

From Bad Idea Magazine- Winter 2008

Augusto Corrieri
Choreographer

Near the internet? Go to You tube and search 'Augusto Corrieri'. Check out 'Intro video for "Dance company"' at the Exeter Phoenix 26th February'. Play it, turn up the volume setting, and watch as an unshaven young man in a cream foulard scarf and knit jumper talks to you in a light Italian accent .

"Hi, my name is Augusto. This is a studio in Brighton from where I will be teaching you a piece called 'Dance company'. The piece will happen at the Exeter Phoenix. Some of these videos you can just watch and listen to. Others, you will have to watch two or three times, and also copy what I do."

Cut to Corrieri in a small and pristine studio with white walls. Dressed in denim jeans and a gray T-shirt, he jogs around the room before collapsing face first onto the floor. We are invited to copy him.

"You will need an internet connection, a computer, and enough space around you to rehearse... The idea is that the day before the show, we will all come together for one rehearsal of about three or four hours. That will be the first time we meet, so it will be good to say hello."

Now skip across the You tube page to 'Instruction video 2'. Midway through the clip, we see 10 people standing in line on stage in a previous performance of the routine in Plymouth. A girl runs from the line, doing a single circuit of the stage before collapsing on the floor." Then, a man steps out of line, and walks across to the girl.

"Zoe, are you OK?"

"Yes, I'm fine" she says.

"Well if you're fine why do you go..." the man copies her, running a single circuit of the stage before himself falling to the floor.

The audience laughs. No one is sure why this is happening.

A third person, a girl, steps out of the line and walks towards the collapsed man.

"Richard, are you OK?"

"I'm fine..."

"It just repeats" says Corrieri, addressing you directly again, "Until everyone is on the floor".

This is an open participation show where dance, for so long the preserve of pearl clad fluffies and their gummy beaus, is being reinvented for the interactive age. Goodbye Sadler's Wells, encrusted art elites, passive audiences, and the professional technique borne of years of punishing practice. Hello local theatres, remote participation, democratisation, enfranchised amateurs, and (gasp) young people.

Blurring the line between live art and dance, audience and performer, Augusto Corrieri's work challenges the values and assumption of the contemporary dance world, tapping into the meme culture of OK GO music videos, and web virals where 1500 Filipino prison inmates dance to Michale Jackson's 'Thriller' for the world's entertainment.

"How can you think of a show as more than just a product?" says Corrieri, holding court from a pub in Victoria, London. "Where dance is not just a one hour set piece done by skilled performers, and watched by passive audience members. In he UK, 'dance' is skilled



movement that's nice to watch, with nice lighting and all of that, but I find myself bored to the point that I want to cry. It's all *given*."

Growing up in Milan, the teenage Corrieri was obsessed with Michael Jackson and David Copperfield, teaching himself to moonwalk and performing close-up magic. In 1999 came to England, his mother's home country, entering the Magic Circle and enrolling at Dartington College of Arts, a cutting edge arts institution in Devon. After graduating in 2002, he co-founded the experimental performance company Deer Park, and has worked as a solo artist since 2006.

Corrieri's dance pieces typically disintegrate the barrier between audience and performer – in a recent work he removed a member of the audience, gave them a quick dance lesson, and then watched as they performed the solo finale to the show. He's put on three such YouTube sourced shows now.

His 21st century vision of dance production can be a solitary experience though: "I work alone, they work alone, and there's this great climax, a coming together on the night of the show. Every time it simply puts people in a state of euphoria. But then it's over, and I never really see these people again. We just scatter; I'm left without a dance company, and we start all over again."

He laughs: "Sad, eh?"

JR