

Tess de Quincey & Stuart Lynch

Since May 1992 Stuart Lynch and Tess de Quincey have been collaborating on performances, teaching workshops, directing events and film/video productions. They are co-directors of the recently formed De Quincey/Lynch Performance Union which functions between Australia and Denmark. The Union presents solo, duo and group choreographies alongside time-based events, electronic virtual performance and the installed body. Tess de Quincey is a choreographer and dancer who has worked in the Japanese theatres of Tatsumi Hijikata, studied with Kazuo Ohno and has been a dancer with Min Tanaka and his Mai-Juku Performance Group from 1985 - 1991. Stuart Lynch is a sculptor and a dancer. As a sculptor he has exhibited in Germany and the UK but since 1989 he has been working exclusively with dance-performance. He worked with the Mai-Juku Performance Group from 1991-92. Angharad Wynne-Jones and Jonathan Parsons spoke with them recently on the eve of preparations for their ambitious *Compression 100* project taking place in May of this year.

JP: You have chosen to divide your time between Australia and Europe, what differences have you observed between the body's expressions in these two places?

SL: There is the genetic thing that exists between these two continents, but the physical, social and cultural climate is quite different. In a larger spatial area, you can be bigger. Maybe it gives a greater perception of freedom.

TDQ: There is no doubt about it, this country has space.

SL: And this can be seen in the body.

TDQ: And in what's happening inside the head. When you first arrive here, I always feel as though somebody's scalped me, the whole thing is open. It's present in everything that goes on, whereas in Europe you're confronted with dense traditions - layer upon layer upon layer, wars and more wars. Australia has the space to grow into itself, perhaps unlike anywhere else.

JP: What about in Scandinavia where you've worked a great deal?

TDQ: Northern Scandinavia certainly has more space than the rest of Europe but I think it takes on a completely different value than in Australia. The further north you go, the more the alignment is to the Polar region. Rather than an identification with the nationality it's a direct identification with the land; the thinking is tough because the survival is tough - but the focus is wide.

AW: In Australia, implicit within the perception of space is indigenous culture and inevitably historical and political tension.

SL: That's true. And it is tension, or pressure that also affects change. But where can this tension take us and in consideration of what is held as a global culture, where does indigenesness fit? What is the indigenous dance of Australia? How can this concept of space be really held? What will be the Australian body?

And where does the past fit into the future?

JP: What was your early training and how did you come to performance?

TDQ: I studied graphics and sculpture in Copenhagen, but I had trained in ballet as a kid, and found in Denmark that I had to do dance again. I started doing modern and then worked for two companies over four years, Teatergruppen Fair Play and The Ladies Dance Theatre Company. I left the last company because I felt I wasn't striking what I wanted to. But then, after having watched a performance by Hijikata, I remember standing on the street in Copenhagen and thinking "What the hell was that?". I felt I had to go to Japan and find out why this work was being done, what it was about and what its language is. So I went, had the opportunity to see a lot of different work and then finally joined Mir's company as I felt a total and immediate rapport with his way.

JP: What was it about this performance that struck you?

TDQ: The performance was a complete explosion of form. I couldn't decipher the language but I felt its presence as something totally fundamental. I also found the rebellious aspect of the work - destroying accepted form - shocking. It swept from under my feet everything I believed. I had nothing to walk on anymore.

SL: Are we talking a classic inspirational moment?

TDQ: Inspirational? I wouldn't describe



Movement on the Edge, Copenhagen 1989

it as inspirational no. It's almost the opposite in one sense, because it completely blew away anything I had envisaged any concept around. And in Japan, I felt that I had to break down all my concepts of what I had previously built up and eventually I was left standing, if you like, on bedrock. Then I could start re-assimilating and finding another language.

JQ: Is that where you met Stuart?

TJQ: We met through Body Weather work in '89.

AWJ: You were both in Japan at the same time?

SL: No, I arrived as Tess left. But since '92 we have been working together in Europe and Australia.

AWJ: Tell us about the training you did with Min Timuba?

TJQ: Min's work is different from Hijikata's. The first time I went to Japan it was to find people to take back to Copenhagen for a festival. That gave me the opportunity to see a lot of different work which is how I met Min.

He believes in a universal body - a body accessible beneath culture - as opposed to Hijikata's insistency on a Japanese body. Much as I was fascinated by Hijikata, and working in his night clubs was quite an experience, I was nevertheless more drawn to Min's

tradition and his openness in working with foreigners.

SL: That was also true for myself. I would have gone wherever Min's work was. In a way the 'Japanese-ness' was irrelevant. It was about the work itself - Body Weather. It's an amazing way to understand, on a simple level, the body. However, on another more demanding level, it was also the closest I'd come to a military training. When I was younger I'd trained with fighting and kick-boxing techniques - this was tough but Body Weather was kinder, addressing more directly the body and spirit. I found it a non-sexist form of training. Men and women just had to go through things. Everyone was hurting equally, moving their own body weight through space. But that's just one aspect. The training revolves around a certain method of repetition so it's a very classical training, not a free expressive or improvisational form. Mind you, that's certainly not to eliminate a very strong relation to concepts of freedom but they're more similar to what one finds in Zen.

TJQ: It's also extremely sensitive even though it's a martial discipline.

SL: It moves from very hard training

into areas of almost ridiculous softness. It's the most complete training that I've ever done because it gives you a wide range. It gives you the ability to change very quickly, to take on different circumstances and bodies, to change moods or situations not only in performance but in daily life. I first worked with Tess not with Min and felt the sensitivity of this work immediately. What was clear to me from the beginning was that there were lots of problems working within the Japanese methodology. It's very easy to be taken by the Japanese-ness of it.

When I first went to Japan, and especially coming from a sculptural and performance art background, I didn't find Butoh very interesting at all, too theatrical, too nostalgic. I found Tess' interpretation the most relevant and resolved because she combined the classical with a clear acceptance that this was a European doing it. No matter how much I might have come to love some of the techniques or



Identity, Danish National Museum, Nov 94 photo Freddy Toesberg



Wir, Wuppertal Germany 1993.

photo: Annie Connolly

processes, I've not lost, or anyway have tried not to lose the sense that I have a European body. I think there is a fundamental difference between the European trying to copy a Japanese body and a European dancing the same source but with the acceptance of being European.

TDQ: Body Weather is not Butoh. It's a strategy of approach to the body and to the mind. However, you can use it to gain easier access to Butoh because it provides a very easy crossover into the concepts, terms and definitions that define Butoh. Body Weather is about building up one's recognition of body and recognition of space in a very broad sense.

JP: Was Body Weather practice developed by Min Tanaka?

TDQ: Yes, and very much with Maijuku and the people he's worked with over the years. He has also established various Body Weather Laboratories around the world and those of us working within Europe are constantly redefining our practice and trying to push Body Weather further within a western view point.

JP: So Body Weather isn't about trying to create a universal body in the sense that everyone's the same?

TDQ: No, universal in the sense of a common subterranean understanding, a shared body. Body Weather is about finding the weather of the body. Everybody has weather within the body and within the mind. It's about recognising change. It's about finding a language around the similarities, complexities and differences of the body - developing a language around the body which is almost pre-cultural. How do we manage to gauge complex feeling between us, between cultures, through the body?

SL: In our workshops we're addressing the primary experience of learning through the body or experiencing the body in itself. Our function is also to facilitate discussion about the body. We're looking for a comprehensive

understanding and it's not the actions themselves that are necessarily important, or right or wrong, it's how you observe them that's valuable.

TDQ: You can never arrive, never finish, that's why I can keep doing it. There's consistently something new coming up all the time. Body Weather is also very strongly an objectification of the body and it is designed to throw light on it so that you can observe quite neutrally.

AMJ: You mean as a performer you can observe neutrally, or as an audience or both?

TDQ: Both. But also just as a person totally outside of any performance parameter. Body Weather is not just for performers. The idea of this training is



Paradise Fable, Copenhagen 1993 photo: Steen Erik Søkkeland

that it's for anybody, anybody who wants to look at their body. I've often found it the most interesting when people come from disparate backgrounds. I remember a situation where an accountant walked in off the street, he'd seen the workshop advertised in a laundromat. It was fascinating to see him contributing his level of experience and working with a woman who had done dance for many years.

SL: However, observation is the key and in terms of directing, the focus is obvious. Body Weather develops the ability to observe very precisely and then, if necessary, to copy; when we've taught in acting studios it's often for this very reason alone.

JP: Has your use of Body Weather in your work changed over time?

SL: It changes a lot. We've tried not to fix things since 1992, to travel a lot and work in different places and therefore also many different teaching situations. Sometimes working with high level professionals and sometimes with mixed groups of people, sometimes with the disabled, sometimes with children. So one changes the work and the forms according to the group, but that doesn't necessarily mean that the level goes up. Sometimes if you are working with say trained modern dancers, one returns to basics because that's where they're going to get the most benefit. We don't need to take them into other areas they already have. So within each group there's a secret that you are trying to discover, what is the nature of this group, and which are the exercises and the teaching structures that will bring out this group's natural form and abilities... and I'm talking about intuition here

rather than an overtly pedagogic approach. It helps to play off on each other, for example Tess has a stronger tendency to push through whereas I enter the more 'least resistant' mode.

The other thing we try to do is to keep it very neutral, aligned to the long-term and away from therapy; from the, 'you'll learn everything about yourself and more on this workshop.'

TDQ: Oddly enough though, as a practice it does make sense of the world. I was drawn to dance originally because I found that it was the most primal thing, everything boils down to the body, warts and all. The body comes before the words. The practice of Body Weather also makes sense of everything for me. Go back to the body, everything begins, the definitions starts from there, become apparent. The reality of that is much more shocking and changes one more strongly than a mental understanding that remains in the head. The mind changes the body as the body changes the mind. I feel I have to understand through the body.

JP: In terms of your work in Australia did you start teaching then performing, or was it always hand in hand?

TDQ: I came over from Japan for a couple of months in 1988 to do a show at TPS. Nobody knew me here and when I arrived ten days before the opening there was no publicity, so I got on the phone... People were suggesting that I do workshops at TPS during the day. So everyday I would do a workshop in the theatre and then would re-align the installation. I then came back and did another performance in '89 and more workshops. As part of a four-week intensive, working from eight in the



Paradise Revolt, Wuppertal Germany 1994, photo Barbara Grzechuk

morning to six or eight pm, we also went to the Blue mountains for a nine-day period. The next obvious step was to go to the outback. So we started to look for places and Lake Mungo came into the picture and we started to work there. That became the centre of a four year project (1991-94) which concerned the body in time and space, and history and memory. The most recent performances in connection with Mungo were *is and is-2*, shown here at TPS in 1994 and then an interstate tour in '95.

JP: How did you find Lake Mungo?

TDQ: It's fascinating because it's not a place which is overtly scenically striking, but you get taken by it in some strange way. The quietness of the space - it's a dry lake bed. One of the strange things about approaching Mungo is that it looks as if there's water there. Or as if it has just been there. The sense and weight of the water is ever present. There's a vastness, an undercurrent of the continent.

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Interview

Tess de Quincey/Stuart Lynch

JP: Do you anticipate that you will revisit it?

TDQ: Originally my intention was first to work in Mungo and then try to go into the centre of the continent, simply in the belief that the centre in itself carries something. But instead I needed to return to Mungo and have many times. And I am sure we will be going back again. We talk about it often and it's always figuring in our plans. But as it turned out, we did also go to Alice last year and yes, the heart of the continent...

ABJ: That reminds me of the previous article for is.2 which appeared in The Centralian Advocate with the caption 'Tess Goes Bush'.

TDQ: It's funny, because it was one of those thick, hot days in Darwin and we got this telephone call from Anakaen saying "Tess, there's been a mistake." It was great, they'd mistaken an "O" for the "C". But maybe a lot of great things happened because of that. Anyway, we ended up doing the performance in the original 'Alice Spring', the old waterhole itself. It was one of the most magical things I have ever been involved with.

SL: Yes, especially with the inclusion of the 'ghost', the Mimi. I wasn't meant to be performing but because Tess had a back injury, we had to prepare choreographies for an improvisational 'ghost' to enter. This way I could then take over the more strenuous areas. Tess could not do due to her immobility. As it happened she recovered much quicker than diagnosed but we kept the ghost and Alice was the high point. I was in the middle of the Springs, very, very cold, submerged up to my neck, and having to remain completely motionless until the end of a delicate part by Tess. The

solo was going well, which meant that Tess was pulling the time and extending, while I was there, totally immersed waiting for hypothermia to set in. The agreed cue finally came and I exploded out of the water adding some vigorous voice bits to help give a bit of heat...

TDQ: As he was yelling his head off, I immediately thought "Shit! Crocodiles!"

But yes, the performance was very special. Also the video projection onto the rock was wonderful with ripples from the water reflecting through the imagery and over the whole cliff surface.

JP: So what did you do after is.2?

TDQ: We went immediately to Europe and breathlessly toured our way through seventeen different productions over the last six months in Scandinavia and Germany. I guess that accounts for why we felt we were busy, but we did just count them all up the other day and got a bit of a shock. For me the most interesting were two group works, one on the west coast of Sweden entitled *Shoal* and the other in Wuppertal in Germany which was the continuation of a piece we had done (1991)

years ago - this one was called *WW.2*. Both were works with more than eighteen performers involved and these numbers alone allowed us to try out a whole series of ideas. But that many people on stage is also magnificent - especially nowadays when it's a rarity. We involved ourselves at one point in directly referencing some of the work of Pina Bausch - Wuppertal is her home town - but these details were really not appreciated or understood by local audiences who obviously seemed to think that we were unconsciously copying. The referencing is perhaps a very Anglo-Saxon phenomenon and tradition.

SL: Many of the other performances were a part of the *Thalidomide* series which I started in '93. *Thalidomide 22 to 31* was its own series worked in conjunction with Kiesowski's film series *Dekalog* and was in turn based on each of the Ten Commandments. Our main production though was *Thalidomide Fable* around Jean Baudrillard's text *Metaphors, Homotopics, Heterotopia*. This was a solo I first developed and performed at Brisbane's DMA with a theoretical collaboration from Nicholas Zurbrugg. *Fable* was then presented again in a re-worked form in November as part of a European Theatre conference *BODI ritual - manipulation* in Copenhagen.

Baudrillard himself was involved and did the text narration which of course was a great honour - he liked the performance too, which was a bonus. I say this because in keeping to what I felt was the spirit of the text I hadn't expected him to like it.

But we've been working this rightly for 4 years now, trying to align our theory by our practice and the period from '92 to '94 can best be described as a 'Prologue to Compression'.

TDQ: Yes, we've been working with the compression idea over the last few years, in fact ever since we started working together. That's why the *Compression* project in May is in some way the natural outcome of all this hyperactivity. It's maybe the sum total of all those performances. The constant moving itself provides another aspect to the compression which although at times has been hard it has also been an impetus.

ABJ: Do you anticipate that there will come a time when you might say in one place?

SL: It has been a choice to be nomadic. It relates back to *Body Weather* and the need to understand change.



is. Sydney 1994.

photo: Robert Murphy

TDQ: It's not easy on many levels but of course it's massively stimulating. It's a choice that induces a state of perpetual reformulation. The movement fuels and is fuelled by urgency. It keeps one fluid and one cannot establish. But we also suffer from the sense of frustration of often not having the time and continuity to bring things to a full definition because we're consistently moving on. There is an inevitable drive towards refining one's language and the need to develop strongly with other people, dancers and performers that we are building up strong relationships to. Also the drive to find other strategies to oneself, to the outside. Strategies for the development of performance and I guess a need to work with a sense of responsibility to a larger situation.

Little by little two bases seem to have formed themselves, one in Australia and one in Denmark and for the moment we're seeing if we can make this work. We spend extended time in each place and our planning is now more concentrated on a long term development. We're wondering if it's possible to create a performing unit or a group that can work in both places, an I.C.B.P.U. 'Inter-Continental Ballistic Performance Unit' missed! ... that seems to be the dream anyway...

Budô: Basic Genealogy

Budô originated in Japan in the late 1950s in a period of great political upheaval and cultural turmoil. It is often seen as a response to the war, the turbulency of that time and a need to transcend the predominate cultural imports and sympathies of that period. Appropriating elements from traditional Japanese theatre, Japanese ritual ceremonies and German expressionism, the main architect and originator was Tatsumi Hijikata although perhaps the most famous exponent is the Japanese octogenarian Kazuo Ohno.

Chronology

De Quincey/Lynch Productions,
(TDQ = Tess de Quincey & SL =
Stuart Lynch)

1995

Paradance 17 - Fuck Me (SL),
Hollbaek & Copenhagen (Cop) in
Denmark (Dk), Artspace, Syd and
Griffith Uni, Bris.

Paradance 18 - Fable (SL, collab
with theorist Nicholas Zurbrugg), DMA,
Iris & Cop Dk.

Paradance 19 - Lecture (SL), Griffith
Uni & QM Uni of Arts, Bris.

Is.2 (TDQ), Browns Mart Theatre,
Darwin, Arakoon Arts Centre, Alice
Springs, Town Hall, Lismore & Dance
North, Townsville.

Lift (SL & TDQ), MGS, Syd

Sense & Paradance 20, 21 (SL &
TDQ), Gerlesborg, Sweden (Swe)

Shoal (SL, TDQ & chor for 17 dancers),
Gerlesborg, Swe

Paradance 16 - Limit (SL & chor for 9
dancers), Hollbaek & Ballenap, Dk.

Paradance 22: The Commandments
- **No Other** (SL collab, with film maker
Jens Jørgen Thorsen), Cop Dk.

Paradance 23: The Commandments
- **Name in Vain** (SL), Cop Dk.

Paradance 24: The Commandments
- **Holy Day** (SL), Cop Dk.

Paradance 25: The Commandments
- **Mother/Father** (SL with Ulrike
Stenkula & Leif Persson), Cop Dk.

Paradance 26: The Commandments
- **Kill** (SL with Jon Ussing), Cop Dk.

Wir 2 (TDQ), SL & chor, for 18
performers), Wuppertal, Germany (Ger)

Paradance 27: The Commandments
- **Adultery** (SL collab, with Lara Erik
Trift), Cop Dk.

Paradance 28: The Commandments
- **False Witness** (SL & TDQ), Cop Dk.

Paradance 33: Butoh Product (SL &
TDQ), Odense Theatre Festival, Dk.

Paradance 30: The Commandments



Paradance 17 Fuck me, Stuart Lynch

- **Last, neighbour, wife** (SL, TDQ &
Anne Katrine Kallmoes, collab with
musician Jørgen Teller), Cop Dk.

Paradance 31: The Commandments

- **Caret** (SL, collab, with musician Per
Buhl Aes), Odense Theatre Festival, Dk.

Paradance 36 (SL with Peter Fraser),
La Mama Theatre, Melb.

1994

Paradance 4 - (+ expected space)
(SL & TDQ), La Mama Theatre, Melb.

2 Solos (chor, by TDQ for Peter Fraser
& Lynne Santos), Dance House, Melb.

Hidden (chor, by SL for Paul Eugene
Gaffney), Dance House, Melb.

Is (TDQ), TPN, Syd & DMA, Bris.

**Paradance 5 - Revolt (Butoh an
English translation)** (SL), Wuppertal,
Ger.

Element & Four (TDQ/SL), Bolnisi,
Swe.

Paradance 7 - Butoh Product (TDQ
& SL), Cambridge, UK.

Paradance 9 - Carve Water (SL,
collab, with sculptor Asa Hergardt),
Bolnisi, Swe.

Paradance 11 - Noir (SL collab, with
photographer Katy Shepherd),
Bolnisi, Swe.

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