Video in its different dimensions as a tool in performing arts education

The constant development and use of video as a so-called "new media" and the fact that this technology has by now become an inherent part of performing arts demands a profound discussion about the use of archives, the video camera and all the applications connected to the work with digital media.

A few words about myself:
As an educated biologist and dance pedagogue, I have been working since 2000 mainly in the field of video documentation in contemporary dance. I am filming and editing. For ten years I worked in collaboration with Mime Centrum Berlin, where I was part of the conceptual development of the database. Within this structure I was also part of the discussion about and the founding of the "Verbund Deutscher Tanzarchive" (Association of German Dance Archives). In addition to working with several choreographers I am involved in the development and realization of several national and international projects such as "Tanztechniken 2010" (Dance Techniques 2010) - an educational book, published by Ingo Diehl and Friederike Lampert - and "Tanzfonds Erbe" (Dance Fund Heritage) a project of the "Kulturstiftung des Bundes" (Federal Culture Foundation).

For several years I have been teaching various classes on the issue of video in educational institutions such as the "Hochschule für Musik und darstellende Kunst" Frankfurt am Main or the "Hochschulübergreifendes Zentrum Tanz", Berlin. This teaching experience has motivated me to develop a combined workshop series. The content of the workshop components can be combined or taught separately.

Series of seminars: Archives and Archiving

- Video as source of information about past performing arts productions.
    - Watching and discussing video recordings in a mutual process:
        What does video as a medium achieve? What is missing if I watch the recording of a live performance? What can I learn from a video recording?
    - Visiting the archive
        Introducing the archives of performing arts, the work of archiving and the idea of container of knowledge.
        Introduction to online archives, the use of data bases.
    - Transferral of the research process
        for example: Dance scientists have to reflect on the relevance of research issues on the creation of dance history. What happens if students choose a so far "unknown" choreographer and create evidence about this person by discussing and writing about her or his work? There is also the possibility to create a virtual persona such as "Veronika Blumstein" (2005, Veronika Blumstein Group http://www.buero-kopernikus.org/de/project/2/37/). In a playful way knowledge about sources, the process of archiving, creating evidence through writing and creating knowledge is created.
    - Art-historical contextualisation
        In which social and political situation have plays had been written? Questions of aesthetics, state of the art in other artistic fields, technical possibilities as well as the political "Zeitgeist" are relevant in this component. Archives offer direct access on many levels to these questions.
    - Questions of copyright
        The question of creative ownership is not only aiming at material in the archives but is also a most relevant question for young creative artists and their own work, for example due to the broad broadcasting options in the worldwide web.
There are several formats to offer students the possibility to work on their own research projects

and to develop joint projects. Either in an on-going series of seminars or in an intensive week-long class.

Options of producing video material

- Video recordings of rehearsals as working material for reflecting yourself and others
    - Video recordings of the work process as resource material for oneself and colleagues.
    - Video recordings as documentation of artistic processes.
    - Video recordings to distribute or advertise ones own work, to apply for scholarships etc.

- Video as artistic media
    - Live camera on stage
    - Video projection
    - artistic video work, as a specific product or as part of a performance.

Teaching the technical know-how
Two to three days with classes of five hours each are already offering the possibility to create a base for working with the camera.

The envisioned use is decisive for the method
(more detailed: A. Keiz "Situation and Form" (S.38-41) in "Partnering Documentation" by Edith Boxberger und Gabriele Wittmann)
This includes the question: What is the purpose of the video? Is it supposed to be representative or to highlight sensual aspects of my work? Does it serve as a reminder to myself? Is it supposed to be a single work in a bigger context?
The easy access and broad use of video entails the danger of aimlessly producing material. Therefore, decision-making processes on the use of the images - as well as implementing choreographic principles in the production – will be addressed as well. Especially in the context of contemporary dance education I consider the students' options to use the camera as an extension of their own body as an unlimited source of inspiration. A reflection of perspectives, organisation of space, time and dynamics is an integral part of video as a media and will be taught through the basic work with the camera (and the eye). This means that also students who are not attracted to the media video will gain fundamental knowledge with regard to perception and choreographic decisions.

How to handle a camera
The teaching themes in a video camera workshop are for example:
- The importance of perspective and change of perspective (physical, sensual work without the camera as a warm up) (referring to Lisa Nelson "Tuning score" and Alva Noë, "Action in Perception")
- Developing a choreographic understanding of the camera moves.
- Working with "continuous shot" as a result of the camera choreography
- Editing in the camera as an exercise to create concepts for the image
- Collaborating with other students, that includes having to explain and revise plans and ideas and reflecting on ones own work process.

Introducing Editing and Archiving
The questions regarding the production in the work process are followed by questions on how to handle the massive amount of digital material
                - for use in a project and then to be deleted
                - to store away and archive
                - to create a version which is useful for presentations or distribution
                        - the choice of the medium:
                                - online stream
                                - DVD

- using the material for an artistic work, creating a film

These options lead to the last complex: the post processing of the video material
- post processing
- video editing
- online streaming
- archiving.

Video editing

The basics in the most widely used and accessible editing programs (i-movie, final cut pro or adobe premiere) are taught in this class. However, the class can only offer a starting point. In-depth learning of video editing needs continuous practice, including access to editing software.
The duration of this introductory class depends on the editing program. In my experience it is not helpful if computer sessions last too long. Two days in a row with three hours of class and time in between where the students can access the facilities.
Content of the workshop should be:
- creating a project, saving the work, import to an editing program, editing, introducing some effects like title, export according to the further use.
Students may consider contributing their work to the pool of the archives.

The classes I am teaching are offering access to the medium video through a broad approach and diverse perspectives and within the context of current debates and institutionalising. Starting with the discussion around archives, moving on to the use of the archives for personal research and further to the technical know-how of the production, the class enables the students to participate in dance history not only as consumers but as producers and creative beings as well.

Apart from the use of video, it continues to be important to include other possibilities of documentation in the process. Practical questions can help to decide what kind of documentation is most helpful with regard to the purpose of each process. (photo, sketch, writing, sound)

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