

Limewire (2006)

The idea of the new piece, "Limewire" is about youth movements. Basically we asked what would a contemporary 'youth movement' be. We know the images of the punks, the glam rockers, the hippies, etc. what would a mass movement of today be? We came up with several ways to deal with this question in our performance.

One is that youth movement today is about being able to switch identities, not so much 'belonging to' as switching into and out of many identities. We took this switching of identities to be representative of youth 'movement' today. We chose concert dance and behavior as our primary material to express the spaces where youth usually come together to share a collective sense of identity, We worked with embodying all that is known from the 'counter-cultural' bodies of rock, punk, black, death, and dark metal, hardcore, new wave, brit-pop, grunge etc. We worked on how to identify these bodies- is the tension aggressive, fluid, or is it without tension, in awe; is this an excited, celebratory body, a body lost in ecstasy, an abject, violent body, an out of control body, a body that doesn't know how to define itself.

Using different music- from light, poppy rock music to hardcore punk and heavy metal- we were able to build these differentiations into a language to express different bodies and embodiments, behaviors, identities, and relations. By using this material and techniques of 'morphing' identities (smoothly transitioning for instance from a kid listening to pop music on an mp3 player by himself, to an aggressive youth in a packed basement hardcore concert, to someone in a crowd of hundreds of thousands jumping along with everyone else) we were able to suggest a 'youth movement' of many movements, with no fixed identity. The morphing techniques allowed us to suggest the transmission of identities- absorbing intensities of expression from one another and 'becoming' one of the group. This process of conformism suggests the paradox of all youth movements- wanting to join into a group in order to define oneself as 'different.' But this is also what propels new movements to arise- the absorption of 'difference' means that a new expression or movement is no longer 'new,' causing the movement to either die or transform- we used this social dynamic as a tool to structure the choreography.

This dynamic of assimilation and differentiation propels the group movements to form and break up, reformulate, mutate, gain momentum, switch, join again under another identity, lose momentum so that the movement of the shifts of identities builds as the movement itself. In the choreography this all becomes so fast and dislocated from any single shared context that the 'group' movement falls out into individuals with only recycled images without a context to share these expressions with the others.

We then come to the question of what happens at the death of collective space. Looking at all of the youth movements that I studied before beginning the project, there was always a question of where these movements went after they died. Some influenced new movements, some were rejected so strongly that they spurned completely opposite expressions, some were quickly buried only to be copied in versions one or two

generations later. In this piece, we used the idea of network space as the after life of this youth movement without fixed identity.

We thought about the 'i-pod generation,' and what the status is now of the 'counter-culture' when its expressions can be so easily shared, traded, and copied. When you no longer share with other bodies, you become resourceful. You share and connect but you reprivatize- this is the order of the network- all connected but all private. But how does the network behave, what differentiates it from sharing in a collective space? Here we came to the idea to use the computer program Limewire as a choreographic practice. Limewire is a peer-to-peer file sharing program where you can download music for free from other users around the world. Everyone who has this program is connected to the network once they are online, and their music libraries, and in fact all information on their computer is potentially available to other users on the Web. Limewire is an example of a contemporary youth movement- millions and millions of young users sharing information with each other, but not as they shared space in Woodstock or in London in the 1970s, but connected by their ability to copy from each other. This means that the moment someone has a previously unreleased song, it becomes available to be absorbed by every other users' system. If you download a file from Limewire, the program searches several users who have it and takes parts of the song from each of them in order to assemble your copy (this is the fastest way to circulate mass amounts of information). We took this idea as a practice- looping concert expressions, breaking them down to one part of the body and reconnecting to the others by copying parts of their body. Here you see all of these expressions of rebellious youth being repeated, broken down, recomposed, copied, appropriated, etc. The system has no end, it is an endlessly open system which admits and absorbs all differences. It differentiates and assimilates, morphs into and develops out of connections with other bodies, it takes whatever is 'new' and makes it part of the 'known' necessitating more and more new expressions in order to absorb them as well. Space is no longer shared and physical- bumping against each other and celebrating the experience of an undifferentiated, collective body- but connected and virtual; a consuming machine where identities, information, and intensities are absorbed and transformed as soon as they're produced. Rather than propose this cynically, the piece suggests that this is commercial culture, sub-culture, and counter-culture in one; it is a mode of connection, expression, and representation in one, and it is a movement with no beginning and no end.

Written by Andros Zins-Browne June, 2006