

Mariella Greil - Contact improvisation and it's philosophical implications

“A philosopher never gets quite used to the world. To him or her, the world continues to seem a bit unreasonable – bewildering, even enigmatic.” (Jostein Gaarder in “Sophies World”)

Contact improvisation has a lot to do with the faculty of wonder – there´s always something new to it. You might find yourself upside down, balancing easily on the highest point of someones body, understanding the important role of gravitation on a practical-physical level, finding yourself in the arms of a man/woman that you don´t know, being moved...

I find that CI as a danceform provides an incredible rich playground to make unusual experiences with unique bodies (contrasting the "neutral dancers body" which might be required in other dance techniques).

CI is a dance that is distilled from the wonder of people getting in touch with each other.

5 precepts to be basics in CI as philosophical practice.

1. Dancing can be exploration
2. Enjoying working with my body
3. Effectiveness in the use of my body
4. Giving and receiving support
5. Letting conscious mind rest and trusting the intelligence of the body

Ideas for a contact lesson:

Using the text “ A Strange Creature” of Jostein Gaarders “Sophie´s World” (page 14 –16; 1994) as a base for a class with a group that had previous contact experiences.

Start of with people walking through space, seeing the room and the others, find a place that you like and lie down on the ground.

Close your eyes, open your kinesthetic senses. When everybody is ready to listen, explain that you are going to read a text which they can hear and perceive in a resting and receiving state. Start reading the text slowly :” A strange creature ... “–

Give time for resonance and continue guiding verbally into a moving state.

Advise to start moving on the ground, feeling the touch of a big surface of your body with the ground. Enjoying working with your body as a mysterious creature. Dancing can be exploration. Appreciating the freedom to be your own teacher.

When the group has come into movement and the dancers have explored near areas, invite them to open the eyes and explore the room as well as other strange creatures. See each others, meet and play.

You might exchange bodyweight. Rolling, resting, sliding at each others bodies.

Giving and receiving support. You might appreciate to be a matrix for someones learning process.

In movement look for the effectiveness in the use of your body. See the space between the bodies as a partner, as offered opportunities.

Letting conscious mind rest and trusting the intelligence of the body as a bewildering experience.

Notes for the facilitator: give time – everybody will be glad about it !

„ The body is our way to be in the world.“ (Merleau – Ponty)

I invite you to adjust the first thought a bit and say it like that:

A dancer never gets quite used to the body. To him or her, the body continues to seem a bit unreasonable – bewildering, even enigmatic.