the spectator. Concluding, I relate the discovered facets of mobility of the spectator to the notion of moving freely to point out how such movement of the spectator

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<sup>12</sup> Foster, *Choreographing Empathy*, 20.

<sup>13</sup> Groot Nibbelink, 111-135.

<sup>14</sup> Bleeker, *Visuality*, 19-37.

as means to relate, perceive, and engage can be understood as contributing to the multiplicity of spectatorial participation.<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> André Lepecki, "Choreopolice and Choreopolitics: or, the task of the dancer," *TDR: The Drama Review* 57.4 (2013): 13-27.

# 1 Exploring the premises

## Moving with the current of contemporary dance

The discussion of choreographing spectatorship within the format of this thesis is based upon three performances created by choreographers.<sup>16</sup> *WHLE WE STRIVE* by Arno Schuitemaker, *Pandora's DropBox* by Katja Heitmann and *The Cube* by Andrea Božić and Julia Willms are presented within the context of contemporary dance, theatre and performance.<sup>17</sup> Yet, the term 'contemporary' does not allow for a clear demarcation of the works. As Cvejić points out, this term is rather generic as it merely refers to the present day production scape that is not dominated by specific movement or style.<sup>18</sup> The term rather gives witness to and supports the current 'obsession' with contemporaneity evaluating novelty.<sup>19</sup> Yet, each of the performances in this thesis rather invites the spectator to (metaphorically) wander and wonder, to explore and re-evaluate what is already there through alternating patterns of address. Thereby the discussion of these performances within the discourse of the contemporary shows distinct ways of reflecting critically on the contemporary logic of exhaustion and renewal.

Such themes as exhaustion and renewal also touch upon questions of the political in contemporary dance. As dance theorist André Lepecki argues, contemporary dance can apply the tools of choreography to critically reflect on the political potential of movement.<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> I apply the term performances without reflecting on it since this term is used in colloquial as well as by the choreographers themselves and in the discourse on dance, theatre and performance.

<sup>17</sup> Schuitemaker, Heitmann and Božić/Willms present their work as choreographies and are embraced by contemporary dance, theatre and performance as well as visual arts. The performances of these choreographers are programmed in national and international festivals in this field: Both *The Cube* and *Pandora's Dopbox* were presented at *SPRING*, Utrecht. *The Cube* was originally presented in a museal space, *Kunstraum am Schauplatz*, Vienna Art Foundation. *Pandora's DopBox* and *WHILE WE STRIVE* were presented at the exhibition *STRP*, Eindhoven. *WHILE WE STRIVE* is awarded with the second jury prize 2016 of the contemporary dance concours *[re]connaissance* in Grenoble, Switzerland, Katja Heitmann holds the award of the 'most promising young choreographer' of the *Nederlandse Dansdagen* 2016. Andrea Božić and Arno Schuitemaker have been artist in residence at *ICK-International Platform for Choreographers*.

<sup>18</sup> Cvejić, *Choreographing Problems*, 5.

<sup>19</sup> Idem, 5.

<sup>20</sup> Lepecki, "Choreopolice and Choreopolitics", 13.

Referring to philosopher Hannah Arendt's understanding of 'true' politics as being bound to a notion of freedom, Lepecki sutures "(...) the *political* (as the opposite of the business of politics, politicians and policy makers), *movement* (sometimes danced, sometimes not) and *freedom* (as that about which we must gain kinetic knowledge) to propose the concept of choreopolitics (...)." <sup>21</sup> With such concept Lepecki pinpoints performances of the contemporary that investigate moving politically as moving freely. Such a way of moving, according to Lepecki's understanding of Arendt, is something that needs to be (re)discovered again and again, and can only be learned through practice and repetition. Specifically the dancer that fully 'devotes' her/himself to her/his own actions within a collective structure shows how one can practice to move politically. <sup>22</sup> Approaching *WHILE WE STRIVE*, *Pandora's DopBox* and *The Cube* through the lens of choreographing spectatorship suggests that the task of the spectator in these performances bares similarities to such tasks: After all, these performances stage how a performance asks the spectator to devote themselves to the process of the performance, and to participate in (internal) movement.

However, the term 'contemporary dance' restrains from dissolving the controversy on what dance *is*, a discussion that originates in the field of dance in the 90's of the last century; A discussion I do not intend to solve yet to apply productively in its differences. On the one hand, as Cvejić calls it, pure dance continues to build on the synthesis of movement and the body as explicitly expressed in modern and postmodern dance. Such dance builds on movement as a form of bodily expression as a subjective, emotive experience of the dancer adhering to a universal understanding; Or, of bodily expression as the object of dance. <sup>23</sup> On the other hand, conceptual dance in colloquial, designates no movement, poetics, style, or genre, but symptomatically evidences a problem as qualifying as choreographies. <sup>24</sup> Such performances break with the synthesis of movement and the body that (post)-modern dance is founded on. These performances choreograph distinct problems that force the

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<sup>21</sup> Idem, 15. Lepecki makes a distinction between the choreopolitical and choreopolice. The second refers to performances that reveal the manipulating force of systems of control through the tools of choreography. In this thesis I choose to restrict myself to discussing the choreopolitical.

<sup>22</sup> Idem, 26.

<sup>23</sup> Cvejić, *Choreographing Problems*, 19-21.

<sup>24</sup> Cvejić, "Choreographing Problems, Expressive concepts in European Contemporary Dance." (PhD diss., Kingston University, 2013), 15. Cvejić specifies the colloquially called conceptual dance as performance of choreography.

spectator to think as they question the self-evidence of dance expanding to include expressions from other art forms dependent on what arises in their making.<sup>25</sup>

Looking at the field of dance today, at the second decade of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, dance in all its facets increasingly incorporates strategies from other performing arts and media and/or engages in coproduction with other disciplines.<sup>26</sup> Thereby it seems that the distinctive features of the generation Cvejić describes have become guidelines in the contemporary landscape. As several dance theorists such as Bojana Kunst argue, the field is characterized by an affiliation with interdisciplinarity, self-reflexiveness and process-oriented methods.<sup>27</sup> Also Schuitemaker, Heitmann and Božić/Willms initiate their processes of creation with research where the initial question determines which elements, possibly from other disciplines, are needed.<sup>28</sup> Moreover, such process of making 'choreography' stands out as a way of organizing movement in thoughts, people, and/or objects while considering how to invite the spectator to participate in the process. Thereby the choreographers Schuitemaker, Heitmann and Božić /Willms can be seen to continue in line with conceptual dance where choreography is introduced as a process of making choices about the organization of subjects and objects in time and space on stage.<sup>29</sup>

At the same time, contrary to the generation Cvejić describes, this generation of current contemporary choreographers does not shy away from choreographing movement bound to the body of a (human) performer. However, movement is not (solely) bound to the expression of the (human) body of the performer. In fact, the performances *WHILE WE STRIVE*, *Pandora's DopBox* and *The Cube* each in their own way break with the exclusive synthesis of movement and the body of the performer yet suggest the synthesis of movement and the body of the spectator. Thereby these performances can be seen to choreograph embodied and embedded spectatorship that invites the spectator to move in relation to the choreography regardless to physical and conceptual terrains. In this way the performances by Schuitemaker, Heitmann and Božić/Willms move beyond the dichotomy of

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<sup>25</sup> Cvejić, *Choreographing Problems*, 11.

<sup>26</sup> Katja Heitmann's description about her work to me seems accurate for all three choreographer's work, they operate on the intersection of dance, theatre, visual arts and performance <http://www.katjaheitmann.com/info/>

<sup>27</sup> Bojana Kunst, "The Economy of Proximity, Dramaturgical work in Contemporary Dance," *On Dramaturgy, Performance Research* 14.3 (2009): 81-88, 84. See also Synne K. Behrndt quoting a.o. Heidi Gilpin and dance dramaturg Marianne van Kerkhoven, "Dance, Dramaturgy and dramaturgical thinking," *Contemporary Theatre Review* 20.2 (2010): 185-196.

<sup>28</sup> Based on my own observation from the working processes I visited during my internship.

<sup>29</sup> Cvejić, *Choreographing Problems*, 8.



the debate 'what dance is' and broaden the scope of choreography and its effect on the spectator.<sup>30</sup>

### **Choreography – to choreograph - choreographing**

Such broadened understanding of mobility to me seems to offer the possibility to move beyond another dichotomy: After all, by staging facets of mobility that involve internal movement of the spectator I argue that performances of contemporary choreographers can be seen to stage the participation of the spectator beyond the bias of active and passive spectatorship. My intention is not to glide into another dichotomy as either following someone else's movements or engaging on her/his own terms. Much rather I want to create a space where different qualities of spectatorial internal movement matter in the discussion of participating in an event. To build my argument for such notion of participation my first concern is to pronounce the specific role movement plays in the performances I discuss in this thesis. My second concern, choreographing spectatorship, asks for a more distinct elaboration on the notion of choreography. After all, such notion has travelled through different appliances that each crystallizes another facet of the term. Deriving from the Greek word for the synthesis of dance, rhythm and vocal harmony, chorus ('choreia'), and the act of writing ('graph') the term originates as a fusion of movement and its notation.<sup>31</sup> Coined by Raoul Auger Feuillet in the late 17<sup>th</sup> century this neologism is applied to capture essential elements of dance, their combination and spatial progression.<sup>32</sup>

The understanding of choreography as 'capturing the elements of dance' has been applied in connection to dance throughout the centuries. Yet, the deconstruction by poststructuralist critique in the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century has made it possible to unravel what appears to be an inviolable connection as culturally determined and mutable.<sup>33</sup> Thereby also the bond between choreography and dance loosens. The notion choreography gains specific capacities: It turns into a tool that supports mapping out the progression and transformation of movement in relation to the source that makes such movement happen. After all, applied as a verb, 'to choreograph' unravels the relation between movement and

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<sup>30</sup> While all three choreographers stand out in their investment in spectatorship Božić and Willms are the most outspoken in making the spectator the centre of their work. The *Fonds for de Podiumkunsten* even invented a new name, 'Interdisciplinary Performance art', suggesting that Božić and Wilm's work is unique in the Netherlands.

<sup>31</sup> Foster, *Choreographing Empathy*, 37.

<sup>32</sup> Idem, 38.

<sup>33</sup> Foster, "Choreographies of Gender," *Signs* 24.1 (1998): 1-33, 2.

its determining factors, or in other words, between the players involved in a process. As Foster points out, not only choreographers can be seen to choreograph the movement of dancers, but also the habitual movements of a person can be seen as choreographed by the cultural and social environment of this person.<sup>34</sup> Further abstracted, buildings can be said to choreograph the movement of people, a camera can be seen to choreograph cinematic action, or even birds movement can be analysed as choreography.<sup>35</sup> In the course of this development the notion choreography highlights movement in various disciplines and discourses and expands to a rather all-encompassing referent for a structuring of movement, not necessarily the movement of human beings.<sup>36</sup>

By these means choreography can be applied as a theoretical tool to examine power relations. After all, as Lepecki summarizes, the division between that which choreographs and the one that is choreographed can point towards the distribution of agency.<sup>37</sup> However, choreography does not take place independently from the one observing. After all, dance, and with it choreography is said to have very specific effects on the spectator, which generations of researchers are out to prove. As twentieth century dance theorist John Martin argues, “(d)ance (...) conveys meaning because viewers, even though sitting in their seats, feel the movement and consequently the emotions of the dancer.”<sup>38</sup> Moreover, twenty-first century neurophysiologists claim the intrinsic connection between viewer and dancer through mirror neurons.<sup>39</sup> Even though the argumentations on how the connection between the dancer and the spectator ‘works’ differ, these theories unanimously claim that dance has the capacity to involve the spectator in the staged movement through moving with a human performer. Complementary, Cvejić claims performances that apply the frame of choreography to reflect on dance itself choreograph problems and can be seen as “(...) an

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<sup>34</sup> In “Choreographies of Gender” Foster utilizes choreography as a concept to understand how gender formed by culture. Distinguishing between choreography and performance Foster thereby builds on cultural theorist Judith Butler that approaches gender as a performance of movement vocabulary. The summary of this section does not do justice to the implications of the findings of Foster a.o. I choose to limit myself to point towards the steps in the development of the concept choreography that are essential to my thesis.

<sup>35</sup> Foster, *Choreographing Empathy*, 20.

<sup>36</sup> Idem, 20.

<sup>37</sup> Lepecki and R. Allsopp, summarizing Martin, “On Choreography,” *Performance Research* 13.1 (2008): 1-4, 2.

<sup>38</sup> Foster, *Choreographing Empathy*, 19.

<sup>39</sup> B. Calvo-Merino et al, “Action Observation and Acquired Motor Skills: An fMRI Study with Expert Dancers,” *Cerebral Cortex* 15 (2005): 1243-1249.

exercise of the limits of sensibility beyond recognition.”<sup>40</sup> Rather than following the logic of identification such performances invite the spectator to move in thought.

Overarching these claims, Foster concludes through a genealogical study of the notions choreography, kinesthesia and empathy that choreography always addresses the spectator in a specific way of feeling towards it: “Any notion of choreography contains, embodied within it, a kinesthesia, a designated way of experiencing physicality and movement that, in turn, summons other bodies into a specific way of feeling towards it.”<sup>41</sup> Thereby the capacity of choreography is not limited to summoning other bodies into kinaesthetic empathy as feeling someone else’s feelings. After all, Foster limits empathy not to inhabiting the other with one’s physicality or with one’s emotional capacities but defines empathy as a behaviour that relates to ‘the entire scene that affects the object of one’s empathy’.<sup>42</sup> Thereby Foster shows how the overall composition of movement in actions, sequences and qualities accumulates in an event that choreographs internal movement(s) of the spectator as a behaviour, ‘a specific way of feeling towards’ a composition of movement.<sup>43</sup> In this way choreographing can be seen as a staging strategy to arouse certain behaviour in the spectator. In reverse, choreographing turns into an analytical tool that allows tracing how movement traverses between the performer, the space and the spectator. In this way Foster introduces choreographing as a tool to analyse the relation between the spectator and a performance. The following discussion of movement in between the dancer and the spectator forms the niche wherein I apply choreographing as such a relational tool.

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<sup>40</sup> Cvejić, *Choreographing Problems*, 30.

<sup>41</sup> Foster, *Choreographing Empathy*, 20.

<sup>42</sup> *Idem*, 30.

<sup>43</sup> *Idem*, 20.

## 2 Movement in between the dancer and the spectator

### A critical discussion of methods tracing movement

In the following I investigate how the two dominant phenomena in the discourse of dance and choreography, pure dance and conceptual dance, address and position the spectator within the historical and cultural context of their making. I attempt to expose how these performances move the spectator differently. After all, as Bleeker points out, “(e)ach discourse has its own possibilities for showing and telling, for taking audiences along, and for making these audiences move in response to the address presented to them.”<sup>44</sup> Moreover, I intend to show how the methods of analysis related to the discourse of pure dance and conceptual dance seem to cut short on investigating how performances of contemporary choreographers can invite the spectator to move (internally). Let’s depart from these two assumptions: Dance moves the spectator through an unmitigated connection between the spectator and the dancer, and an intrinsic connection between movement and feeling. In colloquial talk and in the discourse on dance these assumptions still seem to form the base line of the understanding of how dance moves the spectator.<sup>45</sup>

The understanding of dance as such an expression of feelings emerges with the upcoming of modern dance in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century and marks a turn away from the formalism of ballet and towards dance as a quest of self-expression and freedom of the body and spirit. As a rebellion against ballet spectacles and entertainment choreographers such as pioneering Isadora Duncan and Mary Wigman stage movement as a ‘natural’ form of expressing feelings. Thereby the work of Martha Graham is even said to reveal the ‘inner landscape’ of the soul.<sup>46</sup> Simultaneously dance theorist John Martin builds his entire theory on such natural form of expressing and understanding movement. Thereby he delivers an explanation for the effect of the choreographies of Wigman and Graham on the spectator. Martin argues that the spectator reproduces the movements s/he witnesses through an internal process as if it were her/his own. Such kinaesthetic sympathy is, in Martin’s theory,

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<sup>44</sup> Bleeker, *Visuality*, 8.

<sup>45</sup> Cveijć, *Choreographing Problems*, 163.

<sup>46</sup> C.P. Warren, S. Youngerman and S. Yung, “A Brief History of American Modern Dance” [2013] *Dance in Motion. Education* – 07-07-2017  
<http://www.dancemotionusa.org/education/>

connected to a natural understanding of the emotions these movements express.<sup>47</sup> Dance informs a process of ‘inner mimicry’ that allows for the spectator to feel immediately what the dancer is feeling:

“Naturally (...) motor responses are registered by our movement-sense receptors, and awaken appropriate emotional associations akin to those which have animated the dancer in the first place. It’s the dancer’s whole function to lead us into imitating his actions with our faculty for inner mimicry in order that we may experience his feelings.”<sup>48</sup>

With this argumentation Martin assumes a direct connection between the dancer and the spectator, and an intrinsic relation between feeling and movement. However, according to Bleeker, a performance always mediates between the performer and the spectator through the way a performance addresses and positions the spectator.<sup>49</sup> Thereby a performance can suggest an unmitigated connection between the performer and the spectator by obscuring the traces of mediation. By these means, as Foster exposes, such an address mediates the effect on behalf of the spectator to be able to feel what a specific human being is feeling while, in fact, the performance adheres to a specific understanding of feelings at a specific cultural and historical moment:

The dancer’s performance draws upon and engages with prevailing senses of the body and subjectivity in a given historical moment. Likewise, the viewer’s rapport is shaped by common and prevailing senses of the body and of subjectivity in a given social moment as well as by the unique circumstances of watching a particular dance.”<sup>50</sup>

Thereby performances in the line of modern dance, referred to by Cveijć as pure dance, can be seen to position the spectator in a way that obscures the underlying complexities at work in the historical and social moment of its occurrence. Such dance performances and

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<sup>47</sup> John Joseph Martin, *America Dancing: The Background and Personalities of the Modern Dance* (New York: Dodge Publishing Company, 1936), 117.

<sup>48</sup> Martin, 53.

<sup>49</sup> Bleeker, *Visuality*, 9 and 21. As I elaborate later on, Bleeker uses the terms theatricality and absorption to expose that theatre always presents the spectator with an address, whether this address is exposed or its mediation veiled.

<sup>50</sup> Foster, *Choreographing Empathy*, 19.

methods of analysis that deny its positioning can be seen as problematic. After all, as Foster argues, these performances can be unraveled as a site of successfully producing, and not just reflecting, on notions of gender, class, and race.<sup>51</sup> Moreover, by obscuring the traces of mediation these performances create an address that actually distracts the spectator from her/his own feelings. As Bleeker points out, the performances Martin refers to position the spectator to feel what the dancer on stage is feeling by veiling the bodily investment of the spectator in what s/he sees.<sup>52</sup>

Meanwhile the discourse on kinaesthetic empathy focuses on unravelling how it is actually possible to feel what someone else is feeling. Thereby Martin's theory on how such a process takes place within the body of the spectator is revised through neurophysiological research at the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Such research argues that specific synaptic connections in the brain fire when one sees action and one does that action.<sup>53</sup> While Martin bases his theory on the existence of an autonomous inner self, in neurophysiological research selfhood can be seen as continually reforming.<sup>54</sup> Such research offers the possibility to disconnect the claim of an emotional understanding of movement from the physiological workings of the body. However, this research is based on the same teleological perspective as Martin's theory: movement as the means of expression of the subject and to feel what someone else is feeling. Even if neurological research on kinaesthetic empathy revises Martin's claim of inner 'muscular mimicry' such research aims to prove that it is kinaesthetic empathy that motivates 'people to seek out dance performances to watch'.<sup>55</sup> According to Cvejić, promoting such understanding holds in place an ideology where dance is watched solely to gain pleasure through kinaesthetic empathy and quality is judged by common sense of the audience as well as researchers.<sup>56</sup>

The underlying assumptions of such ideology can be seen as problematic as they seem to exclude other interests of attending as well as producing dance performances. For instance, one can also be interested in dance by means of an intellectual and critical engagement. Such engagement is the case in conceptual dance that applies choreography as a way to reflect critically on the genre dance and what it represents through its own framing.

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<sup>51</sup> Idem, 23.

<sup>52</sup> Bleeker, "Martin, Massumi and the Matrix," in *Anatomy Live, Performance and the Operating Theatre*, ed. by M. Bleeker (Amsterdam: University Press: 2008): 151-164,

<sup>53</sup> Foster, *Choreographing Empathy*, 19.

<sup>54</sup> Idem, 20.

<sup>55</sup> Matthew Reason and D. Reynolds, "Kinesthesia, Empathy, and related Pleasures, An Inquiry into Audience Experiences when Watching Dance," *Dance Research Journal* 42.2 (2010): 49-75, 49.

<sup>56</sup> Cvejić, *Choreographing Problems*, 164.

Thereby choreographer Mette Ingvartsen explores the expressivity of movement ‘in its own right’.<sup>57</sup> In this work, as Cvejić points out, composition relies on the understanding of the expression of movement as one

“(…) that does not belong to the individual self of the performer or to its attender or to the relation between these two terms, but instead arises in performance in and for itself and has an existence of its own.”<sup>58</sup>

Such approach suggests movement itself as the object of inquiry. While the discourse on kinaesthetic empathy lacks tools for such examinations, Cvejić argues that such movement can be approached as a composition of affects and sensations by means of the philosophies of Deleuze.<sup>59</sup>

A composition of movement in its own right seems to affect the spectator cognitively by choreographing problems that stimulate a thought process on ‘how things work’. Building on philosopher Baruch Spinoza’s distinction between passive and active affects Cvejić points out, that passive affects “(…) are conceived by the mind solely from the dictate of reason and not from the encounter with other bodies that affect us.”<sup>60</sup> In this way Cvejić offers an alternative analytical method to the ruling discourse on kinaesthetic empathy. However, even though Cvejić loosens the bond between movement and the expression of the body she does so by binding movement in its own right to the cognition of the spectator. Ironically, she seems to hold in place the perspective of extreme emotionalism by affirming its counterforce. By these means Cvejić’ approach of the relation between the spectator and the performance veils how the body of the spectator is involved in the performance.

It remains questionable whether it is actually possible to pin down *what* one feels and *how* audience responses to dance could be determined and argued for. As Foster exposes, the notions of choreography, kinaesthesia and empathy are tightly interlaced with the notions of subjectivity and perception of the specific cultural and historical context in which they are applied.<sup>61</sup> Thereby she exposes that the experience of feelings has changed radically over time. However, the intrinsic connection between feeling and movement

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<sup>57</sup> Idem, 165.

<sup>58</sup> Idem, 165.

<sup>59</sup> Idem, 165.

<sup>60</sup> Cvejić, *Choreographing Problems*, based on Spinoza, 166-167.

<sup>61</sup> Foster, *Choreographing Empathy*, 19.

within one body can be seen as essential to what bodies are. As philosopher Brian Massumi argues, "(...) adding movement to stasis is about as easy as multiplying a number by zero and getting a positive product."<sup>62</sup> Thereby the connection between feeling and movement within the human body, within the spectator, seems to be hard to argue against. In retrospect also Martin observes a close connection between feeling and movement in the expressing as well as observing body. As Bleeker points out, even though it is problematic that Martin assumes feelings to be universal he also introduces movement as the central way of responding to what one is confronted with.<sup>63</sup> Thereby Martin presents movement not only as a medium of expression but as a medium of perception.

All in all, approaches of kinaesthetic or cognitive empathy both aim to trace movement in between the spectator and the performer. However, both approaches in their own way veil the bodily investment of the spectator in a performance. Kinaesthetic empathy aims to prove the bodily investment in feeling what someone else is feeling but veils how the body relates to the world from her/his own position. Cognitive empathy argues for the involvement of the spectator in thought, yet veils the bodily investment in thinking, relating, perceiving and engaging with the world. Thereby both approaches cut short on providing tools to explore how a performance can stage the bodily investment of the spectator in involving with a performance. Performances of contemporary choreographers create such a space for varying modes of involvement of the spectator in the process of the performance. As the mobility of the (human) performer has left the centre of the stage, yet has not disappeared, an alternative method of analysis seems necessary to consider the ways in which choreography can summon the spectator into a specific way of feeling towards it, a tool to trace movement in between the spectator, the performer, and the space regardless of conceptual and physical terrains.

### **Choreographing spectatorship**

The performances this thesis discusses invite to be explored by a notion that builds on Foster's choreographing empathy. After all, Foster identifies choreography as separate from performance and the history of practicing a given dance and points towards its potential as a

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<sup>62</sup> Brian Massumi, *Parables for the Virtual, Movement, Affect, Sensation* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2002), 3.

<sup>63</sup> Bleeker, "Martin, Massumi and the Matrix" in *Anatomy Live, Performance and the Operating Theatre*, ed. M. Bleeker (Amsterdam: University Press: 2008): 151-164, 158.



relational tool.<sup>64</sup> Applying choreographing as an analytical tool Foster's focus lies on exposing the effect human movement has on other bodies. However, even though Foster investigates human movement, her explorations on the concept choreographing empathy invite thinking of what arouses such effect in a broader sense. After all, referring to '*Einfühlung*', Foster exposes empathy as a distinctly human ability that can be triggered by anything in the observable world.<sup>65</sup> Moreover, in her argument she fuses the capacity of 'summoning other bodies into a specific way of feeling' not to the human performer but to the notion of choreography.<sup>66</sup> Thereby the criteria for movement to have an effect on the spectator that I distill from Foster's argument is that such movement is not necessarily connected to human expression but rather embraces all traces of movement in varying intensities and dynamics that accumulate in an event.

Further I broaden Foster's view on choreographing behaviour as I observe that such notion emerges from performances of contemporary choreographers. I fuse choreographing with theories of performance analysis that allow for exploring spectatorship as an embodied and embedded practice. Choreographing allows acknowledging the (seemingly) direct connection between the performer(s) and the spectator as always mediated.<sup>67</sup> In this way Foster's findings show similarities to Bleeker's elaborations on vision and visibility in the theatre. Bleeker argues that each performance presents the spectator with a specific address. "The theatre addresses us and this address implies a position for us as subject of the vision presented to us."<sup>68</sup> Thereby the spectator is invited to take on a position s/he does not necessarily identify with. After all, "(t)he address presented by theatrical performance has the power to position us and displace us."<sup>69</sup> By these means it becomes possible to analyze the way a performance constructs a spectatorial address independently from the experience of the individual spectator yet in relation to the cultural and historical background of the supposed spectator.

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<sup>64</sup> Idem, 24.

<sup>65</sup> Foster, *Choreographing Empathy*, referring to Theodore Lipps, 147. Foster describes empathy as a human quality, a moving into the other, exploring materiality, that could be aroused by dynamics not necessarily of human origin.

<sup>66</sup> As I read Foster's argument the term body includes all capacities of the human instead of insinuating a split between mind and body.

<sup>67</sup> Idem, 19.

<sup>68</sup> Bleeker, based on Barbara Freedman, *Visuality*, 9. 'The' theatre relates to the place with conventional auditorium stage divide as well as the discourse on theatre that embraces performances in all kind of situations. As I read Bleeker her findings on address can be applied for any performative event and therefore also for a dance performance in a theatre space.

<sup>69</sup> Idem, 9.

Combining both concepts, choreographing and spectatorship, allows me to look more detailed into how the overall composition of movement addresses and positions the embodied and embedded spectator. Furthermore, each of the performances discussed in this thesis follows distinct strategies that ask for slightly different approaches. On the one hand, aspects of the concept nomadic theatre introduced by Groot Nibbelink allow approaching patterns of movement in relation to surfaces in the material, sensorial and lived constellation between the spectator, the performer and the space.<sup>70</sup> This concept is developed to investigate the ways in which participatory and ambulatory performance stage movement and mobility. Thereby staging refers to composition and spectatorial address.<sup>71</sup> In performances where the performer appears to have left the center of the stage nomadic theatre supports locating where the stage actually is. On the other hand, the concept focalization introduced to theatre by Bleeker allows tracing movement that occurs through the ways in which a performance positions the spectator towards what is there to be perceived.<sup>72</sup> Bleeker has applied this concept within the conventional stage-auditorium divide to argue for the embodied spectator. Thereby such concept can help to clarify how the spectator is invited to perceive what is there and whose feelings the spectator is invited to feel.

This study proposes that the exploration of movement in performances of contemporary choreographers asks for a method that offers flexibility. I therefore apply concepts that help me steer through a qualitative performance analysis to arrive at contributing to the theorization of movement in performance. My examinations take place in form of a dialogue between theory and practice, between performances and concepts. Sources from the discourse of practicing dance and choreography are the performances *WHILE WE STRIVE*, *Pandora's DopBox* and *The Cube* as I have attended them myself, and digital documentations of these performances. My sources from theory are elaborations on concepts by several cultural and theatre theorists. It might seem that choreography is the very concept movement is made of and has always been in close connection with. Yet, in the introduction of this thesis I have argued how the concept choreography has *travelled* from mapping out what is happening *over there* to a concept that supports an understanding of how the relationship between the spectator and what is staged is constructed. Considering the journey the concept of choreography has taken through various practical and theoretical

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<sup>70</sup> Groot Nibbelink, based on the philosophies of Gilles Deleuze and spatial theories of Henri Lefebvre and Edward Soja.

<sup>71</sup> Groot Nibbelink, 31.

<sup>72</sup> Bleeker, *Visuality*.

discourses allows approaching this concept as a ‘travelling concept’ as introduced by cultural theorist Mieke Bal. Such concepts originate in one discipline and are applied in another. Being travelling concepts they offer flexibility that, as Bal argues, is much needed, as some of the aspects of the pluralism of contemporary art are difficult to grasp through traditional methods of analysis.<sup>73</sup>

Moreover, concepts not only help to understand cultural artefacts better, they also give space for the knowledge created by the practice of theatre. Thereby concepts can actually arise from the performances. As Cvejić points out, such ‘expressive concepts’ occur in the work of contemporary choreographers. Related to the Deleuzian logic of expression these concepts help to move beyond ideas of representation.<sup>74</sup> Vice versa Cvejić argues these concepts are necessary for a deepened understanding of the works of choreographers that trigger the involvement of the spectator.<sup>75</sup> Yet, as elaborated above, Cvejić approach focuses on how performances stimulate the thought process of the spectator as seemingly disconnected from the body of the spectator. Alternatively, building on Groot Nibbelink and Bleeker, I advocate for a broader approach of expressive concepts that embraces spectatorship as occurring through material, sensorial and lived relations even though the spectator might be seated in a conventional stage auditorium divide.<sup>76</sup> Thereby the performances this thesis relies on can deepen the embodied understanding of concepts applied by serving as ‘theoretical objects’.<sup>77</sup> After all, as Bleeker argues, performances can be read as theoretically meaningful statements embodied in the artistic discourse of the theatre.<sup>78</sup> Complementary, such analysis deserves to be done in a way that gives witness to the researcher’s own positioning. A conceptual analysis gives space for such subjective position of the one applying the concepts. After all, as Groot Nibbelink argues, concepts are intersubjective tools that create co-constructive relationships between concept, object and critic.<sup>79</sup> In this sense, in the following chapters, please let me steer you through the analysis

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<sup>73</sup> Mieke Bal, *Travelling Concepts in the Humanities, A Rough Guide* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press Incorporated, 2002), 5.

<sup>74</sup> Cvejić, *Choreographing Problems*, 33.

<sup>75</sup> The approach of Bal, of Groot Nibbelink as well as of Cvejić are to some extends based on the philosophies of Deleuze. An investigation into the depth of Deleuzian philosophy would be needed for a refined understanding of the offered theories and concepts but lies beyond the capacities of this thesis.

<sup>76</sup> Groot Nibbelink, based on spatial theories of Henri Lefebvre and Edward Soja, 33.

<sup>77</sup> Bleeker, *Visuality*, based on Bal, 8.

<sup>78</sup> Bleeker, *Visuality*, 8.

<sup>79</sup> Groot Nibbelink, based on Bal, 12.

of the performances *WHILE WE STRIVE*, *Pandora's DopBox* and *The Cube* with the notion choreographing spectatorship as an analytical tool.

### 3 Movement as a means to relate

#### Exploring spaces of proximity

In this chapter I explore how the composition in actions, sequences and qualities in the performance *WHILE WE STRIVE* accumulate in an address of the senses of the spectator. In *WHILE WE STRIVE* three dancers draw patterns across the architectural space repetitively challenging proximity. Together with sound waves emitted from handheld Bluetooth speakers these patterns break with the conventional stage-audience divide. After all, these patterns seemingly touch the skin of the spectator and nudge the senses of the spectator. I investigate the ways in which these patterns can be seen as related to the movement of the Deleuzian and Guattarian 'nomad', as for the nomad ground has no borders.<sup>80</sup> Thereby movement in *WHILE WE STRIVE* can be seen to oscillate into spaces of interiority inviting the spectator to relate to the bodily movement and the sound waves on surfaces of thoughts and feelings and give meaning to them. Such appliance of movement as a means to establish a relation with location, ground or land relates to how, according to Foster, a performance can choreograph empathy for the relation of a performer towards the ground.<sup>81</sup> In the following I intend to show how *WHILE WE STRIVE* repetitively reorganizes the constellation of the performer(s), the spectator and the stage, inviting the spectator to participate in movement as a means to relate to surfaces and stages the vibrant mobility of the spectator.

In the beginning of *WHILE WE STRIVE* the dancers enter the stage one after the other.<sup>82</sup> With the auditorium and the stage of the black box theatre evenly lit, my attention is immediately brought towards the constellation of all bodies in this space. On an all white stage floor continuing into a white backdrop two small black objects are almost unnoticeable. The first dancer traverses the architectural stage, casually yet purposefully, walking towards the seated bodies in the auditorium. He stops halfway, yet continues to look at the audience searching for eye contact. A second dancer enters in a similar manner.

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<sup>80</sup> Groot Nibbelink, 21.

<sup>81</sup> Foster, *Choreographing Empathy*, 165.

<sup>82</sup> Gay Mc Auley, *Space in Performance: making meaning in the theatre* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1999), 24-32. Following Groot Nibbelink, I refer to the terminology of Mc Auley on spatial functions. I apply the term theatre space as it allows acknowledging the effect the actual architectural space of the theatre has on the way the performance can be perceived by the spectator.

When she comes to a halt, the first performer turns towards her. They look at each other with a smile of recognition. When the third performer crosses diagonally through the space he takes up a position balancing out evenly the spatial relation between the human performers, the black objects and the audience members. Scanning the space curiously, these dancers let their look pass amongst each other and the members of the audience.<sup>83</sup>

Whilst traversing the space, these dancers bring the attention of the spectator towards the patterns of displacement emerging on the surface of the stage. Approaching the auditorium such movement, as a means to traverse ground, relates to the Deleuzian and Guattarian notion of nomadism.<sup>84</sup> This nomadism is not as much related to movement as it is connected to the ground one moves on. The nomad shows a different kind of behaviour towards the surface than the sedentary: whereas to the sedentary ground is conceived of as a territory, “(t)o the nomad, ground is not a territory; when conceived of as a surface, ground has no borders.”<sup>85</sup> In theatre, the architecture of the stage and the auditorium reflect the conventional division between the one watching and the one showing.<sup>86</sup> Decreasing the distance between the dancers and the audience through walking closer and increasing proximity through eye contact, the dancers in *WHILE WE STRIVE* nudge the territory of the spectator and its conventions.

In this approach of the spectator lies the core of the exchange between the performer(s), the spectator and the stage of *WHILE WE STRIVE*. Coming ever so closely, the spatial commence of the dancers mounts in a transgression of the imaginable 4<sup>th</sup> wall of the theatre. Reaching out, never losing eye contact, one dancer almost touches the leg of a spectator in the first row.<sup>87</sup> In doing so, this dancer can be seen to disturb the territory of the spectator and question its territorial conventions. After all, as Groot Nibbelink points out,

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<sup>83</sup> *WHILE WE STRIVE* [online video clip], (2015) accessed September 15, 2017, <https://vimeo.com/145839664>, 00:00 – 01:13.

<sup>84</sup> Groot Nibbelink's PhD thesis "Nomadic Theatre" is on the mobilisation of the constellation of the performer, the spectator and the stage in ambulatory performances and participatory theatre. Groot Nibbelink's research differs from my research as "Nomadic Theatre" explicitly involves with the actual displacement of the stage, the performer, and the spectator. Her research "(...) adheres to distinct modes of displacement and simultaneously closely inspects the theoretical movement implied." (p.25) However, I feel encouraged to let her approach travel into the traditional setting of the theatre as she also investigates a situation where the spectator is seated. Groot Nibbelink's chapter "diagram", to which I refer specifically, investigates the staging of singled out, yet seated spectator. It is because of Groot Nibbelink's move of Deleuze and Guattari's theories to the participatory stage that I take the detour via Groot Nibbelink's research instead of directly referring to Deleuze and Guattari.

<sup>85</sup> Groot Nibbelink, 21.

<sup>86</sup> Mc Auley, 90.

<sup>87</sup> *WHILE WE STRIVE* [online video clip], 01:13-01:57.

nomadism in relation to theatre can point to a particular mode or attitude that concerns the disturbance or undoing of territories.<sup>88</sup> Such mode is designated in patterns of deterritorialisation that engage “(...) acts that (...) escape the codes or laws of a system and relate to strategies that render territory into a state of continuous variation.”<sup>89</sup> Piercing the border between the stage and the auditorium, the dancer undermines the codes that are specific to the territory of the spectator. This moment of proximity brings uncertainties, raises questions and sharpens the attention of the spectator. One might begin to wonder where the stage actually is.

By these means the sequence of the dancer initiates patterns of de- and reterritorialisation. In disturbing the territory of the spectator, the deed of the dancer introduces performing actions to the auditorium that is conventionally labelled as the place of voyeurs sitting in the darkened auditorium ‘just looking’, ‘passively’.<sup>90</sup> Through this merging a new code is initiated, as deterritorialisation of a territory cannot be understood separately from the reorganization of the elements within new assemblages.<sup>91</sup> This implies that the territory of the spectator is reterritorialized as a place where performing actions and attending a performance merge. In this way the stage is extended from the architectural stage into the auditorium. The stage ‘happens’ in-between the encounter of the performer(s) and the spectator.<sup>92</sup> Thereby *WHILE WE STRIVE* exposes how the spectator relates towards what is staged as part of the staged movement. As Groot Nibbelink points out, spectators are always actively engaged by way of observing, meaning-making, memorizing, and as such are always co-producers of the performance.<sup>93</sup> As I will explain in what follows, *WHILE WE STRIVE* stages such engagement of the spectator through challenging proximity and addressing the senses.

### **An address to the senses**

Piercing through the 4<sup>th</sup> wall the theatrical encounter in *WHILE WE STRIVE* relocates onto surfaces in-between the relation of the singular spectator and the performer. After all, the proximity of the dancer brings the attention of the spectator towards the possibility of being

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<sup>88</sup> Groot Nibbelink, 197.

<sup>89</sup> Groot Nibbelink, referring to Deleuze, 17.

<sup>90</sup> Groot Nibbelink, 19.

<sup>91</sup> Groot Nibbelink, referring to Deleuze, 18.

<sup>92</sup> I borrow this term from Groot Nibbelink (introduced on p.18).

<sup>93</sup> Groot Nibbelink, 19-20.

touched. While theatre as a 'live event' always holds the possibility of being touched, strategies such as a direct address of the spectator foreground the dimension of the tangible of the spatial relation between the performer and the spectator. In theatre, as performance theoretician Herbert Blau points out, "(...) we gaze, in separation, at what we cannot touch, though we fear to be touched."<sup>94</sup> Yet, as theatre scholar Hans-Thies Lehmann argues, performances addressing the spectator directly in deeds and proximity foreground theatre as 'a place of gathering in the here and now'.<sup>95</sup> Thereby, the unexpected approach of the dancer in *WHILE WE STRIVE* highlights the most intimate theatrical encounter, that of the sensory perception.<sup>96</sup>

In such theatrical encounter movements that address tangibility can be seen as oscillating in different intensities and dynamics in-between the bodies encountering. As dance theorist Gerko Egert argues, touch demands to be approached as movements of their own virtuality: they are 'not yet' and 'no more'.<sup>97</sup> Rather than a linear developing in space and time, touch happens as a configuration of movements in different intensities and dynamics. In this way approaching and withdrawing touch is already happening even though it might not result in skin-to-skin contact.<sup>98</sup> Such movement, as a means of 'drawing near', creates haptic and affective relations.<sup>99</sup> Egert builds his argument on how the staging of two bodies touching arouses moments of emotional stirring. Moreover, he argues that such movement not only occurs between the two bodies touching but also affects the spectator.<sup>100</sup> Following this argument, in *WHILE WE STRIVE*, although the dancer approaches only one single spectator, and though the spectator is never touched, the spectators that witness this singular event can be seen as affected. After all, movements of touch involve the one watching in the potentiality of their dynamic relations.

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<sup>94</sup> Herbert Blau, *The Audience*, (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1990), 84.

<sup>95</sup> Hans-Thies Lehmann, *Postdramatisches Theater* 5<sup>e</sup> print (Frankfurt am Main: Verlag der Autoren, 2011), 12.

<sup>96</sup> Groot Nibbelink, 111.

<sup>97</sup> Gerko Egert, "Movements of Touch in *MAYBE FOREVER*," in *Touching an being Touched, Kinesthesia and Empathy in Contemporary Dance and Movement*, ed. G. Brandstetter, G. Egert and S. Zubarik (Berlin/Boston: Walter de Gruyter GmbH, 2013): 63-82, 64.

<sup>98</sup> Egert, "Movements of Touch in *MAYBE FOREVER*", 66.

<sup>99</sup> Egert, "Berührungen- haptische und affektive Beziehungen im zeitgenössischen Tanz" (PhD diss., Freie Universität Berlin, 2014), 5.

<sup>100</sup> Egert, "Berührungen", 56.



Such ignition of dynamic relations through the potential of bodily touch in *WHILE WE STRIVE* is intensified through movement from other performers being sound sources.<sup>101</sup> As the dancer in *WHILE WE STRIVE* defers from touching the spectator, she picks up a small black object from underneath the chair of the spectator.<sup>102</sup> As she displaces the object from underneath the auditorium chair the attention of the spectator is brought towards the sound coming from this handheld Bluetooth speaker. This sound has been already present in the space when the audience entered, yet, probably remained unnoticed. After all, perceiving sound means that certain modes of listening help to select from the multiplicity of sounds in an environment.<sup>103</sup> As one cannot close one's ears, music scholar Pieter Verstraete points out, one manages to 'spatially control' auditory distress by filtering out 'unnecessary' auditive stimuli through modes of listening.<sup>104</sup> So when the dancer grabs the speaker in *WHILE WE STRIVE*, she guides the attention of the spectator towards the emitted sound waves. This sudden appearance of the sound in the awareness of the spectator shifts the attention of the spectator to how her/his ears 'open up' for the sound.

In this way also the sound waves in *WHILE WE STRIVE* appear as movement or- more specifically as patterns of de- and reterritorialisation. The white noise emitted from the speakers oscillates through the theatre space in a way that guides the attention of the spectator towards the specific direction of the sound as well as to its origin.<sup>105</sup> Thereby the perpetuating quality of the sound from the handheld speakers highlights similarities between the sound patterns and the patterns of bodily movement. Moreover, similar to touch the sound waves nudge the skin of the spectator as the border of her/his territory. After all, the act of listening can be seen as related to the haptic sense of touch. As Verstraete argues, listening involves "(...) a sense of being touched by the sound through its

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<sup>101</sup> The performance also makes a specific use of light. Yet, I leave this out of my considerations as the relation between sound waves and bodily movement is exemplary for my argumentation as this relation intertwines seeing, hearing, and touching.

<sup>102</sup> *WHILE WE STRIVE* [online video clip], 01:40-02:11.

<sup>103</sup> Even though *WHILE WE STRIVE* addresses issues of perception I will not delve deeper into the workings of perception. Nevertheless, to understand the effect of sudden proximity I point towards the expectation the performance possibly plays with.

<sup>104</sup> Pieter Maria Gabriël Verstraete, "The Frequency of Imagination, Auditory Distress and Aurality in Contemporary Music Theatre" (PhD diss., University Amsterdam, 2009), 20.

<sup>105</sup> *WHILE WE STRIVE* [online video clip], 01:57-02:30. On the registration the sound seems very present from the beginning of the registration onwards. However, from my own memory of the live performance the sound blends into the environment until the dancer displacing the speaker highlights it.

contractions of air pressure.”<sup>106</sup> By these means *WHILE WE STRIVE* creates multisensory intrusions of the territory of the spectator and choreographs haptic and affective relations for the spectator to involve in. Thereby the performance reorganizes the conventions of dance: Rather than creating a stage for a subject to move, movement is staged as oscillating in-between the performer, the spectator and the stage. Instead of following the conventions of the theatre as a place of looking, the theatre is reterritorialized as a sensorium. *WHILE WE STRIVE* exposes the (internal) process of the spectator of relating to the world through all senses and stages this process as movement. After all, the stage folds onto surfaces of interiority.

### **Traversing stages of interiority**

While sequences and patterns of bodily movement and sound waves in *WHILE WE STRIVE* become more complex and reach further into space throughout the performance the underlying intention remains to stage tangibility. In this way the sensory approach of the spectator initiated in the beginning of *WHILE WE STRIVE* continues to resonate. After the above-described opening scene each of the dancers takes a speaker in her/his hand. By playing with the proximity of the speaker towards his or her own body the dancers test out the theatre space. Measuring distances their repetitive movements of arms and upper body draw patterns through the space as if they are gathering sensory information about this space.<sup>107</sup> By investigating the continuous quality of sound waves and bodily movement these dancers bring the attention of the spectator to the tangibility of such movement.

Such tangibility foregrounds composition as an occurrence of pathways rather than the solidification of a specific positioning. Indeed the relations between the performers and the spectators keep alternating. So it seems that the composition of bodily movement and sound waves in relation towards the spectator are continuously re-written. In this way the composition shows similarities to the Deleuzian concept ‘diagram’ as a composing force. According to Deleuze, the diagram “(...) invites spectators into a fundamentally open process, while at the same time the composition of this process provides the conditions for

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<sup>106</sup> Verstraete, referring to music scholar Murray Schafer, 200. Moreover, Schafer’s concept ‘touching at a distance’ suggests that listening, rather than being an act of interiority, is the listener moving towards the sound.

<sup>107</sup> *WHILE WE STRIVE* [online video clip], 02:11-06:18.

the spectator's mode of engagement."<sup>108</sup> Groot Nibbelink points out that this concept can be helpful to investigate the patterns that occur in the intimate theatrical encounter of the sensory perception. As a tool the diagram exposes how the interplay of alternating patterns stabilizes into specific situations and re-articulates into another.<sup>109</sup> Even though the address of the senses is a given, the response of the spectator to this address re-writes the diagram each time anew by each relation of the singular spectator towards the event.

We can thus conceive the theatre space of *WHILE WE STRIVE* as a sensorial laboratory where (seemingly) not only the performer(s) but also the spectator is a force of composition. Thereby the duality of the concept diagram can point towards how this performance invites the spectator into a process of re-exploring questions as "how do I as an embodied being relate to my environment?" As pointed out before movement as a means to relate in *WHILE WE STRIVE* manifests itself in particular patterns that are continuously re-written through the involvement of the spectator. Thereby, as Verstraete argues on sound, its physical manifestation is nothing more than meaningless resonations. The spectator as the one receiving this haptic address "(...) attributes meaning to sound in relation to a cultural discourse and context in which the act of listening takes place."<sup>110</sup> Moreover, as dance scholar Freya Vass-Rhee argues, the interplay of sound and bodily movement in contemporary choreography nudges the spectator's urge to search for 'traces of connection'.<sup>111</sup> Thereby the physical vibrating quality of the bodily movement and the sound waves resonate on surfaces of the body of the spectator to fold onto surfaces of interiority and trigger the spectator to constantly re-map her/his own relation to the performance. As Groot Nibbelink points out, also a seated spectator can be part of a vibrantly mobile constellation of the performer, the spectator and the stage.<sup>112</sup>

Such mobile constellation in *WHILE WE STRIVE* seems to occur through movement as a means to relate as the dominant mode of movement. As Foster points out, such movement as a means to relate to ground can be seen as a process of remapping a terrain.<sup>113</sup> Likewise, in *WHILE WE STRIVE* the spectator is invited to take part in a reconfiguration of the theatre space as a sensorium. Moreover, Foster points out how performances that openly mediate the relation between the spectator and the performer

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<sup>108</sup> Groot Nibbelink, 111.

<sup>109</sup> Idem, 112.

<sup>110</sup> Verstraete, 54.

<sup>111</sup> Freya Vass-Rhee, referring to Lehmann, "Auditory Turn: William Forsythe's Vocal Choreography," *Dance Chronicle* 33.3 (2010): 388-413, 397.

<sup>112</sup> Groot Nibbelink, 111.

<sup>113</sup> Foster, *Choreographing Empathy*, 165.

can choreograph empathy for the relation of the performer towards the ground.<sup>114</sup> *WHILE WE STRIVE* also offers a position to the spectator from which it is possible to explore how the dancer relates to her/his environment. However, the direct and sensory address of the spectator through the overall composition of bodily movement and sound waves involves the spectator in a process of re-evaluating her/his own relation towards the surface of the architectural space as well as towards surfaces of interiority. This implies that the spectator is involved in a process of giving meaning, folding thoughts and emotions from her/his own embodied position into one mode of movement. In this way the sensorial address of *WHILE WE STRIVE* foregrounds the vibrant mobility of the spectator.

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<sup>114</sup> Idem, 165.

## 4 Movement as a means to perceive

### A multiplicity of universes

In this chapter I explore through the lens of choreographing spectatorship how the composition of actions, sequences and qualities in the theatre version of *Pandora's DropBox* accumulates in a spectatorial address of multiple points of view. In *Pandora's DropBox* six performers are exposed on a hexagonal stage. Moving in slow motion these bodies metaphorically invite the spectator into different worlds. Wondering whether these bodies are 'real' humans or robots the spectator can wander between multiple positions towards what is there to perceive. Thereby the staged movement perpetuates from controlled horizontal shifts of the human performers to the dripping of fluids giving into gravity and twists into a multiplicity of universes that invite the spectator to move towards multiple positions from which the world appears as it does. A particular quality of the movement staged for the spectator is that it appears as a means to perceive the world from embodied, metaphorical positions. As Foster notices, a performance can choreograph empathy through staging movement as a means to expose and evaluate difference.<sup>115</sup> However, in *Pandora's DropBox* these differences are not bound to different bodies to empathize with. Rather the spectator her/himself is caught up in a loop of perceiving different worlds through her/his own body. In the following I intend to show that this performance foregrounds the ethical and political reality of theatre and stages the metaphorical mobility of the spectator.

For an encounter with *Pandora's DropBox* I search my way through the darkened auditorium towards a lit stage on stage. The performance seems to have already started as the spectators enter. Seats on all six sides of a hexagonal stage invite the spectators to sit down and look up towards six performers.<sup>116</sup> It takes a moment to adjust my eyes to the movement of these performers as they propagate so slowly through the dark shifting their weight. The vulnerability of their presence is magnified by our clumsy entrance and at first reassures me that I am 'just' watching theatre. These are performers of flesh and blood testing out their limits. But I am also drawn to forget where I am and I move and feel with

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<sup>115</sup> Foster, *Choreographing Empathy*, 174.

<sup>116</sup> *Pandora's DropBox* [video clip], (2017) accessed September 15, 2017, Hard drive, file 1, 01:30-02:30.

these performers in their role as dancers longing for perfection, I explore the world of perfect humans and even imagine a world of human-like robots without actual humans. Until I catch a glimpse of hesitation in one performer. Trembling movements of exhaustion create new worlds where the harsh discipline of the dancer neglects physical boundaries, where the ideal of a human does not do reality justice, and the human-like robot is designed to be imperfect, to appear more human.

The staging of *Pandora's DropBox* does not invite the spectator into a coherent situation. Rather the performance breaks open into a multiplicity of universes for the spectator to move between. To unfold how a performance can invite the spectator into such a multiplicity the tool focalization can be useful. This narratological tool "(...) describes the precise relationship between the subject viewing and the object viewed, as it is given within the particular construction of the visual, verbal, or multimedia text."<sup>117</sup> Such relationship between a world - an object viewed within its context - and the position from which it appears can be seen as constructed through internal and external focalizers adding up to specific frames. As Bleeker and theatre theorist Isis Germano point out, "(...) each frame focalizes in a different way and invites us to take up a different position, a different way of relating to what is there."<sup>118</sup> Thereby performers as internal focalizers frame a performance in a way that invites the spectator to take on a position inside the staged world. Such world seemingly exists independently from the embodied position of the spectator.<sup>119</sup> Complementary, performers as external focalizers throw the spectator back in her/his chair as the mediation of the performance is made explicit. This implies that the frame of the performance positions the spectator in a subjective position outside of the world on stage.<sup>120</sup> Thereby various conflicting focalizers can add up to multiple frames that address the spectator simultaneously. After all, as Bleeker and Germano argue, such conflicting focalizers can break a coherent situation into a 'multiplicity of universes'.<sup>121</sup>

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<sup>117</sup> Bleeker and I. Germano, based on Bal, "Perceiving and Believing: An Enactive Approach to Spectatorship," *Theatre Journal* 66:3 (2014): 363-383, 366.

<sup>118</sup> Bleeker and Germano, 376. The notion of framing refers to Lehmann's description of how the unitary logic of the dramatic world is deconstructed and replaced by a multiplication of framing in postdramatic theatre. While Lehmann claims that through such multiplication the spectator can finally see what is there as it really is, Bleeker and Germano expose how what is there to be seen is always staged in a certain way. However real it may seem a staging always invites the spectator to take on a certain position towards what is there.

<sup>119</sup> Bleeker, *Visuality*, 27. Performers thereby refers to any 'thing', a human performer or an object, in the performance space that, (un)intentionally, guides the attention of the spectator in a certain direction.

<sup>120</sup> Idem, 31.

<sup>121</sup> Bleeker and Germano, 375.

By these means *Pandora's DropBox* can be exposed to create multiple subjective positions for the spectator to perceive. The first subjective position that is introduced invites the spectator to acknowledge the actual situation within the theatre space. As spectators and performers share the architectural stage by means of a 'stage on stage set up' the theatrical encounter itself is focalized as a staged world. The curtain of light that distinguishes the hexagonal stage from the auditorium thereby serves as an external focalizer that brings the attention of the spectator towards the division between the auditorium and the stage. Thereby the curtain of light prevents the spectator from entering an imaginary world. After all, the subjective position for the spectator is outside of the platform stage and the relationship of the spectator towards this stage is exposed. By these means the attention of the spectator is brought towards, as Lehmann describes, theatre as the site of 'heavy bodies', of performers and spectators being of flesh and blood.<sup>122</sup> At the same time the stage-on-stage set-up explicitly stages theatre as a gathering of real people as well as a construction that stages a parallel world. As Bleeker describes, in itself "(t)heatre presents a *staging* of the construction that is also constitutive of the real."<sup>123</sup> Thus in *Pandora's DropBox* the spectator is deliberately invited to acknowledge theatre as a world where the performers are real and at the same time create other worlds. This frame focalizes the situation as 'just theatre' and the bodies on stage as 'just performers' fulfilling their tasks and at the same time predicts what is about to unfold.

The same curtain of light also focalizes the attention of the spectator internally on the movement of the six performers. In this curtain of light glimpses of six upper arms appear and disappear smoothly in a regular beat as the performers shift their weight while walking.<sup>124</sup> Together with other conflicting internal focalizers the curtain draws the attention of the spectator into a multiplicity of worlds. The perfectly shaped upper arms moving in a steady rhythm appear as part of the trained bodies of dancers held in position to express an inner movement. These dancers devote themselves to movement as their form of expression and adhere to a specific sense of subjectivity and perception.<sup>125</sup> Zooming in on one of them I can feel with a personal longing for an ideal. When the stage lights rise, the composition of all six bodies becomes visible. A well-balanced play of meticulously slow interactions begins.<sup>126</sup> Through the suggestion of interaction I am drawn into a sterile world

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<sup>122</sup> Lehmann, 17.

<sup>123</sup> Bleeker, *Visuality*, 9.

<sup>124</sup> *Pandora's DropBox* [video clip], file 1, 02:30-05:30.

<sup>125</sup> Foster, *Choreographing Empathy*, 19.

<sup>126</sup> *Pandora's DropBox* [video clip], file 1, 05:30 onwards.

of disciplined humans that seem to be preoccupied with their appearance rather than with communication. Particularly the meticulous control in which these bodies command even their facial features to stillness makes them appear as actors embodying the picture of the perfect human. With them I can explore what it would be like to live in a world with no expression of feelings, nor the relief of expressing such feelings.<sup>127</sup> Moreover, as these bodies defy any involuntary reaction they could embody or even *be* robots, or just human faces tamed with Botox. Thereby I am confronted with worlds predicting future scenarios or part of the 'real' world that has already caught up with perfecting the human: Worlds where the unpredictable human is replaced by its own ideal of harmony.

In this way the quality of movement and actions, and the composition of the performers in relation to each other invite the spectator into different worlds. While it is possible to feel with the performer the heaviness of her/his task, one can long with the dancer for another world, explore the world of the perfect human or of the robot as the better human. The spectator is invited to enter a kaleidoscope of worlds that demands switching between the embodied position in the auditorium and subjective positions in the auditorium and on stage. As the spectator could keep asking "What is it that I am looking at?" These multiple frames focalize the attention of the spectator on differing qualities of movement of different imaginary, yet real, bodies perceiving their environment and disrupt the continuity of identification with any of them. After all, the gliding smoothness of the dancer turns into harsh sterility of the human that refuses to interact, the harmonious tranquillity of the perfect human turns into absence of relief in the humanoid robot. All these staged bodies in *Pandora's DropBox* seem to be suspended in a loop of striving for an ideal while the spectator finds the spectator in a loop of repositioning in relation to and inside these worlds. In this way perception itself is brought to the attention of the spectator.

### **Entering the world through a metaphor**

To understand more clearly how *Pandora's DropBox* brings the attention of the spectator towards perception it can be helpful to apply a metaphor. After all, as Bleeker points out,

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<sup>127</sup> Bleeker and Germano suggest approaching such embodiment as '*embodied simulation*' by neuro scientist Vittorio Gallese. Gallese argues that '*intercorporeity*' is the main source of knowledge we gather about others. Thereby he challenges the more traditional view that interpersonal understanding is a matter of attributing to others propositional attitudes that are mapped as symbolic representations (p. 378). Within this thesis it would go too far to investigate this further.



the concept of perspective as a 'conceptual metaphor' or a 'searchlight' is, in some ways, comparable to focalization.<sup>128</sup> Also perspective builds on the relationship between a world and the position from which it appears as it does. However, perspective veils this relationship. Bleeker argues that perspective is often used as a metaphor to describe seeing things in their true relative proportion. Metaphors such as 'getting things in perspective' are not neutral since they do influence 'the way the world constitutes through them'.<sup>129</sup> Similar to stories, metaphors show the world from a subjective point of view, even though they can be so deeply integrated in how we perceive the world that we do not recognize them any more as such. In this way perspective is such a metaphor replacing a story. While 'getting things in perspective' appears as finally getting things the 'right' size, perspective actually gives the illusion of 'true' proportions. Thereby perspective "(...) draws attention to the relationship between (...) illusions of objectively given world that exists as stable entity independent from any particular point of view and the subjective point of view from where the world can appear as such."<sup>130</sup>

In this way perspectival painting and the staging strategies of dramatic theatre, or pure dance, can be seen to bear similarities.<sup>131</sup> Similar to perspectival painting the mode of spectatorial address of dramatic theatre veils the traces of the actual position of the spectator and stages a world that seemingly exists independently from a specific point of view. Bleeker describes this mode as 'absorption'. Complementary, Bleeker describes 'theatricality' as a mode of address that renders visible the relationship between what is there to be seen and the position from which the spectator is invited to see it.<sup>132</sup> Breaking up and taking away the dramatic frame, this address guides the awareness of the spectator towards a subjective position outside of the staged world that the spectator can identify with or not. These modes of address that occur through perspective as a metaphor allow imagining how a spectator is invited to move in relation to these staged worlds. On the one hand, absorption as a mode of address invites the spectator to 'step inside' a world and to forget for a moment her/his physical reality.<sup>133</sup> On the other hand, theatricality as a mode of address precisely reveals the power of theatre to 'position and displace' the spectator.<sup>134</sup> Moreover, as the spectator is no longer presented with a fixed subjective position inside the

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<sup>128</sup> Bleeker, *Visuality*, 14.

<sup>129</sup> *Idem*, 14.

<sup>130</sup> Bleeker, based on Bal, *Visuality*, 14.

<sup>131</sup> Groot Nibbelink, summarizing Bleeker, 54.

<sup>132</sup> Bleeker, *Visuality*, 21.

<sup>133</sup> *Idem*, 9.

<sup>134</sup> Bleeker, based on Freedman, *Visuality*, 9.

world, Bleeker argues, the spectator is free (at least metaphorically) to 'wander' the staged world.<sup>135</sup>

Through perspective as a metaphor, *Pandora's DropBox* can be seen to invite the seated spectator to metaphorical movement to perceive the world. The curtain of light as highlighting the movement of the performers together with other internal focalizers bring the attention of the spectator towards the movement of the staged bodies. Thereby the spectator can 'step inside' worlds, even inside these bodies, and explore the way the bodies on stage perceive the world and relate to this world. Complementary, the curtain of light as a separation of the stage and the auditorium together with other external focalizers bring the attention of the spectator towards her/his own movement and the way her/himself relates to the position s/he is invited to take on. The spectator is invited to notice how theatre 'positions or displaces' him/her and at the same time is free to 'wander' the staged world. As the modes of address in *Pandora's DropBox* alternate, the performance creates a wide range of metaphorical movement for the spectator. After all, the spectator is invited to the motion of stepping inside, positioning oneself anew and wandering the worlds to perceive how the bodies of the performer, the dancer, the human, and the robot relate to their environment.

Moreover, I argue that to understand the full range of such spectatorial movement, metaphor demands to be acknowledged as an embodied experience. After all, Bleeker and Germano also point out, conceptual metaphors "(...) are not just matters of the intellect; they govern our functioning to the most mundane details of our lives and are inseparable from most concrete embodied experience."<sup>136</sup> In this way metaphors seem to play an essential part in how a spectator can move in relation to (staged) worlds as an embodied experience. *Pandora's DropBox* suggests that this metaphorical movement of the spectator foregrounds perception itself as a mode of movement regardless of imaginary and material terrains. Whether the spectator is positioned inside or outside the world on the platform, the spectator can move towards subjective positions and perceive the world in a different way. As Bleeker and Germano demonstrate, each "(...) staging is constructed as an object of perception in relation to a position from which it is perceived."<sup>137</sup> Additionally, each mode of staging (willing or unwillingly) implies positions, "(...) both in concrete embodied space and with regard to the ways in which our perceptions of things include attitudes towards them:

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<sup>135</sup> Bleeker, *Visuality*, 14.

<sup>136</sup> Bleeker and Germano, summarizing Lakoff and Johnson, 370.

<sup>137</sup> Bleeker and Germano, 365.

assumptions, expectations, beliefs, desires, and fears.”<sup>138</sup> Thereby *Pandora’s DropBox* can be seen to choreograph a composition of subjective positions that invite the spectator to metaphorically move through these positions and temporarily embody their attitudes including assumptions, expectations, beliefs, desires and fears, in order to perceive the world as it appears from these subjective positions. Such perception, as philosopher Alva Noë argues, appears as a sensorimotor skill rather than a representational process.<sup>139</sup> In this way the choreography of spectatorship in *Pandora’s DropBox* guides the attention of the spectator away from what is (re)presented on stage and towards movement as a means to perceive.

### **Perceiving difference**

By choreographing movement as a means to perceive, *Pandora’s DropBox* foregrounds how what appears to be real is entangled with how the world appears from a subjective position. After all, the spectator is invited into a process of perceiving what is there from multiple subjective positions. Thereby all worlds of *Pandora’s DropBox* follow a certain logic that appears, from a specific subjective position, as real and true. As Bleeker and Germano argue, the spectator can step inside each world by accepting the logic of this world.<sup>140</sup> By these means, *Pandora’s DropBox* invites the spectator to reflect on and question what seems to be real and true through the differences of how the worlds appear as they do. The spectator can be seen to enter the staged worlds by accepting the assumptions about each world: “Yes, these performers are strong and confident and know their boundaries,” and “Yes, these dancers will achieve bliss through perfecting their ideal body,” and “Yes, the desirable world is the one where humans live in complete harmony, beauty and bliss,” and even “Yes, robots are the new ideal as they fulfil the human quest for perfection.”<sup>141</sup>

However, as fluids start to express from the skin, the eyes and the nose of the bodies these fluids disrupt the logic of each staged world.<sup>142</sup> As a result of the exhaustion

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<sup>138</sup> Idem, 365.

<sup>139</sup> Bleeker and Germano, summarizing Alva Noë, 365.

<sup>140</sup> Bleeker and Germano, 376.

<sup>141</sup> Germano, “between stage, brain and body. using cognitive science to flesh out the embodied act of looking” (MA Thesis, University Utrecht, 2013), 65. The way of articulating stepping inside a world through focalization in a confirmative thought starting with ‘Yes’ I borrow from Germano.

<sup>142</sup> *Pandora’s DropBox* [video clip], file 2. Due to the distance of the camera to the stage snot, sweat, and tears are not visible on the registration. However, the erratic movements of

from the physical challenge of attempting to control all movement of the body, snot, sweat and tears disturb the illusion of the controllable body of the dancer, the perfect human, and the humanoid robot. The fluids momentarily work as external focalizers. After all, the fluids disrupt the logic of the staged worlds that appear real and true by changing the perception of the spectator expressing the limits of controlling the body. At the same time these uncontrollable movements draw the spectator back into worlds where bodies express fluids as mortal features. After all, snot, sweat and tears focalize the attention of the spectator on the needs and the limits of the human body. Thereby, as expressions of inner processes these involuntary movements invite the spectator to step inside by accepting these worlds as real and true: “Yes, the performer is of flesh and blood just like me and that is ok,” and “Yes, the dancer is caught up in an unsuccessful, even unhealthy quest of longing,” and “Yes, the human cannot achieve perfection because of the needs of her/his body and that is tragic,” and, after all, “Yes, humanoid robots are built with ‘flaws’ to appear more human after all.”

In this way, with the controlled movements of the performers in *Pandora’s DropBox* regressing the body to near stillness, the involuntary movements of the staged bodies perceiving and relating to their world as well as the movement of the spectator as perceiving, accepting, questioning and reflecting on these worlds are magnified. Thereby the process of the spectator is staged as s/he takes on embodied relations towards the universes of *Pandora’s DropBox*. I would suggest that the spectator gets caught up in a loop of perceiving difference between these worlds. After all, one fluid or erratic move expressed by a staged body might at one point appear as a surprise, then mould into the logic of a world and become a given until another oddity disrupts this logic again. In one instance the spectator might be touched by seeing tears roll down a performer’s cheek, in the next moment s/he might be surprised by the endurance of the performer. While the spectator might at once wonder whether the tears are ‘real’ or just a mechanical stage trick, in the next s/he might be mesmerized as their shiny texture might touch one’s sense of aesthetics. In this way the performance seems to not judge the quest of perfection as much as - through movement as a means to perceive - leaves it up to the spectator to form an opinion, a position towards the subject.

Such movement as a means to take on a position towards a subject or a theme through evaluating differences can choreograph empathy for cultural differences. After all,

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the exhausted body almost seem magnified on the registration. This file shows the performers in a half laying position that provokes involuntary movements even more.

Foster points out, a performance can stage movement as a means to expose and evaluate conventions of different cultures or disciplines.<sup>143</sup> *Pandora's DropBox* stages an encounter between disciplines through a metaphorical encounter. After all, the spectator is invited to perceive dance as a means to strive for harmonious perfection, robotic engineering as striving for approximating ideal human features, and theatre as a stage to excel as well as to reflect critically on excellence. However, in *Pandora's DropBox* behaviour such as empathy for the dancer, the human or the humanoid robot in her/his quest is repeatedly disrupted. After all, even though the spectator can identify with the bodies on stage, conflicting focalizers disturb this identification. The spectator can feel with the dancer, the human or the robot that succeeds in her/his quest as well as with the one that 'fails', without the performance dictating a specific outcome. Thereby *Pandora's DropBox* keeps the spectator involved in a loop of perceiving difference. After all, the performance continues while the spectators leave, seemingly exhausted, while the performers appear strangely fresh.

Rather than an answer or behaviour, *Pandora's DropBox* seems to choreograph a question within the spectator, a composition of movement in the architectural and in a metaphorical space for the spectator to perceive difference. Applying theatre in its capacity to let the spectator perceive different worlds as real and true *Pandora's DropBox* can be seen to involve the spectator from her/his embodied position in an ethical and political reflection on the worlds that the performance stages. After all, as Bleeker and Germano point out, understanding the ethical and political reality of theatre "(...) requires a shift from what is (re) presented towards the relationship between what is staged and the modes of perceiving of an audience."<sup>144</sup> In this way, despite moments of empathy, *Pandora's DropBox* points to the relation of the spectator towards the system of belief that the different worlds build upon. Thus this performance rather foregrounds various movements of the spectator in relation to the worlds: The spectator might be confronted, hurt, shocked, maybe even disoriented. Similar to Lehmann's observation on postdramatic theatre thereby the political engagement in *Pandora's DropBox* does not necessarily consist of the topics, but in the forms of perception.<sup>145</sup>

Perceiving difference between scenarios that appear real and true in *Pandora's DropBox*, the spectator might start to question the actual system of belief that propagates perfection. After all, such theatre can serve as a tool to reflect on how ideals of a system of

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<sup>143</sup> Foster, *Choreographing Empathy*, 174.

<sup>144</sup> Bleeker and Germano, 365.

<sup>145</sup> Lehmann, 184.

belief manifest itself in how one perceives a situation.<sup>146</sup> In this way *Pandora's DropBox* can be seen to question and destabilize the system of belief that holds in place the human quest for perfection. The performance applies the framing of theatre to reflect critically on how ideals such as perfectionism inform the way our world appears to us as it does. As Bleeker and Germano notice, events can be constructed in ways that destabilize systems of belief, and draw attention to how such systems mediate the ways in which we relate to what we encounter.<sup>147</sup> Rather than creating empathy for the other, *Pandora's DropBox* applies the political and ethical reality of theatre to bring the attention of the spectator to her/his own embodied relation towards the system of belief intending perfection that Western society and with it capitalism feed off. In this way *Pandora's DropBox* choreographs the metaphorical mobility of the spectator in relation to the theme of the performance.

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<sup>146</sup> Bleeker and Germano, 364.

<sup>147</sup> Idem, 365.

## 5 Movement as a means to engage

### Tracing the movement of the look

In this chapter I investigate how the composition of actions, sequences and qualities in *The Cube* composes a spectatorial address of alternating points of view.<sup>148</sup> *The Cube* is a performance installation of projected images that merge with the architectural space. The spectator is free to leave at any time while a row of chairs opposite the projection invite to sit down and linger. With no human or other performer present, the space itself can be seen as a performer. Thereby movement emerges on the rim of the architectural and the virtual space as the tension between these spaces create a multitude of subjective positions for the spectator that invite her/him to movement as a means to engage attentively. A particular quality of such movement is that it foregrounds vision as a 'synaesthetic event' as the spectator is invited to engage with a choreography of sensorial gaze. In this way, as Božić and Willms point out, *The Cube* could be seen as a training ground, "(...) a space to imagine and exercise other possible realities."<sup>149</sup> In the following I investigate how movement can be staged in a way that blurs the outlines of subjective positions and undermines the identification with movement from static positions. Especially through the editing technique of crossfading the spectator can even be seen as invited to movement that suggests to be approximated through Massumi's notion of movement vision.<sup>150</sup> Thereby I intend to show how *The Cube* stages the micro mobility of the spectator.

In *The Cube* the architectural space is duplicated by a video projection covering the entire back wall of this white cubical space. As a continuation of the actual space the virtual space displays a loop of situations in which weather conditions, natural landscapes and animals in mismatching sizes interfere with the vanishing point of the architectural space. Without any (human or other) performer 'present' in the space - except the materiality of the video projection seamlessly blending with the architectural space – I sense that I am

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<sup>148</sup> *THE CUBE* [online video clip], (2015) accessed September 15, 2017, <https://vimeo.com/147658212>

<sup>149</sup> Andrea Božić and J. Willms, "Undoing what we know, Dramaturgy as Cosmology-in-the-Making, in *The Practice of Dramaturgy, Working on Actions in Performance*, ed. K. Georgelou, E. Protopapa, D. Theodoridou (Valiz: 2016): 221-230, 226.

<sup>150</sup> Bleeker, based on Massumi "Martin, Massumi and the Matrix," 160-161, and Massumi, *Parables for the Virtual*, 49-51.

invited to movement even though I am seated. Taking a seat in the cubical room of *The Cube*, I find myself in situations whereby natural phenomena seemingly traverse the architectural space. In one situation the door of the cubical space gives way to rocks of a mountainous site spreading towards the right-hand side of the architectural space. In this way the room seems to be situated on a mountaintop breaking open a view into a valley of empty resting ski lifts on dry summer rocks.<sup>151</sup> Somehow this space triggers my sense of equilibrium. Focalization enables me to investigate how the performance addresses the spectator.<sup>152</sup> According to Bal, focalization also helps to articulate the look precisely through its movement.<sup>153</sup> In the following I will demonstrate how the spectator is invited to movement on the rim between internal and external by the alternation of multiple subjective positions. To begin I show how the spectator can move between such multiple subjective positions within one situation and how this challenges the sense of movement of the spectator. After that I will show how this process is intensified through the alternation of constellations of multiple subjective positions from one situation to another.

My example for the movement of the spectator within one situation is the above-described situation that takes place in a space where a mountainous site merges with the white cubical space. In this situation the only traversing movement noticeable is the gradual passing of clouds. So it seems that the spectator is invited to step inside and move along with a performer in the projected space. After all, such movement of a cloud can invite the spectator to take on its subjective position inside a world. As Bleeker points out, through the frame of theatre each object in a performance space can internally focalize the attention of

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<sup>151</sup> *THE CUBE* [online video clip], 00:00-02:08. This registration only shows the virtual space and leaves the set up in the architectural space up to the imagination of the viewer of the video.

<sup>152</sup> The tool focalization is also applied in film analysis to trace how cinema is taken to the level of narrative continuity. As film theorist Peter Verstraten describes, through *eyeline match* one shot is connected to the next through one person looking at another person or a thing. The spectator identifies with the person looking (*Handboek Filmnarratologie*, 89 and 91). Next to that Verstraten also points out how the spectator identifies with film through a three-step logic with the eye of the camera, the picture and the character looking. These tools could also give valuable information about *The Cube*. However, the images projected in *The Cube* rather follow the logic of the three-dimensional performance space than the two-dimensionality of film and the projected images hardly offer 'eyes' (or the right scale of eyes) to identify with. Bleeker's appliance of the concept focalization - where any thing can be seen as guiding the attention of the spectator within one frame and focalization points towards the subjective positions in relation to what is there to be seen - gives precise insights into how the spectator is invited to move in particular ways rather than only the process of identification.

<sup>153</sup> Bal, 39.



the spectator.<sup>154</sup> Thereby, I suggest, similar to 'Einfühlung', each moving object in its subtle progression invites the spectator to follow its intensity and dynamic.<sup>155</sup> In this view from a mountain top the spectator is invited to identify with the position of a cloud and perceive the emptiness of the land through a suspended quality of moving.

Such identification or sensing with the quality of moving of a cloud could be seen as the (possible) action undertaken by a body in response to the situation the body finds itself dealing with. This understanding of Martin's 'motor response', as Bleeker argues, plays an important part in our experience of what we see even though these responses might not be carried out.<sup>156</sup> Moreover, Bleeker summarizes, such motor responses connect what is seen to previous experiences and thus awaken earlier sense perceptions and the feelings, emotions and expectations, etc. related to the current events."<sup>157</sup> Seeing the clouds could be connected to an earlier precarious experience of the spectator flying, falling, or standing on a mountaintop. Interestingly enough, focalization also shows that such responses happen from the steadiness of a subjective position. In such situation, Bleeker argues, "(...) kinaesthetic awareness appears as a tool for observing feelings and movement in other bodies in a world observed from a stable point of view."<sup>158</sup> Thereby feeling with someone else seems to ask a certain stillness of the one feeling with.

In *The Cube* such steadiness of a situation is disrupted and with it the continuity of identification disturbed. After all, the spectator is simultaneously invited to take on other subjective positions that create distance and enable the spectator to observe the landscape. Thereby the situation creates a paradoxical tension between two landscapes: In this first example the rectangular shape of the room mixes with a view into a valley. Thereby the white cube focalizes a subjective position of the spectator as sitting and focusing straight ahead into the infinity of its vanishing point; the valley focalizes a subjective position of standing on a mountaintop gazing downwards with a dispersed gaze. In the tension of this situation the spectator is invited to move back and forth between looking into these different directions and potentially arrange her/his body towards such positions, their specific qualities and their attitudes. After all, through focalization it becomes possible to articulate the look through its movement.<sup>159</sup> Following this argument, the combination of

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<sup>154</sup> Bleeker, *Visuality*, 19-40. Bleeker's examples of performers as internal and external focalizers include objects and humans.

<sup>155</sup> Foster, *Choreographing Empathy*, referring to Lipps, 147.

<sup>156</sup> Bleeker, "Martin, Massumi and the Matrix," 158.

<sup>157</sup> Idem, 158.

<sup>158</sup> Idem, 163.

<sup>159</sup> Bal, 39.

two spatially very different views draws the attention of the spectator towards the movement of positioning. As each view focalizes the attention of the spectator on a different part of the space, the literal movement of the look of the spectator following the imposed gaze can be seen as a glimpse of the internal movement. In this way the spectator can be seen as engaging with a choreography set out by the positions connected to each view. Altogether, the alternation of these two positions, together with the earlier described position of identification with the cloud, suggests a play of perceiving *one world* from three spatially very different positions that invite the spectator to move towards them from her/his own embodied position. Moreover, the appliance of the tool focalization as a way to articulate the movement of the look demonstrates how within this singular scene the metaphorical movement of taking on positions and their attitudes mingles with the actual movement of the spectator looking.

Such spectatorial movement within a singular situation is exemplary for *The Cube*. Moreover, as I intend to show consecutively, this movement is magnified through the alternation from one situation to another. More specifically, the movement of the spectator is magnified through the alternation of one constellation of subjective positions to another. The example described above situates the spectator in a room broken open looking down into a dusky valley with clouds passing. This situation is followed by a situation where the spectator finds her/himself in an expositional cube that hosts a snail larger than life, slowly progressing.<sup>160</sup> In another situation the spectator is invited to step inside a projection of a swarm of fish on all 5 walls of the cube. Then the situation turns into the cube as a museum where the spectator can look at an expositional tank that exhibits weather conditions like lightening.<sup>161</sup> Following the above made argument, each situation invites the spectator to explore a different set of subjective positions and their attitudes. In this way *The Cube* playfully interweaves positions of 'feeling with the movement of a performer' and positions of 'perceiving landscapes of paradoxical tensions between the artificial and the natural'.<sup>162</sup> By inviting the spectator to move along in these alternating space, these examples show how the spectator is invited to a complex choreography of spectatorial address. After all, *The Cube* composes an assemblage of subjective positions that, in their progression through time, ask the spectator to move along in a way that interlaces internal with external

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<sup>160</sup> *THE CUBE* [online video clip], 09:11-12:55.

<sup>161</sup> *Idem*, 21:50-26:07.

<sup>162</sup> The artificial and the natural landscapes in *The Cube* need to be approached as escaping one 'static' meaning. After all, the mountainous site might appear as the natural and the architectural space might appear as artificial. At the same time, the mountainous site is only projected while the architectural space is also materially present.

movement. To understand the workings of such spectatorial address, in the following I will make a distinction between the look of the spectator and the gaze choreographed by a performance.

### **Choreographing a sensorial gaze**

To understand better how *The Cube* can be seen to choreograph a spectatorial address I will elaborate further on the appliance of the concept focalization by Bal. As Bal points out, focalization helps to articulate the movement of the look of the spectator in relation to the imposed structure of gaze.<sup>163</sup> Thereby 'the look' refers to the one looking as it points to a real or represented position. At the same time the Lacanian sense of the term 'gaze' as an imposed structure is almost opposite to the look as it is a "(...) fixed and fixating, colonizing way of looking, a look that objectifies, appropriates, disempowers and, possibly, even violates."<sup>164</sup> We can thus conceive of the gaze implied by a performance as a fixed path that asks to be followed by the look of the spectator. In *The Cube* the spectator is invited to a choreography of subjective positions within a singular situation and through the alternation of situations. These positions invite the metaphorical movement of adapting towards the subjective positions and their attitudes as well as the actual movement of the gaze. In this way the spectator can be seen as invited to an embodied exploration of a choreography of spectatorial address.

Following the argument of Bal, a choreography of spectatorial address needs to be acknowledged as an imposed way of looking. After all, such gaze is part of a structured way of inviting the spectator and demands of the spectator to follow a fixed path and in turn fixate what is there to be seen. Let me be clear, the gaze in *The Cube* can be seen as such an imposed structure that asks the spectator to follow a specific way of looking. However, this way of looking *The Cube* invites the spectator to participate in is a way of perceiving the world that differs from objectification. Rather than a fixed perspective *The Cube* offers alternating viewpoints that invite the mobility of the spectator. And, rather than objectifying the world *The Cube* invites the spectator to engage with her/his environment with all senses. It seems that the complexity of the spectatorial gaze in *The Cube* might choreograph a disorientation that achieves the opposite of the Lacanian gaze. After all, *The Cube* creates

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<sup>163</sup> Bal, 37.

<sup>164</sup> Idem, 35.

tensions by combining paradoxical landscapes with non-human movement to identify with. In this way the positions for the spectator to take on are part of a space that demands to be explored as it differs from the world s/he knows. Being invited by ever shifting contradictory focalizers the spectator needs to reposition continuously searching for traces of information about this space. Thereby the gaze choreographed by *The Cube* can be seen as a multisensory gaze that invites the engagement of the spectator *in* the world rather than fixating and objectifying the world.

Such choreography of a sensorial gaze in *The Cube* suggests an understanding of looking, perceiving and engaging with the world as a combination of senses. In this way, as Groot Nibbelink points out, seeing itself appears as a relational act that always involves the spectator as an embodied locus of looking.<sup>165</sup> Moreover, *The Cube* magnifies movement of the body of the spectator engaging with the world through a gaze infused by all senses. Thereby *The Cube* foregrounds vision as a 'synaesthetic event'. As Bleeker points out, the act of looking is "(...) a necessarily impure and always synaesthetic event that takes place in a body as the locus of intertwining of various perceptual systems."<sup>166</sup> In this way *The Cube* can be seen as an exercise of engaging again and again with what could be seen as a possible reality that lacks objectification and breaks through habitual patterns of perception and action. As Božić and Willms describe, the world of *The Cube* can enable a process of distancing oneself from the world one is conditioned into and allows a different reality to emerge and to be experienced.<sup>167</sup> Complementary my investigations show that *The Cube* invites movement of the spectator that appears as a means to engage with a choreography of a sensorial gaze. After all, the alternations of subjective (metaphorical) positions bring the attention of the spectator towards her/his own process of all senses: (re)positioning, leaning towards or stepping inside, leaning back or sideways to shift focus and wander in micro movements with all senses blending into movement as a mode of attentiveness. A specific quality of the suggested movement of attentiveness from these subjective positions that arises from the environment of *The Cube* is that the internal movement of the spectator seems to emerge on the rim of voluntary and involuntary movement, and between inner and outer movement. Therefore I propose that *The Cube* stages movement of the spectator as a means to engage with the world as an embodied being.

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<sup>165</sup> Groot Nibbelink, 54.

<sup>166</sup> Bleeker, *Visuality*, 7.

<sup>167</sup> Božić and Willms, 226.

## Engaging as an embodied being

As I have shown through the concept of focalization, *The Cube* can be seen to choreograph a sensorial gaze. However, while *The Cube* composes subjective positions to explore in an embodied way, the movement between alternating positions could be seen as baring no quality at all, as a leap through unknown terrains, a 'bracketed' space that has no characteristics. Actually, as Bleeker describes, the method of bracketing has been part of 'cultural theory of the past decades'.<sup>168</sup> With such bracketing comes a disconnection of how we imagine bodies and change and their connection with movement and sensation. After all, this method became "(...) a means to both counter and stabilize the perceptual modulations, fusions, and resonances as they occur in the embodied observer and mutate into stable, objectively valid cognitions."<sup>169</sup> This observation resonates with the way I remember learning a movement vocabulary such as ballet. I remember connecting two ideal poses of my favourite ballerinas, striving to reach the ideal of their perfect positions while the connecting movement between the two poses remained kind of a blur. At that time to me this sensation of not knowing was already part of the thrill of moving. However, the arrival at a posture was always connected to the restrictive sensation of wearing pants that do not quite fit. Thus it appears that I learned to dance by identifying with the representations of two consecutive postures and then displace connecting from one to the other.

On the contrary, even though *The Cube* offers positions outside the body of the spectator to identify with, this performance brings the attention of the spectator to the process of relating to space. Thereby it brings the attention of the spectator to what could happen within what has been 'bracketed' by her/his way of making sense of the world. *The Cube* does so by inviting the spectator to transition from one situation to another through the editing technique of crossfading. Thereby the movement of crossfading between two spaces suggest movement of the spectator as traversing, shifting, or morphing from one spatial constellation of subjective positions and attitudes as they disappear to another constellation as they slowly fade in.<sup>170</sup> In these micro moments of *The Cube* the spectator is invited to constantly explore her/his relation to the space by engaging in a mobile situation. Even the terms 'spectator', 'relation' and 'situation' seem to stop making sense in such context that lacks objectification and stasis. After all, the motions of crossfading between multiplicities of contrary subjective positions suggest movement as intersubjective actions

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<sup>168</sup> Bleeker, "Martin, Massumi and the Matrix," 152.

<sup>169</sup> Idem, 153.

<sup>170</sup> *THE CUBE* [online video clip], 00:00-01:20.

rather than a means to achieve positions. Such a means of movement in *The Cube* reminds me of dancers discovering movement through task-oriented approaches to dance. Even though there is already a certain direction or idea involved such a task can appear as if moving through a foggy space while orienting oneself along the coordinates of the task. Instead of jumping to conclusions, to a specific pose or an end product a process can emerge by moving attentively.

Such attentiveness of the spectator while engaging in movement regardless to internal or external explorations of space, could be seen as a process of being in-between, engaging with the world not from the stasis of a subjective position but 'from' what shares similarities with Bleeker's understanding of Massumi's concept movement vision. Massumi makes a difference between mirror and movement vision. Mirror vision involves an act of bracketing that allows for stable cognitions that can be connected by means of a narrative logic that explains the change from one into the other.<sup>171</sup> Movement vision means leaving the empirical world as we know it since such vision undermines the basic presumptions concerning how we think we know the world.<sup>172</sup> Through the lens of movement vision the choreography of subjective positions in *The Cube* appears as a staging strategy that invites the spectator into a space where s/he does not 'know' precisely. Thereby movement and sensation of the spectator become an essential part of the constellations *The Cube* is built upon and from which momentary relationships between the spectator and the staged world emerge. As Bleeker points out, "(...) conceptualizing the implications of movement vision requires a shift from movement/sensation understood as kinaesthetic awareness (i.e. the experience of a subject) towards movement/sensation as an aspect of the relationship from which the self and the world emerge, and into which both disappear."<sup>173</sup>

I suggest that such alterations of the habitual way of perceiving the world in *The Cube* can be approximated by movement vision. Engaging in a choreography of crossfades between subjective positions the spectator in *The Cube* is never outside the space and this space is not objectified. Much rather the subtle fading of how one world appears from multiple subjective positions to the next constellation invites the spectator to a state of in-between, a foggy space that holds coordinates as inclinations to move. Thereby *The Cube* could be seen as a training ground to explore a language of movement that does not agree with the bracketed system of perceiving the world from steady positions as we habitually understand movement. After all, *The Cube* invites the spectator to a certain quality of

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<sup>171</sup> Bleeker, "Martin, Massumi and the Matrix," summarizing Massumi, 160-161.

<sup>172</sup> Idem, 161.

<sup>173</sup> Idem, 163.

movement on the rim between visible and invisible, imaginative and physical, voluntary and involuntary. In this way *The Cube* choreographs a micro mobility, for lack of a better word, a mobility in between the brackets where movement is not clearly defined yet as belonging to certain terrains but exists just as what it is.

## *Conclusion: Moving freely*

At the turning point to season 2016-2017 spectatorial movement is a hot item on the advertisement pages of structurally subsidized dance companies: The Arnhem based classical company *Introdans* claims with its latest trailer, “Introdans beweegt je,” and the contemporary city company of Amsterdam, *ICK*, invites the spectator to the starting season with “When I move, you move.”<sup>174</sup> There seems to be a sense in the air that dance and choreography offer ways of involving the spectator in movement in relation to other bodies, to spaces, to ideas, and concepts. While such postulations give dance a clear image and a right to shine in times of precarious subsidy, these claims also trigger valuable questions. As artistic director Anita van Dolen of the annual festival *Julidans* in Amsterdam summarizes in her opening address to the audience: “WHAT MOVES YOU?”<sup>175</sup> To me this question gives further food for thought on ‘what strategies does dance offer to move the spectator? What kind of mobility does dance suggest?’ Pursuing such questions might support the selling points of dance. And, valuable in a different way, the variety of possible answers in contemporary performance could contribute to learning more about how bodies are involved with the world through movement, how bodies are involved in systems of belief or institutional structures, and in what ways the body in turn can move these systems. Exactly that is why I feel the need but also the pleasure to pursue exploring the scope of how dance and choreography invite the spectator to move.

Consecutively, this is my moment to point out that this thesis touches upon large discourses of philosophy and cultural theory while the outlines of this thesis do not allow delving deeper into these discourses. In this way, unfortunately, there seem to be a lot of loose ends in this thesis. On the bright side, there are still a lot of possibilities for continuing to deepen the understanding of the variety of the mobility of the spectator and to transfer the broad spectrum of possibilities that choreography and movement have to reflect on habitual ways of moving to the medium of writing. A possible continuation for this study

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<sup>174</sup> *Trailer seizoen 2017-2018 Introdans* [online video clip], (2017) accessed September 15, 2017 <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RZuzpAddgOY> , and *Teaser ICKFest September 2017* [online video clip], (2017) accessed September 15, 2017 <https://vimeo.com/229389895>

<sup>175</sup> Anita van Dolen, “WHAT MOVES YOU?” *Festival Julidans. Programme book* (2017).



thereby could lie in theories of embodied perception such as Noë and Massumi, and the philosophies of Deleuze and Guattari. Thereby I hope the discussion on the ways in which dance can invite the spectator to mobility can be continued and the vicissitudes of participation can be further explored. An interesting terrain for further analysis through the notion of choreographing spectatorship appears to be the Amsterdam based art festival *Why Not*.<sup>176</sup> As the artistic directors of the festival, Marjolein Vogels and Daisy Benz point out, their festival is intended as an art festival focusing on bodies and movement, rather than a dance festival.<sup>177</sup>

Let me summarize my investigations until here. At the beginning of this thesis I have argued that performances of contemporary choreographers can contribute to the understanding of spectatorship beyond the binary of active and passive. My intention was to show how *WHILE WE STRIVE*, *Pandora's DopBox* and *The Cube* can be seen to invite the spectator to facets of mobility that demonstrate the participation of the spectator regardless of conceptual and physical terrains. In doing so, I have pointed out a gap within the discourse of dance and choreography. Through my investigations this discourse, dominated by the phenomena pure dance and conceptual dance, has appeared to cut short on how performances can stage different modes of embodied movement. After all, the discourse of kinaesthetic empathy as a method of analysis linked to pure dance solely enables to investigate how the spectator can feel with someone else's feelings. Complementary, Cvejić' approach of conceptual dance through expressive concepts as a method of analysis solely enables to explore the cognitive involvement of the spectator. I have concluded that there is a need for a method that provides an understanding for the nuances of spectatorship as an embodied and embedded practice and I have proposed a possibility for filling that gap.

Therefore I have introduced the notion of choreographing spectatorship: a relational tool that helps to investigate how the overall composition of movement in actions, sequences and qualities accumulates in patterns of sensorial address and (metaphorical) positions. Through the analysis of the performances *WHILE WE STRIVE*, *Pandora's DopBox* and *The Cube* I have shown that such notion of choreographing spectatorship can give insights into the nuances of how these performances stage a mobility of the spectator. Thereby I have exposed that these performances do, at times, provide the possibility for the

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<sup>176</sup> "Why Not." [2017] *Festival Why Not. Home page* – 13-09-2017  
<http://www.festivalwhynot.nl/about/>

<sup>177</sup> Miriam van der Linden, quoting Vogels, "Choreograferen met anderen," *Dans magazine* 35.4 (2017): 22-24, 22.

spectator to feel with the movement of a performer as well as to reflect in thoughts, from a distance. Moreover, I have exposed that these performances can be seen to choreograph complex spectatorial addresses that embrace and expand the strategies of pure dance and conceptual dance. After all, the performances *WHILE WE STRIVE*, *Pandora's DopBox* and *The Cube* exemplify staging strategies that invite the spectator to move (internally) in relation to a choreography of sensory patterns and (metaphorical) positions.

Specifically, *WHILE WE STRIVE* exemplifies a staging strategy that choreographs an address to the senses of the spectator. In this way the performance challenges proximity, stages interiority, and the vibrant mobility of the spectator. Thereby the spectator is invited to relate to the staged movement that traverses the ground of the theatre space as well as the surfaces of skin and interiority. Another staging strategy is exemplified by *Pandora's DropBox* that choreographs multiple subjective positions that bring the attention of the spectator towards (internal) movement as a means to perceive. Thereby the performance choreographs the metaphorical mobility of the spectator. Complementary, *The Cube* exemplifies a staging strategy that choreographs a crossfading of constellations of subjective position that invite the spectator to movement as a means to engage with the world. Such movement on the rim between the internal and the external could be seen as a micro mobility of the spectator. All in all, the analyses of *WHILE WE STRIVE*, *Pandora's DopBox* and *The Cube* show that these performances can be seen to stage the vibrant, metaphorical and micro mobility of the spectator.

By means of these analyses I have also demonstrated that performances of contemporary choreographers can add knowledge to the understanding of movement in between a spectator and a performance within the discourse of dance and choreography. After all, these analyses point out how performances of dance and choreography can invite the spectator to facets of mobility beyond the division into kinaesthetic and cognitive empathy. Embracing spectatorship as an embodied and embedded practice, these conceptual analyses has therefore highlighted how the spectator, even though seated, participates through modes of (internal) movement in material, sensorial and lived relations with the world. Moving beyond the discourse of dance and choreography, such participation of the spectator in a performance of a contemporary choreographer has the potential to contribute to a more nuanced understanding of the notion of participation. As I mentioned in the introduction, the mobility of the spectator by means of displacement as staged in participatory theatre does not necessarily result in a move beyond the binary of active and passive spectatorship. Such binary might cut short on valuing the nuances of performances

in the 'grey area' between the binaries. *WHILE WE STRIVE*, *Pandora's DopBox* and *The Cube* present a paradox as they work with a conventional stage-audience divide yet explore a variety of modes of (internal) movement of the spectator. Therefore it appears as if these performances can help to generate a more nuanced vocabulary for the understanding of the vicissitudes of spectatorial participation.

To round up, in the following I intend to show how the facets of mobility of the spectator in the performances of contemporary choreographers relate to the mobilisation of the spectator in participatory theatre and its dance equivalent 'social choreography'.<sup>178</sup> Such participatory art utilizes the displacement of the spectator to address questions of community, society and agency.<sup>179</sup> On the contrary, being staged within the conventional stage-audience divide, *WHILE WE STRIVE*, *Pandora's DopBox* and *The Cube* seemingly agree with the division into performers and spectators and refrain from outspokenly raising societal questions. However, in these performances the spectator is also invited to participate in the performance along choreographies of sensorial address and (metaphorical) positions that, in turn, relate to the conventions, expectations and habitual behaviour the space and the body of the spectator hold. By involving the spectator in a process of explorations of conventions, expectations, and habitual behaviour, these performances present a potential of providing meaningful explorations on how the individual relates to, perceives and engages with her/his cultural and social environment. To understand better the political and ethical potential of such involvement of the spectator with a structure, or, a choreography, I will demonstrate how the involvement of the spectator shares similarities with the notion of moving politically.

One of the most pressing findings Lepecki makes in his investigations on moving politically based on Arendt is that moving politically needs to be practiced. After all, being intrinsically connected, the adjectival 'political' and freedom are not 'anthropologically, historically, or genetically given to the human', they do not define humanity.<sup>180</sup> Rather they

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<sup>178</sup> Cvejić and Ana Vujanović, "Editorial", in *The TkH Journal for Performing Arts Theory*, ed. B. Cvejić and A. Vujanović, Vol. 21 (Belgrade, 2013), 3. Dance scholars Cvejić and Ana Vujanović argue that, similar to participation in theatre, within the discourse of dance choreographers develop practices with political concerns that can be summarized under the notion of social choreography. Based on literary scholar Andrew Hewitt such social choreography "(...) offers embodiment as the mechanism of ideology, replacing interpellation (...)." In a collective research of various scholars the question is asked as to "(...) how movement across dance and everyday social, public or private, behaviour signifies and acts politically or ideologically.

<sup>179</sup> Bishop, 7.

<sup>180</sup> Lepecki, "Choreopolice and Choreopolitics," 14.

are an ever-evolving commitment and need to be practiced to remain in the world. Following Lepecki's argument, what seems more urgent than learning how to choreograph and perform a protest is to practice how to move politically, as what is at stake in not knowing how to move politically is the loss of freedom.<sup>181</sup> A possible practice of moving freely according to Lepecki is the task of a dancer in a choreography. The task of the dancer is to endure the length and repetition of an exhausting performance. The dancer does so by devoting to the plan, the choreography, rather than to the author of the choreography. Such devotion "(...) demonstrates the capacity for political rupturing not by dismantling choreography, but by insisting on remaining within choreography by persisting to endure the actualization of its plan."<sup>182</sup> As being performances of repetitive and minimal movement *WHILE WE STRIVE* and *Pandora's DropBox* certainly depend on the dancers insisting to remain within the choreography. It might be a bridge too far to claim that the spectator of such performance shares the same devotion as the dancer. Surely, these performances are not as equally dependent on the devotion of the spectator than on the devotion of the dancer.

However, more than an end product these performances stage processes for the spectator to involve in. Thereby *WHILE WE STRIVE* foregrounds choreography not as an imperative but rather a tactile process of exploring spaces. By means of this process the theatre is reterritorialized as a sensorium and with it the spectator is exposed as a vibrantly mobile being even though her/his mobility in space is rather limited. While the nomadic movement disrupts the conventions of the space the spectator her/himself can be seen as invited to devote her/himself to the choreography such patterns draw into spaces of interiority. Thereby *WHILE WE STRIVE* might be considered as an opportunity for the spectator to take part in a process of working with the conventions of the theatre space as well as bringing change to the system from within by devoting to relate to it. After all, the explorations the spectator commits to seem to allow for changes in the way the spectator relates to what is there. As dance critic Jacq. Algra observes regarding to *WHILE WE STRIVE* that "(s)pectators who commit emerge revitalized."<sup>183</sup> Following this argument, such change could be persevered through persisting to explore the space through all senses. In this way

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<sup>181</sup> Idem, 14.

<sup>182</sup> Idem, 23.

<sup>183</sup> Jacq. Algra, review of *WHILE WE STRIVE*, by Arno Schuitemaker. *Het Parool*, 2015. <http://www.arnoschuitemaker.com/nl/work/while-we-strive/> The quote is from the English version of the website. Moreover, the quote in the Dutch version refers to how the 'we' in *WHILE WE STRIVE* implies the dancers and the non-dancers together, as the audience is invited to a sensory experience.

*WHILE WE STRIVE* invites the spectator to a practice of moving politically based on a sensory exploration of the space one is part of and an internal exploration of how one can relate to this space from one's embodied position. Such practice of sensitivity could bring change to a system whilst committing to the overarching system.

Complementary, *Pandora's DropBox* invites the spectator to participate in a process that reflects on a system of belief. Through embodied metaphorical movement along a choreography of subjective positions the spectator is invited to reflect critically on a system of belief. Perceiving the world from multiple subjective positions shows an interesting similarity to the relation of thought and movement in the notion moving politically. After all, also Lepecki bases his notion of choreopolitical movement on a metaphor by Arendt. Arendt points out that the prejudices she observes against politics around 1950 show that "(...) we have arrived in a situation where we do not know – at least not yet- how to move politically."<sup>184</sup> While Arendt's use of 'moving' seems to be primarily bound to the lack of knowing how to discuss and converse politically Lepecki takes the intriguing step to investigate the kinaesthetic practices of such movement. *Pandora's DropBox* can be seen as exposing the interweaving of movements of thought and language and movements of kinaesthesia and metaphors. After all, the performance stages how kinaesthetic and metaphorical movement interrelate with perceiving difference. In *Pandora's DropBox* the spectator is invited to acknowledge how the world can be perceived from multiple points of view, and, how the spectator her/himself is physically involved in perceiving and understanding the world through metaphors. Thereby this performance reminds on how what seems to be only language can actually be seen as part of the conceptual system of how we relate to the world. As Lakoff and Johnson point out, how we get around in the world and how we relate to other people is not just a matter of language but of how we think and act along certain lines.<sup>185</sup> With the understanding of metaphors as an embodied way of perceiving the world I suggest that *Pandora's DropBox* deepens the understanding of what it could mean to practice moving politically interlacing movement of thought with the dimension of moving embodied and embedded in one's environment.

In *The Cube* the spectator is invited to a process of testing out movement as an intersubjective action. After all, the spectator is invited to engage with space as a performer.

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<sup>184</sup> Hannah Arendt, written in 1950, *Was ist Politik? Fragmente aus einem Nachlass*, ed. U. Kurz (München und Zürich: Piper, 1993), 13.

<sup>185</sup> George Lakoff and M. Johnson, *METAPHORS we live by* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1980), 3. Bleeker and Germano also base a part of their argumentation on Lakoff and Johnson's theory based on the argument that conceptual metaphors play an essential role in how we perceive the world.

In this way the actions the spectator might take are less bound to the spectator as a subject than a relational act. Such movement can be seen as moving politically. As Lepecki points out, "(...) the adjectival 'political' defined as the movement of freedom is less predicated on a subject than on a 'movement', as it is defined by intersubjective 'action'."<sup>186</sup> Moreover, unlike following the conventional structure of knowing the world, *The Cube* suggests (internal) movement as a way to engage with the world that offers an escape route to the empirical understanding of the world. The performance does so by providing a training ground for a way of moving we do not know how to do yet. As Lepecki states, not knowing how to move politically yet can be seen as an invitation to continue exploring rather than thinking one knows. The exploration the spectator is invited to in *The Cube* could be characterized as such a practice of moving in an unknown way. After all, through the crossfading of constellations of subjective positions *The Cube* invites the spectator to explore intersubjective actions in relation to space by following coordinates of a task rather than connecting static positions. Such way of moving does not agree with the conventional way of objectifying the world. Therefore, similar to how *WHILE WE STRIVE* stages interiority, *The Cube* invites the spectator to explore spaces in-between and explore relations and constellations by movement that includes all senses on the rim of impression and expression.

Thus we can conceive of *The Cube* as a structure that gives the spectator the freedom to explore movement to be other than predicted. In this way this performance invites the spectator to explore being engaged, committed, and daring in testing out indications to move. Thereby the spectator her/himself can be seen as a performer of devotion, performing practices of the political. As Lepecki argues,

"(w)ith the performance of devotion, the choreographic reveals itself to be that which produces an agent, that which produces an affect, and that which reminds us that the political, in order to come into the world, requires commitment, engagement, persistence, insistence, and daring."

However, rather than being affected by a performance of devotion, the spectator in *The Cube* is invited to devote her/himself to engaging with a choreography. In this way *The Cube* exemplifies how a performance can choreograph the devotion of the spectator. All in all, each in their own way, *WHILE WE STRIVE*, *Pandora's DopBox* and *The Cube* can be seen to

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<sup>186</sup> Lepecki, "Choreopolice and Choreopolitics," 14.

choreograph opportunities for the spectator to devote to processes of (internal) movement in relation to conventions, expectations and habitual behaviour the space and the body of the spectator hold. Thereby the involvement of the spectator in movement includes participating in disturbing the conventions of the space in *WHILE WE STRIVE* by relating with all senses, participating in a reflection on a system of belief in *Pandora's DropBox* through metaphorical movement, and practicing an alternative to understanding the world in *The Cube* through engaging with space in an unknown way. In this way these performances provide the spectator with a sense of engagement, persistence, insistence, and daring and thereby, in different intensities, facilitate a training ground for moving *freely*.

Concluding, *WHILE WE STRIVE*, *Pandora's DropBox* and *The Cube* not only stage the mobility of the spectator but also need to be considered as choreographing behaviour such as devotion. After all, in such choreographing devotion lies the ethical and political potential of these performances. Choreographing devotion, these performances provide insights in how the individual practice of moving internally enables one to move within a collective structure, commit to the structure and change the structure by remaining within with all of one's capacities regardless of physical and conceptual terrains. After all, the spectator is invited to a choreography that in turn disturbs the conventions of the theatre space that limit the senses of the spectator, reflects on a system of belief that limits the capacities of expression of the human, and offers a training ground for an alternative to understanding the world as we already do. In this way the ethical and political potential of the mobility of the spectator in *WHILE WE STRIVE*, *Pandora's DropBox* and *The Cube* escapes the binary of active or passive, political or non-political, participating or not participating, and contributes to the vicissitudes of spectatorship.

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