

## Forum between John Tain and River Lin

John: So I guess we are going to get started. Literally mopping up the sweat from Lin Wen-Chung's amazing performance. Thank you so much for that. So I want to start from somewhere very basic, very simple. And I was wondering if you could talk to us a little about the structure of the piece. Because it seems to me that there is a way that the piece has three parts structure. And you kind of mark each part by the announcement by the dancer. And I wonder if you can talk about what those parts are and say a little about that.

River: Basically in this performance, the proposition of structuring time is, we're basically three timelines. The first one if you still remember 20 Minutes for the 20th Century, which is the title. And the second is "the 20 minutes for the past 20 years of my dance practise". And then the third is the title again, but Asia. And then I actually propose a circle here but the idea is to propose a negotiation of regarding and negotiating and understanding within the two timelines but saying the same pattern but with different interpretations or with different ways of thinking the time.

John: And it seems to me that you know the first two in some way is something like a repetition. Right there is kind of a structure which what we start off is something that seems to be OK. I mean the way that is presented here any way is start of being a kind of collective experience and then there's a literal laying there, or in the French term will be "*mettre nu*". You know the making naked of in some ways the. (River: Did you speak French?) Yes, I did. Anyways so there's a way which from the collective to the individual in some ways through the act of unclothing and some ways it seems to me. And then the third one is something else, right? And maybe for the benefit of the audience, can you say a little about the kind of the transitions between from one to the next?

River: Can I ask you a question? (John: Sure.) What did you see in the third part?

John: I think throughout, there were references that I could get or I thought I could get. I was not always certain about the references. I think the interesting thing for me about seeing this piece is that I haven't seen the Boris Charmatz's piece, but I have seen the Tino Sehgal piece. I have seen it as performed by one of the authorised dancers, Frank. Yes, by Frank Willens. And so what is interesting about that piece is that it is kind of like a guessing game. It starts off, not to give anything with for the audience. But it starts off for the Rite of Spring, the Stravinsky and it is very memorable kind of movements. And even though I'm not a dance specialist, I've seen enough dance to know what the references are, so I can tell what's that, or to Trisha Brown point it out or De Keersmaeker or (name). So there are these things inside and moments I see, the gestures that I can tell what they are. And here I'm not always familiar with what the reference points are. Some of them I think the collective one of exercise, the radio exercise, you've explained that, you gave the way. That is kind of the first one. There is yoga, right? There is some other moments like disco or something. But also it seems like the last one, it kind of transition to something else. I want to say that I think that there is Butoh in that but I am not exactly sure. That's kind of what I see. So I don't know what the audience saw, maybe they saw other things, maybe they saw more things.

River: In terms of the original piece of Tino Sehgal is like, because I'm not a dancer or art historian to be able to recognise every choreographer and at the same time in the program note it didn't mention at all, so but the way of dancing in this way like a showcase like from Jérôme Bel to Trisha Brown to Nijinsky to Pina Bausch, this is always like seeing a live YouTube. Do you see what I mean? It's actually not very difficult to see or to understand that even though you don't recognise this certain moment belongs to which choreographer but it is like a live YouTube, that basically many clips are performing live.

John: It is pretty clear that it is a collage.

River: Collage, exactly. So base on this and my proposition is not doing this but doing the ambiguity and doing the transition and doing the transformation. For example, of course more or less you can recognise there is contraction of Martha Graham. There is something like similar to Merce Cunningham technique or even apparently there is yoga here. But all the certain elements here is about methodology or technique, not about which piece from YouTube that being cut here. And certain movements that you can categorise has been transformed. For example the short yoga demonstration that Wen-chung just did. It is not ashtanga. It is something like that but because the yoga system that Wen-chung has been trained was in Bill T. Jones Company. And the Bill T. Jones Company uses their own yoga system that is already transform and mix with many things else. And because Wen-chung has been working with Bill T. Jones for seven years and that's his daily practise. And ten years ago, when he came back to Taiwan to build up his dance company and create his own works and he still does this everyday. And we sort of like include this progress.

John: And it is interesting because so I'm not a yoga person. I don't, I've never. (River: I can teach you) I can't say I've never taken yoga class but I am almost never, I mean very like autobiographical reasons I've stayed away from yoga. But I recognise that is yoga. I mean not just because you see it everywhere, you know like the "downward dog" or whatever, but also because there's one particular position that Wen-chung did, that I recognise because of a friend who worked actually with Mathilde Monnier. And during that time was working with Mathilde Monnier who is a choreographer in France that River and I just saw about a week ago, I guess. Anyway so that he did and then I kind of like remember that and then so when I saw it, oh that's that pose, you know the sun pose or something. Anyway, that kind of brings me to another point, which is interesting is that the middle portion is kind of my 20 years, from Wen-chung's career and even though the title of the piece has the kind of "but Asian" or "亞洲", right? It's in fact not "but Asian" or "亞洲". It's something else, if we all recognise yoga because of the global popularity of yoga, for instance that kind of are also about that kind of that mixing or that mingling, right, were like you were saying. The yoga is not yoga as it's practised in India. It's not authentic yoga, right? It's yoga as it has been adapted and adopted in the US. And then adapted and adopted and practiced in Taiwan by someone who has kind of traveled around.

River: And this travelling system is also like maybe some dance people here, I guess. Like the Indonesian Martha Graham and Taiwanese Martha Graham and Japanese Martha Graham are all different. It is in this kind of sense and I pretty agree about this kind of globalised context, addressing and responding the title "but Asian" because this is also interesting. For me, my personal proposition to put this title, "but Asian", and at the same time, maybe during your expectation that you sort of like to have the opportunity to think about like in our daily life. For example, when you say Pina Bausch and maybe some moments that you recognise and you acknowledge that this is so Pina. But when you say, "This is so Pina", what's that actually? Or this is so Xavier La Roy, which might be "Oh, this is so conceptual or this is so European. And at the same time, no matter you are in Asia or in an European region that when you say this is so Asian, I don't know if this kind of moment has occurred you in your mind but when you think about "Oh, this choreography or this movement is so Asian", what actually does it mean? And so the proposition here is really mix and has the constant fluidity I will say. Fluidity is happening on the dancer's body but as well as in this spectatorship I will say. In your gaze, or in your imagination, or just you mentioned that that kind of yoga movement sort of like evoking your memory. And I think that's kind of idea when regard history, when we rethink about the past and that evokes your memory in different zones of your brain.

John: So there is certain degree of irony or just an authorial distanciation, right? For the "but" or "在".

River: But the idea of "but" is like a gesture, I will say. But a gesture is also like ironic. Why "but" or why it's not "and"?

John: So one other kind of point returning to the kind of the tripartite format. I wanted to know a little about what it was like to the negotiation between choreographer and dancer in this case, because there is a kind of implication nevertheless despite the irony that there's something very personal, right? And so can you say a little more about where Lin Ren-chung starts and stops and where Lin Wen-chung starts and stops in this piece because there's like .....

River: Actually the background is really about a story between Wen-chung and me. We met in 2008 when he just returned to Taiwan. And because like our names are like Lin Wen-chung and Lin Ren-chung, so many people are like, "Oh River, your brother is coming back to Taiwan from America." And then I was like, "What?" And I was twenty four, who is so young. (Laughter) That was 2008 and then that was the interesting point that we met each other introduced by dancers, and I was really not in the dance community in Taipei or Taiwan. And then I do performance art and he came to see my performance, and I came to see his dance. We got to know each other. We drink beer and blablabla. (John: And the rest is history) Ya, and then to a point that we wanted to work together. Because I'm kind of body worker, I really want to try if I can work with choreographers or dance makers and what's the difference and what can be an interesting progress that I can learn from. So we made a very conceptual work in 2013. And then I was like training my body. I took ballet dance. I took modern dance class of his company. I was like training to my body to be able to work with dancers. And then many years later when I thought about this project, to construct this project, I thought about him. So this is the personal connection that we share and we negotiate language between the genre of dance and performance art and so on. Another reason is about the personal history of Wen-chung's body that actually his mother Tsai Li-hua is kind of godmother, grandmother, grandma of Chinese folk in Taiwan. So he got this DNA in his family system. And then he wanted to be a dancer when he was young. And then he kind of went through all the academic training that you can imagine, like when a pre-dancer wanted to become a dancer, what kind of academic training that a dancer needs to do. So he went through all of this and then he left Taiwan and then having an experience of working with Bill T. Jones. There is a kind of systemised history of his body and then the reason he retired to Taiwan was because he wanted to build up or find out or look for his own body language and/or system. So base on this lexicon of Wen-chung's body that I found this is a kind of foundation or material that I can work with and work on for this project. So because the idea is not really showcasing like Martha Graham here, and maybe Lin Hwai-min, Cloud Gate there. It's more about we actually talk a lot of about the progress of becoming a dancer today and what of system has been embody a dancer. And I think that's the most situation that dancers in Asia will they wanted to become a contemporary dancer or modern dancer, like this kind of learning progress is for me is like embodiment and that's the progress we work on the structure and the different moments and the movements in these two timelines.

John: So it was in some ways also for you aware of understanding the training that you were undergoing as well. And then in addition to treating his body, the embodiment as a kind of embody museum of dance, right? The way that Boris Charmatz is kind of proposing.

River: And also a reflection or evidence that both physical or emotional memories of a certain dancer is really a container of memories, a container of dance, which is sort of the notion of treating body as museum. So it is like body has been collecting or displaying or constructing or expecting all this materials.

John: Interesting. I mean that kind of interesting also within the history of dance itself, right? To kind of do that kind of gestures because, or that kind of project that seems to me one of the ways of reading the history of dance in the 20th Century is thinking about each kind of progressive movements as trying to making the claim that it's about getting rid of the cultural and returning to the body and kind of letting us see the body by itself, right? So modern dance is all about kind of getting rid of the kind of the structure, the training of the body and letting it speaks for itself and then when I think one of the things that [Jackson?] was doing was kind of breaking away from dance completely and say no. No to

ballet but also no to, you know, even modern dance was saying let's look at everyday movements, right? What's happening here is in some ways it's kind of like saying, there's no such thing as the body without those kind of assumptions and references. It is all about in some way letting us see or kind of project us association.

River: In terms of this projection association, I will say probably this is not a dance piece. You see what I mean like ..... Yes, you see dance but we don't really say it's a dance piece because in terms of methodology or definition, I do think I did choreographic progress but the result or things here on stage. I think, I guess it's something else.

John: So the level, in other words, it is kind of your word intersex with your practice, is not so much about the transitioning into a dancer or choreographer but thinking about how to intersex with other aspects. I think maybe here can we talk a little about, where you think it does? Because I mean one of the ways it does is I think the way that the body is very present in your work, in your performances. So I think maybe some of us were able to get acquainted when you were here in ..... When was it? April? May? (River: May) May. And you perform personally as part of the M+ festival, right? And you did *Cleansing Service*. It is very and that was very personal. That was you performing. For the clothes, but there have been many performances of yours, where you have also been naked (River: How do you know? Hahaha) It's call the internet. So you know that kind of interest in not just kind of "the body" but also like the naked body is that you've been working with. So can you say a little about that?

River: Because I'm basically a porn star, that's why I'm always naked. (John: And one of the pieces is Turkish...) Turkish Porn. Sorry I was not joking. Haha, being artist is so poor, so I need to do something else. No. I do have a fascination of working on nudity or naked body. But the naked body or nudity is more like object or tool or material, so I would say is flesh, like 肉身. And so I guess in many different context of my previously different projects, nudity plays different roles but at this, the common point, crossing road of using nudity, for me is my tool to host a ritual or a ceremony or no matter is personal ritual or in one-on-one performance or treating flesh as a ritualistic tool to disturb something because I'm very interested in this kind of typology of "this is dance", "this is theatre", "this is visual art", "this is live art", "this is performance art", "this is contemporary art", "this is contemporary performance". And body is sort of, for me, a meeting point for all those genres. And then so, I say that because it's my personal research and progress and also I've been treating body in this way to construct situation (John: constructed situation. You can't escape it) by Tino Sehgal, hahaha. But it has different lines, for example, when I do one-on-one performance, I always operate by myself. Like for example when I do this piece, I have a dancer to perform, to inact. I don't do that by myself. I'm not a dancer. I don't have that skilful body. But normally the one-on-one performance, I always perform by my body, because it's about dealing with intimacy and dealing with encounter and is really individually personal and no body can replace. I'm not saying nobody can replace me. I mean my position as a performer or either if audiences are receiver. This position is like very unique. So I never pass this performance to someone else to perform for me and also delicate.

John: Then in other words is really not something that can be scripted or scored.

River: Ya. So it is quite sensational.

John: So maybe at this point we can open it up to....