

A dance dramaturge – do we need that?

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Gjennom dialog, et analytisk blikk og dyp tilstedeværelse kan dramaturgen bidra til å åpenbare og underbygge koreografens visjoner i en forestilling. Også de hun ikke visste hun hadde.

When Sidsel Pape invited me to give an introductory presentation at the seminar on Dance Dramaturgy she posed the triggering question: *Dance dramaturgy - do we need that?*

Thought provoking, but I immediately found an answer to the question: *Dance dramaturgy: we cannot do without it.*

Performances and dramaturgy are inherently linked. By definition, a performance contains some sort of dramaturgy, just by the fact that it is an activity in time in which different elements (movement, dancers, light, and sound) are put together and presented to an audience in a theatrical frame. These elements, and the decisions made in relation to them, are all dictating a certain dramaturgy. The question is how consciously a dramaturgy is made part of the process and how aware choreographer and dan-

cers are of this dramaturgy. A dance dramaturge could play a role in making dramaturgy an even more conscious part of the process of making. Therefore, instead of the question *Dance dramaturgy, do we need that?* I would like to pose another question: *A dance dramaturge, do we need that?*

Dance dramaturgy

One clear definition doesn't capture the practice of dance dramaturgy and is therefore incomplete and unsatisfying. The practice of dance dramaturgy differs in each process. But some general things can be said. Dance dramaturgy deals with the coherence of a performance, with finding connections and building bridges, with implications of decisions, with the potential communication possibilities of a performance. A dance dramaturge can function as a mirror, as an interlocutor, but also as someone who is bringing context,

specific analyzing skills and other inspiration sources to the studio.

Most importantly, the dance dramaturge is an individual being part of the making process. It's not a party outside of the process, as is suggested sometimes. As professor of the Utrecht University and dramaturge Maaïke Bleeker describes it: *«He or she is not only an analytical, intellectual eye from the outside, the first audience, but also a body who thinks along with the director or choreographer, that is, as a collaborator who moves along with him or her in a movement that involves both closeness and distance, both similarity and difference.»*¹ Like the choreographer, the dancers and the musicians, the dance dramaturge is within the process, bringing in his or her personality, knowledge, body and skills. The participating individuals, together with the con-

cept, the context, the audience and much more, are all forces in a creative process and are influencing the end result. Having different roles and responsibilities, they are all part of the complexity of creating.

Key notions

But how is dramaturgy put into practice? Again, it differs with every process. But some key notions I believe, will always return.

Dialogue

Creating a constructive dialogue is an important part of the dramaturgical practice. It means diving deeply into the ideas, visions and fascinations of the choreographer. It's useful in laying bare the desired communication topic of the choreographer in a certain performance. It can create a deeper understanding of the topic and can offer new perspectives. It's a tool for widening the subject, looking for potential

