



FROM A DANCER'S POINT OF VIEW – MY EXPERIENCE OF CHOREOSOUND 2009

by Sara Ruddock

Dancer Sara Ruddock explains her way of thinking and relating to dance and interaction with music. In many ways it corresponds to the definition Cecilia Roos describes in her Master Class Interpretation – a tool or a method? Sara Ruddock agrees with Choreosound's broader definition of what dance and music is, but in her article she also expresses frustration with the fact that the methods applied in the labs need time, time for interpretation and time for reflection.

There is movement all around us in our everyday lives. Bodies in motion and in stillness, just as there are sound scapes, rhythm and silence around us. (If you can ever call anything still or silent...) I find it fascinating how we are all dancing through our lives, expressing ourselves with our bodies, and what we can see and hear around us if we just open up our senses.

As a dancer, I strive towards experiencing my body as fully as possible in relation to time and space. To experience my body in motion is to be present in the movement at that very moment. It is a dynamic and changing existence, not static, and there is an ongoing listening process, a perception of the body and the movement. I can even apply different methods of enhancing and challenging my senses and my perceptions of body, time and space.

When I interact with music, I need to include the music in my perceptions, and open up for a possible interplay. Even when the choreography has no room for improvisation, I still have the element of time to play with, if only on a minimal scale, and I always need to re-experience the music every time I dance with it/perform, especially if it is performed live.

I have always found the musicality (its rhythm in a wider sense, and phrasing) and the expressive quality of movement interesting. Our voices, breathing, speaking and singing also affect the movement quality, as well as the other way around.



PHOTO: MALIN ARNÉSSON

Peter Svenzon, Sara Ruddock and Asgeir Helgi Magnússon during a working session.

An inspiring part of Choreosound was that it opened up for a generous interpretation of what dance and music can be, more like movement and sound (which is how I think of music and dance anyway – it's all about definition and perception). There was an open atmosphere where most people seemed willing to get out of their comfort zone and to try new approaches to dance-music interaction. What I find really interesting is when the musician also becomes a performer on stage in the sense that he/she has a performative sense/presence to their physicality, and can also be involved in movement tasks. Most musicians already move quite a bit while playing their instrument. In the different sketches that we created it was also possible for dancers to speak/use voice and play instruments. Dancers and musicians performing on stage together in a more interwoven way, was tried out for quite a bit, and with great success! There was some really interesting work coming out of it.

Interesting I find, because of the work getting out of being safe and predictable.

We were 30 artists/creators gathered for one week, with strong individual voices and interesting varying backgrounds, so a disappointing part of Choreosound was that we didn't have sufficient structured time for deeper reflection/discussion, or summary/follow-up of the project's objectives.

We made a lot of sketches, and many of them were exciting and inspiring, but we didn't really dig deeper into what we were doing, or formulate our methods together, including what we gained from the different collaborations.

Some confirmed thoughts during Choreosound:

- Reflection takes time!

Generally we need more time and trust for the reflection of the independent and practical/intellectual artist and creator! This applies to this project but also to the professional world.

- Communication and trust takes time!

In every new collaboration you need to find some kind of common ground regarding language, definitions, and an idea to work from. You also need a certain amount of trust in each other and the joint artistic process. In a collaboration like this, with artists and creators that barely know each other, a short working session with a pressing time limit and focus on showing a product can become unnecessarily counterproductive.

It was interesting to see the difference of the work created in the longer working session compared with the short ones regarding the dancer's artistic process. When there was little time to work there was also little time for the dancer to interpret improvisational ideas/structure or set material, meaning little time to reflect on choices, experience and awareness of relationships (time, space, other people, music, audience). When there is uncertainty on how to move, it muffles the dancer's awareness of the music, and I think it's the same for the musician when it comes to seeing and acknowledging the movement, if the music feels uncertain.

So, in the shorter working sessions it was more "do as you're told" (by the choreographer and composer), in combination with instinctive choices regarding dance and music, but after the one long working session stretching over two days, you could tell that people had spent some time talking and finding more of a common ground. The work that was presented

was also more thorough, the performers were more aware of one another, and the following discussion more rewarding. We never really got round to reflect on and discuss the roles we had in the collaborations of a group of dancers and musicians being led by a choreographer and a composer. This was just being mentioned at the sharing sessions, and there was more focus on how the choreographer and composer had worked together to come up with ideas and how to develop them.

One last thought:

- Seeing and listening, awareness of/interaction between movement and music takes practice!

There is a clear value in setting up tasks for truly focusing on this, which was something that people felt the need for and constructed during the working sessions. The traditionally trained dancer has commonly had a lot of time to work in relationship to music, while most musicians don't when it comes to dance. On the other hand, dancing to music doesn't mean that you automatically listen. One needs to practise the awareness and making conscious choices in relationship to the music!

I leave Choreosound being inspired by it taking place, and by meeting, working and sharing all this creativity and generosity with the people involved in the project. I hope and wish for extended networks and future platforms for further explorations, and I look forward to future collaborations within music and dance!

Sara Ruddock, APRIL 2010

Sara has been working as a freelance dancer and teacher since 2002, when she graduated from the University College of Dance, Stockholm.

As a dancer she has worked for several years with choreographer Lena Josefsson and Kompani Raande-Vo, performing and touring in Sweden, Zimbabwe, Tanzania and Germany. Other choreographers that she has worked with are Margaretha Åsberg, Claire Parsons, Satoshi Kudo, Marie Fablin/Ulrika Wedin, Jukka Korpi and Lotta Gabrton.

Sara is currently teaching at the University College of Dance in Stockholm (contemporary dance) where she is active within the nordic network EMD (Explorations in Music and Dance). She is also dancing/choreographing in different performance projects, one being a solo adaptation from the Solo Performance Commissioning Project with choreographer Deborah Hay (USA).