THE JOURNAL OF SOCIAL POLICY STUDIES
ЖУРНАЛ ИССЛЕДОВАНИЙ СОЦИАЛЬНОЙ ПОЛИТИКИ

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THE RIGHT TO DANCE AS THE RIGHT TO THE BODY

In this work, I combine theoretical and practical material to analyze the effects of a collective dance practice on trans*gender bodies. I argue that marginalized bodies are largely regulated and suppressed by the dominant normative discourses and are confined to the spaces of forced in/visibility that are harmful to trans*communities. Trans* bodies are forced visible, for instance, when legally and medically recognized: they have to withstand an uncomfortable scrutiny and surveillance by having to relegate the control of their personal body parts to the state. Mass media and the society imposes forced visibility on specific trans* bodies – transgender women's bodies – by demonizing and/or sexualizing them. Other trans* bodies are forced into a space of invisibility, erased and silenced. I use the 'right to dance' concept to suggest that collective creative movement practices allow trans*bodies to acquire visibility and recognition on their own terms and get empowerment. The right to dance is both the entry into the spaces that are created for and by queers and the ability to transform one's body by dancing the wounds, and when dancing and attaining the visibility on its own terms, transforming the world around. Thus, the 'right to dance' is a collective access to resources and to the re-making of the world capital of dance. The practical part of the research is based on the creative movement workshop for trans*gender people and their partners 'Telaboratoria' that I, as a dance teacher, facilitated in St. Petersburg, Russia in the spring 2016. I offer some details of the movement practice that addresses recognition and visibility issues, focuses on trust building and solidarity in a group as well as tuning and listening to our own body. I share my personal experience with dance, as a queer person, as a tool for liberation and visibility. I use personal notes and observations, as well as the responses from the two questionnaires that the participants of 'Telaboratoria' answered to.

Key words: the right to dance, trans*gender, queer, feminism, body, in/visibility, empowerment

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It is 2:05 p.m. Sunday. Right before the class everyone looks rather reserved, people gather in small groups and chat quietly in the corners of the room. What is about to happen is unfamiliar to all, including myself. I have fourteen participants and two more will arrive a little later. It is time. I invite everyone into a circle. We sit on pillows in the center of the room and I lead my students through a simple series of breathing exercises. Breathe in. Breathe out. Again. Now we all feel more grounded and can start. Please, everyone, say your name, your preferred pronoun, your reason of participation and offer a simple movement gesture that describes how you feel today into our circle… Shy at first, slowly the group is warming up to sharing and the participants voice their expectations: some came to have fun, others appeared to be around the people who are alike; some want to feel more relaxed in their bodies, yet, all clearly express the need to have more body-based experiences. According to this brief checking-in inside the circle, the connection to their bodies is lacking for most of the people in this room.

A long-time dancer, I have been teaching occasional movement-based improvisation classes for the last five years, yet this specific workshop is a nerve-wracking experiment for me. I designed this four-hour long class specifically for trans*gender individuals and their partners in St. Petersburg, Russia, as a comfortable space to connect to their own bodies through creative corporeal exercises. As a Russian-born queer performance artist based in the Bay Area, the most progressive part of California in terms of its social justice practices, I have witnessed the use of dance and theater as tools for liberation and empowerment for marginalized communities, including queers. Yet, similar practices for queer and especially trans*bodies (I explain and operationalize the term 'trans*' further in this text) are nearly absent in Russia, even in the large cities. This essay presents my experience of providing this dance practice in Russia and offers a self-reflection on that event.

My work comprises of several parts. Firstly, I explore and analyze the issues of trans*body dis/ownership and dis/empowerment, and then rethink those through the concepts of forced visibility and invisibility and other instruments of control that the heteronormative paradigm inflicts on a marginalized body. In the next part I conceptualize a dance practice using the right to dance optics and argue that group creative movement practices can help to reclaim and liberate trans*bodies. Finally, I share my experience of work with trans* people in Russia.

I use both secondary and primary sources, such as queer and trans* theory articles, online material, first-person narratives written by transgender scholars and activists, informal conversations with trans*individuals in St. Petersburg, and the responses I received from two different questionnaires which I asked the workshop's participants to respond to. I gave the first questionnaire (Q1) to all of the participants at the end of the class, as a feedback form. It had six open-ended questions that asked the participants about their

experience at the workshop. About a month after the workshop I sent a follow up questionnaire (Q2) to a small number of selected participants who I was in touch with personally. Those questions focused on the general bodily experiences and the role of a movement practice in their lives. I am using both responses to the questionnaires in this paper.

In addition, I apply the autoethnographic method – that is, not only as researcher, I take on another role, of an insider, the facilitator of 'Telabaratoria,'[1] a four-hour workshop that I offered to the trans* community of St. Petersburg this spring. This part of my research is autoethnographic because I analyze both my personal experience of reclaiming my body through creative movement and performance practices as a queer person and the workshop itself that I lead as a facilitator. For the sake of making my argument more concrete I am offering selected details of several exercises that I teach explaining the purpose and the ideas behind them.

Connecting to the Body through Dancing

Trans*people, one of the most vulnerable groups in Russia (Vykhod 2016: 61), do not have access to group spaces to explore the connection to their bodies and to engage in an empowering collective practice. Furthermore, the lack of collective corporeal practices and existing dominant discourses about trans*bodies deny them their own bodily experiences. Medical, legal, public and even fundamentalist feminist discourses inflict a judgmental societal gaze upon trans*bodies that strips their agency and personal power, while simultaneously framing them within the invasive normativity.[2]

Trans*bodies are allowed to exist within the heteronormative discourse only when they are assigned the place of tamed 'freaks.' For example, often the kind of trans*body that is welcomed into public visibility is a male-to-female cross-dresser body that is depicted in a 'sensationalizing, sexualizing and/or outright hostile' way (Serano 2007: 22). Trans*bodies that do not comply with or fit the stereotypical image are coerced into invisibility space: once escaping the objectifying gaze they are losing their assigned 'freak' place within the dominant paradigm and are pushed into no-existence as no-bodies people. Therefore, trans*bodies lose their agency, power and self-connection both when being forced-visible and forced-invisible or existing at the mergence of those two equally unchosen states.

Although a body is constructed both from within and without (Nagoshi et al. 2014), in this short paper I choose to focus on the external forces that produce and control a trans*body and, thus, result in its disembodiment. According to

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1 'Telaboratoria' is the movement-based improvisation workshop that I designed a couple of years ago as a class for non-dancers who seek empowerment through movement practices.

2 I mean the transphobic feminist discourse that started with Janice G. Raymond's book (1979).

responses I gathered in St. Petersburg, often after the transition (if a trans*person chooses to do it) the connection and a sense of congruence with the body gets stronger as an individual experience, still the systemic oppression by the hegemony of heteronormative and transphobic discourses continues to persist affecting this marginalized group as a whole. Therefore, I find it important to focus on the oppression of trans*bodies as 'the institutionalized movement of some bodies against others' and 'complex structural forces' (Nordmarken 2014: 49).

I want to explain my use of the term 'trans*' by suggesting some of the existing ideas and relating them to my work. The term 'trans' with or without an asterisk is highly problematized and there is no consensus reached within queer communities about it. According to Sonny Nordmarken, a transgender sociologist, 'the adjective "trans" can describe people whose gender and/or sex identities, expressions, bodies, and/or histories depart from normative conceptions' (Nordmarken 2014: 49). Still using the term trans 'as a one-size-fits-all category for those who "transgress binary gender norms"' (Serano 2007: 13) can be misleading and 'has inadvertently erased the struggles faced by those of us who lie at the intersection of multiple forms of gender-based prejudice,' argues transgender woman activist Julia Serano (Ibid.: 14).

Being aware of the complexity of trans*gender identities, I still choose to use the word 'trans' to encompass the identities of those who are located after the 'B' in LGBTQ (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender and Queer) umbrella term, yet, I add the asterisk to the word, too. Although some American transgender activists stand against the asterisk, arguing that 'trans without the asterisk is already inclusive of all trans identities' (Trans Student Educational Resources 2016) I find its use the most appropriate specifically for the Russian reality, where the term 'transgender' without the asterisk mostly addresses the gender-binary trans people, not the whole wide range of trans*gender identities. In order to avoid any misunderstanding that I am speaking only about those transgender people who identify as men and women by choosing to use asterisk I include genderqueer, gender-nonbinary agender, genderfluid, bigender, genderfuck, and other ever-emerging identities that are missing in the modest LGBTQ abbreviation (as well as in its expanded version). Still I do use 'transgender' without an asterisk to affirm the identities of those, who, as I know, identify within a gender-binary system.

In my work with trans*people and this paper, I use the concept the 'right to dance' borrowing it from a queer dance collective Ill Nana/DCDC from Canada (2016) and simultaneously utilizing and queering a political geographer, David Harvey's the 'right to the city' concept (2012), to argue that a collective dance practice, that allows the marginalized to get recognition and visibility on their own terms, can act as a tool of liberation that empowers trans*people who are dis-embodied by the heteronormative, transphobic discourses.

One last point should be noted. While conducting my research and offering creative movement workshops, I find myself in the unique position of being

both an insider and an outsider. I am an insider by being a Russian-born queer person, thus understanding the stigmatized status and the needs of the Russian queer community relatively well. I am an outsider by being perceived as cis-gendered,[1] having lived in the United States for the past twelve years, having the privilege of U.S. citizenship and a different experience with my queerness. Using the precise term by the anthropologist Lila Abu-Lughod, I am a 'halfie,' a researcher who shares the identity with the subjects of her research and yet, carries layers of other identities due to a foreign residence and privileges (Abu-Lughod 1991). I might have enough distance to have a deeper insight into the phenomenon of my research, but am still trying to retain sensitivity and humbleness when researching and writing about these marginalized identities.

Bodies that Are Forced to Be In/Visible

Trans*bodies are constructed and controlled within both official and unofficial discourses. Official discourse such as legal and medical one, and unofficial – created by popular media and the society – manufacture a specific and convenient image of a trans*person, thus instituting forced visibility upon a trans*body. By forced visibility I mean outing[2] or a type of visibility that objectifies, pathologizes, sexualizes or/and monstrosizes one's body, is out of control of the subject, and is detrimental to all trans*people. For example, when legally and medically recognized, trans*gender individuals have to withstand an uncomfortable visibility and surveillance by having to relegate the control of their personal body parts to the state. As Gayle Salamon, a queer and trans*identity theory scholar, states:

> …sex is treated as material property in transpeoples' dealing with medical and state bureaucracies and functions specifically as state property rather than private property for transpeople in a way that it does not for the normatively gendered (Salamon 2010: 19).

The sex of a trans*gender person becomes the property of the state in Russian contemporary reality, where one has to go through the humiliating routine of withstanding the medical commission that gives (or denies) the permission to make the transition and then the court that can grant (or refuse) the identity documents change (Vykhod 2016: 55, 63). In addition to that, the outing of a trans*individual can happen when dealing with the endless number of institutions that profile the (mis)match of a gender representation and the sex assigned on a document. The highly profiled body is in a constant alarmed

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[1] Although I identify outside of the gender binary system, I socially present as a female-bodied masculine-of-center person and choose to use 'she' pronoun for both political and safety reasons.

[2] Outing is an act of violence, revealing someone gender or sexual identity without their permission.

state, it does not belong to the needs and desires of a trans*gender person but is kept at will of the institutions.

Within the unofficial societal and popular media discourse nearly the only trans*bodies that are forced-visible are transwomen's bodies. Serano states in her political series of essays 'Whipping Girl':

> …the media hyperfeminizes us by accompanying stories about trans women with pictures of us putting on makeup, dresses, and high-heeled shoes in an attempt to highlight the supposed 'frivolous' nature of our femaleness <…> the media hypersexualizes us by creating the impression that most trans women are sex workers or sexual deceivers, and asserting that we transition for primarily sexual reasons (Serano 2007: 36).

According to Serano, when media portrays transwomen it chooses two main stereotypes: 'the "deceptive transsexual" or the "pathetic transsexual,"' that are obviously insulting to trans*gender community (Ibid.: 73). In addition, trans*bodies are placed under the constant public gaze. Nordmarken describes his experiences of bearing this gaze in the autoethnographic work on 'everyday interactions living in a gender-ambiguous body':

> In the menu of gazes, there are many types. There are the double-takers, the trying-to-be-discreet-corner-of-the-eye extended glimpses, the persistent looks of confusion, and the more obvious blatant stares. I encounter them all (Nordmarken 2014: 37).

The eyes staring at a trans*body express more than just curiosity – it is a carnivorous desire and entitlement 'to possess, the intention to extract, it in the mission to obtain for oneself "Truth"' (Ibid.). Thus, the trans*gender body is denied its independent existence and experiences, permitted to exist only within the dominant forced visibility discourse.

As much as affected by forced visibility, trans*bodies are constantly relegated into a space of forced invisibility, which also ignores their bodies and experiences. Some alternative to state discourses deny trans*gender bodies' existence. For example, up to this day radical feminists derogate transgender women experiences, holding on to the essentialist gender approach, and therefore, erase transwomen bodies. Serano explains prevalent feminists' argument by stating that they 'believe that trans women foster sexism by mimicking patriarchal attitudes about femininity, or that we objectify women by trying to possess female bodies of our own' (Serano 2007: 98). Instead of learning about transgender women's unique experiences as a tool 'to examine far more relevant issues: the ways in which traditional sexism shapes popular assumptions about transsexual women and why so many people in our society feel threatened by the existence of "men who choose to become women"' (Ibid.: 16), and to confront patriarchy united by their differences, some radical feminists choose to focus on essentializing the gender instead. This transphobic misogynistic stance is largely adopted by many radical feminist groups in Russia who

keep bashing transgender women (as well as other trans*people) on their social media pages such as 'vKontakte' groups. Often transwomen's bodies are not welcomed into 'womyn only' spaces, as a years-long scandal around Michigan music festival that has been for 'womyn-born-womyn' exclusively demonstrated (Ring 2015).

Attuned to the normative discourse that controls trans*bodies, trans*gender people themselves begin to impose self-control and surveillance practices within their community making those, who do not 'fit' the normativity, invisible. As with the Foucauldian panopticon, the trans*subject is 'subjected to a field of visibility', and

> …knows it, assumes responsibility for the constraints of power; he makes them play spontaneously upon himself; he inscribes in himself the power relation in which he simultaneously plays both roles; he becomes the principle of his own subjection (Foucault 1995: 198).

This phenomenon is evident when one of my workshop participants, a transgender woman Angelica (a pseudonym), in an informal conversation shares her experience about participating in Russian online forums for transgender women. She states that forum participants create hierarchies based on the 'truthfulness' of their womanhood using the studies conducted by American sexologist Harry Benjamin in the 1950s during the times when transsexuality was pathologized. Angelica says that transgender women who do not fit the standard of an ideal woman according to Benjamin's scale are bullied and even expelled from this forum. Thus, trans*bodies that are not trans normative, according to the 'police' of their own community, are rejected and further marginalized, denied access to recognition and support. Under the pressure of the constant erasure of their bodily experiences, objectification, uncomfortable public gaze and imposed self-control, trans*bodies live in the unceasing question of their own existence, where the self and the body easily become dissociated from one another, as Angelica explains.

Trans* people can be forced into invisibility and their experiences can be neglected when they are spoken for by non-trans* activists and scholars. Serano shares her experience as a transgender woman:

> Rather than being given the opportunity to speak for ourselves on the very issues that affect our lives, trans women are instead treated more like research subjects: others place us under their microscopes, dissect our lives, and assign motivations and desires to us that validate their own theories and agendas regarding gender and sexuality (Serano 2007: 28).

Often well-meaning trans* allies make a mistake of speaking for trans*people, and therefore, framing 'transsexuality in terms of non-transgender people's assumptions and interests' (Ibid.: 23). Something similar happened at the 'Bok o Bok' LGBT film festival in St. Petersburg in February

2016, which featured a film about a transgender man's experiences in Iran. The organizers failed to correct the Russian subtitles that misgendered the main character throughout the film. Furthermore, the moderator, invited by the organizers, was incompetent in trans*gender subjects, did not use the right terminology and continued to address the main character in the wrong gender (personal field notes).

It often happens that there is no segregation in terms of forced in/visibility and trans*bodies are pushed into both spaces at once, they are forced to be invisible but suddenly are also forced to be visible. In any case, these unchosen states cause the disempowerment and disembodiment of a marginalized group (Ryland 2013). I offer a dance remedy practice of this.

My (Queer) Right to Dance

Personally, I have had a complex relationship with my body for decades. Doing creative movement work that I discovered more than a decade ago, has helped me to navigate through the raising complexities of my sexual and gender identity. For years I felt confused about both my sexuality and gender identity; there was a sense of not feeling fully a woman or a man, yet not being able to comprehend or verbalize it. By doing performance practice I was repeatedly able to access and rework my self-perception through a regular movement practice, character work and imagination activities. I was able to safely explore the masculine and the feminine, as well as the non-binary parts of myself that were not reachable or safe to perform in my daily life. In a way, doing performance was a way of doing drag to explore and indulge in my many identities. Having access to this exploration, I had access to my body and my authentic corporeal experiences. Just imagine, using one's body to dance a volcano eruption or a tree growing from a seed requires absolute tuning to all its parts, control of one's breath and total presence with all that the body feels. Dance gave that to me.

Indulging in gender-bender experiences, I played gloomy middle-aged mustachioed men, flamboyant gay boys and androgynous creatures of no gender at all. Performing hyper-feminine roles such as faux drag queen allowed me to reconcile the feminine with the rest of myself – something that, slowly and naturally moving toward a masculine of center person, I could not afford to act out in public. Socialized as a female and raised by a working class single mother in a post-Soviet 1990s small town in Russia, I had had my bodily experiences suppressed for years. Creative movement allowed me to slowly strip the roles and restrictions that were assigned to my body from birth and decolonize it. While, as a cis-gender-perceived queer person, I absolutely do not claim to embody or even understand the whole complexity of the experiences that trans*people go through with their bodies, I can state that persistently demanding the right to dance gave me the right to be inside my body. Now, by

taking on a teacher role, I am attempting to provide a similar space for my students, where they are offered the basic tools to pay attention to their own needs and desires, to play them out creatively and safely.

Telaboratoria

This spring the St. Petersburg LGBT-organization '*Vykhod*' ('Coming Out') invited me to teach a series of creative movement workshops for the St. Petersburg trans* community. The main purpose of the first introductory class was to offer my students some simple tools to access their fun, creative, dancing bodies and to demonstrate that all of them had a right to dance. Although I was able to facilitate only one class due to the time constraints, I am looking forward to continuing to work with this community in the future. When answering the feedback form, most of the participants expressed the desire to attend similar workshops up to once a week and responded very positively to the exercises I offered. Below I would like to describe the sequence of my exercises as evidence to my argument.

First, I led my students through simple movement and breathing practices that they could incorporate into their lives to stay grounded. We used the first half of the class to 'return' to our bodies by simple internal and external observations, focusing on different body parts, tracing the contours of the body, scanning it and noticing the minute details of the movement. We played with voice and movement, trying to connect the two. We did a floor warm-up that was based on the early childhood movements – a very comforting and relaxing way to access the body for most people. 'Returning' to one's body exercises are always crucial for the whole practice and become the base for the rest of the exercises. In the second part of the class I introduced more imaginative and group games that engaged a creative 'muscle,' built group's trust and safety, and encouraged the participants to engage in an active observation of each other's practice.

All of the group exercises addressed recognition and visibility issues – the participants were asked to pay attention and appreciate each other's bodies and their different expressions. Toward the end of the workshop some participants expressed that they had higher level of comfort with themselves and the group, being able to enjoy movements that were not available to them on a daily basis. Some were surprised and excited that their bodies could move in a different way. This four-hour dance practice created a sense of unity and a shared experience between the participants that they could take outside the room now and apply in their lives.

The Right to Dance in Russia: the Lack of it

Many LGBTQ people in Russia, and especially trans*gender individuals, do not have access to a safe dance or theater practice. Even in the large cities, such as St. Petersburg, those creative movement classes that are offered often maintain oppressive transphobic and homophobic structures and are unsafe for

trans* folks to attend. The only regular non-heterosexual dance practice known to me, the Queer Tango in St. Petersburg, seems to target cis-gendered LGB people mainly. The lack of space for LGBT+ persons in a mainstream dance and theater world denies them the access to the collective right to dance and consequently the right to their bodies.

When answering my questionnaires, the participants of 'Telaboratoria' expressed the pressing need to creatively connect with their bodies. As one participant put it, '*after the transition <...> it became easy and exciting to be in my body, live in it, feel and create through it*,' even if it remains the case that:

> …a life-long habit to live outside one's body, it doesn't disappear on its own. Some action to reclaim one's body must be taken – for the first time, or possibly – again <…>. Also, because of the constant life outside my body, all these restrains and reasoning inside my head and chest binders and other things outside, I have a number of body issues and want to do something about it (Participant 1, Q2).

Another participant said that while he was able to finally accept his body after the transition, '*to learn about your body as a mechanism, to learn how to interact with your body – this is challenging without a special environment*' (Participant 2). He expressed that after the transition he was just thrown into his life not having the right resources, people or time to 'sense' and to 'learn' about his body, '*its endurance, its speed, flexibility*.' He felt like it was easy to become '*a head on a stick attached to a flat cardboard piece of something... Like there is some superficial expression of the body, but what is behind it, is unclear*.' It seems that some steps of experiencing and learning about one's body must be taken even after the transition, in order to feel fully present and recognized. One of the possible ways toward a bodily liberation can be the right to dance.

The Right to the Body

Here I want to further introduce the right to dance concept. When conceptualizing the right to dance, I draw upon Harvey's concept of the 'right to the city' and queer it using Jack/Judith Halberstam's optics. The right to the city was first introduced by Henry Lefebvre, a French Marxist philosopher and sociologist in 1968 and then further reworked and updated by Harvey. For Harvey, the right to the city is a collective access to resources and to the remaking of an urban reality that is achieved through anti-hegemonic and anti-capitalist practices (Harvey 2012: 4). Harvey criticizes the capitalist urban invasion, suggesting to fight it by collective practices of changing 'ourselves by changing the city more after our heart's desire' (Ibid.: 4).

Still, Halberstam criticizes Harvey's approach for not acknowledging how the 'hegemonic constructions' he encourages to unite against of are also 'uniquely gendered and sexualized' (Halberstam 2005: 16). Halberstam states that while Harvey's approach uncovers 'the processes of capitalism <…> it

lacks a simultaneous desire to uncover the processes of heteronormativity, racism, and sexism' (Halberstam 2005: 16). By looking at Harvey's right to the city through Halberstam's optics, I am queering the concept, making it accessible to those who live alternative histories (Ibid.: 12). A queered right to the city is the entry for the most wounded to speak up, create in/visibility on their own terms and access the resources that way.

When talking about his wounds that were silenced, Nordmarken quotes the work by Marcelo Diversi and Claudio Moreira: '"We cannot erase the oppression in the marked body. But we can allow the wounds to speak up in their own bodies." So, I can speak… Perhaps, speaking through my wounds can create a new way of seeing' (Nordmarken 2014: 41). Thus, the right to dance is the access to the 'new way of seeing' a dancing body that can speak through the wounds. The right to dance is both the entry into the spaces that are created for and by queers and the ability to transform one's body by dancing the wounds, and when dancing and attaining the visibility on its own terms, transforming the world around. The website of Illa Nana/ DCDC, where I borrowed this concept, states in their description that they are:

> …queer multiracial dance company that embraces difference as strength and are committed to changing the landscape of dance by performing our stories on stage as well as providing more accessible education and performance opportunities for LGBTTIQQ2S [Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transsexual, Transgender, Intersexual, Queer, Questioning, 2-Spirited] communities prioritizing people of colour, various body types, backgrounds, classes, and abilities (Ill Nana/DiverseCity Dance Company 2016).

This description can be the right to dance manifesto of all the non-heteronormative and the other bodies that choose to claim themselves and the world around through dance.

Some examples of exercising the right to dance by trans*gender individuals are self-evident. In 2013 a 35-year-old transgender woman Sophie Rebecca was accepted into the Royal Academy of Dance. While she is not planning a professional career in ballet, she asserted her right to dance, receiving the access to a world previously closed and hegemonic practice of ballet (Styles 2016). Another example of making trans*gender people visible through the movement arts is 'Fresh Meat Production,' a San Francisco-based trans*gender and queer performing arts festival that

> …empowers transgender artists and audiences, expands the repertoire of original work authentically experience, brings visibility to transgender and gender variant communities, connects transgender artists with diverse audiences, promotes the artistic development of emerging and established transgender artists (Fresh Meat Productions 2016).

The right to dance is a pass that gives the entry into a world capital of dance, allows the wounds to speak and makes those who were previously

forced to be visible or invisible, finally seen and considered on their own terms.

Conclusion

Even with the great efforts of trans* and queer dance activists like those mentioned above, the right to dance remains a seldom lucky ticket for the rest, an exception rather than a regularity. 'In most professional dance institutions, you have to pick either a male or a female role: the men go over here and practice "male movements" and the women go over there and do the "women movements,"' writes a journalist when interviewing the members of Ill Nana/DCDC (Willard 2014). Genderqueer and trans*gender people are not even considered, and having to choose either a male or female role can be a difficult and alienating experience. Even when trans* and queer people are allowed into dance spaces, they are often reserved a tiny slot in it and are portrayed in common stereotypes. When being interviewed one of Ill Nana dancers says:

> when people think of LGBTQ and dance, they think of a gay white man with muscles doing ballet or contemporary <…> But I think our communities are a lot more diverse than that, and the art form of dance is not usually inclusive of the larger spectrum of what our community is, including transgender and genderqueer people and people with different body types (Ibid. 2014).

Thus, although the right to dance is still largely unavailable to the marginalized bodies, when each one of these bodies puts itself on the line to claim it, it is bringing it closer to all.

In my paper, I argued that while hegemonic discourses put 'marked' bodies into a forced in/visibility and stripped them of agency, dance as a collective practice constructs new ways of seeing, a visibility of a desired kind, giving bodies experiences of their own and, ultimately, empowering them. Practicing the right to dance is exercising the right to both a collective and an individual space of liberation through a creative movement. Once the right to dance is embodied, it becomes a personal tool that can be carried within, shared, and accessed anywhere as a magic wand queering anything it touches. The marginalized body empowered through dance 'speaks through her wounds,' altering herself and normative dance spaces simultaneously. Body that is seen and recognized, takes space and changes this space.

Acknowledgements

I appreciate everyone who helped me in developing this work, thinking it through, encouraged me, talked to me about it. Thanks to the LGBT-organization 'Vykhod' and 'T-Deistvie,' the University of California at Berkeley, the European University at St. Petersburg, participants of 'Telaboratoria,' Jonny Dzhibladze, Jenya Yahina, Alexander

Kondakov, Leo Rain, Olya Panova, Nika Yurieva, Anton Macintosh, Karl Martin, Diana Yashenkova and Ekaterina Messorosh.

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