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## Intimate encounters: A study of the interaction between dancer and observer

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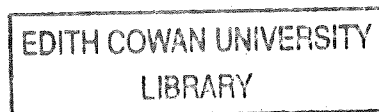
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**Intimate Encounters:**  
**A study of the interaction between dancer and observer**

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**November 2010**

## **Abstract**

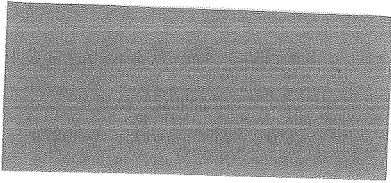
This paper explores the world of intimate performance, looking at the effect intimate spatial relations have on the connection between performer and audience. The constraints and unspoken formalities of traditional theatre conventions are examined, with a focus on the resulting relationship between the individual audience member and the performer. Comparisons of performances respecting traditional conventions, and those which are site-specific, one-on-one and involve audience interaction, will provide the basis of the examination of the nature of intimate performance and the audience-performer relationship. Performance interaction is compared to nonverbal social interaction and what the blurring of these phenomena means. Essentially I intend to explore the question: how does proximity between performer and audience affect their relationship in the context of western art dance? Intimacy and its subsequent effect on this relationship will be addressed through a collision of performative and social norms, examining manifestations of accepted and expected behaviour, as well as their deviations.

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## **Acknowledgements**

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“Theatre is a peak experience and significantly different from other kinds of life because of its focus, intensity, and general visibility. But it is not separate from other kinds of life: It comes from them and blends back into them. To work from this perspective means to accept the audience as a potential ally, and to admit that without the audience's collaboration no performance is possible.”

*Audience Participation, Shechner, 1971*



## 1. Introduction

I propose to explore the world of intimate performance, looking at the effect intimate spatial relations have on the connection between performer and audience. I wish to examine the constraints and unspoken formalities of traditional theatre conventions, with a focus on the resulting relationship between the individual audience member and the performer. Comparisons of performances respecting traditional conventions, and those which are site-specific, one-on-one and involve audience interaction, will provide the basis of my examination of the nature of intimate performance and the audience-performer relationship. I compare performance interaction to nonverbal social interaction and question what the blurring of these phenomena means. Essentially I intend to explore the question: how does proximity between performer and audience affect their relationship in the context of western art dance? Intimacy and its subsequent effect on this relationship will be addressed through a collision of performative and social norms, examining manifestations of accepted and expected behaviour, as well as their deviations.

In order to draw connections between performative and sociological paradigms, the definition of some terms, as used within the context of this paper, must be clarified. I have confined my research to a western art context. In reducing cultural variability I am able to conduct a more in-depth study into theatre settings, which is quintessential to this paper. Dance can be contextualised under many headings; artistic, social or ritual and religious, based on the dance form's function and purpose (Adshead 1988, 68). I am concerned with social interaction that occurs as a result of dance as an art form. Within this paper, dance and dance performers are examined within an art context, as is relevant in understanding the manifestation of social interactions in a performance setting.

Within this paper a 'traditional' stage setting refers to the 17<sup>th</sup> century proscenium arch stage where "traditionally ... the playing space has been

contained in an area or building designated as theatre” (Bennett, 1997, p. 127). Choreographer Clare Dyson describes this ‘traditional’ setting in her paper on authenticity and audience engagement: “Current western choreography is most typically designed for traditional presentation, with a fixed ‘passive’ audience, created tour ready and presented within a proscenium/single front theatre format with a separation between audience and performer” (Dyson, 2009, p. 1). Significantly, Dyson mentions the fixed audience, the proscenium/single front theatre and the separation between audience and performer. These elements seem to contrast the concept of the intimate performance setting.

The word *intimate* can be defined as “deeply personal, private or secret” (“Collins Paperback Dictionary,” 1995, p. 415). I refer to ‘intimate setting’ as a performative space that brings audience and performer closer in proximity than conventionally accepted, and subsequently suggest that this leads to closer engagement. Hollingworth refers to the importance of the

disposition of the platform and its elevation [which] is [a] mechanical feature not to be ignored... it ... sets [the speaker] apart from [the audience and] gives a formal touch to their relation, more definitely polarizing the audience toward him. The elimination of the platform not only puts the speaker on the same physical level with the audience but also tends to make him part of it or at least more intimately related to it. (Hollingworth, 1935, p. 169)

Therefore, I look at site-specific performance, not to explore the impact of the site on the performance, but to examine the impact the changed perspective has on the audience, the performer and the relationship between the two: “contemporary movement-related artistic work, often challenges the traditional physical boundary between performance and audience by allowing audiences to share a common physical space” (Butterworth & Wildschut, 2009).

Similarly I am interested in audience participation or inclusive works. It is important to note the impact dance has on an audience in interactive works. In theatre, participation means engaging in dialogue, playing a role or having a physical presence in the work (Shechner, 1971, p. 73). In dance performance the interaction can be far more subtle and I suggest lends itself more to the term inclusion, "a term that accurately describes organic arrangement of the audience in space so that their presence is visible to each other and their deployment an important part of performance" (Shechner, 1971, p. 73). I would like to make note of Grotowski's argument in relation to audience interactive works in theatre: "direct audience participation has become a new myth, a miraculous solution.... In fact, spatial relations are only important if they form an integral part of the structure of the production" (Fumarole, 1969, p. 7). In arguing that close spatial interactions have an amalgamating impact on audience-performer relations, I refer to works in which this relationship is a focus and intended result of the performance. To be clear, I am not investigating a site or the effect of site on a work, but rather a space and situation that influences behaviour within a work.

I examine Individuals' behaviour in light of the audience-performer relationship, thus they are the subjects of this exploration: "theatre consists of human beings in a defined space watched by other human beings, and it is this reality that constitutes the basic apparatus of theatre" (McAuley, 1999, p. 245). The audience can be seen as a singular unit or as individuals making up a whole (McAuley, 1999, p. 251). Either way their presence is essential to the theatre experience since "theatre is recognized as being incomplete until an audience witnesses it and creates it for themselves intellectually" (Kattwinkel, 2003, p. viii). This line of argument has directed my research to focus on the performer as opposed to the choreographer. The choreographer is intrinsically embedded in their work but direct human interaction only involves those who participate in the moment of performance. Therefore it is the communicating dancer under analysis, as pointed out by Carter in his paper, *Arts and Cognition: Performance Criticism and Aesthetics*,

The aims for the work as established by the choreographer are internalized and given shape in the mind and body of the dancer and individuated within the dancer's own artistic persona. The choreographer's aims guide the dancer's efforts to realize the dance in the performance. (2003, p. 6)

Undeniably the participant and choreographer could be one and the same but his/her role becomes concerned with performance not construction and choreography. Although the choreographer is fundamental to the existence of the type of work that I investigate, as a group they are the vehicle for, not the subject of, my exploration. Thus, this paper does not explore the choreographer/audience connection but rather those involved in the live dance event.

Peterson Royce points out in *The Anthropology of Dance* that, regardless of the formality surrounding a dance event there is always a coinciding human encounter:

[W]here dance is performed in a theatrical setting, which is probably the closest thing to a pure dance event, there is the crucial factor of interaction between dancers and non-dancers. (Royce, 1977, p. 12)

I propose that a specifically intimate relationship between performer and audience can be reached when a personal connection is made between individuals. Therefore within this paper, terms such as audience member are likened to the role of witness, spectator and observer and are indicative of a more intimate level of performance. "‘Witness’ is perhaps a more appropriate term to use ... for it leans towards a sense of mutuality, hinting at an engagement in a shared journey" (Worth, 2005, p. 444). The idea of shared journey is important in regards to this paper, as I investigate the individual in performance and the individual in an audience. These terms are an overarching label, however it is important to remember that they refer to an individual whose experiences are personal and unique.

There seems to be limited research available on the dancer in relation to audience, therefore I have drawn connections from other forms of performing arts such as music and theatre. However, the dancer who is engaged with movement and body as communicator (Plevey, 2009, p. 7) contrasts dramatically to the actor whose physicality often comes second to language and text. It is important to note the unique platform dance offers in attempting communication: "Dance, it would seem, has great potential for communicating something about how people feel about themselves, particularly in situations where different peoples come in contact" (Royce, 1977, p. 158). As a means of communication, dance is not limited by the structure of language (Royce, 1977, p. 160), dealing in perception, it evokes "sympathetic responses in viewers" (Royce, 1977, p. 194). Royce suggests that dance should not be used to communicate in the same way as verbal language, firstly, because dance will always be inferior when communicating this way and secondly, because the artistic expression that is embedded in dance is lost (Royce, 1977, p. 193). "The body is the instrument of dance, the medium of expression. This makes dance more immediate in its impact not only for the dancer but for the observer as well" (Royce, 1977, p. 159). Here, Royce explains that other art forms can evoke a neutral response from the observer because, unlike dance, they are one step removed from the creator (Royce, 1977, p. 159). This notion suggests the possibility of expression and behaviour as elements of performance. This facilitates my argument that through nonverbal forms of communication and the interpretation of perceived meaning dance performance can also be a site of social interaction.

Essentially I explore the immediacy of communication that culminates within a dance performance. I question the nature of intimate performance by looking at audience and spectator, performance, performance space and social interaction, seeking to define how these elements shape and influence the meaning and function of intimate performance within Western Art dance.

## 2. Traditional Theatre – an accepted setting

As the 17<sup>th</sup> century progressed... audience's perception of the dancer began to alter as performing conditions changed. The proscenium stage created both physical and psychic distance between the performers and the spectators, who were no longer encouraged to identify with the former as they had been in the days when the court ballet was a symbolic means of creating unity among different factions. (Au, 1988, p. 23)

Au's description of the influential proscenium arch stage highlights the symbolism attached to placement within a theatre setting. "All the world's a stage', indeed, but a stage alone would never lead us to act; for that, the credit usually must go to the audience before which the stage is set" (Hollingworth, 1935, p. 174). Audiences are an essential element in performance, but in a traditional theatre setting, their role is clearly defined due to the impersonal nature of the auditorium and the clear divide that is audience and performer. Audiences have been labelled 'passive' and although there is evidence to argue this point, the notion is perceived to be common in modern western art culture (Kattwinkel, 2003, p. viii). The audience has little impact on the actual performance; behaviour is based on social formalities and constraints, thus interaction is limited within these boundaries. The performer holds attention (or attempts to) and the audience responds at appropriate times, in the form of applause and "in most traditional Western theatre, those responses are generally polite and unobtrusive" (Kattwinkel, 2003, p. viii). In such a convention an audience as a collective body can communicate with the performers. However, there is no personal communication between audience and performer.

### 3. Dysfunctions of the Traditional Theatre – for the individual

There is perhaps a knack in regarding the audience as if it were a unit, which is often acquired only through practice and experience. Ordinary communication is between individuals. But in facing the audience the performer must compromise between two possibilities, —that of relating himself to the group as a whole, as a photographer would, or that of directing his attention to particular individuals in it.

(Hollingworth, 1935, p. 181)

One can assume that an audience is recognised as a separate entity by a performer in theatre through geographical positioning, orientation and purpose as Charles Woolbert indicates:

The audience and the speaker face in opposite directions; their minds take different bents: they are moving in opposing channels. Even though they be strongly of 'one mind' on some points, the very nature of the conditions is such as to place them at opposite poles. (Hollingworth, 1935, p. 19)

This separation is an expected protocol of theatre, but is it also a constriction? Bennett argues that, “[c]ontemporary audiences in theatre buildings are... most used to fixed stage-auditorium relationships, and the predominance of this convention has led to its necessity for a comfortable theatrical experience” (Bennett, 1997, p. 132). The audience understands their relationship to the stage and therefore to the performance.

When a performance begins the audience takes the role of watcher, and as a unit there is a central and shared focus. Woolbert comments:

When this second phase of orientation ultimately gives way in favor of polarization toward the speaker, there will be equally obvious signs in the audience. Individuals will slouch in their seats, will ignore apparel

that is awry, will cough more freely, and will assume a general attitude of restfulness rather than this one of alertness. (Hollingworth, 1935, p. 19)

Within a body of audience, people assume anonymity and therefore reassurance (Bennett, 1997, p. 131). As indicated, an audience places less importance on their appearance, having no audience to 'appear' for. External from a performance context, Hollingworth describes the human need for an audience: "[s]ocial heritage makes actors of us all, and in the absence of the audience we feel a loss very like that of the smoker who has lost his pipe" (Hollingworth, 1935, p. 178) The role of audience, then, breaks down a social need (unless the audience member intends to pose a sense of nonchalance).

There are concerns too for the performer in a traditional theatre setting. In agreement with Hollingworth, Charles Rosen writes about audience purpose for musicians in *Piano Notes*: "It might seem that the answer to the question "for whom does one play?" is: one plays for oneself. This is misleading. If one plays for oneself, it is unnecessary to do so in public" (Rosen, 2002, p. 123). In this instance I question who is truly the giver and receiver in traditional performance. In addition, Rosen questions the relative status of the artist when an audience is present: "playing in public not only isolates the pianist: it isolates and objectifies the work of music, and it turns the performance into an object as well" (Rosen, 2002, p. 123). So it can be deduced that although the audience pay to receive the performance, the performance would have no meaningful existence without the audience, and yet with an audience, the artist within the performance runs the risk of becoming objectified. 'Art as a product' is a conundrum not entirely relevant to this paper, however, in acknowledging that performance can be objectified there is an argument that this can also apply to the performer. In contrast, non-traditional performance, where human connection between performer and audience can be established, allows a mutual sense of give and take to be implemented.

To include the audience is to work in front of it, or with it, but not for it.



The buyer-bought relationship is abolished because there is nothing for sale, either goods or services. Instead, there is an agreement to begin, maintain, and possibly complete a set of actions- many of which, in order to develop, need the audience (Shechner, 1971, p. 74).

In both non-traditional and traditional performance the audience endows purpose to the performer's actions, regardless of the performer's treatment of the audience. For example, Hollingworth suggests that performers often feel their performance is less purposeful when there are few audience members (Hollingworth, 1935, p. 170). Bennett agrees with this notion, suggesting too, that audience members also affect one another, "[t]he percentage of seats occupied will inevitably affect reception both through its effect on the quality of actors' performances and through inter-spectator relations" (Bennett, 1997, p. 131). The audience feels a lessened sense of group mentality, if they are few in number. Therefore they react differently and tend to be less responsive (Bennett, 1997, p. 131). When an audience is considered to be large within a traditional theatre, the notion of group mentality can be seen as functional. However, I suggest that in gaining deeper audience-to-performer relationships, audience-to-audience awareness decreases. Intimate performance conditions cause a shift in focus and subsequently audience homogeny becomes void.

#### 4. Non-traditional Spaces

I have elsewhere described the attention to the personal interplay between the artist and his or her audience as an “effect of intimacy” – an aesthetic strategy that marks contemporary art in which the artist offers him or herself up to the audience, and invites us to experience the work as not only autobiographical in terms of the artist, but relational – soliciting a personal, emotional, and narcissistic investment from the spectator. (Doyle, 2010)

Doyle points out a current view on performance intimacy that not only involves the view of the audience but also that of the artist. Doyle reflects on the work, *I Miss You* (2003) by Franko B performed in the London Museum’s cavernous Turbine Hall. What is important about the emotional narcissistic investment? For me, what is interesting about non-traditional performance spaces is the affect on audience and performer when they become physically close. This proximal relationship can be examined in site-specific works, audience interaction and one-on-one performances: “if one seeks, as we do, to meet each spectator rather than an undifferentiated public, it is perhaps preferable that the audience not be monstrous” (Fumarole, 1969, p. 6). Before examining types of non-traditional performance spaces, I would like to point out an argument made by Bennett: “non-traditional theatre... produced in non-traditional, less institutional venues” (Bennett, 1997, p. 129) have less codified stigma attached and are therefore less able to transfer this stigma to the performance or performers (Bennett, 1997, p. 129). Comparatively, Williams indicates that a social relationship cannot be separated from its produced and reproduced meaning (Williams, 1981, p. 16). If an audience member and dancer are only able to recognise their relationship via traditional and performative codes, what occurs when this stigma dissolves? Pavis, in *Language of the Stage*, questions the relationship between spectator and actor, identifying the only place of true exchange in extreme circumstances, like in The Living Theatre, “where the actor does not play a role but is himself and where the spectator communicates with him on

the level of an exchange of views about actor's craft" (Pavis, 1982, p. 73). Additionally, Pavis implies that the 'theatrical relationship' is bound up with deciphering meaning through reception (Pavis, 1982, p. 70). If this is the case, the context in which reception takes place is crucial in understanding and projecting meaning. I align this theory with one of Edgar Degas: "Art is not what you see, but what you make others see" (Kovens, 2006, p. 73).

Sela Kiek comments on her experiences in site-specific work, mentioning her own work, *Circulate*, that she constructed to "develop fluid and porous boundaries between audience-performer" (Kiek, 2007, p. 27). Although, Kiek is concerned mainly with site, it becomes evident that the audience's relationship to the performer is a noteworthy by-product of site manipulation. She talks about creating a sense of ambiguity within the site. Here she suggests that by making the performance and spectator space undecipherable, the division in role is narrowed. Additionally, both audience and performer have more responsibility in what they see and physically experience. Kiek quotes Valerie Briginshaw on the topic of cultural and social considerations of site: "when these social and cultural boundaries are upset there is a questioning of 'true', fixed or real meanings and the socially constructed nature of a place is revealed" (Kiek, 2007, p. 30). Where revelation of a site's specificity is of interest to Kiek, I question whether or not the site can reveal something about the intangible relationship between performer and spectator.

Looking at Anna Halprin's site-specific work 'En Route', 2004 (Worth, 2005, p. 443), one can draw a likeness between improvisational work and site-specific work. The work was structured but improvised and moved from a hotel to a performance centre: "certainly the dancers have to re-invent the performance each night. This brings immediacy to the pieces and draws the audience into improvising their own role, since from the start the traditional one of sitting passively in the dark has been disrupted" (Worth, 2005, p. 443). The interactive nature of site-specific work makes every performance unique. Essential to this notion is the specific audience-performer

relationship that occurs within each performance. Therefore whether or not the performer repeats the same performance or dance, the individuals encountered will differ and new responses will invariably develop. Thus, the nature of performance can be likened to social interaction.

In nature, audience participation and one-on-one performances have the advantage of gaining audience involvement, whereas site-specific work can draw attention to other audience members. Here there is an argument that the audience members too, become performers but this theory is not one that concerns my hypothesis directly. Kattwinkel argues that, “without the decisions made by audience members the product would be heavily fragmented” (Kattwinkel, 2003, p. x). Similarly, one-on-one performances give the audience little else to concentrate on but the performer and themselves. David Thorpe comments on a one-on-one performance by artist Franko B. “It was an intimate experience in which the potential for contemplation was heightened by the extreme, one to one, relationship between artist and spectator” (Thorp, 2010).

The social nature of going to the theatre can, and certainly has in the past, been more of a focus than the performance, audience-to-audience relationships taking focus. When a performer and spectator are engaged with each other, the performance event develops intellectually and takes back the focus (McAuley, 1999, p. 244).

## 5. Opening Lines of Engagement

When people are acting in social situations they are not self-sufficient, isolated units but are inextricably involved with others. In such social situations the behaviors of the individuals involved, take on a new role: they become messages which are sent and received. (Williams, 1981, p. 58)

In non-traditional performance, where both audience and performer's behaviour is also, non-traditional, a dual meaning of behaviour develops. Firstly, the meaning of behaviour within a performative context, which is generally expected and accepted at a performance event. Carter points out that the paradigm of performance must be in place if it is to be considered a significant activity that holds purpose and meaning (Carter, 2003, p. 12). Without this label,

“the dancer would not know where to begin or end, and would have no idea when he had succeeded or failed... Correspondingly, the spectators would not know when a performance is taking place, and when it is successful, without some implicit or explicit understanding of the underlying concepts and principles that establish the nature and objectives of performing” (Carter, 2003, p. 12)

Secondly, I look at the meaning of behaviour in a social context within a non-traditional setting. Here, the audience evaluates their role and reacts accordingly and furthermore the performer adjusts to the audience's individual reactions. Evidently there are at least two behavioural messages being sent and potentially, received. Reception is essential to successful communication (Williams, 1981, p. 60). Kendon argues that,

Communication is always framed by a set of social definitions, which may or may not be agreed upon by the people involved. When it is not

agreed upon then coordination is difficult to achieve (Williams, 1981, p. 68).

Kendon's notion is both functional and dysfunctional in a non-traditional performance setting. The traditional frame of performance has been dismantled, which alters both audience and performer's preconceived perception of self-conduct. This generates the possibility to form a new way to communicate. However, means of communication is unclear due to the uniqueness of non-traditional performance spaces. Therefore, successful communication will depend on the performer's ability to instill a new framework within the performance, and the audiences' reaction to the performers approach.

Even the simplest communication depends on the existence or close possibility of significant relationships between those involved: sharing a language or certain gestures or some system of signs. Moreover these relationships are not merely available; in the course of communication they are themselves developed, and means of communication with them. (Williams, 1981, p. 16)

Thus, if a frame for communication can be established within performance then, as Williams suggests, communication is possible and furthermore can develop. I suggest, simultaneous to and as a result of communication, a relationship will develop during intimate performance.

If the speaker is interested in welding together, mentally, the members of his audience, for purposes of enthusiasm and concerted feeling, it is important to realize that spiritual sympathy is promoted by physical proximity. (Hollingworth, 1935, p. 164)

Here Hollingworth refers to audience-to-audience proximity, a notion previously discussed. However, I suggest the same psychological outlook can apply to performer and audience in contemporary contexts. This proximity

theory is to be explored in detail; initially let gesture, authenticity, acknowledgment, energy and physicality become consequences of proximity.

“Body Language and voice are the primary forms of human communication” (Williams, 1981, p. 40). Although gesture is more primitive and limited than spoken language it often expresses more than words. According to Williams, non-verbal communications or body language is instinctive and can reflect a truer message from the sender (Williams, 1981, p. 40). However, gesture in performance is not natural gesture, “having to communicate over distances far greater than those normally used in gestural communication” (Turner, 1987, p. 147). By decreasing distance between performer and audience in intimate performance a more ‘normal’ relationship appears (Turner, 1987, p. 147). The significance of nonverbal communication is discussed in detail in Section Six.

Dyson argues that traditional performance spaces do not encourage an audience to ‘experience’ performance but rather to view it. Dyson suggests that audience proximity is one of the tools that enables performance to be an experiential event (Dyson, 2009, p. 2). Dyson points out that improvisation artist, Andrew Morrish believes that once a performer acknowledges that they have a relation with the audience their work is authentic. This suggests a notion of acknowledged relationship and understanding of role (Dyson, 2009, p. 2). Additionally, Dyson suggests an audience can perceive when a performer is being authentic or ‘present’ in their gestures or actions, constituting a deeper level of connection to the exchange. She mentions Ryod Climenhaga and his belief that presence in performance equates to a directly engaged audience (Dyson, 2009, p. 2). Therefore, if a performer acknowledges their audience and their interdependent relationship, it seems possible that a level of understanding of personal commitment can develop between the two.

Dyson questions whether or not the performer’s authentic experience of the performance deepens the audience’s connection to the work. I suggest that

the sense of connection comes from the audience's understanding of the performer's awareness of the audience. For a dancer, movement and the need to focus on his/her own body can become a distraction from this relationship. However, in an intimate performance setting, the audience provides a constant reminder to the dancer that the reason they move at all is to communicate. This ever-present and tangible reminder is in contrast to an auditorium audience, plunged into darkness and free of personal commitment. Dyson talks of the work, *Being There* 2007:

While the audience didn't move once the work began, the proximity to the dancers allowed them an unusual opportunity to see these dancers deconstructing their own profession and their own world of performance in an intimate environment. This was done for, and with the audience, and for some it connected them deeply with the performers. (Dyson, 2009, p. 11)

The proximity of performance changes the way the spectator focuses on performance. Joshua Abrams writes of his experience in a one-on-one performance by Felix Ruckert: "I didn't know where to look; frequently she was too close for me to visually acknowledge her entire human figure" (Kattwinkel, 2003, p. 5). Here the spectator is clearly engaging with the performance via the individual dancer. Abrams makes conscious choices concerning his physical observation of the work, with not only awareness into what he sees but of what he cannot. This type of engagement in performance is in direct relation to the proximity of performer and spectator.

According to McAuley, there is a constant energy exchange between performer and spectator. The presence of the audience energises the performer. She refers to John Harrop's suggestion that an actor is in danger if they neglect their immediate audience and "play last night's performance" (McAuley, 1999, p. 246). In an intimate performance setting, where bodies and roles are not defined by space, the performer's consciousness of the spectator is sufficient to make that performance unique. McAuley also



mentions John Gielgud's notion that an actor should learn to listen, watch, respond, guide and be guided by an audience (McAuley, 1999, p. 246). In my opinion, where the dancing body is concerned, an intimate performance setting is an ideal catalyst for Gielgud's ideals. Rosen questions the ability of a musician, in particular a pianist who faces away from the audience, to focus on their audience whilst playing, without jeopardising the performance (Rosen, 2002, pp. 121-122). He notes that "[d]uring the actual playing, the performer's sense of the listeners is largely suppressed" (Rosen, 2002, p. 122) due to the lit stage and darkened stalls and the importance of maintaining the integrity of the preplanned work (Rosen, 2002, p. 121). I liken this to the dancer who is very much focused on what has been constructed and prepared prior to performance:

[t]he principal elements in a performance from the dancer's point of view are the movements and/or instructions prescribed in the choreography. The dancer then draws upon his/her technical skills and expressive powers to execute the movements with the appropriate qualities of shape, line, proportion, feeling or concept. A sense of movement style in accordance with the overall intent of the piece is also required. (Carter, 2003, p. 5)

Not only is the dancer required to complete a physical role but also is often required to contribute on an emotive level. Dyson's paper, *The 'Authentic Dancer' as a Tool for Audience Engagement*, includes a dancer's comment on trying to convey character in performance: "it's hard to be 'angry' or 'sad' when you are doing an attitude turn" (2009, p. 7). Here the dancer refers to the challenge of finding emotion within performance when the technical elements of the dance are demanding. These are all elements of dance performance that lessen a dancer's ability to attend to the audience as Gielgud advises. Physicality is a concern in all dance performance, however I propose that Gielgud's notion, when applied within an intimate performance setting is a probably where, "the actor... must heed the minute signals emitted by the spectators" (McAuley, 1999, p. 246).

Additionally, when a work is designed to indulge the audience-performer relationship, the dance is not threatened by this relationship but rather, fulfilled. In Oxford, 2009, Ballet in Small Spaces directed by Susie Crow presented the second edition of *The Solos Project*. Alongside this performance they launched *Dance Writers of the Future*, a program enabling a range of students to practice reviewing and critiquing dance. Student, Rosie Hore, explains that the small capacity theatre is ideal for an “intimate setting, [where] the stage, surrounded on three sides by plain brick walls, leaves no space for hiding” (Hore in *Ballet in Small Spaces*, 2009). Hore points out that although this offered huge potential to explore audience-performer connections, other production elements such as costumes and lighting shifted the focus. Hore depicts one of the solos: “This could have been dance communication at its very best, but the tacky showgirl outfit, complete with cardboard box, lost it all hints of subtlety ... seated only a few metres from the performers, these gimmicky effects were completely transparent” (Hore in *Ballet in Small Spaces*, 2009). I further discuss the importance of performance design and purpose in Section Nine. However, at this point I indicate that a relationship between performer and audience in an intimate space is a relationship that can be visually and cognitively acknowledged by both parties, the acknowledgement of reaction, response and affect (McAuley, 1999, p. 245).

## 6. Silent Communication and Performance

The eye of a person discloses his own soul when he seeks to uncover that of another. What occurs in this direct mutual reciprocity is the entire field of human relationship. (Simmel in Dyson, 2009, p. 11)

Throughout this paper I have given insight into the definition of non-traditional theatre audience and performer relationships, key elements being bearing, purpose and setting. It seems that the more non-traditional performance breaks down the conventions of traditional performance, the more it can be likened to social interaction. Social interaction is defined by Roberts in a sociological framework as “the ways in which people act towards, respond to, and influence one another” (Roberts, 1987, p. 5). Goffman offers another definition which indicates the immediate and physical nature of interaction: “the reciprocal influence of individuals upon one another’s actions when in one another’s immediate physical presence” (Goffman, 1959, p. 26). The relationship that emerges between audience and performer in non-traditional performance moves beyond that of traditional performance. In suggesting that it can be likened to social interaction, I compare and contrast the two. It is important to note that language is not the main form of communication within dance (Royce, 1977, p. 160). Therefore, I explore the nonverbal components of social interaction.

The exploration of social interaction via nonverbal communication is embedded in sociological and psychological approaches. For the purpose of this paper, I am concerned with physical means of communication in relation to intimate performance. “Nonverbal behaviour is involved ... in regulating the degree of intimacy between participants by signalling the degree of involvement each person is ready to commit to the transaction” (Heslin & Patterson, 1982, p. 71). In dance performance, regulating nonverbal behaviour is challenged by the demand for movement that embodies the form. When this instinctive means of communication is impaired, how do we go about defining ourselves in a situation? There is extensive information

about reading nonverbal behaviour and what signals we receive via this form of communication. However, in terms of dance communication, the message the dancer portrays depends on the purpose and meaning of the work. What a dancer does in addition to the dance movements and to the overall picture of the work will indicate to the spectator the dancer's level of engagement.

Rossi-Landi and Pesaresi, describe Bruegel's painting, *Peasant Dance* (1568): "A young child is being taught to dance. Gaze, closeness and bearing tell the whole story" (Williams, 1981, p. 40). This quote superbly illustrates the main elements I explore in examining communication through nonverbal behaviour. As discussed earlier, proximity is particularly significant in this study as space is primal in defining the audience-performer relationship. In accordance with sociologist Ian Roberts, Helsin and Patterson talk about "zones of appropriate distance" (Heslin & Patterson, 1982, p. 61). They point out that an intermediate distance between individuals leads to concentration on content of speech, whereas close proximity (as well as far) results in closer attention to the physical appearance of the speaker (Heslin & Patterson, 1982, p. 61). Additionally, reference is made to researchers Albert and Dabbs who note that

[a]s distance decreases, the speaker appears to focus his attention more intently upon the listener and gives the impression of trying to influence him. As a consequence it is difficult for the listener to relax. He must observe the social amenities of paying attention, reciprocation eye contact, and in general avoiding unnecessary movement. When he does engage in expressive behaviour, the listener tries to do so as unobtrusively as possible (Albert and Dabbs, 1970, 269).

This example of physical proximity shows the social tendencies affecting interactions. The above research includes verbal communication but the concept that one person can engage the other through change in proximity is, nevertheless, influential.

Alongside proximity, eye contact or 'gaze' is significant in nonverbal communication. The look or type of look given or received reverts to the primal instinct or survival strategies.

Patterns of looking indeed offer clear arguments for an action theory of expression. The gaze contributes heavily to expression; and its functional nature is evident. Looking is establishing some sort of contact, and varieties of looking represent modulations of such contact. Looking steadily, or intently, or stealthily or hesitantly, or looking away are of 'direct use' for seeing more, or better, or more continuously, or while maintaining readiness for flight. (Frijda, 1982, p. 105)

Within performance this basic return to everyday interaction consolidates the human nature of the event and again breaks down a formality of traditional performance.

Although studies have shown that eye contact can be used aggressively or as a means of intimidation, several studies show that increased eye contact is a sign of attentiveness and friendliness: "it appears that the subjects interpreted interviewers' failure to look at them as meaning they did not like the subjects" (Heslin & Patterson, 1982, p. 33). Therefore the type of look or meaning projected within the gaze is relevant: "the long intense gaze, then, seems to have the special meaning of high involvement" (Heslin & Patterson, 1982, p. 33). It is also pointed out that generally people are aware of this relationship: "[h]e who looks does not only see but is seen to be looking; he who looks away is seen to be not looking, and he knows this" (Frijda, 1982, p. 111). With the assumption that in an intimate performance, eye contact between performer and spectator could be made, this would seem to be a tool of engagement. Shulman and Penman suggest that, "the point at which the approach and avoidance tendencies of the people involved are in balance is the point of comfortable intimacy" (Williams, 1981, p. 69). Therefore

recognition of the relationship developed between performer and audience could be made through acknowledging eye contact. Furthermore, in order for this exchange to continue this point of comfortable intimacy must be obtained (Shulman and Penman in Williams, 1981, p. 69).

Facial expression is hugely important within social interaction. It is understood to be natural in humans to express emotion with their faces, and moreover it is generally understood cross-culturally (Roberts, 1987, pp. 158-159). Frijda explains that there are interactional expressions that hold purpose in their effect on others (Frijda, 1982, p. 109). With this notion in mind, one can determine that expression could be a powerful tool within performance. As discussed previously, close proximity allows the audience to observe the dancer more intimately; presumably this is equally true for their modes of expression. If facial expressions are natural reflexes (Roberts, 1987, p. 159), they can be received as indicators of the dancer's emotions.

However, as a conscious and intentional tool, a dancer can produce or suppress an expression for the sake of performance. Thus, if expression can be both intentional and unintentional, understanding the performer's expression strengthens the audience-performer connection. Within performance context, both deliberate and premeditated to a degree, the expression of the performer becomes particularly significant. Additionally, producing a particular expression to distinguish a persona or character is not unique to performance; Goffman explains that during social interaction "an individual ... requests his observers to take seriously the impression that is fostered before them. They are asked to believe that the character they see actually possess the attributes he appears to possess ... and that, in general, matters are what they appear to be" (Goffman, 1959, p. 28). This request from individual to observer is no different to the role of dancer in relation to audience in a performance context.

The discussed forms of nonverbal communication are social codes identifiable within performance. They are influential 'informants' in social and performance engagement, which allow a framework between audience

and performer, however in the latter, they also act as powerful binding agents between audience and performer.

If we think of theatre as a social occasion, then several things follow. The event rises from the audience in a space shared by the audience and performers during a time when the two groups have agreed to meet... The performers, knowing the space, in a sense living there, are the hosts during these open spaces (of time), but the performers have no special privileges. (Shechner, 1971, p. 75)

At this point I would like to reiterate Bennett's theory that non-traditional performance settings have less stigma attached, which is illustrated in Cicourel's suggestion that, "status relationships are based upon norms (external to immediate interaction) that have a broad consensus by 'third parties' in ego ... social networks or some larger community. This suggests that the more spontaneous or intimate the relationship, and hence the interaction, the less 'institutionalized' the behaviour of each" (Cicourel, 1974, p. 13). Hence, I suggest that the label 'performance', can work as an institutionalising agent in the audience-performer relationship, restricting both individuals' approach to the other. However, if the non-traditional performance setting decentres the concept of performance thoroughly, the performer and spectator might engage in an emancipative relationship.

## 7. The Conflict

Perhaps it is because I engage with the world as a dancer first that I see the intense potential of the kinaesthetic relationship of bodies in performance, especially in the performance-spectator relationship. (Adamenko in Kattwinkel, 2003, p. 15)

Looking at performance as an expression of art does not usually prompt the examiner to consider the individual within the art, or the social encounter undergone, unless this individual becomes apparent within the performance. As discussed, I suggest this occurs within intimate performance conditions and a subsequent outcome is the conflict of social and performative norms. Conflict seems to revolve around understanding the paradigm in which individuals engage with each other. Social engagement involves the struggle to interpret or believe the performer and performative engagement make issue of a potential invasion of physical and cognitive space.

Robert Wilson, a stage director and playwright, comments on his choice to work in formal theatre, appreciating and acknowledging the formalities; "theatre for me is something totally artificial" (Shechner & Friedman, 1988, p. 120). I would certainly agree that the event of dance performance is constructed. When a human participates in a formal event, where their role is pre-defined through ritual and learned social conduct, the 'human' becomes subordinate to this role.

The dance profession has embedded conventions about how to perform, how to teach, create and also how to watch dance: Audiences expect that a 'dancer' will 'dance'... But the question of her authenticity is shrouded in the expectations of the profession. There is no discussion of her authenticity in terms of who she is as a person, unless she is a dancer first, and then a person. (Dyson, 2009, p. 7)

Here I see the value of intimate performance where isolation and escapism



are replaced with live human interaction. The collision of artificiality and 'liveness' culminate in a dichotomous environment.

Joshua Abrams in *Audience Participation* (Kattwinkel, 2003), writes about the work *Hautnah* a one-on-one performance by Felix Ruckert. He writes of the complete breakdown of traditional performance norms within this work. Set in a club, this performance labelled as 'art' calls for a hybrid of protocols. The audience member or consumer chooses their dancer, pays them directly for the performance and is subsequently privately entertained. Ruckert pushes the audience's ethical boundaries further by allowing the spectator and performer to negotiate the price of performance. The author explains that "the dancers directly receive the money ... [it] troubled me because I was purchasing a relationship, buying the services of another person" (Kattwinkel, 2003, p. 5). Here, Ruckert successfully makes the audience aware of their interaction with a human being.

Dyson notes that, "[i]n dance there isn't an assumption that the dancer is the work of art herself, even if it is a solo. Rather, that she is revealing the work of art and is part of the work of art" (Dyson, 2009, p. 3), indicating that the audience is aware of the person within the performance. However, here there is a definite focus on art and what is revealed in the work. In comparison, Ruckert's work seems to focus on the person performing, what is revealed as art is secondary to the audience-performer relationship. Abrams says, "I found myself focused on her eyes - the "correct" way to look at someone whom you've just meet in an intimate social situation" (Kattwinkel, 2003, p. 5). This relates to Kiek's site-specific concept of social conditioning. Social conditioning as a regulator of behaviour within a site seems evident to Kiek, based on her studies, however rather than the conditioning being a result of the site, I suggest social conditioning is a result of the human interaction. Due to social conditioning an intimate performance setting challenges the audience and performer when social and performance interactions collide (Kiek, 2007, pp. 30-33).

"The presumed conformity or nonconformity of actors to norms raises the question of how the actor decides what 'norms' are operative or relevant, and how some groups or 'community' (or its representatives) decides that actors are 'deviant' and should or should not be punished or sanctioned negatively" (Cicourel, 1974, p. 14). Presumably, the audience's reaction to the intimate setting will affect the relationship that develops. If for example the audience member feels uncomfortable or unprepared for the dancer's non-traditional approach their response may be to disengage. Shechner argues that theatre works involving audience participation can often unnerve an audience.

[B]ecause trained, skilled performers have come to be expected, there are those who grow uneasy contemplating direct interaction between performers and the unskilled audience. The audience, by and large, expects a show to begin and end on time, to be "finished" and "packaged" ... (Shechner, 1971, p. 73)

There is something unnerving about an uncertain future. Shechner records the feelings of an audience member from an audience participation workshop conducted by Tom Diver in 1971 stemming from Growtowsky's work *Commune*, "You know what's going to happen, and I don't. That makes me afraid - paranoia. I don't want to be made a fool of" (Anonymous in Shechner, 1971, p. 87).

Normal formalities of initial interactions are automatically dismissed in a performance. There is no expectation of verbal introduction to "establish some preliminary basis for mutual evaluation" (Cicourel, 1974, p. 25). Therefore individuals rely on alternate ways to assess the other. "Initial social encounters are based upon 'appearance factor'" (Cicourel, 1974, p. 14). This notion presents another conflict in that the performer is not necessarily 'appearing' as him/herself. Therefore, the audience must decide with whom they are engaging, the character, the individual or an assumed identity. Consciousness of this choice depends on whether or not the spectator is reflectively aware that they are watching real life people, in real space and

time, for they can also understand or be persuaded that what is presented is fiction (McAuley, 1999, p. 252). The spectator either collaborates with the fictional world on stage or they do not (Bennett, 1997, p. 152). Frijda comments "emotion is used, willingly or unwillingly, as a way to manipulate the human environment" (1982, p. 113). This argument supports the idea of authentic performance being more meaningful for the audience. The more believable a performer's emotions seem, the more likely it is that the audience will be affected and react honestly. Whereas, if the performer appears to generate emotion for the sake of performance, the audience may respond to the foreseen manipulation, possibly resulting in dysfunctional communication (Dyson, 2009, p. 10).

The primary fact of theatre is, however, the live presence of both performers and spectators, and from this flow two major consequences for the spectator: first, theatre involves an energy exchange among and between spectators and performers, and, second, the performance is necessarily embedded in a social event. (McAuley, 1999, p. 245)

The 'live' nature of both is consequential, as it suggests the ability to adjust performance according to spectator reaction. The performance event is explained here, as what happens between a performer and spectator in space and time. Therefore when an intimate space defines a relationship between performer and spectator, the relationship also defines the performance event (McAuley, 1999, p. 245).

"The audience, through homogeneity of reaction, receives confirmation of their decoding on an individual and private basis and is encouraged to suppress counter-readings in favour of the outcome generally shared" (Bennett, 1997, p. 153). In a private showing performance, the spectator has no reaffirmation of their responses from fellow audience members and so is placed in a vulnerable situation in terms of his/her response. This act of

offering, on part of the spectator, again blurs the barriers between performer and spectator (Bennett, 1997, p. 135).

Roberts indicates that people's sense of personal space is strong and discomfort often arises from invasion of this space (Roberts, 1987, p. 158). In an intimate performance setting, invasion of personal space is likely. Roberts suggests that four degrees of distance may be involved: intimate, personal, social and public. All suggest an acceptable amount of distance between individuals within certain contexts. Although the dancer may not physically touch the audience, the closeness of performance, and of individual, may still challenge the spectator's perception of public or social distance. People physically display concern when they experience spatial invasion. They will, for example, "pull their elbows in, lean away from the invader... avoid eye contact with, or else glare at, the invader, make 'distress' gestures such as scratching the head or fidgeting" (Roberts, 1987, p. 158). In a performance setting, which by nature directs attention to the performer, the behaviour described above would be considered inappropriate. Here again, we see a possible conflict for the audience member (Roberts, 1987, p. 158).

Like Roberts, Helsin and Petterson suggest that decreasing social distances can have negative, rather than positive results: "the usual response to spatial invasion includes both discomfort and emotional arousal." (Heslin & Patterson, 1982, p. 27). Furthermore they point out that people do not recognise and respond to an approach but rather increase their own avoidance tendencies. Interestingly, they note that research has been concerned with spatial invasion from strangers as opposed to that by already acquainted persons. "The use of strangers is unfortunate because there is evidence that interpersonal relationship is a strong determinant of nonverbal intimacy" (Heslin & Patterson, 1982, p. 27). Interpersonal relationships are significant when examining the nature of intimate performance. The dancer is a stranger but the approach to entertain and communicate with the specific audience member is very deliberate, personal and meaningful, almost like that of an established relationship. Furthermore, there is almost a sense of

willingness from the audience member expressed by their presence at the performance. Here is another collision of relations. The performance paradigm allows the dancer to be far more forward than a stranger would be in everyday life.

In summary, it seems that the break-down of conventions within intimate performance has both detrimental and beneficial impacts on performance (Shechner, 1971, p. 74) However, if framed differently this may not be the case. I suggest that the human connection gained within intimate performance is significant and replaces what is lost in performance. For this to be fully comprehended, one must accept that intimate performance must be experienced and defined independently from a traditional performance paradigm.

## 8. Defining This Relationship?

If the individual offers the others a product or service, they will often find that during the interaction there will be no time and place immediately available for eating the pudding that the proof can be found in. (Goffman, 1959, p. 14)

Dyson suggests that if contemporary dance in Australia could be designed and therefore perceived as an experiential event, the role of audience becomes more consequential, as does the way in which dance is encountered (Dyson, 2007). If an audience member 'experiences' performance they become involved in a process more like that of someone engaging in social interaction, participatory in nature. For example, Dyson's work *The Voyeur* discusses intimacy, and the act of revealing (Dysonindustries, 2010). The two dancers, Jonanthan Sinatra and Clare Dyson perform within a four-walled box with small squares cut into each side for the audience members to observe through. This physical divide between performer and audience immediately established a role for the audience, concerning observation and anonymity. For me, this was the case until half way through the performance when Dyson acknowledged some of the audience members. She made eye contact with individuals through the peepholes, acknowledging that she was aware of the audience's presence and aware that they were watching her. I had so easily and comfortably accepted my role as observer that this recognition by the dancer was affecting. I immediately felt guilty; she had caught me watching her. Subsequently I began questioning my anonymity and what she could see from her side of the box. This simple acknowledgement forced me to recognise my role in the piece and my connection to the dancers. Private elements of the dancers' lives were available to the audience if they chose to listen to headphones attached to the outside of the box. I had chosen to listen to the audio text and after the moment of eye contact, I felt a connection had been made with this particular dancer, through my own will, and hers. I indulged in emotional empathy and appreciation for her as a person. Dyson's work was designed to intrinsically

involve the audience; they chose how they watched, what they saw and what they heard. Each audience member had a unique experience essentially due to Dyson's performance design and their own choices. If intimate performance successfully enables a performer and audience member to connect on a level of experience beyond that encountered in a conventional performance then intimate performance can be seen as experiential.

Dyson also refers to Curtis Carter's paper *Arts and Cogntion: Performance, Criticism and Aesthetics*. Notably, Carter's argument acknowledges the individual: "she/he discovers and discloses to the audience an individualized presence that can only be experienced at a particular moment of performance" (Carter, 2003, p. 3). This idea proves significant when contemplating the personal connections that take place in dance; the individual is essential to the experience that takes place within performance. If an individual, as opposed to a performance, can be distinguished within performance and seen as a communicator and receiver, the lines of engagement open. Here I bring to light a comment made by Rachel Gildea, a student taking part in Ballet in Small Spaces' *Writer's of the Future* program:

Although unprepossessing on the outside; inside, the potential of its intimate 50-seater theatre is very apparent. The soloists had nowhere to hide from the close gaze of the audience, huddled in anticipation. How well-suited, if not a little daunting for the dancers, to perform alone in such a personal setting. With dance, so often associated with collaboration, companionship, co-existence and accompaniment, The Solos Project offered an opportunity for some of Oxford's professional dancers to step bravely forward into the limelight, revealing to us their unique, isolated worlds. (Gildea in BalletinSmallSpaces, 2009)

Gildea's description exemplifies the exposure a dancer succumbs to when performing in an intimate performance space. Her mention of 'close gaze' is in direct relation to the 'daunting' empathy she feels for the dancers. *The Solos Project* comprises of several works, all thematically diverse, however, in

her review, Gildea focuses on the expectant audience and the dancer's exposure (BalletinSmallSpaces, 2009). Another student's review suggests that the spatially restricting theatre not only offered an opportunity for the audience to get to know the soloists but evoked the need to pursue the audience-performer relationship (Hore in BalletinSmallSpaces, 2009)

In addition to the individual, Carter discusses the notion of 'the moment within performance', highlighting the 'liveness' of the event. Carter points out that *erlebnis* is key in gaining knowledge from performance since

the intimate details of the dance as the performer knows it is his own body-mind processes, or as the spectator perceives it in the presence - as a flow of articulated movement in time and space ... [is] knowledge gained directly from the work itself. (Carter, 2003, p. 11)

What seems to me to be an underpinning result of 'experiential' performance is the shift in what is gained. In the case of intimate performance, I suggest that a more rewarding understanding of audience or performer results. Theatre director and researcher, Grotowski, makes a strong claim when he observes that "[i]n our epoch, when religious values are almost totally exhausted, human intimacy is perhaps the single value which has any chance of surviving" (Fumarole, 1969, pp. 5-6). Grotowski focuses on a particular evocation of intimacy, distinct from the physical exposure to nudity that is sometimes used within theatre. There is a danger of falsifying or manufacturing intimacy between audience and performer when this is a desired outcome within performance. The audience presents an unknown, "the trouble is that spontaneity could end in a lying spectacle" (Fumarole, 1969, p. 4). The paradigm of performance suggests a formality between audience and performer regardless of external relationships. This contrasts the notion of intimacy, defined as close or warm friendship or intimate words or acts within a close relationship ("Collins Paperback Dictionary," 1995, p. 415). A clear exchange and relationship development that comes from close proximity creates an authentic experience that requires neither close



friendships nor words. Here intimacy lies in the creation of relationship and within that, the understanding of situation, time and space.

## 9. Finding an End

Man in his intimacy: such is the last of our temples. We must scourge the peddlers and chase them out of the temple. (Fumarole, 1969, p. 6)

Traditional theatre, which is commonly understood as a performance event in function and setting, naturally divides the audience and performers, allowing little personal engagement to take place. To establish a personal relationship, a less traditional, intimate performance setting is functional (Fumarole, 1969, p. 6). Less traditional performances such as site specific, one-on-one and audience interactive works, often involve an intimate spatial relation between audience and performer. The lack of preconceived and understood formalities in non-traditional theatre allow the audience and performer to interact more freely with one another since there are less codified rules to guide their actions. Additionally, it is the shift in proximity within these types of performances that brings the audience and performers to encounter each other more intimately. In this instance communication and social exchange becomes viable within performance. Close proximity leads to clearer physical exchange, authentic performance and relations to develop and acknowledgement between audience and performer of their respective roles and commitment, ultimately resulting in a shared energy.

During the examination of non-traditional, audience-performer interaction, this relationship becomes comparable to social interaction. Proximity is also a factor in social interaction, through eye contact and expression, indicating an interest in engagement, relationship status and intention of communication. A certain tension arises when performative and social norms collide as a result of unclear behavioural requirements. This tension can be seen as detrimental to both performative norms and social norms, however if isolated as an independent experience, intimate performance becomes uniquely functional. The role of both performer and audience becomes subordinate to the person undertaking each role. The specific individuals involved are consequential and their relationship to one and other, more

meaningful. There is a possibility of shared learning or growth taking place that is intrinsic to the moment of performance and to those involved. Non-traditional performance can establish a form of intimacy unique to performance and unique to social interaction.

My research suggests that intimate performance must be examined and reviewed within a certain framework as it fosters an experience that functions differently to that of traditional performance. In searching for a definition for the more intimate relationship between audience and performer, I have found that although what occurs can be isolated and discussed, the actual term to accurately encapsulate this interaction is nonexistent. I believe that perhaps this is essential to its existence. By defining the parameters of the intangible and unfamiliar world of intimate performance, the experience can lose in part its sense of mystery and ambiguity. These are elements that make the performance a unique and personal journey for those involved. Defining this relationship essentially designs roles and functions, unraveling the essence of non-traditional performance. Additionally, words, terms and meaning will always be found, tested and redefined. Perhaps within the *undefined experience* we can hold onto a sense of consistency. I suggest that intimate performance be considered as a separate entity distinct from other performative labels but, at the same time, resistant to definitional closure in order to avoid generalising what should remain an intrinsically personal experience.

Personal experience and human connection are essential to the idea of intimate encounters and essential to this paper. Non-traditional performance, intimate in setting and concept, develops through dance and social interaction occurring simultaneously. This collision cultivates vulnerability and unfamiliarity but also a willingness to seek and receive. In the moment of intimate performance, this parallel and instantaneous form of interaction can transcend, dance and social communication, becoming more than the sum of its parts.

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