

POST DANCE CONFERENCE
15th October 2015 at MDT Stockholm

Hi and welcome to Samlingen. We are Amanda Apetrea, Nadja Hjorton, Stina Nyberg, Halla Ólafsdóttir and Zoë Poluch.

We think the dance scene lacks knowledge about its own history. About stories, traditions, experiences. It lacks knowledge about the people who made the history, not only about those who wrote it.

Every now and then I hear someone describing the dance scene as a “minor” art scene, like one of the small arts. Smaller than theatre. Smaller than visual art. Smaller than literature. I think that this is a self-fulfilling prophecy, which keeps us small through repeating our tinyhood all the time. To bring up the long, rich, embodied knowledge of dance history makes us bigger and reminds us of all the good stuff that people have made.

Also, history tends to be written by men with rational minds and an expensive pen, sitting by their desk whilst a woman cooks the food. The dancer is not really well known as a history writer, but she kind of is. History writing is also made body to body, mouth to ear, and mouth to mouth. This is not to say that dancers do not talk or write. On the contrary, dancers are great talkers and writers. But it is just an attempt to combine two feminist strategies on history writing: one that highlights the physical knowledge, the experience and knowledge transferred body to body, the oral history and herstory of dance. And one that insists on that we, we being everyone that has been excluded from the history books (because of having a vagina, of practising the wrong kind of sex, of using feet to write with, of being silenced as a housekeeper, or as the subject of any kind of racist, ableist or sexist behaviour), that we need to write ourselves into that big book of history.

Samlingen is a collection of past, present and future related dance stuff.

We are five choreographers working together, as a collective, in making choreographic work signed as a group author. It is about how we relate to history, how we think about working together, the hierarchies between work roles, who gets to be the boss and who should be the boss, the whiteness of the black box, the money, the sick leave and parental leave, about working only with people you want to sleep with, about stealing ideas, about feeling like you never will become anything and everyone already knows that. These things, the major dilemmas of living in relationship with dance, can be brought up in Samlingen.

We will state things that for some of you will be stating the obvious, because the risk is that it will not be said at all otherwise. So, if you have heard this before, bear with us.

We believe that there is no apolitical space. This room is not apolitical. This conference is of course not. There is no apolitical choreographer, no apolitical chair, no apolitical dance. We find it important to re-politicize bodies and spaces.

We are doing our best to be politically correct, failing constantly of course. But it is a way of meeting our prejudices and trying to confront them. It is a tool for thinking about stuff acknowledging how fucking complex they are. When can we get past this that some of us always have to carry the weight of identity politics, that some bodies always carry a story, while some of us can simply pass as neutral?

As being 5 white people talking here today, we are accomplices to the racist European dance community. Being here, talking about our experiences, we are actively taking space away from those that repeatedly have been told that they don't belong here, a number of people who have incredible things to say and do inside our field. As being 5 normatively abled persons talking at this conference, we are accomplices to the ablist dance community, a dance community that also blankets over eating disorders, glorifies certain techniques and thinks that dancing can only be done by certain bodies while actively sorting away or exotifying differently abled dancers.

It is super important that choreography puts anyone that is currently marginalised by hegemonic structures of power in their projects, but also important for the rest of the choreographic community

to feature these performances in their reviews, their academic research, their programs, their festivals, their European money networks, their affiliated blogs, their critiques, their conversations. It's a perfect time to paraphrase Courtney Trouble, the icon in the genre, and movement, of queer porn, both a producer and performer of it:

"Hire a trans woman as your personal trainer, hire a woman of color as your editor, hire a sex worker as your boss, hire a dancer with cognitive difficulties in your show, hire each other to look at how we do things. Or just put yourself at the service of others instead of making one more uninclusive work. And you know that no matter what dance school you go to they will call you chubby, and fat and worse words. All under the thin veil of your own best, your way to perfection, you becoming a great dancer. Fat activism is part of the feminist movement. Go home and google it." You can also google this, her keynote speech at the 2014 Feminist Porn Awards, it's on youtube.

"Hej Agnieszka, Aja, Alexandra, Allyson, Alma, Ambra, Anja, Anja, Anna, Anna, Anna, Anna, Anna, Anna, Anna, Anne, Camilla, Carina, Caroline, Catharina, Cecilia, Charlotta, Chrysa, Cilla, Cilla, Cristina, Dalija, Dorte, Efva, Eliisa, Emelie, Emma, Emma, Eva, Eva, Fay, Francoise, Gunilla, Helena, Imenella, Ina, Ingrid, Jeanette, Jeanette, Jennie, Julia, Kajsa, Kajsa, Kajsa, Kajsa, Karina, Katarina, Kathleen, Katja, Katrine, Kristiina, Lena, Linda, Linda, Linda, Linnea, Lisa, Lisa, Lisen, Louise, Louise, Malin, Malin, Margareta, Margaretha, Marie, Maryam, Melina, Minna, Minna, Nicki, Nina, Ofelia, Rani, Rebecka, Rebecka, Salka, Sandra, Sandra, Sara, Sara, Sepidar, Sharon, Siv, Sophie, Stina, Stina, Susanna, Susanne, Susanne, Tove, Tove, Tove, Tove, Tyra, Ulrika, Virpi, Åsa, Åsa,

We want to meet you and write dance history!

We, the choreographers Amanda Apetrea, Nadja Hjorton, Stina Nyberg, Halla Ólafsdóttir and Zoë Poluch work together under the name Samlingen. We earlier did a collaboration with Cullberg ballet where we researched Cullberg ballet's history through an exhibition at the Dance Museum. This 11th of April we want to meet you at Kulturhuset Stadsteatern to together fantasize around and create a timeline from 1974 (Kulturhuset's opening) until today. We imagine that we write dance history from personal memories, anecdotes and historical facts but that there is also place for forgotten, hidden or dismissed history that relates to the past 41 years.

The time line will then be our departure point for a 4 day long public activity in the foyer of Hörsalen during the beginning of September.

The timeline is physically made in a studio at Kulturhuset, the 11th of April between 17-19. We will provide snacks that are needed to make the historical memory juicy -- wine, coffee, cake, popcorn.

We are grateful if you can answer as soon as possible.

With soft hands,

Amanda, Halla, Nadja, Stina och Zoë"

I would like to talk about the magic act of naming, an act that reveals two sharp sides of the same knife depending on who's using it. We need to be able to call ourselves woman when the category of woman is useful in order to organize, emphasize and emancipate. We also need to know when it is not useful. We need to be able to be all of the other things we are: friends, choreographers, bosses, bus drivers, without being girl friends, female choreographers, female bosses and female bus drivers. There are moments when naming is a fruitful strategy, when it can lead to increased agency and emancipation and there are moments when it is not. But naming is always political. We bring the YES association into the room. They say: "We often hear that the deconstruction of essentialized identities, which results from an acknowledgement of the contingency and ambiguity of identity itself, renders feminist political action impossible. Many feminists believe that, without the existence of "woman" as a coherent category, we cannot imagine the possibility of a feminist political movement in which women could unite as women in order to formulate and pursue specific feminist aims. To the contrary, we argue, the deconstruction of essential identities is a necessary starting point for those feminists who are committed to a radical democratic politics, because it highlights the variety of social relations to which the principles of liberty and equality

should apply. Let's demand that we locate our political identity between what we have inherited and what is not yet born, between what we can only imagine and the histories that constrain and shape that imagination."

Is it important that we are women?

Could we, for instance, ask all men to leave the room, like right now?

Could we ask for all the cis men to leave the room?

What would it stir? Would it be worth it?

Don't worry, we aren't gonna throw men out but instead throw into the room a strategy that we have used in one of our more recent projects, that of the strategically separatist room.

In the spring, prior to our residence at Kulturhuset/The House of Culture in September, we had four gatherings where we invited female practitioners to join us in creating a timeline of Kulturhuset, spanning from its opening in 1974 until today. We gathered groups of 10-15 people and asked each guest to bring and share a memory related to dance and choreography. The memory could be as subjective or general as they wanted. Our way of sharing was the "Swedish" circle, where you sit in a circle and get to talk one by one and say what you want to say without being interrupted. After we wrote everything said onto the timeline.

It was quite obvious from the start that this object - the timeline that we created together - was not at all important, but rather it was the fact that we had the gatherings and the conversations. There were some themes or topics that came up in every meeting, themes that also have been mentioned a lot in this conference: institution, feminism, work, school. The fact that these gatherings took place in a separatist room allowed us all to talk from the position of being a women working within the field of dance.

The themes that we generated in these gatherings were then brought to the four days at Kulturhuset Stadsteatern informing our daily activities: a dance we did together with the guests - a speculative and clairvoyant dance that forecast the future that was compiled on a future timeline that also occupied a wall in the space; the samling, the gathering the round table discussion based on the those themes we mentioned that were broadcast on radio.

We bring this up because it refers to history and the writing of a canon. We tried to make a kind of counter-canon of dance, written by women only, while at the same time trying to overflow this canon, gathering too much information for it to actually create a canon. Thus, the dates are not always right, a lot of people tell the same story in different ways and things are written on the timeline that we do not know if they are true or not. They are all subjective stories - emotional, oral and personal stories about how history unfolds. And what happened when having these gatherings is that we became aware of the stories that never got told and were never written down: everyone who did not come, that we did not know we should have invited, what and who we included and excluded in the contemporary dance scene, who the invited people chose to talk about, etc. It seems like a lot of people that continuously are kept out of history continued to fall off our time line, which brought up a lot of thoughts for us, thoughts that have informed what we have chosen to include in what we will talk about with you today.

We are a group of good friends, a friendship that started in dance school and in choreography school. We want to make the conversations that happen when working in friendship, public. We share a friendship with each other, but we also have a shared friendship with certain issues. It's like we have a shared friend that brings us together, and her name is dance. And when we spend time being friends each other and our shared interests it is a way of thinking together, but it is also an escape from work, as a way of becoming more than workers when we meet.

What we have in common:

We are white cis women

We are feminists
We are bisexual, heterosexual and well-educated
We are dancers
We have been sexually harassed one or several times before the age of 13
We are joyful and naive
We are good looking
We like to dance
We want people to feel welcome
We want people to feel included
We are critical
We spent far too long preparing this talk
We are in our thirties
We are emotional (most of us)
We are aware of our weaknesses
We are nervous
We have never done a key-note speech before
We live in Stockholm
We talk with our vaginas
We like to talk
We often finish each other's sentences
We mostly wear pants
We mostly wear black clothes
We talk about fisting
We are kill joys
We know a lot of people
We have some money
We have parents that are still alive
We are invited to institutions
We have anal sex
We say Hi, how are you? What are you doing now? What are you working on. Nice to see you.
We talk about what we are interested in
We know people that live in Brussels
We care about the Swedish dance community
We take care
We talk about failure
We talk about
We love each other
We constantly interrupt each other
We are very good friends
We are good in creating a relaxed atmosphere with a do it yourself esthetic
We want you to stand up
We want you to stay touching the object or body that's touching you if it's already touching you
We want you to close your eyes
We want you to feel the weight of your entire body, from the top of your head to the tips of your toes
We want you to feel that weight move through your hip bones into your heels
We want you to feel this weight transfer from one side to the other
We want you to sway slowly from side to side....

Post-Dance is a five-headed glob with the eyes of an eagle and the ears of a bat. Post-dance is very caring of her young and will play for hours, performing all types of acrobatics. She lives on land, but always has her home near water. She is always on the move and is very curious. This joyful

little creature is adventuresome and will not start a fight unless she attacked first- she assumes that all other creatures are friendly and lesbian - until proven otherwise.

Post-Dance practices sisterhood, aiming to enjoy and share the good fortune of others. She will, for example, offer her partner as a lover to her lonely sister to keep her from drying up and to help with her creative urges. If however Post-Dance is provoked to anger she can be horribly vicious, and attacks with powerful aggression. The very thought of facing Post-Dance angry in a dark ally, makes others run for cover. Her hissing fangs will tear less aggressive opponents to shreds.

Post-Dance loves dancing rituals- dancing just for the sake of dancing, especially when it is about dancing together. With her dance she longs to analyze ways of moving through the world. How she pictures herself in the act of locomotion and what kind of reaction can be created with the energy of movement. Post-Dance also searches for words in order to describe the ways of moving through both the material and spiritual worlds, dancing into her potential.

She loves to share and make up stories of the past present future and the in between. Post-Dance sees herself as a swimming library. She is clairaudient, or able to hear both very low and very high frequencies, she is also psychically developed and fairly telepathic.

Post-Dance shows various types of polygamy usually with members of all sexes, being more or less promiscuous. At times she exhibits monogamous pair formations, lasting through the breeding season. On rare occasions Post-Dance leaves her natural habitat and wanders into big institutions. In those cases she pretends to be an outsider. Crawls on the ground looking for the understory, the subtext, the overlooked, and the downright unfair, then tries to expose it.

Samlingen is initiated by the five choreographers Amanda Apetrea, Nadja Hjorton, Stina Nyberg, Halla Ólafsdóttir and Zoë Poluch. However it does sometimes involve a bigger group of people, in 2013 Samlingen collaborated with the Cullberg ballet and it then included Ása Lundvik Gustafson, Jac Carlsson, Gesine Moog, Patricia Vázquez, Adam Schütt, Vincent Van der Plas, Isabella Edlund, Unn Faleide and Grey Timmers.