

Choreographer recruits and trains dancers on YouTube

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Arts Hub has already reported on the trend for dancers to use YouTube as a promotional tool or a performance space. But now we've found another way dancers are using YouTube to their advantage. For the first time we've seen someone use YouTube to recruit and train performers - so YouTube is used to rehearse and create the performance itself, and as a collaborative tool.

We asked the man responsible for this innovation, choreographer Augusto Corrieri, why he chose YouTube? "To be honest, it came from a very practical reason: I don't have a company of 10 performers! I needed to find a way of rehearsing with people. Plus, the performance is taking place in Birmingham, but I am based in Brighton: so YouTube is proving to be the perfect tool for people in Birmingham to learn the piece. We will only meet the day before the show to rehearse all together".

When Augusto put out his call for performers, he was looking for anyone who understood the message, rather than seasoned dancers. The first part of the performance involves movements that are traditionally seen as workshop preparation, but that Augusto sees as a show in itself. Theatre games, warm up exercises, arm and leg movements, simple stretches – as he says in his recruitment video, when you watch these non-performance performances "it can be quite funny, quite moving, although the people doing it don't necessarily know that".

"I am interested in making performances that can be described as dance, although very little dance happens on stage," he explains. "There are 10 performers standing on stage, some of whom are trained and others completely new to performance. Although they do very little (simple warm up exercises and movements), there is so much going on simply because of their presence," he says.

After putting out the call for performers, he was surprised by the response he got. "I was looking for 10 people and received about 25 emails from people wanting to take part. Because I wasn't expecting such a high number, I had to take the ones who best described why they were drawn to the project. Background and training were completely irrelevant: the cast includes a computer science student and a person who has never set foot on stage. In fact, I didn't take a couple of experienced performers simply because they didn't seem to be at all engaged with the idea," he says.

From now until two days before the performance, the performers will be rehearsing in front of their separate computers using his YouTube videos - and anyone can log on and watch his instructions. The day before the show they will meet in Birmingham to go through it together, before they perform at a theatre event organised by the B-Theatre.

Augusto's demonstration of the performance in his first video is, in a very curious post-modern way, a play and a performance in itself - you can't help but wonder if he's going to be tying this into his themes of rehearsal and performance. The whole venture from recruiting his dancers to the performance itself is really part of the performance.

But how will it come together on the day? "I am attracted to the idea of opening the performance up to the unpredictable: different people will do the same actions in very different ways. So although I 'control' the score of the piece, once it starts it is up to the performers to carry it off and find their own ways of doing it. There is a strong degree of risk, of trusting someone simply because they are brave enough to take part in this." Augusto says.

Augusto trained in Devon, at Dartington College of Arts, which, as he points out is sadly closing down. "It is the only place I think in Europe to offer a course in which you can genuinely experiment and are treated as an artist", he says. Since graduating he has worked with two performance companies, Deer Park and Propeller, and has made and presented performance works in the UK and Europe. In 2005 he started attending numerous dance improvisation workshops, which gave him the energy to start doing solo works.

The results of the YouTube rehearsals will feature as part of PILOT at the B Theatre in Birmingham on 12 April.