SUMMONING IMAGERY IS ONE THING, BUT CREATING A LANGUAGE OF DANCE IS AN ENTIRELY DIFFERENT ONE. O'CONNOR IS PROFICIENT OF BOTH. -Michaela Preiner/European Cultural News

# a waiting dog Michael O'Connor

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# Michael O'Connor

seamlessly blends practice and theory in his choreography and teaching. With an MA from Das Choreography in Amsterdam (formerly AMCH) and a BFA from the University of Utah, Michael has opened doors at the university level for artistic research and experimental choreography.,

His solo premiere work a waiting dog dies earned him Vienna's 'dancer to watch' in Ballet Tanz Magazine 2008 yearbook edition. Michael's other choreographic works, You are the Subject of my Seeing, A General Theory of Love, TERTIARY, Moving Around X, and Moving Around X:the x of y, have been presented at TanzQuarteir Wien (TQW), ImpulsTanz, WUK, BRUT, Burgenland Tanztage, DansMakers, as well as off- spaces. In 2014 his piece TERTIARY was nominated for the Prix d'Jardin in the 8:Tension series at the ImpulsTanz Festival. His drag persona Jai Jai Sincere also performed an adaptation of DeborahHay's NEWS at Impulstanz in 2011.

Since 2009 Michael is the Vienna branch facilitator for the Field organization which teaches artists how to give feedback. He has received a variety of residency scholarships from institutions like ImpulsTanz, TQW, OMI in New York and The Place in London as a Carte Blanche participant of the ModulDance program. Michael was a long time company member with Cie. Willi Dorner from 2003-2010 performing in a variety of stage works and setting the renowned piece Bodies in Urban Spaces in over 30 cities.



In 2011 Michael also premiered his work at TQW .Michael has taught creative practice and contemporary technique as guest faculty at SNDO and the new MA program COMMA in The Netherlands, twice at Arizona State University, SEAD, Danish School of Performing Arts, and University of Music and Performing Arts Frankfurt, He has also taught at San Diego State University, Henny Jurriens Foundation, Marameo and DOCK 11in Berlin. DanceUmbrella in London, Philly Live Arts and Tanz in August among others. In 2012, Michael taught with neuroscientist Corinne Jola the workshop Technologies of Love at ImPulsTanz.

He has presented his research on the intersection of neuroscience and dance in festivals in Germany, Coventry, UK, Spring Dance Utrecht and the Mind and Brain School of Berlin. Michael has also worked with David Zambrano, Deborah Hay, Georg Blaschke, Alain Buffard, Paul Wenninger, Barbara Kraus, Theatrecombinat, and Karol Tyminski. Currently he is he initiating creative research on disability and quantum physics.

#### CONCEPTS

# HORIZONTAL GRAVITY post/contact improvising

Our visual field allows us to simulate touch beyond the borders of our skin. By means of extra-personal space, we are actually larger than our physical frame. Vision allows us to touch with our eyes. This visual-tactility is not passive, but relational and engages the body with surrounding other bodies.

Horizontal Gravity is about the simultaneous approach and withdrawal of two bodies. A pulling toward and a pulling away. It is not limiting. It notices a relationship between two objects and those objects are unique and even temporary, perhaps transient. The forces are intertwined and created with the other, yet also independent and possibly even measured or understood in different values.

#### HORIZONTAL GRAVITY IS ABOUT THE SIMULTANEOUS APPROACH AND WITHDRAWAL OF TWO BODIES.

A PULLING TOWARD AND A PULLING AWAY.



Horizontal Gravity is about colliding micro organizations and harmonizing affective affordances. The practice is to expand the space between control and being controlled. A calling out of the body with movement.

The workshop explores incorporating the visual field into our movement impetus, while divorcing touch from only function. Pulling from quantum physics, phenomenology and psychology, post/contact improvising practices seek a foundation of ambiguity – a certainty of many possibilities, – where the dance can encounter touch with or without skin. More info on workshop

### BODIES NOT AGAINST EACH OTHER





**against:** 'in disagreement with' and 'in physical contact with.'

Historically people of color, woman, gay people, people with disabilities and immigrants have had their bodies de-valued. Between a (mythical) center-periphery schematic, of those in power against those marginalized to the edges, exists the in-between space where our identities and abilities intra-act and define each other. It is these types of intra-actions that define and label identities. Undervalued bodies usually are not represented in aesthetic norms. By questioning how certain aesthetics could change if we give more space for undervalued bodies., traditional aesthetics like symmetry, flow and ease can be challenged. Our bodies become entangled, weight sharing is sporadic and we break momentum to stop trajectories.

IF WE COULD ASSUME WE ARE APPARATUSES OF EACH OTHER, HOW CAN COMMUNICATION BE ESTABLISHED ACROSS PHYSICAL AND PERSONAL DIFFERENCES?

*Bodies not against each other* has had research residencies in

OMI New York 2016

Theatrehaus Berlin 2017

DansMakers Amsterdam 2017

Ufer Studios Month of Research Berlin 2017

#### TEACHING Workshops

#### METAPHOR & MEANING Embodying metaphor as a playground



More info

How to materialize what is intangible? Sound, space and time can metaphorically be transferred to movement, objects and dynamics. Making a metaphorical playground of usually intangible concepts. allows us to understand a deeper meaning in form and have a greater sense of relationship when working with the object and qualities. We also look at the felt sense of the meaning of a word, using our own embodied experience to consciously represent words as actions or movements. By the end, the workshop attempts to reveal how we may have similarities in motivation, but differences in our expression.

TECHNOLOGIES OF LOVE The neuroscience of love as a template for movement



More info

Our creativity comes in how we try to solve unrealized concepts.. Love is a game. Love is a journey. Love is work. This is not about sex or therapy. Its about cooperation, collaboration and connection. Oxytocin, metaphor and neurons. Sensory awareness and poetry. We have the potential to be our own private neuroscience by examining ourselves in relation to another through attention towards areas involving: Exchange, Negotiation, Resonance, Synchronicity, Awareness, Modulation and Attunement. Love is a laboratory.

#### FIELD WORK Giving feedback that is helpful for the artist



Do you find when you routinely speak about all the elements you did not like? Have you found yourself feeling defensive when receiving feedback from someone? Fieldwork is a method that provides the participants with tools to speak clearly about their opinion and in a way that is helpful for the artist to proceed working.

More info

CREATIVE PRACTICE: BOTTOM UP body knowledge guides the explorations



More info

In this workshop, improvisation functions as a tool to expand and practice our potential for creativity and communication. We learn to listen and respond with our bodies as our ears. The goal is to bring our trained dance bodies together while not forgetting all of the cultural and social information our daily bodies carry. We maintain responsibility for ourselves and those around us, giving as much space and time to stillness as the movement so we can stay tuned for the possibility of anything to happen.

Stealing concepts from social anthropology, we use three concepts as starting points:

Participant Observation, Generalized Reciprocity, and Creative Participation

# CONTEMPORARY TECHNIQUE expansiveness of the intimate



More info

The class is based on the premise of using your inner core and your outer kinesphere to maintain balance and coordination so we can blur the lines between verticality and horizontality. The class utilities floor work, release technique and head-tail connections to create delicate and strenuous phrases that challenge each dancer. A mindset that allows us to risk and enjoy the temporality of movement, becomes functional when held together by awareness and technique; which keeps the dancers' minds open and free to make choices.

## KNOWING WITHOUT A NARRATIVE generating meaning without words



More info

This workshop aims to give participants practice in reading the space and others as data and understanding the different bodily responses available. By engaging in practices that sharpen the dancers eye, allowing them to read their partner and space around them, we find ways to generate meaning and explore reasons for movement. This work blurs the edges between vision and listening, so that we can listen with our eyes and understand space with our ears. . We don't break old habits; we instead awaken our perception to many new possibilities and engage ourselves with impossible tasks that there becomes no space or time to fall back on old habits. The biological and psychological information carried in the body is witnessed and explored in order to quiet the mind and sense the body knowing without a narrative.

#### Moving Around X: the x of y











photos Nellie de Boer &

Niels Weijer

What is the quality of your thought? What is the rope-ness of a rope?

Moving Around X and Moving Around X: the x of y, are performance events focusing on the psycho-geography of our poetic understandings. The space becomes a virtual metaphorical landscape and its possible to see our language in action. Thoughts run slowly between my legs. Time parts my lips and presses on my tongue. Language is a movement of text and texture. X Is not the unknown. Instead it is a known subject matter that is constantly shifting and changing, presenting itself in different forms, depending on the different bodies engaging with it.

#### Video Link

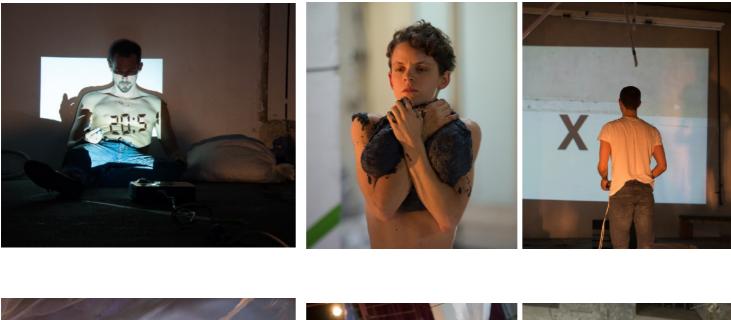
SUMMONING IMAGERY IS ONE THING, BUT CREATING A LANGUAGE OF DANCE IS AN ENTIRELY DIFFERENT ONE. O'CONNOR IS PROFICIENT OF BOTH. -Michaela Preiner/2014 THE TWO BODIES "ENTER INTO COMPOSITION WITH THE OTHER" DESTROYING CLEAR BOUNDARIES OF WHERE ONE SUBJECTIVITY BEGINS AND THE OTHER ENDS. TO ATTEMPT TO CLEARLY DEFINE THE INTERTWINED PRESENCE OF THE TWO PERFORMERS, OR TO DEMARCATE THEIR BODIES FROM THE MATERIALS THEY PULL UP OR DOWN, IS TO MISS THE SUBTLE INEFFABLE INTERSPACE THAT IS GENERATED IN THE BACK AND FORTH OF THE MOVEMENT, SOUND AND IMAGE.

**KG GUTTMAN** 

#### CHOREOGRAPHY

#### Moving Around X

Video link





photos Georg Scheu

"With Moving Around X, O'Connor more than accomplishes everything one could hope for in a contemporary dance piece. It is a work driven by its own contradictions, one that constantly creates poetic imagery and that confronts the spectator with associations that cannot be shared with anyone." -Michaela Preiner/ European Cultural News

> Moving Around X is about metaphor, the deformation thereof, and the creation of new ones..... And the audience may view and marvel. And realize in surprise that time has indeed stopped. The hour was

> > much too short." - Dita Rudle/ Tanz.net

"Moving Around X creates an experience that makes tangible how fragile is the relationship between reality and perception. And that the margins created by this fragility allow actions which fracture norms and thus prevent the hardening of social fabric." -Helmut Ploebst/ der Standard.

#### TERTIARY [8:tension] Young Choreographers Nominated for the prestigious Prix Jardin d'Europe



photos Georg Scheu

As far as human behavior, perception is often a deceptive matter. Especially when empathy comes into conflict with imaginings. This tension is performed by three very different but equally charismatic personalities, with great sensitivity and almost an equally strong sense of irony. " – Helmut Ploebst/ der Standard

"The underlying structure of TERTIARY results from the given space, the space between the dancers, their contact with each other, a watermelon and the musical score."

- Ulli Moschen/Falter

"More heated than affectionate, more aggressive than erotic, passionate in any case, [...] tangling and intertwining of three bodies into one."

#### Video Link

TERTIARY EXAMINES HOW THE BUILDING BLOCKS OF EMPATHY BECOME A VISUAL-TACTILE TOOL CONNECTING THE PERFORMERS TO EACH IN OTHER IN THE SAME WAY THEY CONNECT TO THE AUDIENCE.

> IN NEUROSCIENTIFIC THEORIES, THE BORDERS BETWEEN WHERE ONE PERSON STOPS AND ANOTHER BEGINS ARE BLURRED.

- Ditta Rudle/ Tanz.at

#### A GENERAL THEORY OF LOVE





Video Link

photos David Payr

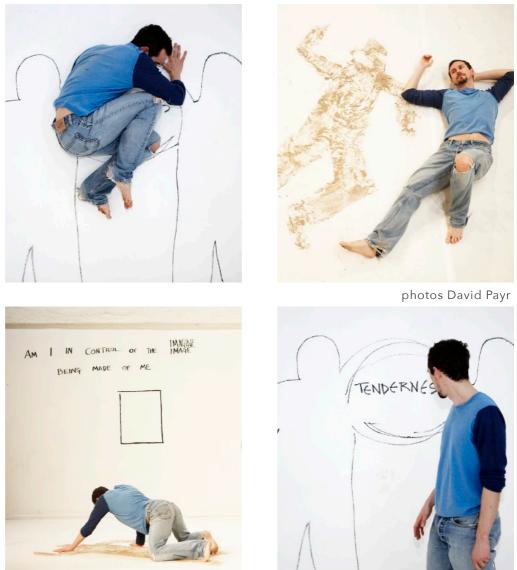
What started out slowly, is now obvious. Gestural pain and collapses make it clear that the relationship has come to an end. A few moments later, in the most beautiful and touching phase of the evening, again raised to be on a positive level. Those who previously did not know - for the initial question should have been answered. These are the same rules, mechanisms and conventions to same-sex and heterosexual relationships... - Michaela Preiner/ European Cultural News

BASED ON THE LATEST DISCOVERIES IN NEUROSCIENCE, THEY AIM TO CULTIVATE LOVE BY CREATING AN ENVIRONMENT WHERE THEIR BODY SYSTEMS CAN SYNCHRONIZE.

Where as the topic of nature stimulates political performance, the topic of love in Michael O'Connor's piece is treated rather privately. This is why A General Theory of Love, with Inertia de Witt singing so touchingly, and O'Connor and Gonzalez dancing so tenderly, seems to be more of a pragmatic answer to the crisis of romantic love. Interlaced with quotations from an interview with US physics nobel laureate Richard Feynman, the sensitive poetry of the piece turns into a statement that could again be paraphrasing the title of Hessel's book: "Touch each other!" - Helmut Ploebst Der Standard .

#### CHOREOGRAPHY

#### YOU ARE THE SUBJECT OF MY SEEING



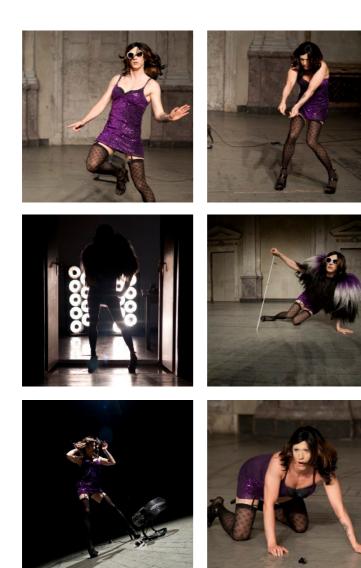
Body and mind hold memory of the future. Living in desire and lamenting in the past. We exist in relation to events that have already happened and will eventually happen. Harboring tension by teetering on memories and anticipations, we are actually thrown into the present moment which my body and mind can't actually comprehend. Focusing on elements such as pain, muscular endurance, speed, breath or strength, American performer and choreographer Michael O'Connor wants to explore the simple limit of the body, the amount of space that we can occupy and the limit of space that we are put into while on stage. In his new solo, the audience witnesses a state that actually slips from our grasp as soon as we realize it.

"THE CHOREOGRAPHER GLIDES THROUGH THE "EGO TUNNEL", AS THE GERMAN PHILOSOPHER THOMAS METZINGER FROM A NEUROSCIENTIFIC PERSPECTIVE PERCEIVES THE CONSTRUCTION OF THE SELF AND THE INNER BODY IMAGE HELMUT PLOEBST/ DER STANDARD

Video link

#### CHOREOGRAPHY

#### NEWS deborah hay adaptation



News is something that interests us when it is shocking, moves us when it is compelling and informs us when it is out of reach. However, more often than not, news is forgotten.

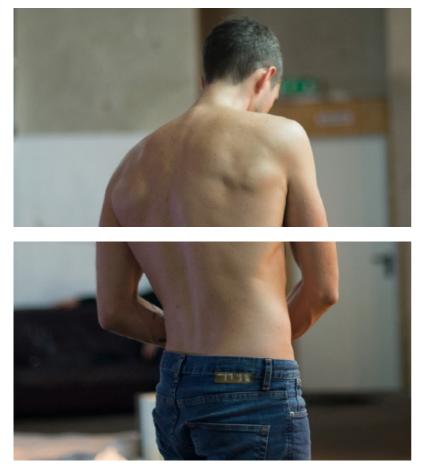
Caught between personal agenda and political activism, Jai Jai Sincere becomes the site of the experiment where personal and political combine. However, exposing perspective is as much as she can do within the balance of art, form and agenda. The political aspect also lies within the audience and their willingness to broaden their viewpoint. Deborah Hay, a member of the New York Judson Dance Theater in the 1960s, created NEWS in 2006 for Michael O'Connor, who after the three month commitment of practicing the solo, passed the work on to Jai Jai Sincere five years later and started the practice again. Accordingly, NEWS is a hymn to queerness, in which the artistic identities of Deborah Hay, Michael O'Connor and Jai Jai Sincere intermingle.

Video Link

(O'Connor) is able to stimulate the performance as Jai Jai Sincere's reflection on gender conventions and expectations, not only in general but especially in the local field, respectively, European contemporary dance and choreography It is hoped that the increased volume of queer choreography in this field of gender binary norms and conventions will cause the dominant question to be asked and subverted. Dancers have an unbeatable weapon - the body.

May many Jai Jai Sinceres on the stages of this country come and offer their bodies in motion as "a site of critical reinvention" to the eyes of the spectators. -Astrid Peterle // Corpus - Internet Magazine for Dance Choreography Performance.

#### ARTISTIC STATEMENT



"His gift was to search in the outer world what nature had laid in his inner world," wrote Goethe about art historian Johann Winckelmann. Choreography interests me as a medium that allows me to use the body as a way of blurring what could be considered the inner and the outer world. I consider the moving body as thought and value it for that.

I have called myself an artistic neuroscientist. I derive practice from cognitive science studies, where performers on stage create poetic experiments. Anthropology, psychology and neuroscience help me get a better understanding of why I do what I do. 'Why do we exist?' or 'Does this mean the same thing to you?' are ongoing questions that generate material for me. There is an impossibility in knowing one another, as our body language has been crafted from our own personal experiences. I dance in order to understand life—to understand the other. In this



way I don't distinguish between choreographing and dancing.

Recent interests could classify me as a love archaeologist. I am curious to look into evolutionary and personal pasts of my body through immaterial things. Metaphor is a way of thinking. It is not representational. This makes a surrealistic seasoning at times that can be humorous or tragic in my work. I understand things by their qualities.

My works are usually delicately held together. The potential for them to fall apart is on purpose. Its part of how I match the outer world, to feel like the transient inner world. Endings are often inconclusive. Ambiguity for me is about an unfinished-ness. This allows for multiple interpretations. I prefer simplicity in style, but layering and complexity in content. I believe there is a fragility that exists between ideas that must be negotiated, so as to provoke meaning for the audience without being explicit.

#### RESEARCH

**Publication** 

METAPHORICAL OBJECTS

Danswetenschap in Nederland edition 9

Conferences

**Detroit Dance City Festival** Movers and Shakers Symposium 2017 Presented MA research

**PRODUKTIVE ÄQUIVALENZ** Metaphor Symposium. Mind and Brain School Berlin. 2017 Presented: Metaphorical objects. Making sense of Contemporary dance

**Making sense of Contemporary dance.** SpringDance, Utrecht NL,.. 2017 Presented: Metaphorical objects

**Research and Applying Metaphor** RaAM, Berlin, DE 2016 Invited guest

International Convention of Psychological Sciences, (ICPS) Amsterdam, NL 2015 Attended

**PRACTICE AS PERFORMANCE**.Symposium Coventry, UK 2014 Presented: Love is an Action paper.

**Festival Art as Research** Ottersberg, DE 2012 Presented: Love is an Action paper.

Residencies

OMI Dance 2016 TanzQuartier Wien 2015. Impulstanz 8tension 2014 TanzQuartier Wien 2013 Raum33 Wien 2013 Theatrecombinat LM 2012 Festival of Art as Research 2012 TanzQuartier Wien Empathic Encounters. Intersection of Art and Science 2012 Arizona State University Dept of Dance 2012 Carte Blanche; The Place London. Modul Dance 2011 ImPulsTanz Turbo Residency with mentors Ivo Dimchev and Keith Hennessy. 2011 TURBO Residency at BRUT in Vienna 2007 PAIN Residency for Research in Brussels 2007



LINK

RESUME



Choreographer Teacher Performer

#### **ABOUT ME**

Born in USA, living between Vienna, Berlin & Amsterdam since 2007. Works on the interaction between cognitive science and dance. Since 2002 has pushed the boundaries of creative research in academia and considers art as a way of documenting human cognition. He's also dubbed his voice for films and occasionally performs in drag to spice things up.

#### CONTACTS

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**INTERESTS** 

**Applied Cognitive Science** Creative Practice **Conceptual Metaphor Theory Quantum Physics** Post/Contact Improvisation Bottom-Up processes **Disability Aesthetics** Anthropological Approaches **Dynamic Systems** 

#### EDUCATION AHK Theatre School 2013-15 Amsterdam Masters of Choreography University of Utah 2000-05. **BFA Modern Dance CHOREOGRAPHY**



selected works

Text/ural. Mora Palazzo, Venice Biennale. (film)	2017
Thought as a Rope. Mind and Brain School. Berlin	
Lines of Thought. Detroit Dance Film Festival. (film)	
Untitled Thoughts. OMI Dance. New York	2016
Moving Around X: the x of y. DansMakers. Amsterdam.	2015
TERTIARY. 8tension. Impulstanz. Vienna.	2014
Moving Around X. Moë. Vienna	
A General Theory of Love. Wuk. Vienna	2012
NEWS. Impulstanz. Vienna	2011
You are the Subject of my Seeing. Tanzquartier Vienna.	
A waiting dog dies. BRUT. Imagetanz. Vienna	2008
(Young dancer to watch, Ballet Tanz Magazine)	

#### **TEACHING**

2008-2018

#### **GUEST FACULTY**

Fontys, Tilburg COMMA, MA program. Rotterdam Danish School of Performing Arts SNDO, Amsterdam

Arizona State University San Diego State University HfMDK, Frankfurt SEAD, Salzburg

CLASSES TAUGHT: NEUROSCIENCE & DANCE , BOTTOM UP CREATIVE PRACTICE, TECHNOLOGIES OF LOVE, POST/CONTACT IMPROVISATION, DANCE HISTORY, INTRO TO DANCE, METAPHOR & MEANING, RELEASE.

#### **FESTIVALS & DANCE HOUSES**

Impulstanz (2012/2017), Marameo & Dock11 Berlin, Henny Juriens Amsterdam, Cie. Willi Dorner Company Class, Dance Umbrella London, Tanz im August Berlin, La Raffinerie Bruxelles, PhillyLive Arts, TanzQuartier Vienna (2009-2016).

#### PERFORMING

Cie. Willi Dorner Company 2003-2010. David Zambrano, Deborah Hay, Theatre Kombinat, Karol Tyminski, Elizabeth Ward, Paul Wenninger, Georg Blaschke

#### RESEARCH

selected events CIRP Contact Improvisation as a Research Paradigm. Paris. Productive Aquivalenz Symposium. Mind and Brain School. Berlin. Publication Metaphorical Objects. Danswetenschap in Nederland. Making Sense of Contemporary Dance. Spring Dance, Utrecht. Neu NOW Artist, 2016 Elia, Amsterdam. OMI Dance Resident, 2016 NY, USA. Practice as Performance. 2014 Coventry, UK.



Mind and Brain School Berlin performance

Thought as a Rope 2017