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Performing Arts, emotions and spaces: multimodal metaphors in a contemporary choreographer's creative universe

This paper is framed by recent studies on Multimodal Corpora (Fernandes, C. & Jürgens, S. 2010, Kipp, M. et. al. 2009, a.o.) and will specifically focus on the analysis of original video material filmed by this paper's author during rehearsals of contemporary choreographer Rui Horta, namely for his pieces *SetUp* (2005, CCB Lisbon), *Lágrimas de Saladino* (2010, CCB Lisbon) and *Local Geographic* (2010, CCB Lisbon). It focuses essentially on dance choreography processes, multimodal metaphors, emotions and the design and perception of performing spaces.

We will take into account the relations between speech, body movements, related emotions and the interaction spaces the dance performers create, maintain, modify or undo, as well as the communicative function of those spaces.

A main characteristic of contemporary dance is to explore how emotional experiences can be expressed in body movements. Rui Horta is one of the founders of the artistic movement “Nova Dança Portuguesa” and his choreographic language is generally considered as belonging to the broad theatrical-dance genre.

Indeed, the analysis of the body movements and co-speech gestures of Rui Horta's dancers and of the spaces they create is a way to find out how the choreographer uses proxemics, for instance, to express abstractions like freedom, standardized society and lack of communication in relations between the single and the group. The way people position themselves in relation to one another in space, and the different spaces of interaction they create, convey relevant cues for the interpretation of both interpersonal relations and the engagement and disengagement in interaction. The positioning of interacting people in space has been the object of research of scholars such as Hall (1969) or Kendon (1990), and more recently Haviland (2000), Özyürek (2002) or Sweetser & Sizemore (2006).

Building on the differences between *Conventional metaphors* vs. *Idiosyncratic metaphors* (Müller/ Chienki, 2009), the paper deals with metaphors, emotions and spaces in artistic narratives such as contemporary dance, while attempting to describe and analyse the more recurrent conceptual metaphors encountered both in the rehearsal videos and in the corresponding shootings of the premiered pieces by the choreographer in question (e.g. *life as a journey; life as a stage; love as war; body as territory/geographic map; emotions as forces; control as up; weakness as down*).

Departing from the tenet that “metaphor is not a figure of speech, but a mode of thought” (Lakoff 1993:210), and therefore understanding that metaphor does occur in other modes than language alone, we frame our multimodal analysis of dance videos within the findings of Multimodal Metaphor theory as presented in Forceville & Urios-Aparisi (2009). We suggest that conceptual metaphors find expression in: the dance movements themselves - and not just in the choreographer’s and his interpreters’ speech, therefore unfolding in time and space; in the interaction spaces between the dancers; and in most of the visual signs used by the choreographer in ways that are not always translatable into language. These semiotic elements may be taken, as “direct” manifestations of the conceptual metaphors unmediated by language.

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