



Breaking Free: score for exploration

The Impeded Body

While all of us can bring personal experience into The Gendered Body, most of us only know occasionally what it is like to have a body that, through illness or injury, does not behave as expected. What is the dance of a body (or mind) that is dealing with impediment?

As I wrote previously, my intention would be to examine what can be achieved *through*, rather than in spite of, impediment. Instead of focussing on the problems encountered by 'disabled' dancers or how an audience responds to their performance, I want us to seek out a *universality* of disablement, an *imagination* of disablement that gives rise to a different kind of performance – to discover the dance of the *broken* body, the *disobedient* body.)

These exercises are intended to help us 'unlearn' our familiar, comfortable, useful ways of moving and discover new, more difficult ones! I'm afraid there are 10 bits to it (as it covers most of what I would have done for a whole workshop session) but it's probably not necessary to do all of them.

The broken body

1. Find somewhere you can walk up and down, even if just a little way. As you walk, imagine that a part of your body is maimed or deformed in some way: how does the rest of your body compensate? Is it different if you also imagine that you are in pain? Keep to the one part for a while, then try another. Try two or more together.
2. Blindfold yourself. Imagine that your vision is in another part of your body. See what it is like to move like that.
3. Sit or lie on the floor. Imagine that an enormous weight is pressing on your legs or arms or back or belly or... What is your dance then?
4. Allow a body part, small or large (but perhaps not hands) to do a solo. Notice what the rest of your body does; although there will be accommodations, try and keep the focus on the one part. Find another and do the same. Create a duet for the two parts.

The disobedient body

1. Begin a dance. As you move, a body part will 'break free' and do its own thing, moving in a different speed, direction, or style. Consider the 'conversation' between yourself (your 'will'), this 'disobedient' part, and the rest of your body.
2. Begin a dance. As you move, you are gradually becoming transformed into another kind of creature, ideally not a mammal, (a cockroach? an ostrich? an

alligator? a mermaid?) with a different body form and abilities. Allow their dance to emerge.

The constrained body

Work with these props:

1. Tie yourself up (you may need a helper!). Try tying two limbs together (the same or different). Tie yourself to an object, fixed or moveable. Then try the same thing without actually being tied.
2. Find a heavy, large, fragile, or awkward object and place it on your body. Move without letting the object fall.
3. Find a garment and sew, pin, or tie up some of the openings (legs, or arms, or head). Put it on. How do you move now?

(NB I haven't included bags and boxes, here, as they overlap with 'confinement', which I see as part of the 'Isolation' theme.)

Finally...

Drawing on some, any, or all of these experiences, create a short improvisation or other response (writing, art, etc.) to share.

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