Invitation to ATD students: Participate in the What a Body Can Do student seminar

From autumn 2019, teacher and postdoctoral researcher Marijn de Langen (Mime study programme) will be holding a research seminar for a multidisciplinary group of ATD students with specific interest in embodied knowledge. The seminar is taking place within the framework of De Langen’s postdoctoral research.

Invitation

I am looking for motivated students in the second, third or fourth year of their BA study programme at the ATD to participate in What a Body Can Do, a seminar for students.

Participants should have an affinity with the subject of embodied knowledge; enjoy reflection, exchange and research; and have ideas for their own potential research in this field. The seminar will comprise six sessions on Monday evenings, from 19.00 to 21.30 (see below for the schedule). The maximum number of participants is 15, the composition of the group will encompass the widest possible range of study programmes from across the ATD. On six Monday evenings, we are going to gather together with a group of students from various study programmes to conduct research on embodied knowledge in general; on your embodied knowledge in particular (which is partly the embodied knowledge of the discipline you are studying); and on the ways in which embodied knowledge is mutually transferable and shareable.

The 17th-century philosopher Spinoza wrote this now famous phrase in his treatise on ethics: ‘No one yet, has determined what the body can do.’ What can the body do? The ATD is bursting with answers to this question. In fact, we have a lot of knowledge about what a body can do when it is acting or performing: we know all sorts of things about the use of muscle tension, about flow, about being in the moment, about rhythm and transparency, about ‘pulling the bones away from each other’, about using the body to make the space visible, about zero, about working on site with bodies and landscapes... the list goes on. In many cases, this technical knowledge is a given for performers and/or dancers.

During the sessions, we will discuss this form of embodied knowledge, and attempt to articulate it in a more explicit way. What happens when you try to describe a form of embodied knowledge that is quite normal in your study programme to someone from another discipline? How might a dancer explain to a scenographer what ‘flying low’ is? How might a scenographer explain to a theatre teacher that stage design is a physical process? How should a mime performer explain to an actor what ‘zero’ is? Let us go a step further, even: How might we as theatre and dance practitioners define embodied knowledge for a care sector worker, a neurologist, or an IT specialist? And how might we convey the value of that knowledge?

How do you go about successfully transferring embodied knowledge? The first thing that comes to mind is of course is to simply do it – to experience it in practice. But what aspects of these experiences can be conveyed in words? And what do these words contribute? What other media and approaches to documentation are suitable for the transferring of embodied knowledge? What are the individual benefits of each medium – of for example photography, the moving image, VR, movement notation, poetry, drawing, and so on? Over the course of the sessions, we will collaborate on building a small archive of embodied knowledge. We will read several texts, we will examine various forms of documentation and research in this field, and we will engage in physical practice. We may invite one or more guests to join us and inspire us.

At the first informative session on Monday 7 October 2019 from 19.00 to
I will outline the idea underlying the seminar, and discuss the new Embodied Knowledge in Theatre and Dance research group and my own postdoctoral research. If you are a Bachelor’s student at the ATD and you are interested in participating, please send me a letter of motivation in which you detail your affinity with the subject and what you expect from the sessions. The letters of motivation will, if necessary, form the basis for a selection process that will seek to maximise the breadth of representation from the various ATD study programmes. The deadline for your written application (with accompanying letter of motivation) to participate in the student seminar is 28 October 2019. Please send your application directly to Marijn de Langen at marijn.delangen@ahk.nl.

Seminar session calendar
Monday 7 October 19.00-20.00: informative session
Monday 28 October: deadline for seminar registration
Monday 18 November 19.00-21.30: session 1
Monday 9 December 19.00-21.30: session 2
Monday 13 January 19.00-21.30: session 3
Monday 3 February 19.00-21.30: session 4
Monday 30 March 19.00-21.30: session 5
Monday 20 April: 19.00-21.30 session 6

Top: Scene from Balthazar (2013) by David Weber Krebs and Maximilian Haas. Photograph by Ines Lechlechner