‘Listening is done by using all the senses’ a study of how dancers create, communicate and perceive a choreographed dance

Maria Calissendorff and Susanne Jaresand

ABSTRACT
This article presents results from a project on dance and music with 16 dancers at different levels of experience who worked with a choreographer for an upcoming performance. The focus was on the participating dancers’ perceptions of how they, through improvisational models, created movement in small groups, communicated these dance sequences to each other and how they perceived these instructions. The research methods were observations and semi-structured interviews where categories emerged during the study process. The results showed that the strategies that the dancers used most considered visualisation, auditory, tactile/kinesthetic senses.

Introduction
This study is based on a project where dance and music form a two-voice harmony between the body-as-musical-object and the musical-object-as-body (Beauty/Schönheit/Skönhet 2014). The movements of the choreography emanated from the dancers’ improvisations, based on the choreographer’s enabling model, as well as through a danced counterpoint to the sounding music (Jaresand and Calissendorff 2018). The choreographer’s role was that of facilitator, where the dancers were partners in the formation and development of the content. Choreographer and dancer created and acquired a volume of knowledge together. The dance as an art form developed through collaborative methods and collective decision-making processes, where more than one person created the choreography (Butterworth 2018). The article will focus on the 16 participating dancers’ perceptions of how, through improvisational listening, they embodied the choreographer’s models, communicated this embodied information to each other, and how they perceived this communication and developed a whole.

The combination of producing and listening to music and training the body to listen through movement can result in an increased embodied sensitivity (‘lived experience’).
which can be explored through the aesthetics of music and dance and thus reveal the full potential of embodied listening. Listening and thinking develop in a differentiated interaction – as an embodied reflective listening open to the unexpected. This creates a particular openness that enables a new way of being in space and a different way to form a subject (Jaresand and Calissendorff 2018; Wilson and Henley 2022). Each character brings their own personal rhythm to the dance. What appears to be chaotic or random is part of a greater order that culminates in expanded consciousness. Many modern choreographers choose not to ‘dance to the music’. It is the movement qualities that create the dance, sometimes with, sometimes without meter. Sometimes the dance and music phrases cross or intersect by choreographic design or by chance, forcing the dancers to ‘feel the rhythm’, ‘to be the rhythm’ (Wilson and Henley 2022, 6).

The dancers in the study have different levels of knowledge, which makes it interesting to investigate how they relate to this way of working. According to Østern (2009), different levels of knowledge can be valuable as a generative force that is important for what dance is created and how. Dance improvisation can then be designed as a generous and spacious learning arena where participants experience, learn and transform.

The aim of the article is to describe which strategies dancers, both professional and in vocational training, are using when:

- creating movement,
- communicating dance sequences to each other, and
- perceiving these sequences.

### Background

Studies on learning strategies quite often focus on the senses of sight (visual), hearing (auditory), touch (tactile) and motor activity (kinaesthetic) (Banevičiūtė 2010; Mainwaring, Pysh, and Krasnow 2010). It’s also common for learning strategies to be defined as learning styles – the ways in which students acquire knowledge that are most effective for them (Banevičiūtė 2010; Riding and Rayner 1998). Banevičiūtė (2010) describes how dance education and learning strategies can be seen as activities, for example, when students watch the movement patterns that the dance teacher or another student demonstrates and then attempt those movements themselves (visual), attempt movements directly together with the teacher or another student, or even alone (kinaesthetic), listen to explanations about performing certain steps and then try the steps themselves (auditory). She also mentions an ‘oral way of learning’, where the student learns most effectively while explaining study material to others, and metacognitive and ‘task-based’ learning strategies. Metacognitive learning strategies involve reflecting on one’s own thinking and learning.

Though many dancers believe that the teacher is the expert and that their job is to emulate the teacher’s movements as accurately as possible, it is important for them to start reflecting on their own learning (Purvis 2014; Williams 2019). When students begin to think about their own learning, they can then reflect on how they learn, how others learn and how they can adjust how they learn and thus become more effective (Biggs and Tang 2011). However, it is important to point out that one strategy/style cannot help
dancers with everything; it is how they combine them that will help them in their development (Rafferty and Stanton 2017).

Poon and Rodgers (2000) studied the learning and remembering strategies of novice and advanced jazz dancers and found that the strategy for remembering that was most used by all dancers was counting. The advanced dancers combined counting, listening to music or just sounds, and created their own ‘sound patterns’ in their heads. Wilson and Henley (2022) write that many students count, which does not mean this is bad, but when one stops counting the rhythm of the dance becomes like measured energy, or effort, rather than alignment with meter. Poon and Rodgers (2000) confirmed that learning strategies that are characteristic of dance concern muscle memory. This is due to the idea that the more you physically exercise the movements, using muscles and body, the more you ‘remember’ and this is why dancers repeat movements.

Many studies have been devoted to the way dancers use mirrors in learning, both to remember and to refine a movement. Dearborn and Ross (2011) study examined how learning and designing dance combinations in mirror and non-mirror situations affected students’ ability to remember and replicate movement sequences a week later. The results initially showed that learning by looking in a mirror produced better results. They point out that many dancers believe that they ‘must look correct’, in which case the mirror is a help (cf. Baird 2022; Evans 2003). Dearborn and Ross (2011) also ask whether there is a difference in learning style (visual versus kinaesthetic) when learning in a mirror situation. Their survey found that those who said they had a visual learning style learned better, regardless of dance background, when they had a mirror available. They also noted that students learned correct positions faster when they were transferred to ‘muscle memory’; they learn by ‘feeling’ rather than by constant visual imitation (i.e. seeing the teacher in the mirror and copying them).

Visualisation concerns not only what is displayed in a mirror but also images that the dancer creates in their mind. Diverse types of images give students different advantages, and it is recommended that images are used to achieve optimal effects (Goldschmidt 2002). In a study of imagery use and learning styles, Bolles and Chatfield (2009) showed that students who learn to create inner images of dance at an early stage develop and use that ability even later in their educational career. Poon and Rodgers (2000) described the merit of transforming information into visual images and that it was obvious that it was widely used by both beginners and advanced dancers, suggesting that it is a more universal learning strategy and that it can be useful as a basis for developing more active, complex and integrated strategies. Images can be naturally complex and contain more information than the dancers can explain.

Taking notes can also be helpful for understanding and experiencing a dance (Cooper 2011). Cooper writes about embodied writing (defined as vivid and descriptive writing), so that both a kinaesthetic and a visual experience develop during the writing process. According to Heiland (2015), it seems that methods using notation are being taught less, and she speculates whether it is perhaps because institutions and students do not see notation as necessary. Another reason may be that notation challenges the method dancers usually use, which means that it may seem out of place in dance. Heiland further describes how some students benefitted from using notes in learning a dance, while others felt that they were being forced to memorise symbols. Those who learn a notation system can benefit
from it when it comes to recognising and performing physical movements. Another argument is that if the dance is written down, it is easier to understand when one ‘sees’ it. Seeing/reading dance may seem different from getting an oral description (Warburton 2000).

Just like learning strategies/styles, teaching strategies/styles are also described in several ways and terms are used indiscriminately. Mainwaring, Pysch, and Krasnow (2010) say that teachers’ strategies are mostly based on heuristics and habits from their individual experiences – from authoritarian, where the teacher makes all decisions, to a pupil-centred style, where students are involved in decision-making. They write that despite different teaching strategies there are several ways to structure dance classes and what they focus on, from skill acquisition to deep interpersonal development.

Teachers often use facilitation strategies such as demonstration, moment decomposition and repetition (Cuellar-Moreno and Caballero-Juliá 2019; Purvis 2014; Rivière et al. 2019; Sims and Erwin 2012). Sims and Erwin (2012) point out that dance teachers mostly present tasks that require visual and auditory ways of learning. Sööt and Viskus (2014) describe how dance pedagogy has traditionally followed a transfer model of teaching, where students learn by imitating specific movements modelled by a teacher. This is the method many dance teachers still feel most comfortable with, since this is how they were taught (c.f. Sims and Erwin 2012; Rafferty and Stanton 2017). Brodie and Lobel (2008) believe that teachers should be aware of and vary the use of instructions, whether based on sensory or on cognitive information. For example, combining kinaesthetic and visual instructions may be more effective for students than using a single method, especially given that individuals tend to prefer different methods of learning, such as visual (watching a demonstration), auditory (hearing an explanation of how to perform a dance sequence), or kinaesthetic (learning through feeling in the body) (c.f. Mainwaring, Pysch, and Krasnow 2010).

In summary, it can be stated that research on dance and learning strategies/styles and teaching strategies/styles attaches significant importance to perceptual preferences, but the authors differ with regard to how the preferences are described. Preferences could include kinaesthetic, visual, auditory, tactile or a combination of these. Some authors talk more about muscle memory and there are also examples of oral strategies, i.e. explaining, describing as one carries out movements. In addition, cognitive strategies for remembering are also described – such as thinking a rhythm or rhyme, or taking notes.

**Method**

Qualitative methods were used to obtain a deep analysis of the participants’ perceptions. Extensive data collection is characteristic of qualitative research and in this study consisted of participatory observations, semi-structured interviews and informal talks (Fangen 2005; Kvale and Brinkmann 2014). In the study, all rehearsals and performances were observed and filmed. During the observations, notes were taken to register the activities themselves as well as interactions between the dancers. During rehearsals, questions based on observations could mostly be asked straight away or directly after the observations. All interviews were recorded and transcribed. The researcher’s own thoughts, feelings and reactions were also recorded to provide further insight.
Participants and musical context

The participants were one choreographer and 16 dancers – three professionals (the trio), four student dance teachers and nine students on a vocational training course (upper secondary level). The dancers are presented as the trio [T], vocational training students [V] and student dance teachers [S]. Later in the process, a string quartet and a chamber orchestra joined in.

Before the rehearsal started, the choreographer had chosen the music that would be the starting point and the framework for the dance. The selected pieces of music were Fragemente – Stille, An Diotima by Luigi Nono, and a commissioned work, Force and Beauty, by Sven-David Sandström. The choreographer’s overall aim was to give equal voice to the dance and the music.

Analysis

The analysis was done in parallel with the collection of empirical data. Inspired by Braun and Clarke (2006), coding was conducted by thematic analysis, where the researcher, while coding, identifies themes that were linked to the research purpose and issues.

We watched the video-recorded observations to select the sequences of most relevance, which were subsequently transcribed. The sound recordings were transcribed in their entirety. We read and reread both sets of transcriptions in conjunction with the field notes to determine patterns and connections in the material. As mentioned, some patterns and relationships had already been identified and these were now developed in more detail and listed in categories that in various ways illuminated the study aim. On the basis of the categories developed both before and during the reading of the material, we grouped categories into main respectively sub-themes. In accordance with the parallel processes of data collection and – analysis, we presented the results here under the main themes which are: creating, communicating, and perceiving.

Results

Creating

The starting point for the dancers was, in small groups or individually, to improvise movements in silence with enabling prompts from the choreographer. The individual dancer’s personality, experience, imagination and knowledge illuminated the material, and these qualities were then formed and modulated by the choreographer. The choreographer chose the sequences, and each individual dancer or group then had to communicate the sequences to the others. For the non-professional dancers, this was something new – creating their own sequences and then communicating these to the others. When the improvisation had been transformed into a preparatory composition, the dancers started rehearsing to recorded music both at rehearsals and at home. After six weeks of rehearsal, the musicians in the string quartet were added and after another two weeks, the chamber orchestra. The rehearsals now became livelier, a new listening in dialogue arose, oriented towards the upcoming performance.

The dancers described using repetition in various ways to memorise sequences. They explained that preparation is in the head, the thought itself, but that it is also deep in the
body, a muscle memory. One of the students on the vocational training course said, ‘(i)f you stand up and do the movements, you will remember, it is more like a separate film.’ [V3]. Sometimes, the choreographer filmed a sequence and showed it directly to the dancers so that they could see and thus refine a movement, but also to help them remember the sequence. On other occasions, the dancers filmed themselves with their mobile phones so that they could watch at home. Some of the dancers found that filming was the best way to remember.

Some dancers wanted to use a mirror, others not, when creating their own movements. For the latter, the mirror was considered a limitation, even inhibiting creativity, since it became too two dimensional. Many of the dancers thought it was good to create without a mirror but then use it later to appraise the movements.

The three diverse groups of dancers each created their own dances, and the choreographer allowed the groups to dance together as well as side by side. For example, the trio dancers had some solo parts in the performance which were later incorporated into the other dances.

**Communicating**

Although everyone had created their own sequences, they had to teach each other how these sequences were to be performed. Those who instructed spoke while they demonstrated, which could have been affirmative, for example, ‘(t)his was part one.’ Their vocalisations sometimes took the form of rhythmic chanting as they moved, or were purely instructional, e.g. ‘gather, stretch up.’

Whether the instructor (dancer) was in front of their co-dancers or behind, there were plenty of instructions. Some dancers talked all the time, giving very detailed instructions. It was clear that the instructor did not always enjoy everyone’s full attention – one of the trio dancers said she felt that the others were not listening to her when she was instructing [T1]. Several vocational training students wanted the instructor to speak while demonstrating, because then they remembered better and could think of the words when dancing – ‘it is like a rhythm’ [V5]. However, one of them [V9] said that he did not want the leader to speak while demonstrating. Yet when he was teaching the others, he also demonstrated and talked at the same time. When asked why he did something that he himself did not like, he explained, ‘I have been taught that that’s the way you should do it.’

The trio said that they had learned their dance sequences in a certain rhythm. When they combined their sequences with the other dancers, the challenge was to become part of a polyrhythmic dance. In this orchestration of these rhythmic patterns, their opinion was that you could not dance solely based on your own rhythm. One had to communicate through the dance with the others while listening to the music.

**Perceiving**

From the analysis, it was clear that each dancer perceived the communicated sequences primarily through their own perceptual preferences. In the rehearsal rooms, there were mirrors on the wall which could be covered and which the dancers used occasionally. It is obvious that the student dance teachers looked in the mirror more often than the other
dancers did. They did this both when following someone else and when developing their own movements. One of them [S4] thought it was difficult to synchronise with the others and so the mirror helped. There were also examples of dancers who often looked in the mirror to get things right, but obviously did not ‘feel/hear’ the co-dancers and thus were not synchronised.

Most of the dancers carried notepads which they wrote in during the rehearsals. In the professional trio, one dancer [T1] said it is important to write things down and that when she consults her notes she can feel helpless if she has not written down her corrections. Another [V9] thought it was a problem to put what they were doing into words. The only time he makes notes is if something must be in a precise order.

Some dancers wanted to ‘draw the sounds’ which may have been a cue in the music or a concept that had been developed in the group about a particular sequence. However, this is not easy to do, precisely because it is ‘difficult to describe a sound’ (T3).

One of the vocational training students [V2] explained how she makes notes to remember things, mainly to avoid colliding with the other dancers. Sometimes, she said, she draws ‘what it looks like on stage’, both in sentences and with arrows, and with underlining. Another student [V7] said she writes down notes like: ‘Here comes a blurry sound in the music and there’s a cue to it.’ Another student [V9] said he does not make notes. If he ever writes, he would rather do it on his cell phone and then usually it is about the order of things. He prefers to have everything in his head and said that music cues are difficult to write down, so it is better to try to remember how they sound.

Another strategy was explained by [S1] who used fingers to remember and described it as useful to see the other dancers on the fingers: ‘It’s like seeing them from the outside.’ One of the students on the vocational training course had a different take: ‘It is first in your head; you think, but you do not see the movement. When you’ve got it in your mind you just do it, the dance.’ [V9]. This student would rather look at someone to learn what to do and would prefer that that person does not talk at the same time. The speech is distracting, causing him to get ‘outside of his body’ as he described it. Another vocational training student creates her own rhymes to remember the dance. She explained that when the movements are in the muscle memory, the rhymes are no longer needed and she can concentrate on something else, for example, placement. In her opinion it is easier to remember words than images [V6].

The music itself was initially perceived to be difficult and this was complicated by the fact that the dancers had to assimilate their dance into the music. One of the trio said: ‘Usually after three minutes you know what is coming, but not with this piece of music.’ [T3]. There were parts where the dance did not synchronise with the music and one dancer [T2] said that on these occasions he did not take the music in but rather ‘listened’ more to the other dancers so that they stuck together.

When the groups had to run on stage and cross each other’s paths, there were collisions in the beginning. One student dance teacher explained that she learned how to enhance listening within the group, so that she learned the fast movements and that it eventually worked when everyone extended the listening to each other [S3]. When the quartet and the chamber orchestra joined in, it gave the students completely new experiences. They described that the live music had affected them – it became a different kind of listening, purely at an auditory level but also because the live music could have a slower or faster tempo than
they had heard during the rehearsals. Similarly, some cues which they had used as guiding points in their dance at the rehearsals could now be hard to hear. As the rehearsals progressed, they learned how the musicians played and started to listen for cues in the music until, in the end, the music became part of a physical memory: ‘You had the music in your body, you suddenly couldn’t dance without the music!’ [V1]

This new, slightly different way of working created confusion. One of the vocational training students [V8] said she had trouble with the counting – ‘there was no counting!’ She counted seconds when she was not sure what to listen to (from the recording). When the chamber orchestra came in, her world became chaotic, and she thought it was too slow or too fast; the cue came not after thirty seconds, as she had counted on before, but much later. This led to her having to stop counting and start ‘doing’, which was something the choreographer strove for – that they give up counting and feel/listen, both to the dance and to the music. When the musicians arrived and started playing, it provided completely new experiences for the non-professional dancers. The live music influenced them by increasing their listening – on a purely auditory level but also because the tempo varied in an unrecognisable way.

The trio dancers said this project was fun because it was not so common to listen to music in this way. One of them [T2] described how, often as a dancer, one must count the meter time in the music (usually eights), and then put feeling into the piece, which he thought was to oversimplify the work.

The dancers could obviously disconnect parts of the listening or hearing. During the rehearsals, it appeared that the groups were able to separately practise different parts of the dance to different music in the same room. Despite the music, the groups could practise something completely different. Accordingly, they were not affected by the music that was played unless it was set for them to do so.

T2 said that ‘if the music is like a long note, it is difficult to hear the pulse to follow. Then the muscle memory must remember the duration of the tone.’ This dancer also said: ‘I hear with my eyes’, which is in line with what one of the vocational training students [V9] said: ‘It’s in the periphery you hear, you don’t look, you just see.’ He described that everyone hears more or less with their eyes. Another vocational training student [V5] stated that one must hear that someone is breathing to feel that they are close, and that one ‘cannot feel without hearing or seeing.’

The dancers talked a lot about feeling, but they had difficulty explaining what it was. They said it had to do with increased attention – you increase your vision on the periphery and increase your hearing, but temporality is also important for this feeling, that you know where the other dancers are and know the duration of the sequence.

The student dance teachers explained that they listen to the bodies, where they are in the room, and the rhythms of the movements. One of them [S3] thought that it was that kind of listening that must be present, not listening with the ear. It is a physical listening – pulse and timing – not sounding but an audible physical listening. Listening is done by using all the senses. One of the student dance teachers said it is hard when she knows it is wrong but does not know how to do it, and that it feels so clear in the body when it is right [S2]. As the rehearsals progressed, the dancers became more confident and did not look at the person who was demonstrating. They said: ‘It is sitting in the body’ and they ‘just listen’ to themselves.
In summary, the strategies the dancers used to remember differed from individual to individual. Strategies could include thinking/looking in the mind, seeing images, seeing the other dancers, seeing where in the space one should be. But strategies were also described as hearing in the head, thus creating a rhythm in the head, or a rhyme. This can be linked to the tactile sense – touching with the fingers or nodding the head, like feeling the other dancers. Finally, they listen. They listen to each other’s bodies, breathing, place in space, and movements. A further aid to memorising is use of film and notes, but most of the dancers said that they preferred to ‘put it in the body’, get the movement into the body memory and feel how the movement should be designed and executed.

The dancers differed with regard to the kinds of instructions they preferred to receive – whether they wanted details explained first, or a more holistic presentation. However, all participants firmly said that the most important thing was that you were able to repeat several times.

**Discussion**

For both the student dance teachers and the vocational training students, this was a new way of working – creating their own movements and communicating them to the others even though the student dance teachers, of course, had already been training to teach dance. It was new for them to dance to a chamber orchestra and a string quartet and learn how to relate to live music where the tempi can vary in contrast with the recorded music that was used in the early rehearsals. The choreographer also invited them to use their auditory sense, listen to their movements, and listen to each other. During the project, the dancers – both spontaneously during rehearsals and during interviews – said that their listening had been developed and sharpened. This led them to feel freer and more secure. It was not only about listening to the music but also to the movements and breathing of the other dancers, as well as listening to the space/location. This shows that the physical listening, which the choreographer strove for, contained visual, auditory, tactile and kinaesthetic aspects.

The dancers themselves reflected on the developments that had taken place and pointed out that as the project progressed, they listened increasingly to the group. After the last performance, several of them said that they became so free; they did not think, they just did (Butterworth 2018). Goldschmidt (2002) describes this as ‘being in the zone’; Wilson and Henley (2022) would say that they had ‘been the rhythm’. The dancers described it thus: ‘Now it had settled in the body, in the muscle memory’ [V7].

As Purvis (2014) explains, some dancers have a musical preference, but in the present study one could talk more about a rhythmic preference. The dancers talk about rhythm in the head, that they hear and feel, but no one talks about melody or that they sing. This may have to do with the fact that the music was considered complicated and not melodic in a recognisable way. As the dancers presented their own sequences to the others, it became clear that this was done in various ways: visual (exemplary) and auditory (through oral instructions), and it was also common for them to both demonstrate and speak at the same time.

The ones who verbally instructed most were the student dance teachers. They said that this is how they had been taught and how they had learned to act. One question is: What function does speech have when the dancers are demonstrating a movement to each
other? It is obvious that it means something for the one who is instructing, because everyone speaks while teaching. Perhaps it is another kind of learning strategy, an oral way of learning, when the student learns most effectively while explaining study material to others (Banevičiūtė 2010; Biggs and Tang 2011). Or it may be, as one instructor said: ‘This is what I have been taught to do.’ [V9] (Rafferty and Stanton 2017; Sims and Erwin 2012; Warburton 2000).

Teaching dance is inherited, i.e. dancers tend to teach as they themselves have been taught. It means that prospective dance teachers should pay attention to how they teach and be aware that their way of teaching may not be optimum for all students (Sims and Erwin 2012; Rafferty and Stanton 2017).

Banevičiūtė (2010) finds it obvious that students have different learning styles and that they should be given an opportunity to learn in the most appropriate way. The most common way in schools, however, is auditory, where teachers often begin to explain the task instead of giving students the opportunity to try different ways of learning. Banevičiūtė’s survey among dance teachers showed that they mostly present ways that require visual and auditory ways of learning, which is consistent with how the dancers teach their peers in the present study.

Participants in this study received and responded to the demonstrated information in different ways. Some asked questions, others imitated directly and some preferred to take notes. Some dancers said that they wanted instructions when they are shown something new that they must learn, while others said they did not. During the rehearsals, it appeared that several of the dancers did not listen to instructions. Unlike Dearborn and Ross (2011) study, which showed that the use of mirrors in learning affected the ability to remember, the use of mirrors, according to the dancers, was no aid to memory. The mirror was only used to perfect a movement or to synchronise with the others.

Most of the dancers explained that taking notes is a way of getting to know the order in which the various steps or phrases come. The results show that the dancers preferred diverse ways of taking notes, or not at all. Some wanted to use words, while others preferred symbols, memorising them by using them; some drew placements and others drew pictures to remember certain details. It is obvious that no one had been clearly taught how to notate dance, but everyone did it in their own way (Cooper 2011; Heiland 2015). There was no difference between the groups when it came to how they made notes or when and what they filmed, which indicates that it is an individual matter, regardless of level and experience. Those who did not make notes, in principle, said that they could do so at some point to remember the order, but otherwise they wanted to remember in the body. There was a tendency for those who asked the most questions to also be those who took the most notes.

Nowadays, notes are often made on mobile phones, but even so, the most common way for these dancers was to write and/or draw in their notebooks. There were just two dancers [T2; V9] who said they preferred to take notes on their mobiles, which they then, however, never did in practice. On a few occasions, some filmed sequences with their own mobiles. One might think that instead of taking notes, they would have recorded spoken memos on their phones, but this did not happen during rehearsals. It is interesting that the paper notebook was still the main tool for remembering. Why? It may be due to, as Sims and Erwin (2012) and Warburton (2000) describe, that one has been taught to make notes, but not how or what to
note – just as one has been taught to speak while demonstrating. Or perhaps it has something to do with the visual and/or tactile senses – one might want to see, have a visual perception of the dance, or one likes to feel, have a tactile perception through using hands and fingers?

Conclusion

Since the individual personality of the dancer, experience, imagination, and knowledge were meant to illuminate the choreographic material, the strategies the dancers used to create movements were very much individual and specific. These qualities were then formed and modulated by the choreographer in the direction and purpose of the artistic idea.

Strategies for communicating and teaching the different fragments of the dance sequences were implemented in various ways, i.e. visual (exemplary) and auditory (through oral instructions). It was also common for instructors to both demonstrate and speak at the same time.

The dancers used several strategies for perceiving these instructions – predominantly through bodily perception which connects to the kinaesthetic mind (what they referred to as ‘setting in the body’). But they also visualised (created mental images and frames cognitively), took notes and filmed. All the participants said that the most important thing was to repeat the dance sequences several times.

Despite differing levels of experience and knowledge of dance, there was no marked difference in how they communicated and taught, nor how they perceived. They had different preferences for how they wanted to be taught, but these preferences were not reflected in their own practices, which suggests that whoever is communicating a movement or dance should be aware of the various strategies and use them. Metacognitive awareness can help them to communicate in several ways.

The physical listening, which the choreographer strove for, had visual, auditory, tactile, and kinaesthetic aspects to it. If you replace established strategies with embodied listening in creating, communication, and learning, then concentrated focus and heightened attention arises at a precise moment. The choreographer as a facilitator can provide an environment that both challenges and inspires dancers to achieve this embodied listening – listening for a communicative presence that creates significance.

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Notes on contributors

Maria Calissendorff has a PhD degree in musicology with focus on music education. She works as a Senior Lecturer at the Department of Education, Stockholm University, Sweden and teaches at
the teacher education program and supervises degree projects at all levels. Her special interest concerns learning styles and learning strategies especially in music and dance. She is involved in an art research project investigating the physical listening in dance and music interacting.

Susanne Jaresand is choreographer and musician and professor in movement and eurhythmics at the Royal College of Music in Stockholm. She is also artistic director of a contemporary dance education at the Ballet Academy in Stockholm. With over fifty choreographies, she has also been involved in numerous theater- and opera productions at the main scenes in Stockholm, and also directed the divertissement at the Nobel dinner. She was the director and choreographer to the opera Queen Christina (SVT) premiered in London. Jaresand has received artistic research grants from the Swedish Research Council, “Counterpoint in Dance and Music in a Listening Attitude”.

ORCID

Maria Calissendorff

http://orcid.org/0000-0002-4169-792X

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