



THE BODY IN *PLAY IT AGAIN*

Embodied Resonances

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Abstract

Multimedia art brings reflection, promotes the construction of theory, and incites disciplinary crossings due to of its own interart nature. This text presents reflections about the body in process in the performance of *Play it Again* by the group Oficina Multimédia from Belo Horizonte. In this performance, the group moves based on rhythmic structures in relation to live music played by the Group of Percussion of UFMG (Federal University on Minas Gerais) and to projected images. Through a review of the pertinent literature; the genetic analysis of the artist notebooks of the group's director; and the construction of an epistemology contrary to purisms and coherent with the paradigm of complexity, I propose the an analysis and reflective synthesis of the performing body in dialogue with cognitive science concepts: empathy, attunement and synchrony. Body, visual images, sounds and numbers interact synchronously, composing a synergic scene. The bodies of the subject performers in *Play it Again* can be referred to as an empathic body and operates in the shared experience of enactment.

Keywords

Empathic body. Resonance. Synchrony. Rhythmic.

In this text, I share reflections based on the search to understand which body I mean when I discuss and invent arguments coming from the process of elaborating and performing *Play it Again*, by the Group Oficcina Multimédia (GOM). The choice of writing through reflective fragments is coherent with my conviction that the theoretical exercise is always approximate and unfinished. This essayist exercise is an attempt to bring into the abstract field of concepts the perception of the embodied image of a stage performance. An exercise of translation, of treason. In the argumentation, I invent relations to put on the agenda what interests me: the attentive study of the body based on artistic practice. The dialogue with the cognitive sciences happens due to its corporeal concepts, nevertheless the reflection concerning the body comes from what is seen and felt on stage. I am interested in the body perceived through the aesthetic scenic organization of a given artist. I have been seeking a sensed knowledge, or as Hermeto Pascoal says, a sensed theory² that can be perceived between the scenes, or between the gestures, in the pause and in the musical accent.

Reflection 1 - Multimedia scene

If this space called a stage is lit, I come in, greet the audience, position myself and start interpreting a piece of a given composer of a given time and place, then I am taking a role, I am “performing” something. Therefore, music is also theater. Rufo Herrera (2007)

The multimedia scene, proposed by Rufo Herrera in 1977, which marks the moment when the project of GOM started, assumes that artists educated in a given artistic language have the interest of experimenting other languages. The purpose of creation of this group was propelled by the wish to create a language that integrated all the artistic languages. This is the way GOM was constituted, and from its beginning, it is composed by visual artists, musicians, dancers, actors, performers. During the rehearsal practices the musician would act, the actor would dance and play, the visual artist would play and act. They operated inventively through the interarts traffic. The hybrid scene of this collective became its most remarkable feature, evidencing that they were interested not in hierarchizing the artistic languages put into play to construct a scenic signification.

Such a choice reflects an indisciplined thought at the basis of the exercise of reading the world that GOM practices. An indiscipline that, according to Sodré (2002), proposes crossings and dilutions of language boundaries. We can derive from Herrera's words that if music is theater, theater is dance and so on and so forth as we move to a non separation between visual arts, dance, music and theater. Scission does not interest

the multimedia scene. I believe it is evidence of the possibility of moving beyond transdisciplinary, once the discipline of theater or of dance no longer exists in a pure mode, and it is configured as a relative of the ecology of knowledge proposed by Boaventura de Souza Santos. Artistic knowledges in fusion, non-hierarchized, that change the relationship that exists, for instance, in a theatrical scene in which music serves the textual dramaturgy. Here no language serves the other, but all of them are interlinked aiming towards scene signification. This sense is related to images, mainly if we understand image as auditory, visual, tactile, and kinesthetic, as suggested by Damásio (2010).

Thus, in the formative process of rehearsal, people improvise with materiality of different artistic languages. Video comes to the rehearsal scene, music scores are practiced at home, art and life are mixed because this embroidery is not created at a glance, but it demands time mediated by an affective attention that carries the will for the mixture.

Reflection 2 - Bringing the cognitive sciences into scenic studies

In these first fifteen years of the XXI century, dance artists from Brazil and from other parts of the world have been resorting to cognitive sciences to reflect on artistic works (Grenier, 2005; 2010; 2015; Nunes, 2009; Domenici, 2010). Even so, I might risk saying that we are in the theoretical infancy of dance in Brazil.

It is said, based on Merleu Ponty, that there is an expressive aesthetic rationality contra posed to a cognitive rationality originated from modern science (Santos; Hissa, 2011). While the first is part of the artistic practice, the last has an instrumental character that colonized art, making it Cartesian, mercantile. If, on one hand, I consider totally pertinent the proposition that the so called cognitive rationality, originating from regulations operated by the State and the market, has contributed to some instrumentalization of art; on the other, I disagree with the distinction between cognition and aesthetics in the contraposition of expressive aesthetic rationality and cognitive rationality. Cognition has been historically associated to the non-corporeal mind in contraposition to emotions, feelings, and sensations that would be related to the body. Reason, as the main faculty of cognition, is associated with the mind and dissociated from the body. In this light, such a distinction sounds like a remnant of historic dualisms such as mind and body, emotion and reason.

When cognition is understood as a construct not separable from affectivity and as a corporeal dimension, it is, for me, impossible to separate it from the aesthetic experience. Cognition comprehended as corporeal process involved in the construction of knowledge implies its inclusion in the aesthetic act. Damásio (2010) reiterates that reason does not operate dissociated from emotion, and adds that, although we think

that we are taking a decision based on a rational logic, emotion marks our choices impeding such a separation.

Thus, the first generation of cognitive scientists, the cognitivists, addressed cognition as the processing of symbols, but in the second moment, it was related to the body in the world. That is the starting point for any association of cognitive sciences to the study of the body in the art. A cognition that is part of the body-world and favors recursiveness of the system body-mind-environment.

I am interested in thinking from the paradigm of complexity (Morin, 2007) that implies theories, methods and practices concerning actions of mixtures and belonging to the borderline, or frontier areas, of fields of knowledge. Therefore, it is possible to think of the between worlds, understanding it as a third body, and then a place of traffic and dialogue between knowledges (Hissa, 2016).³

When we borrow concepts originated from cognitive sciences, which bring enunciations from neurosciences, cognitive linguistics, philosophy of science, neuropsychology, among others, to the discussion about dance, it is necessary to consider that we are acting under the aegis of the paradigm of complexity that contemplates unicity and multiplicity from the dialogic and recursive. Dialogic brings to surface the idea that opposing forces constitute and modify reality as constructed by us. So it also is of interest to consider the effects of a certain disorder in the cognitive operation. And recursiveness breaks with the linear thought of cause and effect proposing that the effect can also act over the cause.

Thus, it is not enough to apply, as if they were stickers, concepts of cognitive sciences on the investigative field of dance. The act of applying seems to be associated to an instrumentalization of concepts, once it is synonymous with superposing and handling. To apply cognitive concepts, as the so cited embodied, or incorporated in relation to cognition, or the action of mirror neurons, hints at the possible unawareness of what appears to be the perceptive acts and, consequently, the cognitive ones. Both perception and the cognition have been approached by scientists in an approximate mode with no pretension to explanatory theoretical stability. The knowledge goes up to a certain point. After that point, it is a mystery. In cognitive sciences, knowledge is fallible and provisional.

Such features may appeal more to researchers of the body in the art of dance. Once we seek concepts originated from these sciences, it is necessary to consider their provisional condition. However, the passion for concepts that are “foreign” associated with the lack of a constituted theoretical body – and therefore, open to be challenged – in the field of dance in Brazil, make us resort to other fields of knowledge without proper immersion. We should prevent the tendency of colonizing those other fields, many times moved by the positivist principles of generalization, the proposition of truths applicable to each and every circumstance, in order to avoid mistaken power relations between territories of knowledge. Cassio Hissa shows the pertinence of denominating a territory of knowledge instead of a field of knowledge, once what is at

stake are the power and domination relations between knowledges and understandings. We need to appropriate what makes us think towards disciplinary crossing. These appropriations presuppose comprehension and invention through theoretical and practical developments.

The act of theorizing understood as the practice of thinking about art, in art, is not separate from the artistic work. There is thinking in the work. From this premise, I attempt to decipher concepts and philosophies present in the image. Theorizing implies to exercise abstraction; to seek for comprehension more than explanation, in art's case; to allow oneself to speculate about artistic qualities, artistic experiences, works of art; to promote the traffic between knowledges so it is possible to think and invent arguments that are developed into concepts, to exercise the translation. Theory comes from practice, it is present in practice, which, in its turn, is related to theoretical foundations. The artist brings theory to practice, many times without knowing it, because he/she is a subject of culture. Theoretical contents arise from the relationship between subject and culture, in the body-world. Recursiveness. Complexity. Interlinking between reflection and action in the world, praxis that cannot separate theory and practice.

Saying we are in infancy does not mean to say that there are no researchers exercising theorizing. It means to say that we still need to risk contrapositions, to identify gaps, to demand reflexive deepening, to exercise creative reading. Reading is also a practice of invention, of creation as Hissa says. In this epistemological context – which is constituted of theories, practices, methods, relationship between researcher and research object - conceptual propositions of the cognitive sciences anchored in studies of the body have subtended artistic reflections about the body in Brazil.

From the research focused on the study of the register of corporal movements in the performance *Play it Again*, of Group Oficcina Multimédia,⁴ I want to understand what the body is when I appreciate this scenic performance. What does the body in scene tells me about the thought about the body constructed by the artists? I consider that the artists, through their work, make artistic praxis, exercising theories in friction with practices, even if we only perceive visual, auditory, or tactile images, which apparently are not associated to concepts. I also propose that we can perceive theory in the danced movements, in the images projected, and in the rhythm with which the body is taken goes into scenic space in *Play it Again*. I relate the knowledge originated in the cognitive sciences with what I recognize of the body in scenic space due to a deep penetration into this other field that affected me and made me wish to speak the language of the other: the cognitive sciences' language. To learn the “basic” to cross this other way of reading the world. But, why establish this dialogue with another field?

I start from the premise that it is not about the dialogue with the other, but with a part of me, that at first, I was not aware it was mine. What interests me, from the moment it receives my gaze, is already

mine perceptively, corporally. This is because I consider that I can only see what I can perceive, and it is not possible to embrace the whole of the happening. I see; I perceive what I do, more than what I wish to perceive. This is an important point to be taken into consideration when we dialogue with territories of knowledge in the process of theoretical construction about/in art.

Thus, the field of art and the so called other territories of knowledge compose an indisciplined epistemological whole, related to a paradigm of complexity that avoids excessive distinctions and that is constituted as a theoretical platform for the construction of readings of the world.

The body in the scene *Play it Again* provokes reflection and argumentative invention. It is about a body that mixes itself to visual and auditory images displayed in the time-space of the scene.

Reflection 3 – Performativity of the numbers in time-space: the scene in *Play it Again*⁵

Play it Again + Dressur is a musical-scenic performance created by GOM, in the year 2012, in partnership with the Group of Percussion of UFMG. The purpose was to construct a musical scene “in which rhythmic and scenic elements would be allied with the strictly sonorous parameters particular of music”⁶, integrating theater, danced movement and music. This work was divided into two parts, the first *Dressur* – work of the Argentinian Mauricio Kagel, who uses musical instruments and non-conventional sonorous objects – executed by the three percussionists of the Group of Percussion of UFMG; and the second, *Play it Again* – a scenic-musical work that pays homage to the classic *Casablanca* through a score of movements, texts, rhythms, gestures, displacements, videos in a game mediated by repetition – with the percussionists and actors of GOM that present the conflictive love relationship of the couple in the movie.⁷

First, in the investigation of the artist notebooks of the group director Ione de Medeiros, I searched for indications of the body in process through drawings of movements. However, I found numeric organizations. Numbers organized by the logics of the Corporal Rhythmic of Ione de Medeiros.⁸ How can we have a glimpse of the processual body among numbers? Medeiros says that it departs from the notion of a musical body that embodies qualities such as duration and intensity of the sound through sensitization and rhythmic action. A practice in which numeric organizations can be seen in the body in movement. The number turns into body. The body incorporates numbers, transcending them towards a rhythmic movement.

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1 2 3 4 > >	1 TÔ	1 2 3 4 5 > > >
1 2 3 4 > >	1 2 TÔ-IN	1 2 3 4 > >
1 2 3 4 > >	1 2 3 TÔ-IN-TI	1 2 3 > >
1 2 3 4 > >	1 2 3 4 TÔ-IN-TI-NÔ	1 2 >
1 2 3 4 > >	1 2 3 4 5 TÔ-IN-TI-NÔ-TSHE	1 >

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1 2 3 4 TÔ IN	1 TÔ TÔ	1 2 3 4 5 TÔ IN TI
1 2 3 4 TÔ IN	1 2 TÔ-IN	1 2 3 4 TÔ IN
1 2 3 4 TÔ IN	1 2 3 TÔ-IN-TI	1 2 3 TÔ IN
1 2 3 4 TÔ IN	1 2 3 4 TÔ-IN-TI-NÔ	1 2 TÔ
1 2 3 4 TÔ IN	1 2 3 4 5 TÔ-IN-TI-NÔ-TSHE	1 TÔ

CRESCIMENTO e
DE-CRESCIMENTO

Image 1. Rhythmic score by Ione de Medeiros, 2006.

Here I reinforce that these numbers, aesthetically worked for the construction of the scene *Play it Again*, allow us to perceive ways of articulation of movements in a dimension that does not dissociate space from time. The first steps taken, in the basis of all scenic movement, cut the space and create spaces – compasses, spaces, pulses. The directions towards which the bodies turn, in the middle of the drawing of a trajectory, enable the visualization of accentuations. Sensed abstraction. Time-space becomes a platform of movement, taking part of the scene. The voice-body is added to the steps and claps that, with the percussion, work in an increasing and decreasing manner. Danced mathematics.

The number, when practiced, is no longer a pure number and it is combined with the body of the subject-actor that dances the numeric relationship. The quantity, relationship immediately associated to numbers does not matter, but rather the temporal-space quality that the number carries in the Corporal Rhythmic of Medeiros. I might risk the assertion that the number dances not in the body, but in time-space. The number becomes a dancing body. The numeric register brought, since its origin as a trace, potency of poetic invention to the scene *Play it Again*.

Medeiros creates movement with numeric organizations; rhythmic movement that allows the number-body to perform in the scene. We see the movement, but we feel the impact of the number. What once was instant, trace, potency, becomes duration, trajectory, happening. In the case of the numeric register of the rhythmic, which performs in *Play it Again*, the register does not outline the scene. The register allows the abstract to be embodied in the scenic action. It is not about the outline, but about the potency of transformation of an abstract entity into a poetic corporeal materiality.



Image 2. Part of *Play it Again* – Photograph by Netun Lima.

The register comprehended as a trace of the creation process is not an outline because it does not premeditate a scene. It does not operate as the origin of the scene. However, as potency of transformation and of embodiment of the number, the trace would work more as a poetic organization.

The scene *Play it Again* is a number-body in multimedia performance. It is important to highlight that I do not qualify body as number. It is about thinking of the number as a body that materializes the abstraction into movement qualifying the quantifiable.

Reflection 4 - Synchronic and syntonic processes in empathic bodies

In this performance, we aesthetically perceive the number-body that performs in a context of resonance. The context mentioned is translated into states of the body and does not quite configure itself as a propeller of a model of body. The refusal to seek a model of body is anchored in the presupposition, previously presented, that I can perceive the idea of body proposed by the artist when I appreciate his/her work. It would be up to me, as a researcher, to scrutinize the work and capture the theory and the thought about the body that is embodied there. Therefore, what is considered modeling seems to distance itself from the provisional condition related to the diversity of bodies due to the multiplicity of artists and works. A corporal state is not committed with the alleged permanence of conceptual stability. The corporal state of the subjects of *Play it Again* appears to be configured as empathic. Empathy favors the consciousness of oneself as a subject-world. In this sense, I suggest that it enables actions of sharing movement and of the sensation of belonging to a group.

The body in *Play it Again* is collective and empathic. It moves, mainly, because one listens to the other. One moves with the other. And this other is not only a scene partner, but also the video and the music. The situation of resonance is constructed by an attentional experience that turns to oneself and to the other, reinforcing the boundary condition of one's own body. Blacking (1992) tells us that when we recognize ourselves as synchronic and syntonic in relationship to the other, we become aware that we are resonating corporally. This act of resonating together owes to empathy. The empathic body is a porous body, a process of relationship and of reaffirmation that when we look to the "outside" we are also looking to the "inside."

The interaction of bodies in the scene happens with the synchronization with the auditory and visual images, through the interplay with sound and video. I retrieve the words by Clayton, Sager and Will (2004) that say that synchronizing refers to a tendency of moving according to the sonorous pattern put in scene. When proposing a synchrony of subject-actors also with the images of the video, I want to incite the observation that the video,

previously constructed, was synchronized with the music played live, which in its turn, would be available for the other synchrony: the one that happens with the bodies in scene. From synchrony we reached attunement, which implies a conscious engagement of the subject-actor in the experience of shared rhythmic movement. The bodies are attuned with each other and with what they listen to in the live music. Synchronic and attuned processes allow us to feel empathy as a mediator of those resonances. A kinesthetic empathy that claims the knowledge of oneself in the recognition of the other and, according to Godard (1995), originates the perception of the movement intentions of the other actors, enabling collective decision-makings. To empathize is not a matter of direct inflection, but rather it carries testimonies of oneself in the collective experience. Furthermore, the group moves together not only because the rhythmic structures are previously learned, but also because it works emphatically, listening to the other and allowing kinesthetic sensations similar to the ones observed. I remind that empathy does not imply fusion, but promotes articulation and relationship of belonging to a collective.

These corporal processes, synchrony and attunement, mediated by empathy, enable what I call enactment. Maturana and Varela (2001) assist us when they suggest that the experience becomes meaningful when it overcomes interaction and transforms itself in participation and communication. The actors, in *Play it Again*, act to the rhythm, allowing the numbers to perform in the time-space in an embodied mode. There is a transaction between them, their scenic wishes and objectives, which is enabled through the cited mechanisms of resonance. “The basis of the enactment experience is the notion of sharing the attentive doing of the body” (Ribeiro, 2014). This sharing happens in the communication regarding operations of resonances and of affections between actions, numbers, images. Silent communication through rhythmic movements. I suggest that this resonance is understood as a sentiment of the body. Therefore, corporal states associated to the subject-world being.

Pause.

Silence.

Musical accent of the percussion, and then the subject-actors come into play drawing the space-pulse. They sit on chairs and start saying, alternating:

play it again Sam please please play it again Sam Sam
Play it again again again Sam
Sam Sam again again Sam
Please Sam Sam please
Sam
Please please please
Sam
Play it again!



DRESSUR + PLAY IT AGAIN

Grupo de Percussão da UFMG + Grupo Oficcina Multimédia /FIT BH 2012 /Teatro Alterosa

Foto: Nereu JR / www.nereujr.com

Image 3. Part of *Play it Again* - Photograph of Nereu Jr.

From repetition, we come to humor. Danced word, practiced, as Tatiana Mota Lima would say. Word-body that moves the laughter of the other that watches. One leg that performs articulated with the number-body in sets as: 123 45 5 4 32 113 52 453 142 241 354 253 1. Each subject-actor crosses their leg with a number that is said aloud during the scene that ends in a heated argument against Sam, in which the percussionists also take part, as it is possible to see above.

The scene is configured by interweaving the number-body of subject-actors in a time-space-pulse-compass. Scene of resonance.

Synergy. Number-body that performs through empathic bodies. I end it with the sensation of unaccomplishment. Sensation of unfinished. Art has the power beyond the feeding of aesthetic fruition. Thus, theories are constituted mediated by the testimony of one's own experience, of knowing one's self during the act of argumentative invention. If I corroborate the assertion that reading is to write, as proposed by Hissa (2013), I can develop it by saying that writing is to feel, to feel the world through what I live in the present. It matters to say that the context, the corporal landscape that impels my writing makes me a body-world now, different from the body-world of one month ago. Then, this text is contextualized by what runs through me, by the way I see the scene *Play it Again* of 2012, in 2016, by the good sensation that is to be part of this compendium, by believing in the need of exercising the reading/writing practice and of the knowledge that the artistic scene behaves in an embodied mode.

Endnotes

- 1 This text is the result of the ongoing research "Bodies in process: the performativity of registers in the genesis of the scenic performance" (Os corpos em processo: a performatividade dos registros na gênese da cena), funded by the Universal Demand Program (*Demanda Universal*) of FAPEMIG - the Foundation for Research in the state of Minas Gerais.
- 2 Pascoal, Hermeto. *O mago da intuição* (The intuition wizard). Article published in the newspaper *Jornal Estado de Minas*, on May 22, 2016. pp. 4-5.
- 3 Verbal information from the lecture *As relações sujeito e território* (The relationships of subjects and territory) in the 1º Fórum mundial de Arte e Cultura (World Forum of Art and Culture) on April 29, 2016, Belo Horizonte.
- 4 <http://oficcinamultimedia.com.br/v2/>
- 5 The scene *Play it Again*: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QwCLTLxdhd4>
- 6 Link: <http://oficcinamultimedia.com.br/v2/c/espeticulos/play-it-again-dressur/>. Accessed on May 20.
- 7 Group of Percussion of UFMG - Coordination: Fernando Rocha - Components: Breno Bragança, Felipe Kneipp and José Henrique Viana. Group Oficina Multimédia of the Fundação de Educação Artística (Foundation of Artistic Education) - Director: Ione de Medeiros - Actors: Escandar Alcici Curi, Fabrício Trindade, Henrique Mourão, Jonnatha Horta Fortes and Marco Vieira. Research and edition of the video: Ione de Medeiros, Marco Vieira e Henrique Mourão. Group Oficina Multimédia is sponsored by Petrobras.

- 8 “The Corporal Rhythmic of Ione de Medeiros (RCIM) is an experience of expressive temporal organizations through the movement of the body. Initially, it was related to teaching rhythm in music learning, and gradually RCIM was configured as practice of exercising engagement of expressive body-mind in time-space.” (Ribeiro, 2012)

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Biography

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