Challenging live performance: Dance on Social Media for Wellbeing and to Resist Dance Quarantine during the 2020 Covid-19

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ABSTRACT

2020 marked the year when all human activities faced experiments of all kinds due to the outbreak of COVID-19. Dance was one of the sectors affected by the decisions of lockdown inasmuch as activities like dance classes, dance concerts etc. were interrupted. Face-to-face encounters being interrupted, the dance sector like other performing arts domain incorporated in its practice the presentation of activities through social media. In such a context, to what extend the use of social media as a remote dance arts platform maintained the communication process of the two important components of live performance: the performers and the spectators, and provided wellbeing experiences? Does the power of virtual aesthetics permits the dancer/choreographer to convey a message above his/her horizon to the virtual audience ? This paper argues that the uptake of social media by the dance community due to COVID-19 challenges the conventional consideration of dance as a live performance and gratifies people with wellbeing experiences. Grounded on Digital Research Method and Theoretical sampling, findings reveal that though the dance community was seriously impacted by the COVID-19 in 2020, they challenged space by re-defining innovative strategies that fused with the digital world to limit stress, recreate a social connection and empathy. As a strong response to COVID-19, dancers invaded the social media, stimulating various ways to observe, create, and understand body and space during confinement. With private homes inviting their self as performance venue, the theatres can be considered vintage in terms of creative opportunities dancers/choreographers explore.

Key words: COVID-19, dance, confinement, wellbeing, social media, digital space, live-performance

INTRODUCTION

Since the outbreak of the coronavirus (COVID-19) in Wuhan in December 2019, and acknowledged as a Public Health Emergency of International Concern by the World Health Organisation (WHO) on 11th March 2020, human wellbeing has been very challenging. With quarantine imposed as one of the strict measures to slow it blowout, human security, activities, and welfare were seriously threatened. One of the sectors to suffer from this was the dance industry which received this decision as a knockback and professionals were required to 'reasses their programs and discern how to make things work in a socially distanced post COVID-19 world.' (Dale and McGreevy-Nichols, 2021) Conscious of the role 'entertainment

plays in maintaining morale' (Abra, 2009: 286), to respond to this difficult moment, the WHO suggested that people in confinement should 'stay connected and maintain social networks. (…) via telephone, e-mail, social media (...) and engage in healthy activities that (they) enjoy and find relaxing.' (World Health Organisation, 2020) De Witte (2020), citing Jamil Zaki, writes: 'The same technologies that people once blamed for tearing society apart might be our best chance of staying together during the COVID-19 outbreak.' Social media networking now became the answer to maintain social connection while being at home, as it is an interactivite platform where any actor, agent, or participant – from a like, follow can share and extend experiences and ideas through images, videos and texts. (Hadley, 2017; Akram and Kumar, 2017) Questioning the effectiveness of social media to overcome the limitations of space and time notably in dance education becomes urgent as the world is still faced with the conituous mutations of the COVID-19. Engaging in a feedback perspective to assess how dancers managed the pandemic in 2020 is futuristic to withstand this deadly plague which has not yet stopped it journey to sweep humans off the globe.

In fact, the recording and audio-visual broadcasting of performing arts such as dance raise important questions concerning liveness. Alongside the praise associated with the increased accessibility of performances, different scholars had underlined the change in the very nature of the act of performance (Phelan, 1993; Taylor, 2003; Schneider, 2013; Hunter, 2019). Indeed, watching a live performance on a screen modifies the relation of the spectator to performance: while there is a digital co-presence and virtual interaction in dance on screen, the bodily co-presence inherent in the definition of live performance is diluted. It is obvious that the innovative practices of digitality in the domain of art and communication cannot be a substitute to reality but a creative space of its own. With the COVID-19, the culture offered new possibilities of its exploration. It created space for larger audiences to discover and practice dance. Researchers as well as dancers and choreographers could acknowledge that screened dance (Whatley, 2017) or screendance[i] (Boulègue and Hayes, 2015) should be understood above a documentation of live performance though Phelan (1993: 146) claims 'performance cannot be saved, recorded, documented, (…)'. Benjamin's (2000) criticism of the loss of the aura of performance in the era of technological revolution can be argued. Contrary to Benjamin, Taylor (2003) recognises that knowledge is mediated in a variety of media and the body is a site of history, of the living past that haunts every moment felt as present. This diversity of view in rapport to screened performances is to be put into perspective as we think that the social media broadcasting of dance is not a way to compete with and empty theatres. Live and screen performances are therefore not necessarily incompatible but rather complementary and even beneficial, since these recorded shows facilitate dance accessibility. With the social media the question of the ephemerality in dance which is chiefly the reason of the disappearing of dance works is corrected through a broader adaptation beyond dance notation suggested by (Mcfee, 2011: 97-105)

There is no doubt that with the pandemic being an obstacle to face-to-face encounters, the performing arts in general and dance in particular is undergoing a change of form and incorporating in its practice the presentation of dance classes, conferences or performances through the social media in the form of pictures or videos. In such a context we ask to what extend the use of social media as a remote dance arts platform can maintain the communication process of the two important components of live performance: the performers and the spectators, and provide them with wellbeing experiences. We also ask whether the power of virtual aesthetics can permit the choreographer to convey a message above his/her horizon to the virtual audience all over the globe, and how the use of the fondamentals of dance (body, space, time and energy) can be fulfilled in the social media platform and convince the spectator.

Based on these problems, the research observes that during crises such as the H1N1/09 virus (Swine flu) 2009 (Rae, 2011), the 'Dancing Plague, (which), was a significant challenge for public health' (Donaldson, Cavanagh, & Rankin, 1997: 201), the Spanish Flu of 1918 (Martin, 2020), dance suffered isolation. Nevertheless, 'it was during that time of great sadness and uncertainty that the Jingle Dress dance'[ii] spread hope to humans, as they believed it was healing. As the world was battling COVID-19 and the theatres lockdown, dance resisted quarantine through social media, as dancers whether professionnals or not shared inspiring videos of themselves dancing. This clarifies concerns on how the dance community invasion of social media during COVID-19 made dance dynamic, withstanding the death trap and maintaining a social connection and empathy.

This inquiry focuses on an audience that was confined at home during the outbreak of Covid-19 in 2020 and was therefore not forcefully seeking dance in a theatrical context. Consequently, the position of this paper admits that the ephemeral nature of dance can be captured notably when the different body experiences are shared and 'performance becomes a dialogue between ourselves and others as we "make sense".' (DeFrantz and Gonzalez, 2014: 11) The study elucidates the causal relationship between dance on social media and its impact on wellbeing, showing a positive correlation between hedonic and eudaimonic entertainment experiences as identified in some dance content uploaded online in 2020 due to COVID-19. The paper highlights the fact that choreographers proposed innovative ways of using their confined spaced and conveyed strong messages to people worldwide isolated in their homes. Those who engaged in social media dance activities during this period succeeded in keeping social interaction during home confinement and made meaning no matter the absence of live performances.

As such, the investigation argues on the one hand that the uptake of social media by the 'dance community[iii]' during the peak of the Covid-19 in 2020 challenged the conceptualisation of dance to be accomplished only as a live art form. On the other hand, the study being oriented on the audience, the question of pleasure and wellbeing is central to the analysis. A particular interest is thus directed towards dance activities that represent a form of participatory choreography or performance in the image-based domain of dance-media circulating on the internet. We formulate the hypothesis that although dance is originally a direct audience performance activity, through social media, dance becomes timeless and transcends the stage to provide wellbeing experiences to individuals.

In this context, it has been observed a paucity of works on dance entertainment content on social media as a wellbeing experience notably during the 2020 COVID-19 confinement. The contribution that dance makes to wellbeing during health pandemics and notably through social media in todays *covidtime* should be recognised better. Acknowledging that there is enough literature on dance and digital technology (Christina, 2011; Wake, 2018; Smith 2018; Selim, 2020), we regret that despite the worthy social and psychological functions that dance performs during crises, its role in keeping social connection and wellbieng in the digital era during public health pandemics has received little detailed attention from scholars. However, researchers have begun releasing papers on dance and COVID-19.

Indeed, an insufficient literature on dance during public health pandemics has been observed. Nonetheless, Rae (2011), narrating the dancer's experience of the 2019 swine flu in China, shows how the virus impacted human-animal relations, intercultural collaboration and more specifically inter-corporeal relations within the dance studio and questions the dancer's status in a "risk society". A recent work, that of De Graaf, Knoeff and Santing (2021) who, suggesting strategies to cope with COVID-19 and a return to a normalized life, are particularly interested in how dance was historically captured in western societies through citizens'

resources to live and to an extent accept the diffrente virus or death trap that have challenged human existence over the last four centuries. Though the work does not adress dance on social media, it gives an aperçu of how dance was traped in the tunnels of the deadly pandemics. Contrary to the previous work, Zihao's (2020) research, published a year before, elaborates on the question of digital technology blend with dance field as creative and pedagogical tools. The paper outlines how dance educators facilitated the transition during the 2020 COVID-19 and made significant changes to bring simultaneous variations in space, technology, and pedagogy. He sustains that creative frameworks and content has been developed with emerging Virtual Reality techonologies and gifted practitioners with exploratory instruments that articulate collaborative practices. (Smith, 2018) In Kvitkona (2021), she analyses dance practice during COVID-19 lockdown in Moscow and Saint Petersburg. Investigating on corporality through the dancers' own account, the author observes that the spring-summer 2020 provoked lockdown practices dance and conditioned dancers to renegotiate people's bodily relationship with screened dance and their relationships with spaces, physical practices, and performances. Relating to wellbeing, Hassen and Hartling (2021) question the ability of dance to address social isolation notably among older adults during COVID-19. They reveal that despite the increase in loneliness, several positive dance interventions, they piloted, improved on individual body appreciation, awareness of interpersonal boundaries thanks to task-based collaboration. Those who benefited from the social contacts during the interventions improved significantly across all body appreciation. Beside these authors, Katayoun, Barnstaple and DeSouza (2021) based their investigation on the effectiveness of the transition of dance-based programs for people living with Parkinson's disease, to an online environment and how this format provided them with supports and gratifying benefits. Even if the present paper explores the perspective of dance in the digital world, it is not interested in showing how dance-based interventions were offered to a specific population experiencing a health challenge during the CONVID-19 lockdown. Though the contribution of this research also meets that of Katayoun et al. (2021), this inquiry is aimed at showing how the 'dance community' adapted to the fastmoving digital environment to respond to the closing of theatres and dance studios due to the deadly pandemic and provided internet users with entertaining contents that gifted them with wellbeing experiences.

METHOD

The research is grounded on Digital Research Method (DRM) (Costa and Condie: 2020) and theoretical sampling for data collection and analysis. As an innovative research method, the DRM faces numerous challenges ranging from ethical to data collection. Though the DRM encourages honest disclosure, improving validity of data collected online, researchers have to take adequate measures to ensure confidentiality when necessary. The social media is one of the tools of the DRM. Even if the popular use of social media is oriented on Public Relations, today, it is undeniably a place where researchers can obtain, use and disperse information as it has the ability to distribute the information in a very effective way to a huge population. (Makhdoomi and al.: 2017) The data used in this inquiry was collected between March and May 2020. This period is important because it was when the restrictions designed to stop the spread of COVID-19 were put in place and this brought considerable changes to the lives of both professionals of the dance industry, dance amateurs and the audience who had to adapt to the digital space. (Fol, 2021)

Accordingly, we were particularly, but not exclusively, interested with social media like contents communities (YouTube) and social networking sites (Facebook, Instagram). We first went in for an arbitrary selection of data such as textual, visual, and video information,

individuals or groups uploaded to share how they coped with dance activities during quarantine to keep peoples' morale up. To avoid any conflicts of interest and ethical inconveniencies, much credit was given to posts on publicly available pages, sites and platforms that can be accessed by any Internet user without necessarily using a password to complete this data. We provide links that one can access to testify the reactions on the way dancers and the audiences interact on the different platforms in relation to the dance activity they experienced during confinement. Though we did not conducted an interview to specifically identify why people seek out dance performance on social media and what they are looking for in the experience in the context of quarantine, it was easy to perceive their motivations in most of the videos since the texts that accompany the videos gave information on how those who took part reacted and testified their experience. The kinaesthetic empathy as a mode of engaging with dance to achieve pleasure (Reason and Dee, 2010) was generally noticed to be a resilient impulse to justify the spectators' choice to connect to dance on the internet during this period.

Thanks to the comments made by users or written in the videos, the data disclosed information on the name of towns where users resided at the moment they took part in the participatory online dance activities. For the purpose of this work, this inquiry randomly used information from diverse geographical location. Illustrative cases were taken from a variety of settings: Cameroon (sub-Saharan Africa); the United States (North America); France (Europe); Vietnam (South-east Asia); and China (East Asia). The global view of dance activities around the world during COVID-19 through this geographical diversity gives credit to the part dance on social media plays during hard times. Data coding and analysis were done simultaneously as we developed categories and analytic codes. Through a theoretical sampling, different categories were refined to select relevant information that we deemed useful analytical codes.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Whether as a performance art, a media performance, or as a post media practice, dance is a medium of human expression and connection that can be understood through communicative, physical, mental, emotional and artistic aspects. Conceptualised as a performing art, it is acknowledged to be a live art because it is performed directly by living, behavioural, mobile bodies in the framework of art, culture and society. Whereas, as a media performance, dance is theorized as a living art mediated through electronic or digital tools, including 'live' understood as dance used in the media practice and system of communication and mediation (television, digital systems, communication networks). In the context of post media practice, dance implies a significant transformation that involves choreography and dance in the production of emotional aesthetic values to the conceptual field of reassessing and investigating the status of dance as a subject of cultural practice.

These three dimensions of dance are discussed in the present research. In doing so, we adopt an eclectic approach to handle the diversity of dance practice during the 2020 COVID-19 pandemic through the social media. Eclecticism is a conceptual approach that does not hold one theory beyond another and does not clench strictly to a single paradigm or set of suppositions to clarify a situation. As such, instead of sticking to one standard approach (Al Hamash, 1985) of dance, appropriating a sort of mixed style in the dance art, this study nourishes upon a variety of theories and ideas to gain complementary insights into the subject. (Uji and Awuawuer, 2014) In fact, variety in performance is usually appreciated and being rigid to a specific theory might not allow for enough argument and communication. The combination of a miscellany of dance theories in this investigation makes it possible to create

diversity and contrast. Four different approaches are used to evaluate how dance through the social media due to confinement cheered and provided spectators and participants with welfare above live performance. These are: philosophical; sociological, therapeutic; and aesthetic communication theories.

THE DIGITAL NECESSITY: THE "DANCE COMMUNITY" RESPONSE TO COVID-19

Since 2020, the COVID-19 is part of our everyday life and has become not only the real centre of social practices and the source of any form of social perception but also the object of historical analysis (1999). The everyday life of the dance community before the March 2020 confinement which was characterised by intensive training, festivals, live performances, and conferences etc., has been threatened and is witnessing a significant change in its' everyday practices. With the consequences of these changes imposed by social distance and quaratine that limited opportunities to access and enjoy cultural goods and services, initiatives were taken by dance professionals whose sector's capacity to create and distribute new artistic expressions outside of the digital spectrum was challenged. Indeed, the coronavirus had a substantial influence on dance activities such as concerts, workshops, classes, competitions, festivals, etc: 'We are finding the field of dance to be particularly challenged with this new reality', said Ostersmith (2020), director of dance at Gonzaga. In fact, one of the dance community's task was to defy the conception of dance performance ' as a display for others, and time-limited' (Liu & Glorianna Davenport, 2005: 237).

Following this challenge, Schneider's (2013: 138) interrogation can be put into perspective: '(I)f we consider performance as "of" disappearance, if we think of ephemeral as that which "vanishes", and if we think of performance as the antithesis of "saving", do we limit ourselves to an understanding of performance predetermined by cultural habituation to the patrilineal, west-identified (arguably white cultural) logic of the Archive?' Her enquiring supports the fact that images are intrinsically part of the world in which we are born and performance must account for humans, their environment, and the actual world are inseparable from images.

The digital revolution has become an integral part of society, interwoven into many aspects of everyday life qnd 'individuals worldwide are now estimated to spend an average of around 450 min each day using media. » (Vordere and Halfmann, 2019 : 2) This was an opportunity for the dance community to stay dynamic. As compared to previous deadly public health pandemics during which dance suffered quarantine, 'COVID-19 has meant closing theatres (…), but the shows have gone on.' (Martin, 2020)

Undoubtedly, performances were cancelled across the world; the financial repercussions of a global pandemic went from hypothetical to real. This was especially true in the dance community, where many institutions are non-profits or small businesses operating on thin margins, and performers rely on gigs that are being cancelled. Nonetheless, the dance family gave life and hope to dance artists. One of its major activities of the year, The International Dance Day was celebrated online. Nomatter the stress, dance organisations lended hands to dance artists and recommend professionnals to elaborate a business continuity plan as they archived their dance activities online for times of memory. Although the battle against COVID-19 took a toll on dance activities, and the dance community worldwide asking the question "How can we sustain international relationships and global dialogues within dance education in light of COVID-19?" (Tuomeiciren and Martin, 2020:5), dancers were engaged to bring beauty and joy through social media into the world and make it move forward:

> In times of Covid-19 virus-related "confinement", health and wellbeing are of utmost importance, even if we have to change our habits and routines. Through this lockdown culture, the performances in front of an audience and similar activities are being hit hard. Cultural activities are diametral to measures of such kind of confinement because especially the performing arts, including dance, always intend to bringing people from all walks of life closer, in communication and into dialogue. (…) this aspect of bringing people together is most valuable and essential. But they cannot happen at the moment. (…) We need to keep our passion alive. That is the reason the members and friends of dance are continuing to celebrate International Dance Day in 2020 online (…). [iv]

The above response of the the General Secretariat Team of International Theatre Institute (ITI) is clear ; online entertainment through dance activities is very welcomed to cope with the pandemic in this time of social distancing and quarantine ; using the body to share advice for staying safe, active and positive makes the world move. Such understanding appears not only reasonable, but also indispensable. South African dancer Maqoma (2020: 6) agrees 'we must free others from the entrapments they face in different corners of the world. (And) become a force of movement weaving hearts, touching souls and providing healing that is so desperately needed.' Some interesting text messages that we collected from the International Dance Community shared due to the International Dance day[v] to stimulate social participation and life satisfaction highlights dancing as a wellbeing experience. As such, Rumi says 'Dance, when you're broken open. Dance, if you've torn the bandage off. Dance in the middle of the fighting.' For as Lynda Barr claims 'Any kind of dancing is better than no dancing at all' because "When you dance, your purpose is not to get to a certain place on the floor. It's to enjoy each step along the way', concludes Wayne Dyer. Undeniably, this has to do with subjective happiness and the experience of enjoyment in opposition to discontentment considered including the difficult moments of life the pandemic is imposing on individuals.

Dance entertainment on social media does not only offer pleasures of the mind, but dancers offers a wide range of hedonic and eudaimonic wellbeing as the spectators are called upon to participate in quarantine dance activities . Surely, those initiating online dance activities consider that happiness is not only reducible to physical hedonism but can be derived from attainment of goals in diverse circumstances as dance goes 'viral' in cyberspace. Dance propfessionals and amateurs were on the backlines every day offering innovative entertainment moments which led to more participatory pratice of dance in a context where the performer/audience had gone beyond the theatre with the conventional stage space and time.

DISTANT SOCIALISING DANCE SHARED MOMENTS GO VIRAL ON SOCIAL MEDIA

Hanna (1995: 223) argues 'Dance conditions an individual to moderate, eliminate or avoid tension, chronic fatigue and other disabling conditions that result from the effects of stress. There is no doubt, the lockdown did more psychological harm to people worldwide and they looked for activities such as dance to bring them out of the stressing life imposed by the pandemic. Fortunately, with digital media, the understanding of togetherness and shared moments is improving and to some extent, redefines time and space in the dance context. In an interview with Anni Leino, Häyrynen admits that dance on social media 'reasserts a social priority for dance, which is to say, they configure dance as a site of social exchange and engagement by providing vehicles for sharing and circulating dance.' (Bench, 2010:184) Whether in times of euphoria or dysphoria, the history of human civilisations is testimony that dance plays an important role in the development of wellbeing. Though 'We are leaving through unimaginable tragedies, in a time that I could best describe as the post-human era' (Maqoma, 2020: 6), and the spread of the deadly COVID-19 has changed the way people

interact with each other, dance lovers stay in connection through the social media with interesting wellbeing experiences that make them feel good and at the same time, share their happiness with others around the world.

A video downloaded from https://www.expressandstar.com presents a dance teacher, Janet Woodcock, who, to distant anxiety, offers a social distance dance to keep spirits up and ease comfort. People concerned about the fragility of their bodies and wellbeing engage in « self-reflexive performance (...) with an audience that is their social and cultural milieu. » (Liu and Glorianna Davenport, 2005: 237). The video transmits the body movements of both old and young people who are an embodiment of expression, rhythm and positive emotions that reveal the beauty of the dance and impact on the viewers' feeling and providing them with happiness (Ryff, 2008). According to Janet Woodcock: 'It's given us fun, enjoyment, something really positive to think about and perhaps more importantly, we are getting something to know one another in the many cases for the first time. (…) coming out in the street dancing about (…) is just enjoying it, which is great because it's making everybody smile now.'[vi] Beyond enjoyment, participants are gratified with eudaimonic wellbeing of relatedness as well as central values : 'There's this connection going on and we're hoping that will carry on long after all of this.' said Janet Woodcock. Dance activities during COVID-19 on social media naturally influence the audience's reconsideration of their day-to-day kinesthesia and geographies, it gave way to a geographical engagement creating place-making, and sharing empathy amongst participants. Tuan (2001) examining the interaction and implication of "space" and "place" says place is security and space is freedom. Moreover, dance is developing with technologies as both (dance and technology) influence each other. (Gray, 1989: 1) and all are not only about motion caption technology. Dance on social media becomes a medium of wellbeing memory whose transmission is renewed each time Internet users 'sway to the rhythm of the motion (they) see' (Foster, 2011: 11). The memory of life during COVID-19 is registered in the body, and becomes an important media of history. Absolutely, performing dance can be a very positive emotional experience especially when the passion is shared. Indeed, dance on social media goes above cultural, social and racial barriers in contrast to dance created for theatrical stage which is intended to be more or less passively consumed to some extent, by a selective audience.

Nonetheless, there has been a noticeable challenge with regards to cultural appropriation and racial discourse, with the sharing of viral dance videos. It is true, some researchers assert that '(…) the most-followed stars of TikTok are not only young, but female, normatively feminine, white and wealthy.' (Kennedy, 2020:1072)Though a racial tendency can be identified in Kennedy's argument, it should be noted that the TikTok application made dance to breach the limits of social exclusivity during the peak of COVID-19.This is particularly true of Jason Campbell's[vii] 'Oh na na na' doctor's TikTok videos , which went viral and resonating with a much wider audience in need of cheering. Truly, Pearce (2020) opinion on cultural appropriation due to TikTok is thought-provoking. He writes:

> The dance challenges (…) have been taken up by the mostly white stars who dominate the platform (…) The white stars feed on the content of smaller users in an act of vampirism, growing stronger as competitors wither away, using culture as a commodity to maintain their positions. Obviously, thousands, and sometimes millions, of people of all races participate in TikTok trends, but the most visible (…) of these users are white.

Undeniably, unlike the fourteen-year-old black dancer from Georgia, Jalaiah Harmon TikTok videos, whose Renegade dance was usurped (Vandermark, 2020); Campbell's did not suffer from the lack of attribution. Just as Kennedy (2020) asserts that the coverage of TikTok of the American Charli D'Amelio's dance challenges during the lockdown appeared to be an antidote to the deadly and destructive global effects of the COVID-19, so too was Campbell's doctor

TikTok. According to Campbell: 'The dancing smiles and laughter is not meant to detract from the seriousness of COVID-19 or minimize its severity (…) It is a small chance to change someone's day, to lighten the mood if only momentarily, and to work together through this tough time.' (O'sullivan, 2020) The 'Dr. TokTok's' videos that gathered 492344 views with 9.4k likes was welcomed worldwide and caught the attention of ranging artists like Janet Jackson who retweeted one of them to keep the connection and continue making dance positively viral.

In a way, the credit given to Campbell's video is a counter discourse on racial appropriation that most critics observe as far as TikTok application and the whitewashing of Black popular culture are concerned. Viewers who encountered Campbell's dance steps designed to bring wellbeing experience during COVID-19 expressed their satisfaction and appreciation. Citing Campbell, O'sullivan (2020) writes: 'I got a message (…) from someone who said 'my family member has the virus and we watch these videos together while they recover.' Spectators and participants were gratified with psychological needs as both patience suffering from COVID-19 and the medical staff, for example engaged in the battle against the fatal virus. In the same way, the "Medical staff dance with Wuhan's Coronavirus patients' video had a viewed score of 436547 and 4.8k of likes, indicating that 'the rise of digital technologies has disturbed the popular belief that dance is a 'self-sufficient art' (Wake, 2018). This is not surprising as dance experiences seem to have become extremely important for many individuals in today's media-saturated world. (Vorderer & Halfmann, 2019) The variety of videos uploaded to raise peoples' spirit during the COVID-19 confinement is acknowledged by viewers who enjoyed watching them. An Instagram follower reacts: 'I'm writing to you in case you have missed my comment. We really liked your video and we'd be glad to have it on Rumble.com.'

DANCE ON SOCIAL MEDIA CHALLENGES SPACE AND TIME

Trapped in the quarantine imposed by the health pandemic, dance professionals imagined innovative ways to keep the rhythm of the heart in connection with space and time. They developed original ingenuities, made previously-recorded performances available online or gave another life to the physical spaces where they were confined. Their home became their best allied to challenge the dead of dance and live performance programmed by COVID-19. The digital space was invited into their privacy and acknowledged as the means to reach their audience and touch new spectators who could not have accessed their performances unless they had been uploaded or live streamed online.

In fact, dance should be accessible to all humanity and is not to be restrained in a dark closet, accessed and enjoyed by a selected view and privileged. Bringing dancers talent and knowhow into the digital world, the social media reduced the risk of seeing dance performance die in the wasteland of forgotten past. It offered dancers and choreographers new opportunities to share dance, explore their bodies with others and enjoy in community in the production of space (Lefvre, 1991). With the COVID-19 experience, dancers used the physical home to produce a space that is fundamentally bound up with the social reality in simultaneity with time in relation to human beings in their corporeality and sensuousness, and imagination, entering into relationship with each other through dance and the social media. According to this understanding, space and time are conceptualised as immaterial factors which are socially constructed in the context of the pandemic and making it essentially historical with physical homes which were given a new social realities. For some dance professionals and amateurs, the social media melted with their home to become their disco, a dance studio or a 'theatre'.

- *My home my 'theatre'*

With the impact of the COVID-19 on human activities and wellbeing, dance professionals could not have been insensible and unresponsive. Confined in their houses and its environment, choreographers looked at it as an opportunity to transform it to a creative space and express their feelings about the pandemic. The home became an innovative space that acts as a medium of expression through the social media. (Yanuartuti and Handayaningrum, 2020) This contemporary vision of dance, where choreographers offer virtual dance aesthetics, has been questioned by Benjamin (2000). To his opinion, recording, by its mechanical aspect, is opposed to the authenticity of liveness since it alters the relationship to time and space: it decontextualizes and delocalizes performance. This premise echoes Foster's (2011) judgment who thinks that the viewers' involvement to dance performance is shaped by common and dominant senses of the body and subjectivity pending social moments. Though these scholars claim for an absolute physical connection between the audience and the performer, for performance to be accomplished, their positions are arguable notably in the context of COVID-19 lockdown during which conditions of creation and watching shifted significantly. From the theatre to the home, garden and the street, people could watch or take part in dance performances thanks to digital tools. At this point, it is important to note that if the experience of moving as a spectator when watching a dance show does not bring a new perspective to choreography, it is sometimes impossible, just for pleasure sake, for the spectator to stop his body from trying to imitate and reproducing the dance movement in the piece though far from the performativity.

Yet, the challenge of space through dance in social media has brought innovative perspectives in contemporary dance. With the physical space at home connected to the internet, the two spaces- the home-private space and the internet-public space- have melted into one and is accessible to everyone with an Internet connection. One of the prominent works showing a dancer performing and exploring her living spaces is the performance of the Cameroonian choreographer; Audrey Fotso titled *World Vs Invisible*. Showing how quarantine has impacted creative dancing, the choreography explores the space of the dancer's apartments from her bedroom passing through the living room to the garden inscribing her body onto surfaces inside and outside the home. Above using the home and the social media for performance, her dance reveals 'a celebration of girlhood in the face of the pandemic, and can be seen to contribute to the transformations of girls "bedroom culture" (citing McRobbie and Garber, 2006) 'from a space previously understood as private and safe from judgement, to one of public visibility, surveillance and evaluation.' (Kennedy, 2020: 1069) Nevertheless, above this privacy, the home has been transformed into a space as a media of expression. In a way Fotso's show is an exposure of the 'truth'-seeking-life's poignancies and vulnerabilities the COVID-19 has provoked. Thanks to the social media, dance reveals an extract of life as we live it. Fotso's *World vs Invisble* portrays a scale of the sociopolitical and cultural aspect of the impact of COVID-19 as it is lived the cameroonian society.

In her catchy choreography she links the impact of the virus to nuclear war on humans as she shows how to protect against the deadly virus. Using a pop music which is characteristic of youths' culture and environment, and constructed over a dynamic and rapid rhythm to illustrate the speed in which the various is affecting the world, she uses dramatic expressivennes to elaborate and design movements with high emotional strength. Audrey Fotso personifies a variety of feelings through a rich motion indicating the interpretive expressiveness of her kinesthesia within space, time and energy. Her choice of music, costumes and scenery are related to the subject of her dance performance and contribute to create substantial meaning. She puts in each movement high sensitivity and strength to attest that life is still around us and

it matters. The different gestures in the video are an illustration of all the emotional experiences people around the world feel: determination and strength that has been handcuffed by fear and uncertainty due to confinement. Basing her performance on what the society is going through closely relates her work to both Michel Fokine's and Isadora Duncan conception of dance. While Duncan created an "interpretive dancing" that is society oriented, Fokine insisted on dramatic expressiveness and believed dance should draw on movements reflecting the subject, era and music.

Aesthetically, Fotso designed movement pattern articulated between lower and upper-levels to symbolise power and weakness. While some movements express the outbreak of COVID-19 with pattern design as an attitude to avoid the virus, others are built to look for strength, above human understanding, like when in her bed she lifts her head towards the sky as she gets up from sleep. To release timelessness, the dancer articulates aspects of tempo, rhythm and duration as she constantly plays with her body refusing to be pinned to the ground. Like a spring, she leaps each time to seek energy and strength thanks to movements which propel her to give life to the series of gestures which she manipulates between swiftness and slowness. From the bedroom to the gardern passing through the living room, she designs bumpy and trembling movement patterns to show how, whether indoors or outdoors, the terror and uncertaintity provocked by COVID-19 surround us. The hands which she brings each time to her chest symbolises the desire to challenge and release the presure caused by the pandemic. Through this constant movement which connect her internally externally and vice versa, she activates the body and its perception towards a more sensitive way of living. The strenghth of the movements, the time pattern and the spatial exploration the dancer expresses in the home could not have been the same if the performance was created to be performed lively.

World vs Invisible in a way, suits dance historian Bryson's (1997) opinion about the impact of modernity on dance when he makes a relationship between dancers and machines. If from the point of view of the choreographer, this is significant because it offered her a new space for dance exploration and experimentation, from that of the audience, the dancers look like strangers in their own spaces, using the private space in an avant-garde way and renegotiating their place in the home. With private homes inviting their self as performance venue, the theatres can be considered vintage in terms of creative opportunities dancers/choreographers can explore. One wonders whether no matter the limitations and convenience of consumption of such performance, this perspective of contemporary dance does not bring to light a substantial change in dance education that can be strengthened as response to COVID-19 to reconnoitre innovative opportunities (Tuomeiciren and Martin, 2020:5) for the development of dance. This performance does not only contribute in reinforcing the environmental choreographic trend but updates the question of the production of space initiated by Lefebvre (1991).

- *My home my dance studio*

Obviously, owing to quarantine obligations and no matter the numerous advantages of home-based dance programs, like the one conducted by the Cameroonian dancer Carine Bahanag, the potential limitations of such practice should not be ignored. In fact, teaching dance virtually is challenging and requires an adaptation to a two-dimensional teaching environment (Gingrasso, 2020). For instance, to avoid physical contact, Bahanag shoot her videos, uploaded them on YouTube and shared the links on Facebook, WhatsApp and Instagram for users to get access. She experienced the web as a site of presence and plenitude (Nicholls & Philip, 2012: 590) and equipped participants with self-realisation gratifications that strongly align with and enhance eudaimonic dimensions of wellbeing. Nonetheless, the need for confidence to engage with

digital technologies and risk of privacy exposure constitute in a way a barrier to participation, including the fact that the social aspects of dance is difficult to capture in the virtual settings and pre-recorded sessions. The defeat of group dynamic and face-to-face interactions with the instructor and the other dancers obstruct the enjoyment of classes and limit the physical, cognitive and psychological benefits associated with dance teaching. However, above these limitations, using social media for dance teaching and learning while participating in education (Zihao Li & Timothy Teo, 2017) facilitated the understanding of wellbeing beyond enjoyment and arousal dimensions of dance during *covidtime*. Self-development including autonomy were experienced both by dancers and viewers who exercised at their homes as they participated in Carine Bahanag's series of fascinating virtual African dances classes to keep the community thriving and connect with African values of sociability and thereby expanding and reinforcing their social ties through dance cultures networks and interactions. She turned social distancing into social togetherness across distance and use dance education to bring people to exceed the limitations of their body as they are experienced in their specific culture and everyday use. (Primus, 1996:3) In this way, the unicity of digital co-presence and virtual interaction should be considered. Dance on social media during confinement became a form of distant socialising that provided everyone with training in participation in virtuality, which in turn became reality.

Owning up that this form of dance teaching is challenging, participants in Bahanag's dance classes shared their personal videos as feedback of their competence growth, talents and demonstrate what they learned. Certainly as Walmsley (2016) puts it, digital engagement with audience facilitates cognitive decoding and enhances kinaesthetic and emotional responses during an artistic event. The positive experiences that arose during and after a dance classe video exposure on social media as compared to direct performance was assured and incessant as people could replay and watch as many times as they wished a dance video that made them learn something on their personal development and identity (Vorderer, Klimmt, & Ritterfeld, 2004).

CHEERING THE WORLD WITH "DISTANCEDANCE"

The outbreak of COVID-19 followed by the lockdown gave way to new trends of dance challenges that people worldwide could download to reduce the ennui that characterised this moment. Among the numerous dance challenges uploaded online, that of the American young girl Charli D'Amelio was acknowledged one of the most-followed creator on TikTok and could be considered the first TikTok star to reach 50 million followers in *covidtime*. (Kennedy, 2020:1070). For Charli D'Amelio, as cited by Lustig (2020), 'Dancing has become a go-to strategy for people and organizations to advocate for safety and prevention measures within the on-going public health crisis.' Above using the social media as a site of youth culture and the celebration of girlhood, d'Amelio's dance challenge is an interactive experience in cyberformance that makes the audience and participants co-authors of a funding project she intiated to activate relatedness in order to assist and cheer communities seriously impacted by COVID -119. The viewers escaped from the passive position to share their subjectivity as they co-present, contribute to the fate and fame of the dance (Selim, 2020) and make the performances go viral on social media.

The wide display of dance on social media attests that the dance community is firm to show her strength in evolving and articulating the digital for dance and mankind sake. Incorporating the fact that social media has strengthened the construction of celebrity and femininity of the contemporary girl culture (Kennedy, 2019), d'Amelio also succeeded in making meaning above feminist considerations with her dance. She created happiness, positive relationships

with people around the world, feeling of purpose including personal growth and development. The rapid recognition of social media's cultural visibility during the COVID-19 pandemic has surely contributed to the affirmation of the youths' culture as a whole. Anyway, what could be better than a young generation full of energy and novelty, to bring optimism to a world gripped in the hands of the coronavirus? The social media gave space to the youths in general to use their energy to attest that 'hard times require furious dancing' (Alice Walker, 2010: xiii). It is in this light that, in conceptualizing dance, dance theorist Enem posits that young boys and girls uploaded choreographies online to sensitise on issues beneficial to the individual as well as to the society (Kleiber, Walker, & Mannell, 2011), helping to inform them and prevent risk bahaviours (Eccles, Barber, Stone, & Hunt, 2003) and enhance wellbeing in this time of COVID-19. The famous 'Ghen Covy Challenge' (Figure 13) dance trend designed by the young Vietnamese, Ho Chi Minch's Quang Dang, choreographing a hygiene-hyping dance that supports the WHO recommendations against COVID-19, urges the public to 'push the coronavirus away" by abstaining from 'rubbing one's nose, mouth, and eyes, limiting visits to public places' and most notably washing hands systematically. According to a comment published on 8th March 2020 on YouTube[viii], this "infectious" new dance form released on diverse social media platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram or Snapchat Discover, amassed more than 200,000 reactions on TikTok and produced mutant versions worldwide since 'Such a creative and helpful dance, and melody sounds phenomenal'[ix]

CONCLUSION

The invasion of social media by dance artists and amateurs was a strong response to cope with COVID-19. The Social media paved the way for the dance community to prevent dance from suffering confinement and cheered individuals with innovative dance entertainment experiences. Internet users who engaged in the dances found it pleaurable, interesting and fulfilling. Without competing with theatre and live performance, the much-celebrated impact of the 2020 COVID-19 is that the social media stands as an alternative medium to link creators and their audiences. People worldwide could access dance content without any space limitation and enjoying dance. Thus it can be concluded that, through the shows held online, confinement did not stop the communication process between the creators and their audience. Such a large presence of online dance has resulted in a range of online performances never seen before and creating new dance trends. Choreographers developed an impressive imagination in dance creation as they challenged the spaces where they were confined. Accordingly, the contemporary dance has seen the emergence of innovative ways of linking the body to virtual space developing in this way virtual dances and performances. Moreover, concerning wellbeing, dance certainly had an impact on the welfare of those who took part in participatory dance activities. However, beyond keeping participants engaged in dance activities and gratifying them with wellbeing through the COVID-19 crises, it is pertinent to examine how the experience of this situation might design forthcoming provision of dance programs notably as new variants (Omicron) of the COVID-19 is continuing and threatening everyday life. In this context and in the longer term, it is evident that digital spaces and resources will change the landscape of the dance community practices. This is not to say digital practices will substitute live performances, rather it should be considered as an adjuvant to keep dance dynamic. Nevertheless, it is high time dance artists determined ways to withstand the inconveniencies the digital space for dance practices and conceived suitable settings for their creation and performances.

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[i] Marisa Hayes, in May, Emily, "Screening Times", Springback Magazine, January 2021, says "Screendance, in a very wide definition, consist of choreography that's been created specifically for the screen, and directly in collaboration with audio-visual materials."

ii Rich Tupica explains that the Jingle Dresses were created by Native American communities during the 1918 Spanish flu pandemic. These dresses are again offering inspiration and healing as the indigenous jingle dress dancing goes 'viral' on social media to help heal the world, https://nativenewsonline.net/entertainment/created-during-the-1918-spanish-flu-pandemic-jingle-dresses-are-once-again-offering-inspiration-healing/, *Published April 7 2020.*

iii This expression is borrowed from Jun Hong Jo, Vice- President of World Dance Alliance, who used it in her enouragement video adressed to dancers during the International Dance Day 2020.

iv The General Secretariat Team of ITI, Editorial – Let's Celebrate International Dance Day 2020, https://www.international-dance-day.org/mainevent.html? accessed, 29 April 2020

v https://www.indiatvnews.com/lifestyle/books-culture-happy-international-dance-day-2020-quotes-sms-images-whatsapp-messages-facebook-greetings-612248

vi "Dancing in the street has boosted community spirit, neighbours say" in Express and star UK News, published April 3 2020, https://www.expressandstar.com/news/uk-news/2020/04/03/dancing-in-the-street-has-boosted-community-spirit-neighbours-say/

vii Dr. Jason Campbell, is a resident physician in the Department of Anesthesiology and Perioperative Medicine at Oregon Health and Science University, and has quickly grown a large following around the world through dance videos he posts on the video-sharing app TikTok, earning him the nickname Dr. TikTok.

viii Tiktok Viral Videos - Washing Hand Dance - Ghen Covy Covid-19 Song Dance, published 8 march 2020,

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=npseW_PBl-0

ix One Facebook fan commented.