

**#Wetoo:
What
dancers
talk about
when they
talk about
sexism**



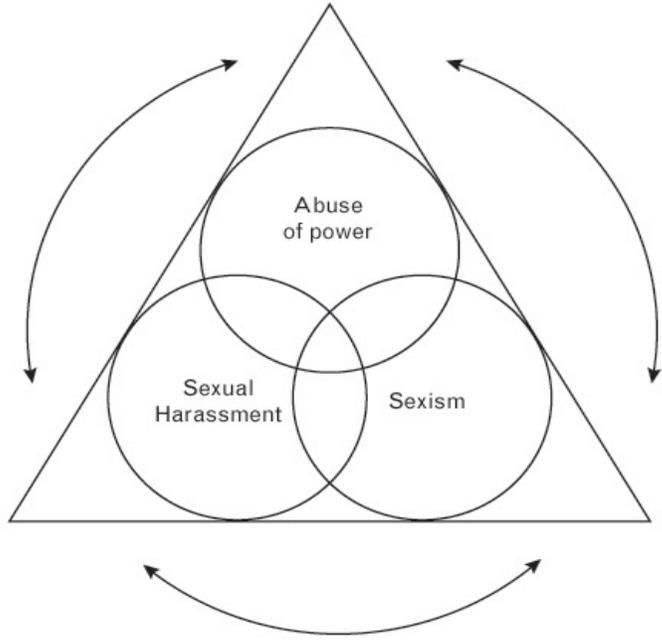
Artistic research grant (2017)

Do you sometimes feel treated differently as a dancer
because you are a woman*?

#MeToo as structural sexism

- Education
- Supply & demand => Competition
- Gendered expectations
- Gender representation on stage => Canon
- Body as instrument
- Private/professional
- Power relation (choreographer vs dancer)
- Experiences of sexism, sexual harassment,...

TERMINOLOGY



#MeToo as structural sexism

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- **Gender representation on stage & canon**
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REPRESENTATION

In A Brief History of Nakedness, Philipp Carr-Gomm argues that: “Nakedness in ballet may still be rare, but when it comes to contemporary dance there have been many more naked performances in dance over the last fifty years than there have been in the theatre”

PRO NUDITY DISCOURSE/TREND:

By returning to the body, free from the symbolism of clothing and of moral codes, dancers and choreographers seem to be exploring the sense of being human.



















Why applying semiotics here:

- *Not art, but publicity*
- *Attracting audiences => commercial*
- *Photographer's eye/gaze*
- *Reinforcing audience gaze*

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“Will there be nudity?”

Are stereotypes harmful?

- Women* performing '*naïve*', '*hysterical*', '*weak*', '*sexualised*',...
- Men* performing as '*dominant*', '*strong*', '*violent*',..
- *Exotification and racist representation* > '*wild*', '*closer to nature*', '*child-like*',..
- *Heterosexuality as the norm*
- *Relation 'love duets' and 'rape culture'*

THE DUET



HETEROSEXUAL DUETS

- *Relation 'love duets' and 'rape culture'*
- *Consent?*
- *Sexualisation of predatory behaviour*





SOME QUESTIONS...

- Why is the dancing/moving body seen as something sexual, erotic?
- Isn't a body's nudity something natural/beautiful?
- Isn't nudity also a form of self-expression/freedom?

As Judith Lynne Hanna notes in her essay *Dance and Sexuality: Many Moves*:

“Dance and sex both use the same instrument—namely, the human body—and both involve the language of the body’s orientation toward pleasure. Thus dance and sex may be conceived as inseparable even when sexual exploration is unintended”

Dancer as 'object of desire'

The dancer is beautiful
The dancer is athletic
The dancer is sensual
The dancer is flexible
The dancer is under control
The dancer does not speak
The dancer is there to be looked at
The dancer is replaceable
The dancer is the choreographer's dancer
The dancer is boundaries-less
The dance is disciplined
The dancer is an object of desire



Historical context?



Paris Opera Ballet in 19th-Century:

- Job for young poor girls
- Performed for upper class
- Foyer de la danse > 'brothel'
- 'Les abonnés'
- Class travel or sexual exploitation?



Body as instrument

PUSH
BOUNDARIES
TO
ADVANCE

PAIN AS
LEARNING

DISCIPLINE

“BODY AS
INSTRUMENT”
&
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DISTANCE/DISASS
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PHYSICAL
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BEAUTY
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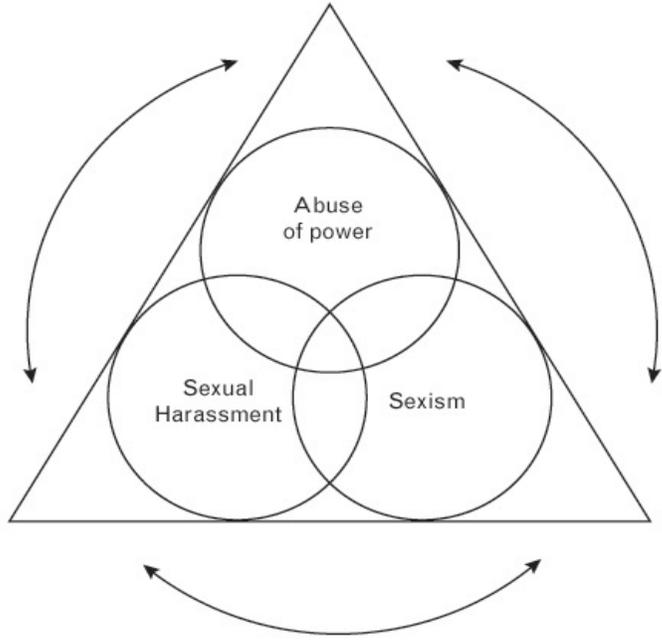
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How do others relate to your body?
How do you relate to your body?

TERMINOLOGY



DISCUSSION

Can art transcend the narcissistic voyeuristic duality of doer and looker?

In theatre, dance, visual arts, circus, women, feminist and queer artists have deconstructed and objected to these norms and power relations, yet as you could see in the examples from contemporary dance: the paradigm of the female nude is still dominantly present, enforcing a white, hetero- and binary cisgendered normativity, not only in terms of representation, but and closely related, also in terms of gender and power relations. The 'active' patriarchal and colonial subject is still occupying the positions of power in arts and arts education.

How is this in circus?