

Introduction to “Dancer Knot” by Lawrence Upton

Foreword

“Dancer Knot” is a visual poem and score for dancer(s), voice(s) and instruments, which was made between March and October 2013. It consists of 68 black and white images, themselves treated versions of some images in an unfinished piece, possibly abandoned, called “Lowe Climber”.

“Dancer Knot” has not been realised in full; but a prepared *Variation 1*, consisting of 18 of the “Dancer Knot” images, was realised as a piece for voice and system on 15 October 2013 at *Arch1* London by Jeff Cloke (live processing) and Lawrence Upton (live voice); 20 minutes approx.

To complicate the issues slightly, perhaps, part of Jeff Cloke's performance was to generate and display a visual response to the sound we were producing. There being no dancer, I followed the score, which only I consulted; Jeff followed the sound, before and after treatment; the audience saw Jeff's images.

November 2013



(Dance Knot # 10)

Introduction

With **Dancer Knot**, I intend that the dancer(s) leads, providing the “ignition” to the performance I envisage. That is, the dancer's movement is the score for vocal, instrumental and system response. **Dancer Knot** is the dancer's score. Or so I have it, here, now, on electronic potential paper; but I am happy to alter it if you can persuade me.

(And the same applies to instrumentalists and engineers: where there is a dancer, follow the dancer; where is no dancer, follow the score.)

My proposal is that the dancer will read these images and react to or interpret them. I am happy to enter into workshop discussion on ways of approaching the score.

I've done that with dancers before. Not telling them how the scores should be danced, but discussing the way that I sound them and letting them infer how to interpret them in movement, perhaps in ways I had not envisaged.

I would much rather have those discussions not focus on the particular image or score to be danced; but I'll go along with that a little if that's what it takes! Ideally though we would be working on an approach which can be applied to any of my works. (It may not work with those dancers who are more directively inclined!)

The images can be presented (to the dancer, to other performers and to the audience) by projection; and that raises the question of how long they are displayed. 20 seconds per image makes for a longish dance overall, but hardly allows much time for development of a full response to the individual image.

I would be quite content, in this context, for images to be dropped from the score as long as what is left retains visual variety over all.

Ideally, if I were to voice the images I would choose to voice them via the dancer(s)' interpretation rather than directly from my images; although I am more practiced in reading the images directly.

In working with instrumentalists and system musicians, I am again quite easygoing about process so long as I know what that process is (e.g. one favourite collaborator tends to respond to my sounding; whereas another will read from the score along with me and perform that way though aware of and responsive to the way that I am interpreting. In both cases, my work with those gentlemen has been developed without reference to specific scores except perhaps retrospectively.

Lawrence Upton

October 2013 (revised slightly November 2013)

Illustration added February 2014.

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