Considering the relationship between digitally mediated audience engagement and the dance-making process

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Introduction

This chapter offers some original empirical insights into emerging modes of audience engagement with dance, which highlight the role of digital environments for the reception and circulation of culture across multiple arts practices and audiences. The discussion focuses on the intervention of the digital into the creative practices and processes of making contemporary dance. In so doing, it considers the impact that a digital platform designed to share work-in-progress can have upon an artist's process and reviews the potential of digital platforms for engaging audiences in cultural practices such as dance-making.

This chapter will explore the integration of audience feedback via a digitally mediated platform during the creative process of three new pieces of dance. It will critically review how attempts to forge empathetic relationships between artists and audiences through digitally mediated interactions intersect with and intervene in the dance-making process. The chapter is based on the findings of a Nesta funded project, which enabled the authors to collaborate with the Leeds-based dance agency Yorkshire Dance and with a digital partner, Breakfast Creatives. The project was funded under Nesta's Digital R&D Fund for the Arts, which supported the development, testing and analysis of a responsive online platform that we called *Respond*. The platform was designed to mediate interaction between audiences and artists, taking the former on a structured journey of collaborative critical enquiry to deepen

their insights into the development of new dance works. The platform adapted the acclaimed Critical Response Process (CRP), a feedback technique for soliciting feedback designed to support the needs of the artist/maker of work and develop effective modes of critical enquiry (Lerman, 2003).

By critically reviewing the process and findings of the study, which was conducted in 2014 by the two authors, the chapter will consider the wider implications for audience engagement of digitising what is essentially an artist-led and -focussed process of critical enquiry. The discussion draws upon key insights developed through scrutiny of qualitative research data gathered through the established audience research methods of focus group discussion, depth-interviews and netnography. The chapter invites new perspectives on the appropriation of technology for developing relationships between dance artists and audiences whilst also highlighting the potential of such a platform for informing and shaping a shared understanding of cultural value and heritage between artists and audiences. The chapter contributes to this book through exploring tensions and possibilities for cultural engagement through harnessing technology in a meaningful and collaborative way.

Background and Context

The research context for the project emerged through the increased attention and value that is placed upon developing audiences' contextual insights or "readiness to receive" (Brown and Novak, 2007) and through evolving definitions and processes of co-production and co-creation (Grönroos, 2011; Walmsley, 2013). Indeed when presenting emerging findings from this research project, it is towards the shifting and ambiguous notions of co-production and co-creation that audiences' questions have primarily been addressed. However, the main

focus of this chapter is to explore the implications of digital engagement with audiences during artistic development for *artists*.

The project was also initiated as a response to the relatively low Target Group Index (TGI) for contemporary dance in Yorkshire. In response to this demographic challenge, one of Yorkshire Dance's key objectives remains to build and develop a region-wide infrastructure for dance whilst also fostering creativity and innovation. Similar projects such as BAC's (London's Battersea Arts Centre) *Scratchr* model have explored co-creation through digital collaboration between artists, audiences and producers with a view to better equipping artists, producers and audiences for co-creative roles (Meyer and Hjorth, 2013). This aim was explored via an online space (www.scratchr.net) designed for the sharing of creative ideas, essentially an online collaboration space, which also set out to enable relationships between artists, the venue and their audiences. The *Scratchr* project findings suggested that audiences were more motivated to use other social media platforms to engage in dialogue rather than scratchr.net. This motivated us to design a responsive platform that would attract and engage participants in a sustained critical dialogue.

The *Respond* project stemmed from the activities of Yorkshire Dance in supporting a broad range of practitioners from across the region and developed organically from their frequent face-to-face application of the CRP technique to support artistic development. Responding directly to the stated aims of the Nesta R&D Fund, our project shifted the focus of the technique from the artist to the audience, with a view to creating a more bespoke audience engagement platform. This gave rise to a number of healthy tensions regarding to what extent *Respond* constituted an artist or audience focussed tool.

Liz Lerman's Critical Response Process and its place in the creation of dance works

The *Respond* platform (see www.respondto.org) translated CRP to the digital realm and thus shifted the facilitation of the technique that ordinarily takes place in a live context towards a more automated and autonomous process managed via an online platform. *Respond* enabled direct communication back and forth between the artist and online participants via a highly structured process (see below). Like its live counterpart, *Respond* provided the audience with privileged access to an artist's creative process. But the online process was mediated through automated responses and input from a facilitator in order to mirror how CRP functions in a 'real-life' environment, where it is facilitated by a trained and/or experienced intermediary.

CRP was developed by Liz Lerman in the USA during the late 1980s with the aim of supporting the development of artistic practices, initially in dance-making. CRP traditionally functions as a feedback system based on the principle that the best possible outcome from a response session is for the maker to want to go back to work. The process has proved valuable for multiple creative endeavours and collaborative relationships within and beyond the arts. Since its inception, CRP has been embraced by a diverse range of stakeholders, including dance-makers, art-makers, educators, conservatoires, theatre companies, museums, orchestras, scientists and science centres. The core aims of CRP are as follows:

- to inform and develop a more reflexive approach to artistic practice;
- to deepen dialogue between makers and audiences;
- to facilitate enhanced learning between teachers and students.

CRP involves a four-step process that aims to minimise and contain personal opinions, personal aesthetics and biases (Lerman, 2003). The four key steps that promote constructive dialogue between artist and audience are delineated as follows:

1. *Statements of meaning*: This step involves the respondent commenting upon what was exciting, evocative, challenging, memorable, compelling or stimulating about the work.

2. *Artist's questions*: The artists ask the audience questions about their work. Lerman (2003) suggests that if artists ask questions first about the intent of their work, the respondents will be better able to frame the discussions around the needs of the artists.

3. *Neutral questions*: The audience asks neutral questions about the artist's work. Questions are considered to be neutral when they do not have an opinion couched in them.

4. Sharing opinions: The audience state their opinions, subject to permission from the artist. The usual form is "I have an opinion about *x*; would you like to hear it?" The artist then has the option to decline opinions for any reason.

(Lerman, 2003).

Ordinarily, the CRP process takes place following a live sharing of work in progress where spectators are configured in a circle and the four step process is implemented by a facilitator (and note-taker) who polices each step to ensure that each step is followed and assures the coherency of the overall process. The circular arrangement is recommended for the Critical

Response Process "because it runs contrary to certain conventions of learning and leadership in the dance field — for example, that dancers enter a room and face front to receive direction from the teacher or choreographer" (Borstel 2003 p.8).

CRP provides clarity on what artists are dealing with in their creative endeavours and subsequently enables the work to be successful through an increased sense of clarity around the artistic intention behind the work. CRP helps to build work as it assists in overcoming habits and preconceived ideas and prompts artists to reflect closely on their creative process.
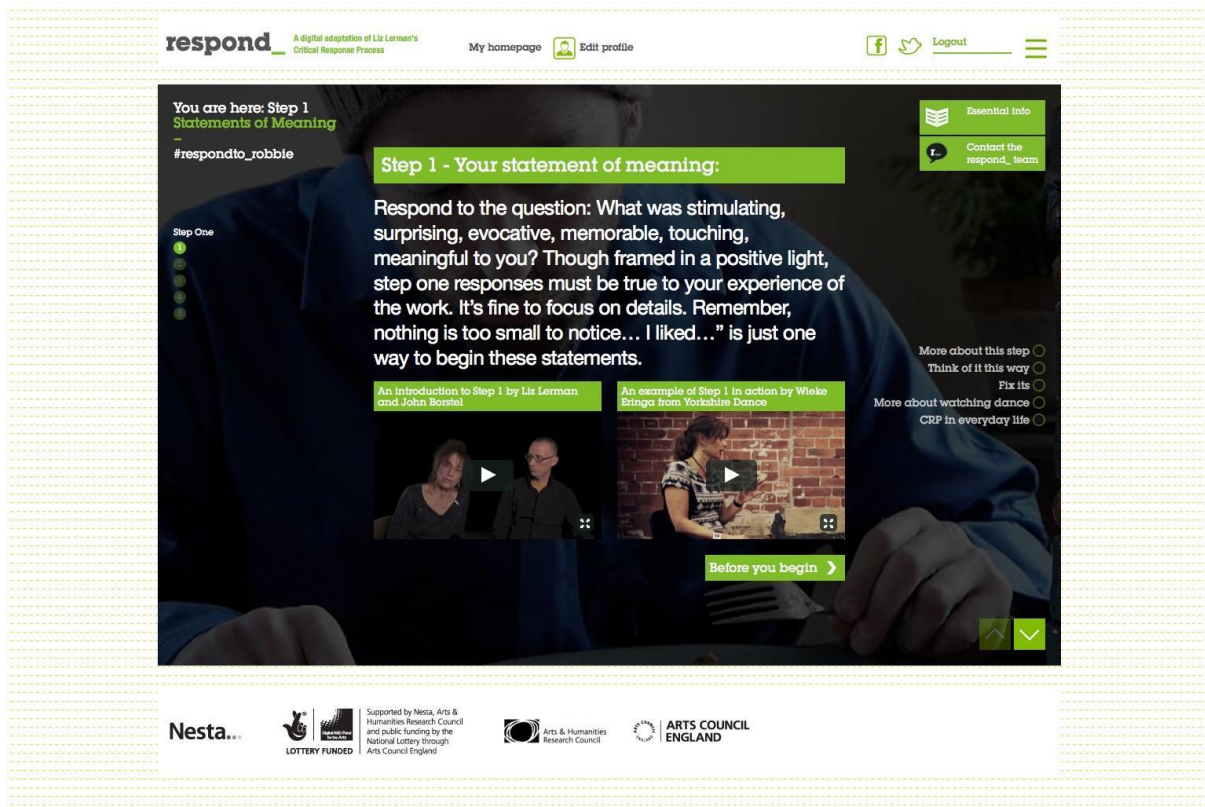

Figure 1: The *Respond* Platform (screen-shot of Step 1)

In translating Lerman's process to the digital world, our project encountered a number of challenges, not least that of maintaining momentum amongst a diverse group of participants from non-attenders to established dance artists. CRP traditionally reverses the hierarchies

inherent in feedback for dance artists, as it is primarily audience focused. Developed with a research focus on how cultural value (and ultimately, therefore, cultural heritage) might emerge as a result of co-creative relationships, *Respond* sought to expand the dimensions of CRP into an audience engagement tool. However, some of these challenges ultimately transpired to be benefits, which surmounted some of the pernicious restrictions and barriers inherent to face-to-face communication in live time. For example, the lack of a spatial context and the shift from spoken to written feedback opened up new possibilities to foster a more democratic culture of constructive critical exchange. As Whatley and Varney (2010) have argued: "Web technologies have a tendency of flattening" what they refer to as the "temporal qualities" or the "raw" nature of materials (p. 60). These authors relate this process to dance and in particular to the process of *making* in their contention that:

> ...the rehearsal process is by its nature a collaborative process, subject to all kinds of influences that are necessarily of the moment. But what is discarded and what is kept is an unseen, un-explained cognitive process; a unique intuition that resides within both the choreographer and the dancer/s, which might be termed "choreo-cognition" (Whatley and Varney, 2010, p. 60).

Whatley and Varney recognise that aspects of "choreo-cognition", if exposed and disseminated, can prove valuable in providing data for the researcher. Whilst Whatley and Varney are concerned with strategies for documentation and digital preservation on otherwise intangible dance heritage, the *Respond* project adds a new dimension to the potential value inherent to sharing the creative process. As such, the project substantiates the work of Miranda Boorsma (2006), who highlights the vital role that audiences play in processes of

artistic reception and argues that the arts consumer is not a passive recipient of art, but an important co-producer of value.

Creating empathetic audience relationships

In the context of this book, this chapter emphasises how new modes of audience engagement with digitally mediated dance-making processes can assist in creating more empathetic audience relationships. The use of the online environment to facilitate audience reception has particular implications for dance, which is traditionally experienced as a live performance practice. The visual experience of watching dance pulls the observer into feeling, through empathetic engagement with the bodily action and the motivation inherent in the movements (Foster 2011 pp. 156-7). This observation derives from the writings of dance critic John Martin (1939) and has continued to inform more recent investigations into the role of kinesthetic empathy in dance spectatorship.

The work of Dee Reynolds and Matthew Reason (2010; 2012) offers useful insights into the multiple modes through which audiences engage with and reflect upon dance performance, including kinesthetic, empathetic and musical engagement, social experience and intellectual reflection (2010, p. 55). These authors suggest that "kinesthetic responses are a key source of pleasure and motivation for many dance spectators" (ibid., p. 42). Furthermore, Susan Foster emphasises the centrality of the moving body to empathetic engagement as a result of the body's "affinity with cultural values" (2011, p. 218). These ideas provide a context for understanding the empathetic perspectives through which dance is primarily received and *Respond* both adds to and problematises these multiple layers of empathy.

The specific function of *Respond* as a feedback mechanism that utilised the online environment alters traditional modes of spectating whereby bodily exchanges are not facilitated through a shared space but an online interface. Existing research into web-based choreography reveals that it is possible for audiences to engage in dance-based learning through Internet communications (Popat, 2006). In addition, practices of "web-based choreography" suggest that the Internet can prove a valuable tool and resource for audience experience and engagement with dance (as is evident in the work of Mark Coniglio, for example). Similarly to Popat's research into the possibility of supporting the creative process via internet dialogues, this research focused upon the time of making, which is ordinarily privately endured by the artistic team. Recent innovations into documentary practices in dance reveal the value associated with the multiple aspects of process. Increased interest in embodied knowledges or aspects of "choreo-cognition" are becoming increasingly apparent within web-based platforms. Scott deLahunta and Bertha Bermudez have explored the increase in artists' involvement in developing unique approaches to the documentation and transmission of their work, which largely depend on the digital interface (2010). Projects such as *Inside Movement Knowledge*, *Motion Bank* (The Forsythe Company), Siobhan Davies' *Replay* and *Double Skin/Double Mind*, to name but a few, encompass:

> ...a wealth of dance-related material while also allowing for new modes of interacting with this material, new modes of navigating through it, understanding it, selecting and recombining it, pulling information from it, and putting it to new (creative) uses (Bleeker, 2010 p.4).

Such projects offer insights into the otherwise hidden components of the dance-making process and reveal that these new ventures are enabling traditionally less tangible forms of

choreographic heritage to become more commonplace. Whilst such projects incorporate the use of rehearsal footage, digitally annotated notations, scores and materials that are intrinsic to the choreographic process, *Respond* adds a layer of audience dialogue into the milieu of choreographic process.

The complexity of kinesthetic empathy as described by Reason and Reynolds is further problematised when translated to a digital environment, especially as the three dance works were not specifically "web-based" choreographies. As Susan Leigh Foster explains, "the dancing body in its kinesthetic specificity formulates an appeal to viewers to be apprehended and felt, encouraging them to participate collectively in discovering the communal basis of their experience" (2011, p. 218). This sense of communality has been considered essential to audience engagement via the digital, according to Popat, in that the construction of "group-ness" in an online context is what facilitates dance-based learning and can support the creative process (2006, pp. 117-8).

The implications for creating empathetic audience relationships via the means of a digital platform illuminate the possibility for communal experience and highlight the inevitability of co-creating value. In particular, the tensions between co-presence and asynchronous online exchange reveal how such modes of engagement afford different types of empathetic relationships. Whatley explains that "the presence of a 'live dancer' involves the viewer sensing the dancer's effort, breath and weight in a more immediate, co-present way" (2012, p. 266). In contrast, when a dancer's body is mediated through a screen, the viewer is required to 'perform' in a different way in order to engage with the work, such as activating a mouse or using a keyboard. Whatley explains that the relationship between the work and the viewer through the use of technology suggests that modes of virtual engagement implicate the

watcher in the viewing "as co-creator, thereby active in realising the work" (ibid., p. 267). Moreover, for artists, as deLahunta and Shaw explain, increased approaches for "looking inwards" at their process helps the choreographer in the form of a "self-demystification" of their own practice, enabling them to deepen their own understanding (p.53). The digital manifestation of CRP facilitates this depth of understanding, as it forces artists to excavate their process and through the addition of a shared dialogue contributes to the artists' and audiences' ability to decipher and engage with the work (Suggate, 2015).

The platform provided an opportunity to explain that there don't have to be "secrets" withheld regarding the dance-making process and provided audiences with a sustained introduction into the work. It was also implied that the process had enabled the artists to understand and engage with expectations and misunderstandings with regards to the work as it "confirmed suspicions" that the work might be "baffling" and this could be pursued in dialogue via the platform. Among the expectations was the idea that the platform might assist in unlocking or providing "new avenues of awareness to explore in future work" (Yakira, 2014). It was anticipated that the platform would enable time for "the formulation of ideas and and for connections between concepts to emerge in a way that is not possible in the live context of CRP" (Suggate, 2015).

Engaging audiences digitally

There is arguably a current trend to overstate audience's desire to co-create artistic work. There are a limited number of studies into co-creation in the arts, but a recent study of co-creating theatre by one of the authors (Walmsley, 2013) found that the desire to create work alongside artists was restricted to a relatively small and niche segment of the audience. For

the purpose of this chapter, it is important to distinguish between co-creation and co-production. Grönroos (2011) maintains that "co-creation" should be applied to processes of audience reception and sense-making and defines "co-production" in terms of consumers participating in the production phases of an artistic product or event. So co-creation is perhaps best understood as a creative philosophy that provides audiences with a cognitive and emotional stake in artistic work rather than a productive role.

To date, very little research has been dedicated to the digital engagement of audiences. One of the most significant contributions to this emerging area of research is provided by Lynne Conner (2013) who illustrates the myriad benefits of digital engagement, including its ability to empower and embolden audiences by safeguarding their anonymity. Conner also notes that online engagement can incorporate important periods of silence, which "slow the pace and allow for a redistribution of power among the speakers", thus democratising discussion and enhancing the meaning-making (p. 79). Significantly for this particular study, Conner's research also illustrates that effective audience engagement focuses on process rather than outcome, which serves to vindicate further the adoption of Lerman's CRP into the audience reception process.

Our empirical work with *Respond* participants provided some rich qualitative accounts of the impact of the digital platform on audiences. Several participants noted that *Respond* helped to peak their anticipation, which served to confirm the findings of Brown and Novak's (2007) study that determined a causal link between anticipation and positive impact in the performing arts. As one of our participants put it: "I had been worried that the process would hinder my enjoyment of the performances, but actually it made me very excited to already be a little aware of what was to come."

Other participants shed light on how digital engagement can facilitate reflexivity and develop a positive etiquette of critical response. For example. one infrequent attender fed back her feelings that the *Respond* process:

> wasn't asking me to be knowledgeable; it wasn't asking me to give facts or figures or esoteric arguments or similes or whatever. It was actually asking me to *respond* to something; and I think to do that you actually had to be very mindful and very humble. And I thought that was a really good thing. It was something I wasn't expecting...

What is perhaps of particular interest in the context of this book is how this facilitation of mindful response can exert a positive influence on artistic practice and address notions of cultural heritage and value.

The artist's perspective

The use of *Respond* as a digital feedback platform was a new venture for all the artists involved and their anticipation of what this could afford illustrated the value that each placed upon establishing constructive dialogues with audiences. Much of the appeal of the platform resides in the opportunity to understand how audiences perceive artists' work. But it is important to note that the platform marks a departure from more traditional uses of digital technologies for marketing activities, which mainly occurs via social media platforms. Instead, *Respond* became a vehicle for shared constructive and creative dialogue. Among the expectations was the idea that the platform might assist in unlocking or providing "new

avenues of awareness to explore in future work" (Yakira, 2014). It was anticipated that the platform would enable time for "the formulation of ideas and and for connections between concepts to emerge in a way that is not possible in the live context of CRP" (Suggate, 2015). Alongside these potential benefits of the platform, a number of complexities inherent to sharing the work during the making process emerged in relation to the digital content and function of the feedback dialogue. In particular, the tensions between what benefitted the artist and the audience/responder highlight the impact that the digital environment can have upon the creative process and the facilitation of deeper, more "mindful" audience engagement.

The CRP technique connects both the makers and the responders of an artwork through a process of response. The three artists referred to in this chapter (Lucy Suggate, Robbie Synge, Hagit Yakira) identify CRP as being central to the process of uncovering "secrets" about the work, or more specifically, allowing the concepts inherent to the process to emerge in and through the shared online dialogues. As Lucy Suggate explained, CRP is "a productive tool to make make the work better" as:

> [...] it helps me realise *how* I want to engage with audiences […] to build work and overcome preconceived ideas, it prompts me to look more into *process*. [...] CRP gives me clarity on the work that I'm presenting. There's something about that clarity that allows the work to be successful […] there's an artistic clarity (Suggate, 2015).

This perspective was also echoed by Robbie Synge, who explained that the process helped him to make the kind of work that he wanted to make. In addition, Yakira noted that the ordinarily private process of creating work is an intellectual journey and that she hoped by

"making the ideas public as soon as they are conceived [...] they can be both clarified and deepened" (2014). The sense of immediacy implicit in Yakira's comment here is significant in relation to the shift in facilitation of CRP from the live to digital context. One key complexity was the timing and participation: as opposed to when feedback is shared live, the sense of immediacy does not translate to the digital platform. Participants reported that they missed the "dopamine hit" they get from other digital platforms (such as social media); and because the CRP was facilitated asynchronously, the artists missed the moments of real-time dialogue that they would get through a live facilitation of CRP.

Figure 2: Robbie Synge, *Douglas* © Yorkshire Dance/Sara Teresa

When using *Respond* the artists were required to prepare two video clips for use in two separate phases of the platform testing. The way in which this intervened in the process offers

insights into how the online relationship with audiences is developed and into artists' different approaches to sharing their works-in-progress. Susan Melrose has argued that "all performance-making processes are relational" in the sense that they are constructed around the presence of an imagined spectator, materially positioned (2007). This relationality, as Melrose argues, dislocates the performance because it is "neither here nor there, but in more than two places, and differently, at once".

This perspective resonates with the mode through which the artists were required to present their work via the platform, meaning that a work within a work as such was offered as an insight into the development. Each artist approached the task of showing work-in-progress via video quite differently. For Yakira, it was important that she consciously placed herself within the footage so that the audience would "see the relationship, [...] see the dialogue, [...] see the way I think, then [...] see how it comes along with the dance. I think it creates more personal relationships with the work, to me, with the whole thing" (2014). In contrast, Synge's clips offered a narrative and were framed as "artistic offerings" (Synge, 2014) often not filmed in a traditional dance space (i.e. in a village hall and in outdoor rural locations).

The dramaturgy behind the videos themselves therefore became an important consideration for the artists, who geared it towards assisting the audience's understanding of their own creative narratives. In particular, Suggate suggested that the process of selecting material for a film of a targeted length (approximately five minutes) directly impacts upon the scope of the feedback and how much she is able to probe her audience in relation to the overall work. These factors contribute to an emphasised distinction between the experience of spectating and experiences of performance-making and performing, both in and in the lead-up to the event (Melrose, 2007). For Suggate, the audience are not watching *the* piece of work but

function as observers in a research process. Therefore the terms within which the work is received is not only subject to the binary of live/digital but performance-making/performing; and through discussion with the artists it became evident that this distinction begins to overlap as a result of the shift from an "imagined spectator" to the presence of a spectator via the online environment.

Based on the findings of this project, it is thus arguable that the application of CRP to the digital context exerted a more sustained impact upon the creative process than the application of a live CRP. This is because of the artist's' ability to return to the online feedback, to re-read and reflect back upon their own and others' comments. Suggate (2015) suggested that this offered a more reflexive process, providing her with an "external eye" in the process. It was also suggested that a live CRP process can sometimes feel confrontational and formal whereas in this digital manifestation the tone was more informal and the depth of feedback was greater. The function of the platform also offered a sense of support and legacy for the works in progress. Synge reported that the more time the responders invested, the more rewarding this was for him, supporting Conner's (2013) contention that the slower-paced mode of digital engagement can enhance the process of meaning-making.

All of the artists appreciated the access to feedback in written form, claiming that this more tangible form of documentation functioned as a type of choreographic notebook, which also contributed to a more sustained period of reflection upon the process and development of their work. The artists appeared to benefit from the process of writing questions for the digital environment instead of formulating these in the live context. The translation of the process into a digitally mediated feedback loop forced the artists to articulate their questions and responses with more care and consideration, making them more "honed and reflexive"

(Suggate, 2015). Suggate also welcomed the fact that *Respond* enabled her to capture her work digitally and to create a living archive of her process. Similarly, Synge commented that the platform has provided him with "a timeline of a process" that is invaluable for future development of the work.

For Suggate, the ultimate aim of CRP is to determine a shared interpretation of a piece of dance: she describes this as "a process of *alignment*", which enables her to "filter the feedback". This perception chimes closely with and Bourriard's definition of 'relational art' as "intersubjective encounters […] in which meaning is elaborated *collectively*" (cited in Bishop, 2004, p. 54, original italics).

Development of dance-making practice

All three artists reported that the use of the platform for gaining feedback on their work offered the necessary space for reflection and the ability to prepare considered responses. This is something that has been perceived as a key strength of the online platform as opposed to live CRP, where dialogue is more dynamic and succinct. The digital facilitation allowed for a different mode of expression that was considered more expansive and reflective. Synge (2014) also claimed that the mode of participation and engagement was "more generative".

The way in which the audience commentary became present within the dance-making environment is significant as it marks a shift away from the spectator as an "imagined presence" (Melrose, 2007) towards a more co-present engagement. This was particularly the case for dance artist Hagit Yakira who selected some of the audience feedback to share with the dancers, musicians and costume designers also involved in the work. The process of

reading comments to the artistic team during the rehearsal process inevitably increases the visibility of the audience at the time of making. Yakira explained that the commentary was selected based upon how closely it related to what she was trying to achieve in the work and therefore constructed a positive dialogue between the studio activity and the online commentaries.

Managing the role and expectations of audiences also emerged as a central concern amongst the artists. As Suggate (2015) pointed out, "the audience are not watching *the* piece of work [...] they are observers in a research process". This insight develops Suggate's notion of the artist-as-researcher and challenges the concepts of co-creation and relational art described above. In the case of Robbie Synge's work, *Douglas,* some of the responders began expressing concerns towards the final stages of the process about whether or not the work would be ready in time for the performance date. Such behaviour further illustrates how the platform enabled more empathetic relationships to emerge through heightened sense of investment in the creative process. Yakira also commented that she was aware of her responsibility to the audience in her selection of "something safe" for them to see and also in her acknowledgement that: "They wanted to help and they wanted to to take part [...] there's a willing that comes from a good place."

Yakira's suggestions reveal that she was less influenced by what audiences actually said but more so about considering how to "invite audiences in". The strength of the process for Yakira was rooted in the way in which it encouraged her to reconsider the language she used to describe her work and how to ask questions of her audiences. These findings further support the distinction between the co-creation and co-production of value that marks a shift in the reception of value as something that can be understood as a shared process of

alignment between artist and audience, afforded via processes of digital engagement such as that offered in *Respond.*

Implications

The various ways within which the audience feedback intersected with the artists' process is indicative of how this mode of engagement has the potential to inform the development of a dance work and provide audiences with a significant and meaningful stake in choreo-cognition. However, the three artists claimed that they were unclear as to how engaging with audiences in this way had impacted upon their creative decision-making. This suggests perhaps that responsive platforms of this nature might function more effectively as tools of co-creation (of value) rather than co-production (of product). Nonetheless, the process has clearly enabled an awareness of the work "beyond geography" and an understanding of how to communicate with audiences by constructing appropriate processes, etiquettes and discourses around their work and by co-creating value through enhanced and more empathic audience relationships.

Another key implication stemming from this work is the challenge of securing funding for digital engagement, which not only emerged as a highly labour intensive process but also demanded significant marketing and facilitation resources. The study also highlighted the need to address artists' skills gaps and lack of confidence in digitally capturing their creative process through ongoing professional development. This is a sector-wide issue that impinges on cultural policy and on aspects of cultural heritage.

Conclusion

There are indications from this case study that digital engagement can encourage both artists and audiences to take responsibility in their various roles of creating and receiving culture and in making sense and deriving meaning from their artistic experiences and endeavours. Digital platforms such as *Respond* have an advantage over traditional face-to-face exchanges in that they can capture and document the creative process as it happens. This implies a democratisation of cultural memory and heritage, as the focus shifts from output (or product) to process, and the documentary voice broadens from that of the artist to a collaborative dialogue between the artist and their audience (sometimes facilitated by a cultural intermediary). This in turn serves to give audiences a stake not only in what cultural heritage *is*, but, perhaps just as importantly, in who *decides*. On a broader level, this more democratic artistic exchange can serve to shape and determine cultural value by establishing an empathetic relationship where sense is made of a work through the artist-audience relationship.

The findings of this project could have significant implications for artists and arts organizations. The platform demonstrated potential for audience development and enrichment alongside the clear potential to shift artist-audience relations well beyond standard transactional processes into a more artistic, human, dialogic realm that exemplifies Miranda Boorsma's (2006) conception of co-creation, whereby audiences give "meaning to the artefact by means of their imaginative powers" (p. 85).

There is consensus from the artists engaged in the process that there is no clear correlation between the creative choices made and the audience feedback, and therefore the role of co-production is not particularly apparent from the activities within this project. The main value

for the artists and audiences was inherent in the way in which the platform encouraged a more "considered", "deep", honest", "structured", "succinct" and "mindful" critical responses than a verbal, face-to-face exchange.

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