

1000

MAPPING PERFORMING

MAIA MEANS

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An introduction.

During the last 3 months I have asked myself about performing and about intimacy. Now, the sentence I have boiled it down to is the following: *How do I become intimate with the action of performing?* The question asks for methods and it asks for stories and processes. These are the things that this paper will contain.

I start with three attempts of, or meditations on, opening up the question:

- a) *I* is an entity that is *becoming*, that is, changing, and it does not stand alone but rather *with* an *action*, that is, a doing, that is, *performing*, which is a verb, and also a thing to be *intimate* with, by the enactor of the *performing*, *me*, in this case, for whom *action* is something *with* which there could be a possibility to *become intimate*, and the question of this paper is, *how*.
- b) I perform. I do the action of performing. I meet the action of performing. It overwhelms me. The two of us don't meet that often. I want to get to know it. I want to move closer to it. I want it to be not only an *it*, but a *that*, a *that* which I can relate to, which I can become intimate with. It's hard to grasp performing, as it's not solid, but I want to make it solid, I want to somehow materialize it in order to create a friendship. How can a doing be a thing, how can a verb be my partner? Performing is complex and never the same, never solid. Working with it is not singular. Practicing performing gets split into methods and words and dances and stories which all feed back on performing as a *that*, or sometimes, as *this*. Performing is enacted and felt and known through these different entities and methods.
- c) How do I get to know, how do I become intimate? How do I make sense of an experience, a lived, spacial, sensorial sense? How do I map out the action of performing? Which method and practice can be a mapping out of performing? How can I make sense without fixating? How can I know enough to not know? How can I create maps of performing which, just like maps of landscapes, can help me to navigate from within the experience, without there ever being a question of whether the map and the experience are equal? Should performing remain this tricky bastard that always changes? What will let me step closer? Could making sense of something be taking one step back which makes room for two steps forwards (to make a both choreographic and cheesy metaphor)?

Intimacy.

The word intimacy has been a very used word in post-post-modern performances which I have both taken part of (ex. Sidney Leoni, *Undertone*), experienced (ex. Mette Ingvartsen, *69 positions*) and read about (mainly in the book collecting texts on intimate performances: *Intimacy Across Visceral and Digital Performance*, 2012). It's also a word I see in many program sheets about experimental dance performances. For me it's been a very used and useful word in opening up and digging into this project. It's a word with many connotations and meanings, it's a very full word. When dealing with intimacy as a performer I've sometimes been dragged into a specific aesthetic of the word which wasn't really relevant to the project. Still, I haven't come with a final definition of the word.

A method for dealing with intimacy has been:

With a pen and a paper available, ask the performer of the definition of a word. Move until a verbalized answer appear. Write it down. Repeat. An example could be:

[
empty
half
page
,
examples
follow
]

i n t i m a c y i s

very safe and very vulnerable

sensing

horny and scared

a movement

being totally lost and without control

in the most solid and direct

relation/situation/reality

shy/careful

a tricky word

allowing

much easier to enter when in a certain mood

not static, not automatic

small when it's scared and big when it's safe

knowledge and experience and emotional
connection, a mapping, a question, a figuring
out, a learning process and a pleasure

not simple

intensity?

a situation where something is at stake.

i don't know

sometimes painful and it doesn't lie

slow and rapidly changing

giving in to the whole situation

a dance

attention

letting something/one take you

wherever, however and therefore giving
up your identity

total surrendering

never constant

something you do

neither past, present or future

past, present and future

moving closer to (the material)

something which can happen in a place
or a situation which could be called a
home

knowing and not knowing

i don't know

failing

a state or idea or ideal or solid or fluid

a method

Performing.

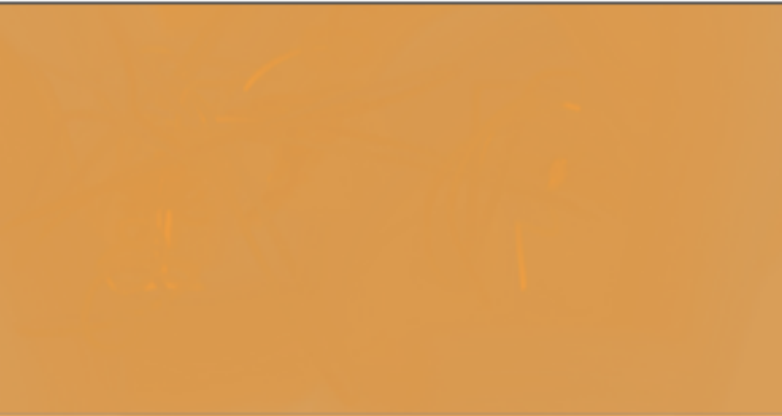
Performing is a verb, it's an action, an -ing form, something I do. Talking about performing instead of performance is a tool of activation, a tool presented to me through Anna Grip's insistence on the -ing form in all her dance classes. The shift of grammar allows for activation and for work.

Performing is big. From having performed a dance repeatedly the last months I have experienced it as clearly not the same dance as the dance I do in the studio. Being; and being on stage. I normally spend a lot of time in the studio somehow always dealing with the future or past or imagined reality of being on stage. There is a blurred but clearly existing difference between the two states that the two different places and spectator situations create. When I work in a studio I experience that there is an agreement that anyone who experiences my work carries their own responsibility for what they see and how they see it. When I am on stage I experience that there is an agreement that anyone who observes has been invited to observe and that I hold the responsibility for what they see and how they see it. Which could be a definition of "on stage".

The effects of performing continue outside the stage. Before and after the meeting with performing it can feel like certain death or like ecstasy or like both. This is a cheesy thing, but it's very much happening in me, still, and these sensations holds the potential, it seems, to be treated as material. That does not mean that it should be or is the most important thing for me or for the spectators. As an example, I am not claiming that performing is more important when I'm on stage than the sensation of my weight shifting from one leg to the other. Rather I'm claiming that performing is presenting itself to me in as inescapable a manner as my weight-shift is — and that performing is a surprising material as it, in opposition to weight shifting, only happens when the dance is done on stage, when it's performed.

A method for dealing with performing has been:

Do something. Acknowledge that what you do is performed. Ask yourself: Where does the performing happen? Imagine performing as a creature that you can see in the space, a creature which moves. See it. Ask it where it is and where it's going. Follow it as it moves. Describe the performing by a drawing or a text. An example could be:



[8 drawings

in different

shades of orange

imagining

30 seconds of

performing

when it penetrates

and holds: attentions

and meanings and bodies

and times]

Another method for dealing with performing has been:

Divide performing into logical parts. Write them down as 1), 2), 3), etc. Perform with this in mind.

An example could be:

PERFORMING IS :

- 1) The performer's perception, which is not known by the spectators.
- 2) The spectator's perception, which is not known by the performer.
- 3) The manifestation of the perceptions, which can be perceived by both parts.

Perception.

As a student I have been presented with many brilliant takes on dealing with the perception of the performer (ex. Chrysa Parkinson, 2016, and Manon Santkin, 2016), which have suggested perception as action and as material and as having many different possibilities and as being really fucking important in performance. In spite of this I often still somehow find myself stuck in the dusty old rock-heavy shitstorm of a bleeding body mind split.

Some of the ideas that tend to lead me *there* is the usually met division between

- the present performer and the absent performer
- the doing performer and the thinking performer
- the physical performer and the conceptual performer

Maybe I am still stuck there because I recognize myself as a person who finds comfort in what is usually seen as thinking and absent and conceptual occupations, especially when I'm tired or happy or in a need of comfort and ease. And maybe because I don't relate to the story I've heard (and keep on hearing often when I tell strangers what I do for a living) of the given joy of dancing and moving, of dance being the only path for me, of the talent from birth etc. This story and the feeling it sometimes brings forth in me, of being an intruder or a fake, could be one of the things which make the traditional splits and divisions a bit sore and easy for me to relate to. Especially in moments of fear or insecurity the great other possibilities and suggestions, as Parkinson's and Santkin's, of the performer's perception somehow seem to not stick around.

I have felt a personal drive towards mashing all my understandings and beliefs of different ways of being (in the world, in the studio, but mostly on stage) and making new ones. I want to really deal with perception as material. I want to touch it, observe it, recognize it, have internal jokes with it and maybe, at one point, engage in intercourse with it.

A method for dealing with mapping perception has been:

Divide perception into fictional layers. Define each layer. Make them exist next to each other or on top of each other or simultaneously or after each other or a few at a time or only one for a while. Notice what it is that makes the perception shift from being mostly active in one layer to being active in another. Pretend to be meditating and take a step back from control and will-power. Let the changing in-between layers happen by itself. Put yourself in different contexts and see how the movement through the layers changes with the contexts. Perform. Observe. An example of this could be:

5 layers of perception:

1: Sensing

Taste&smell&touch&vision&hearing, these old fuckers who can make my body thicker and could be the base or could be a sidekick and is for sure the air on my skin and a pulsating clitoris and a sudden sound and then the weight.

2: Spatiality

The room and me, forms and knowing without words where and what. The given knowledge that everything is material, forms before emotions, like the floor being my body and the air being my skin and the me as a shape in the room which moves.

3: Affect

Meaning, the moment before it's verbalized, like feelings&details&fear&nostalgia&colors before the story. Being moved through how I've been moved before. That feeling; it's like this and not that; it has that..ness. Caring, because it matters, even though (or because) it has no name.

4: Language

Verbal&logical&named stories. Voices&narratives&dialogues&meanings&reasonings &travels&concepts. The most comfortable resting place of *thinking*. Quick as hell and fluxating — making sense, mapping out, being confused. Easy to get stuck in.

5: Imagination

Fantasies and narcissism. Seeing the world from eyes which are not mine or looking at myself with their eyes or seeing a world no one else can see. Vivid memories and fairytales and future horror scenarios.

Writing the movement of writing the movement:

4th1st3rd1st4th2nd1st4th1st3rd1st3rd5th3rd4th1st1st1st3rd4th3rd5th1st3rd1st1st3rd5th4th
1st3rd1st3rd5th1st3rd2nd4th1st3rd4th4th1st1st3rd4th3rd4th3rd2nd5th1st4th1st2nd1st3rd

(maybe the thing is that they all happen all of the time but its different how I engage in each and each thing manifests in different ways and therefore creates another reality and other perceptions)

Braille.

Braille is a written language that is read through touch. I have read a bit through touch, I have started learning braille during the last few months. It can, at its best, be a meditation on the meeting between all the 5 layers described above, between every kind of perception. It can also be a facekick of returning to being a 5 year old who is struggling for several minutes in order to be able to read one simple sentence. It can be something very specific to achieve and get better at. It can also be a reason for finding dance-making very easy and pleasurable.

After having read in a library some times I was lucky enough to get the opportunity to print out a text of my own choice in braille writing. The only thing I printed which was written by myself was a part of a desperate diary entry from last year. It read: “I am so angry. But at least I drew purple dots on the freckles on my thumb and when I drew a line in between the dots it became a cat under a star sky.” The other texts were paragraphs from Gertrude Stein, Chris Kraus, Simone de Beauvoir and Anais Nin, which, looking back at my choice, could point to a big need of explicitly ridiculing my serious intentions and my tendency of megalomania.

Braille is a way for me to practice the multiplicity of perception in another way than dance.

A method for dealing with reading braille has been:

Go to the children's department of the main library of Stockholm which is the place where you can find a book for visually challenged children and open it up to see that there are small dots on the pieces of plastic paper which have small dots which stick out and which ask you to close your eyes so you close your eyes and you put your whole hand on the page where you find the first line and you feel the dots on the skin of the tip of your fingers which are fingers which after touching the dots for a while get a bit sore as if their nerves were multiplied by the sudden attention that would otherwise go to the eyes and also it could feel as if the skin then got thinner in order to more easily be capable of sucking up the sensation of the pages and the meanings of the dots that is the dots forming the letters forming the words forming the sentences forming the story forming your reality in that very moment when your eyes might start twitching in frustration of wanting to be open but you keep them shut and you tense your whole face and neck and shoulders while your hands are in focus where they struggle to be calm and to listen to the dots that is the dots that seem to be moving but are of course not.

(the next page is three pictures in three different scales of lightness of the last of the braille pages I got printed — it's not on the same plastic page as in the library but rather on normal paper, which feels very different and nicer, but has the risk of the dots falling off, which can happen if I read the same word too many times without being very gentle)

[illegible]

100

[illegible]

1000

The dance.

I made a dance. I was alone on a big stage for 5 days within the setting of a residency. after some panic about the seeming non-production of a practice- and writing-based project, I figured that a product would be useful; a thing to do; a dance.

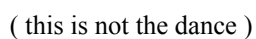
The residency took place in my home town, Århus, so I was staying with my mom and my little sister. On the last day of the residency, on Friday November 25th, the dance was performed to a very complex group of spectators. From left to right, sitting on the front row of a 6 row stair of more that 100 empty seats, was: An Århus-based dancer; a house dramaturge; an old friend's mother; my grandfather; my 6-year old little sister; my grandmother; my mother; and my ex. I gave them coffee and danish christmas cakes which I had bought before the showing in order to occupy myself with something other than the nervousness I felt. I was afraid that the nervousness would be in the way of dealing with performing, but on the other hand I knew that it was simply a very present part of the material of performing. This knowledge made me feel slightly on top of things.

The dance had a long title, which I will translate from danish to english and from notebook to computer as the following:

	What I look at when I don't look back		
or:	left		right
	left		right
	left		right
or:	my left, your right		
or:	in-between construction work and family relations		
or:	in front of one-hundred-and-six seats		
or:	forms to perform		
or:	black square no.666	or: black square no.3	or: untitled
or:	getting to know performing pt. 7.		

A method for dealing with mapping the dance has been:

Work on the creation and execution of a dance. Write down every word that seems of importance to the dance, each word on a small piece of paper. Spread the words out in a blob on the studio floor. At the end of each day of working with the dance, pick out the words that has been of most importance to you. Place them in relation to each other. When the dance is done, transfer all of the maps into a computer program called VUE. Put the maps next to each other and look at them. Notice that all the words are material. Notice that this is not the dance. An example could be:



Another method for dealing with mapping the dance has been:

Figure out what your work is. Find movements which allow you or force you to work with the work. Set the movements into a form. First repeat them alone, then repeat them in a performance situation. Repeat this many times. After each repetition, draw or write a memory of your perception of the manifestation. Some examples could be:



A solo.

After she saw a showing of my work in progress at one of our group-supervisions, Chrysa Parkinson mentioned that she thought of the choreographer, Deborah Hay's, famous comment; Turn your fucking head.

3 months later, in the studio and on the stage, exactly that seems to be exactly what I'm doing, still.

I don't know why Hay is keen on it, but for me, turning my head is a movement which constantly changes what I perceive. It has the possibility of making sense in multiple but at the same time given ways. It creates shifting meanings in my body and in the space.

Both methods and examples seem unnecessary in this chapter, as I will present a dance Friday 13th of January that could work as both. Instead, there will be some images made by my friend and colleague Ellen Söderhult: collages of me, turning my fucking head.





Also, I find these images relevant exactly because they are 1) narcissistic, 2) drawing on pop-culture and 3) have trashy aesthetics: elements that fit perfectly well with the questionably solid morals (and great pleasure) of doing a solo performance (though the aesthetics are swopped; no leather capes and late 90's sci-fi references on-stage, unfortunately).

The dancer

The dancer is huge. She contains everything which is labour in her life. In this project the dancer has had many roles and she has been split into these roles: They have been functioning and working parallelly as an alternative to the dancer working as one entity.

The making of characters can be helpful in moments of over-work or multiplicity or solitude or boredom or frustration or crisis or production. Characters hold the potential of making it less about you and more about everything else. Characters make it easier to accept and work with the material which seems to come from *me*, to make it objective somehow.

The performer of this whole paper is one part of the dancer, the one that I have focused on. The writer is also very active and the choreographer highly necessary. The dancer is the zoom-out.

A method for dealing with the characters of the dancer has been

Observe yourself in different contexts. Notice which roles you take. Give them names. Work alone. Identify different needs and emotions and tendencies in your work. String them up to the different names roles which you normally take. Make characters out of the roles that are the most present in your work. Write down conversations between the roles. An example could be:

[

empty

half

page

,

examples

follow

]

A Conversation: Making the dance (with an appearing practice)

Performer: The practice reminds me of packing, slothing, [other practices she has met though practitioners Oda Brekke and Mira Mutka], bodily intelligence, etc. It seems to have many layers of possible movements and engagements. It lies in-between listening and talking, being passive and taking decisions. Leading and following. Like a group piece, just with the functions of one body instead of many bodies with one function. Or? It likes being on the floor, as it won't have to compromise so much of its directions. It functions best with sensation of skin everywhere all the time. It might have to do with potentiality. It stops functioning under trains of verbal thought but is as much fed by affect and memory as from stimulation of the five senses. It wants all possibilities open. It is, at its best, constantly surprising itself. It is different in a standing body, it becomes less concrete maybe: more gestures and less weight etc.

Writer: We are now coming back to movement as our main informer. It's telling us what is important and reminding us why I can't tell (as I'm not the performer).

Performer: Yes there is so much information but I don't really remember it now. But I will know it when I do it. And it has to do with everything we've written, nothing new, but rather affirmations, confirmations, extra layers.

Choreographer: OK then do the practice again but with a phone in your hand, record so we can deal with the practice's words.

Writer: Rather, what the practice makes us say.

—practicing the practice—

Choreographer: We can transcribe it later.

Performer: It seems a bit endless now, but I know it's precise.

Choreographer: It's just that you feel like you failed.

Performer: Yes, maybe that's it. I see the two of us as mother and daughter now, maybe Gilmore Girls-ish.

Choreographer: How should we continue the work the next 35 minutes?

Performer: I want to go through the score for when Mads comes. [her ex will come to watch a showing]

—doing the score—

Performer: FUCK I've been working so well and now I'm puking and shitting myself, just the thought of doing it in-front of him is making me want to hide, so scared.

Choreographer: Maybe do a very short safety-run?

Performer: Mmmh OK.

Another method for dealing with both mapping the dancer and mapping the perception has been:

Chose one character or layer. Do a movement practice. Let the character or layer speak. Record. Transcribe. Some examples could be:

t h e p e r f o r m e r s p e a k i n g (fracture)
and the ripples from my spine, a slight one, this one comes from collapsing knees, and to take a step i need to change something, i have to take it a bit back on the left before going front, i'm thinking about eh, i was thinking about a man, i was thinking about the male main character of daredevil, it becomes a bit of a throw, and a pull back, bouncy legs, bouncy knees makes me, more stable, the ripple of the spine is easier, when i look at, the wall behind me, the arm, starts being a part of it, thrown back and then, bouncing on the back and the front of my hips, i can check the way all of the bounce of it, and simply do the form, which is a, weird task, it's not really possible, and my feet were dragging, back and forth with the toes, i can also just shift my weight with a bit of a, wide position, back and forth, just like a boxer almost, then the head is much more stable, from there, it's like, the feet, start, being more, center, the weight go, goes more down, and slowly, the spine gets a bit more loose, the head gets, after, so it comes from pulling the head, to, pushing it back again from side to side, my body becomes compact in the front, and, its hard to make a fluid transition between - - - - i wanna just do it the double tempo, it's like i have to hold it up a bit more, to change it, now its like three parts of the hips and the head and the shoulders, before i go in again, this is where i start seeing people always, standing in the periphery of the space, and i close my eyes, and i stop it.

t h e 4 t h s p e a k i n g (translated)
i miss jack. for how long can you continue with one thing. study time for zoning out. the embarrassing sensation of having done something wrong. music for the pleasure of the sound. excited, tensed. held head too. phone in my hand. getting to know myself when i'm bored. not production. production is something else. actually having this time. the thing of rolling on my back, what about the legs? my hip always goes upwards. over time i realize that i have a very strong preconception of what i'm doing and how it should be done. and i realize. that it's not true. pleasure. a feeling not of what what i do looks like but what it actually is or continuing in that. if this is not for an audience. the thing of being able to look back at, at my time ehm on, in school, my time in the studies and to think, god, that was fun. all the muscles i might just not have found yet. music as a welfare state not a dictatorship. when i've said something i can let it go. dance as art etc but what about everything, what about, what about teaching etc etc etc. a playlist called "and then the other one". "and then another one". floating walk. anna's legs for a continuously floating gaze. "new york i love you but you're bringing me down", done.

Frustration

Frustration is a close friend to performing. A method for dealing with frustration has been:

Feel your frustration. Sit down. Let your body be tensed. Let your breathing be fast. Let it out on whoever is near. Let it go out on a pages-document: Write a manifesto. An example of this could be:

performance manifesto:

PERFORM!
 PERFORM IT ALL!
 FORFORM PFPF
 DO IT JUST DO IT, WHAT ELSE
 PERFORM THY THRUE THELF
 EXPRESS THY PHERPHORMANTH OF THAT THEN
 PERFORM THE TRUE EXPRESSION
 T T (TEA TEA)
 DUBBLE IT UP AND SERVE IT
 IT IS SERVED FOR ALLALALALA
 (PERFORM THE SITUATION PERFORM THE LOOKS PERFORM THE RELATION
 PERFORM THE HISTORY PERFORM THE FUTURE AUTOBIOGRAPHY PERFORM THE ESSENCE
 PERFORM THE OTHER PERFORM THE BODY PERFORM THE LOVE PERFORM NATURE
 PERFORM THE LOVE PERFORM THE FORM PERFORM THE THEORY PERFORM THE PAPER
 AND THE TEXT)
 (OR: SAY YES)
 (OR: SAY OK)
 PERFORM THE SONG
 PERFORM THE ACCEPTANCE THAT ALL IS EXPRESSED
 ALL ALL
 ALL THE ALL IS ALREADY EXPRESSED
 (WHICH LEAVES YOU)
 WHICH LEAVES YOU WITH THEM AS ONE AS ALL
 AS YOU ARE ONE OF THEM THEIR THEM DOING THEM
 PERFORM THAT I AM YOU
 PERFORM THE HEARTFELT KINDNESS
 CAUSE ITS TRUE
 PERFORM THE MASK CAUSE —II—
 PREFER THE FORMER
 PREFER THE REAL
 WHAT ELSE WHAT ELSE
 WHAT ELSE THAN TRUTH-UTH-UTH-UTH-UTH-UTH-UTH
 WHEN YOU'RE DONE PERFORMING PERFORM DONE
 WHEN YOU'RE DONE BE DONE
 AND PERFORM THE FORM OF DONE
 DON'T BE A DRAG
 PERFORM IT
 ALLALLALLALLALLALLALLALLALLALLALLA
 IT'S DONE IT'S DONE

(Body) materials.

- I. I assume that every action I do, thought i think, perception i perceive, sensation I sense, truth I feel, experience I experience and imagination I imagine is in the domain of the body.
- II. My brain and everything it produces is no more or less body than ex. my femur; pain in my knees; empathy; movement.
- III. I can't be "anywhere else" than where my body is. (When I think about my home when I am in the studio, I am not more or less present, I am simply bringing an idea about my home into the studio.)
- IV. Thinking is doing.
- V. My body is faster than only its cognition, but my cognition is, anyways, my body.

A method for dealing with materials has been:

Find a class at <http://openatm.org> that seems relevant. Listen to the instructions of the person talking. Do really small movements with the part of the body that the person is talking about. Do really small movements with your listening. Do really small movements with your memory. Do really small movements with your feelings. Trust in what Karen Barad has told us about discourse and material (they are connected by a hyphen). An example of this is tricky but it could be:

