

From now on, just continue until such point that you can no longer breathe. Take yourself to the very edge. By doing so, won't your appearance change? You'll never undergo a radical transformation unless you plunge wholeheartedly into yourself. (Ohno 293)

Conclusions

This process was intended as research for artistic creation. It was noteworthy that rehearsals also became a pseudo therapeutic exercise and that many participants purged some of what they have inside and that helped them to take new steps in their own investigation. The research of vulnerability for this piece demanded a high level of commitment and personal investment and so every person involved found herself dealing with profound personal, physical and psychological topics that were brought out more to the surface by the kinds of exercises and meditations we did throughout. I discovered that I shouldn't keep that from happening. I shouldn't be afraid about the process turning into therapy as long as I kept the focus on art-making. If I was to work with vulnerability I had to be open to all the things that came out of everyone with each passing day. We were working with the idea of ourselves as the rawest material, and that required our totality.

One of the first goals was getting seven dancers to become a group and work as such. The group was formed due to the commitment they all had towards their work, how they related to each other, and because they interacted respectfully and supportive of each other. The differences and sensibilities they all shared made the process take place and evolve, it was those same differences that nurtured the piece.

I strived for integration, not just from part of the dancers but from every individual involved in the creation of the work. Having Angelina experience most of the exercises as well as the rest and depart from there for her creation; José Eduardo devoting himself to knowing what we had worked on, how we felt and what we thought and wanted; having Víctor so enthusiastic and excited about the piece and his rapid involvement in it. These situations resulted in a marriage of people, thoughts, ideas, wills and desires that brought us together to achieve a higher purpose. We were not only working as a group, we were all working as a family of artists.

At the beginning of the project, all the girls had an idea of what the work would be and of the challenges there would be for each of them. They sort of knew or assumed how I worked and that I would be combining my Theatre and Dance experience with many different exercises and even some extreme physical approaches to research and create.

I worked towards helping them to slowly -and perhaps even unknowingly- let go of assumptions about the work and the process so they could ultimately let go of themselves. There were several obstructions towards the work, most of which derived from fear; they were scared of many exercises and of their outcome on them as individuals, they feared risking too much. As time passed they shed most of their fears and that allowed them to have a deeper and fuller experience. The fear of a thing became what drove and pushed them to do it and they found new meanings, ways of moving, old stories locked in their bodies; they confronted themselves and their limitations and in some cases were able to surpass them.

A limitation that at times affected our work was the lack of physical condition in them. That would give me a hard time when wanting to go beyond the exercises proposed, and at the same time it was an indicator that I should ask more of them. Had they been fully trained and extremely fit dancers, it could've been easier to move forward from the proposed exercises and get to new, different and challenging ones that would drive them to surpass other limits. However, as I stated before, I was working with what I had and open to possibilities, thus I realized that this lack of physical condition presented the work with many unexpected possibilities and other ways to access vulnerability.

I wanted the dancers to make the work and the piece their own. I didn't want them to feel like they were working for me and for what I wanted, I wished for them to find a link that could connect the research I proposed to themselves and to their own. I wished they would investigate for themselves, for their own sake. They managed to make it theirs and to let go of obstructing thoughts and ideas about themselves, finding themselves truly and painfully exposed -which was another goal accomplished. However, there was a downside to their appropriation; when the time came to receive feedback they did not know how to. As my advisors helped me see, the dancers had fallen in love so much with their process and their personal findings that they deemed it too personal so as to be talked about by others, they wouldn't let anyone in and would not accept any kind of commentaries or criticism. I had to find a way to help them step out of this and see it from a different perspective, but it was very difficult and I didn't know how to do it, I didn't succeed. I reckoned I would have to make them defend with their performance the piece we had, so that it wouldn't be bland, so that it would be full of heart, and the audience would then decide if it was good or bad.

During a conversation, choreographer Mayra Morales pointed out that had I worked with professional dancers in the same period of time, we would have been most likely able to surpass the preciousness of the process and get to higher levels in terms of creation and performance. I agreed to what she said, however we are always in constant learning, whether we are 'students' or no longer so; had I worked with professional dancers, I wouldn't have learned ten percent of what I did. I believe this was one of the highest successes of this investigation, the learning we received from it.

What is *Aquellos Silencios*? What did it mean? Is there a validity to it and all the work behind it? These are all questions that have been in my head constantly and I can't seem to find a single answer. It is a piece that was informed directly by the exercises proposed in rehearsals during the creative and research process. How did I connect these exercises to the piece and how did I invite the audience members to know this? Was I able to do this? Probably not. It is very possible they could have inferred there was some deep emotional and physical work behind those scenes and images presented, but were we actually able to make them see that? The piece was formed by many images, I believe all of them strong and full of potential. However, I know the piece is not yet unified, it is not yet a whole. I believe time is key to accomplishing this.

In another conversation with Morales, we commented that the images -strong as they were- had not yet acquired their full potential and that they did not fulfill or meet my questions of vulnerability. There is still a lot of work ahead with those images. I would have to try them out again -on a rehearsal room, during a performance with an audience-, probably countless times so that then I would be able to go past them and find new territories of exploration and vulnerability, whether it is with these dancers -if they are willing to- or with others, probably even just with myself.

How can I find a link between that which I want to say, the performers, the piece and the audience? How can I reach and talk to a very heterogeneous group of spectators? The images that affect some might not affect the others. How can I find a language within the proposed piece that becomes readable by whoever witnesses it? Must I do this? I don't have the answer for any of these questions and they probably are all senseless, nevertheless I do believe that this is part of my job in the years to come. Finding answers, trial and error, finding a true link between a scenic discourse, its players and its audience. Get to valuable and applicable findings in terms of research, dance-making, creation and performance.

Where lies my risk? I believe I took many great risks. I set myself in a position in which I could've fallen flat on my face -and I probably did- and fail in achieving what I was after. My first risk was taking on such an investigation in such a small amount of time. I took a chance in working with students and venturing into research that could explode and go everywhere. I risked in leading a group of people into an emotionally and physically intense, demanding process. I risked all the way by doing this with the one will and desire to learn. I risked in the choices I made regarding the piece, in choosing the images I chose -which were images that have most likely been used in many other contemporary scenic discourses, both in Dance and Theatre-, but I too risked in trying to find a new meaning for them and in trying to make them our own, in trying to make those images unique for our piece. I risked by defending what I wanted to do and by defending what we had.

One of the weaknesses of this work, as I stated earlier in the document, is that I just investigated vulnerability from its most lugubrious conception -sadness, pain, sorrow, etc. There was hardly any room left for lightness, laughter and other implications of the term that I assume exist. I believe vulnerability has a wider range than just the aspects we tapped and I believe we weren't able to discover new ones.

Investigating the idea of vulnerability was closely linked to rawness. However, when it came to the time of performing the piece, I wasn't able to transmit it. In another conversation with Morales, she pointed out the case of costume design; no matter how lovely they were and how I thought they worked perfectly, she commented they were still very pretty, and that these took away some essential qualities of the vulnerability I was after, that the costumes ornamented the work instead of aiding it in its essence. I must admit that I didn't give such thought when creating the costumes alongside Angelina. I made a choice of what I wanted and of what I thought worked best for the piece.

Reflecting upon this and many other aspects of the whole work, I discovered my weak decisions and my own tendencies towards beauty and how these can become an obstacle within my creation. I have a tendency of making things beautiful and therefore -whether they were in fact beautiful or not- they lost their vulnerability. I reflect upon the reasons of having these patterns embedded in me, patterns of following things that are aesthetic. This stepped in my way at the end and thus the rawness I could have achieved was lost. These patterns towards beauty and aesthetics worked in detriment of my own quest.

I am deeply influenced by artists, companies, etc., whose work is strongly aesthetic; I find joy, ease and inspiration in it. Nevertheless, there is the question to explore the opposite. Do I want to look for it? Or do I want to stay in just one field? Speaking of vulnerability, I wasn't able to fully access my own because I wasn't able to acknowledge these patterns and leave them behind. How can one break patterns when one is not able to see them?

Aquellos Silencios resulted of a selection of things -images, movement, arranging of scenes, elements, etc.- that was based in deeply rooted and strong patterns I have, which probably made me lose coherence regarding my research of vulnerability. How hard it is to truly let oneself open, exposed and vulnerable. I wasn't able to do this with the piece and thus I unknowingly embellished what was presented, probably because of fear of doing something I wasn't used to doing, because of fear of risking much more.

I realized with this work that when I express myself 'freely' -which now I find is just a way of expressing the way I want to, as opposed to expressing the way that I might be- I lose my vulnerability, I become measured and think of what I wish to express and say. I have to set out to find that so-called true freedom of expression and that will come as I learn to let go of my patterns. I want to let go of them and explore new things. I want to find new ways of working and I must demand myself to go beyond what it is I want to do and beyond what I tend to do so as to not evade what I dislike doing. I believe *Aquellos Silencios* shows these desires and that it also shows how I have not yet been able to fully accomplish them and thus sets a departure point for me to continue working.

With great risk comes great knowledge. A deep learning experience. During this process I discovered a lot of things and learned to stand up for myself and be faithful to my beliefs, speak out, hear what the other one has to say, lead and work with a group. I have learned to be still, to be silent. I have learned to accept when other people are right. I have learned from every single one of the people involved in the project -dancers, designers, technicians, advisors, audiences, friends- and from every single situation too. I've learned to carry out things to the end until I find a new door and am able to open it and find newness and surprise.

I devoted myself so much to the way things were supposed to be, to the shapes and forms, that I forgot to let go of all that and work deeper on what was inside all these. But, I am happy to be standing where I stand. There is the opportunity to keep on creating, investigating and finding answers. I dare say now I can go deeper, past the surface of things. With each passing year I will hopefully come to learn more and discover new ways of creating and investing myself into things, discovering theatre, dance, art.

In the 2010 biographic documentary *Breath Made Visible*, Anna Halprin speaks of her life and the learning there has been in everything she has done and continues to do. At the end of the documentary she says “when I'm 110, I'll dance the way things are” , as if acknowledging that she will never fully know anything till she is very old, and even then she possibly never will. I believe this too. Regarding dance -and many other things as well- I might never come to fully know a thing; yet each experience will be an opportunity to learn and know how things are. I intend to make that process as full, enjoyable and precious as I can: creating, dancing.