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An everlasting experience: the issue of preservation and communication of the ephemerality of performing arts

The concept of preservation of the "ephemeral" might seem an unsolvable problem, already discussed by several scholars who focused on the theoretical debate, without achieving practical solutions yet. However, the charm of the topic lies precisely in the impossibility of preserving something which is non-durable and inherently unique. In this article, I will endeavor to illustrate the state of such debate in the performing arts, by stressing how the notion of ephemerality challenges the original concept of archival devices, both in terms of preservation and communication. I will analyze some cases of archives, exhibitions and museums in order to demonstrate how the academic debate is directly influencing communication choices for ephemeral art forms, with a focus on technologies for more articulated practices of archiving and displaying into a museum. In this regard, I will consider how image, photography, cinema and recent technologies have tried to reduce the gap between the transitory nature of the performance and its durability, creating a paradox between its fleeting essence and the aims for its preservation.

«Performance's only life is in the present»
P. Phelan, 1993

«Essere stato non lo esime
Dall'essere, per sempre»
M. Luzi, Stradivari, 2004

1. Ephemerality: dealing with different times at the same tempo

The word "ephemeral" means lasting for a very short time, short-lived, transitory, and traces its origins back to the ancient Greek term *ephḗmer*, which meant short-lived, lasting but a day[1].The performance is considered as such precisely because of this steadfast component, as underlined by Stanislavski: «[A] work of art born on the stage lives only for a moment, and no matter how beautiful it may be it cannot be commanded to stay with us»[2].These definitions on the nature of performance perfectly express the issues related to its representation: the theatre experience is volatile, the live takes place in a present understood as singular, immediate and vanishing[3]. Although Stanilavskiji's position seems to deny any attempt of preservation, the fear of loss has provoked an urgent desire to counteract the transient nature of performances through documentation. Yet, the loss involved in the process leaves many dissatisfied with the outcome. Since ancient times, artists have been dealing with the problem of representing movement in painting and sculpture, seeking to overcome the tension between the portray-

al of a moment recorded in the painting and the diachronic dimension of the phenomenon. With the advent of technology in photography, videos and audio recordings became the "official" legacy of live events, claiming to be objective in their representation, yet perceived as inadequate and deceitful. Their perspective is narrow and it reproduces only one point of view of the performance, while objects, costumes or scripts reflect only scattered details, thus thwarting a thorough representation of the event. An ancient script of Hamlet dated 1603, from The Shakespeare Quartos Archive, does not suggest in any way the modern staging of the same text by the Royal Shakespeare Company staged in 2008.

The script of Hamlet is the authentic and fixed record of the play, but its testimony is reduced to a text declinable in indefinite versions and interpretations, embodying the shifty and mobile character found in the live nature of each performance. As remarked by Schneider, performance disappears and text remains[4]: the play, when performed, contains the very question of the play. The "question of the play" is given to occur in "the meantime", and the meantime could occur any time a text is taken up[5]. In this regard, the modernist writer Gertrude Stein coined the definition of theatre as "syncopated time", arguing that "the fact that your emotional time as an audience is not the same as the emotional time of the play is what makes one endlessly troubled about a play». Furthermore, the live nature of performance gives it its distinctive energy and allows performers and audiences to interact in a real time, space and social process[6]. The notion of syncopated time immediately recalls some concepts from Bergson's philosophy, as set forth in his essay "Matter and Memory", published in 1896, where he stated that «representative memory records every moment of duration, each unique, and not to be repeated[7]». Bergson then distinguished between two types of memory: memory concerning habitude and pure memory. While performing an action, a mechanical habit of memory is used; but when we think about the range of emotions that we have felt in front of a performance, pure memory comes into play .

Recent performance studies have steered towards the temporal condition of theatre[9]. Sondra Horton Fraliegh defined dance as "a metaphysics of doing", living in the present-centered moment of its execution and through the immediate communion between dancer and audience. She argues that during the performance a process of communication of intentions is activated through the use of the body, and the performance effects are achieved only when its intents reach the audience[10].

The concept of time in all its declinations is undeniably crucial in the analysis of the representation of the "ephemeral" and conducive to further discussions on

the best archiving and communication choices for the performance. The temporal discourse affects the topic at many levels: we have referred to Bergson's matter and memory theory in connection to the syncopation between the time of the performance and the time of audience memory as present in Stein and Horton Fraliegh's thought. However, what is even more to the purpose is the discrepancy between the time of the event and the time of its reproduction. The latter can only capture a single moment of time or a single performance event of a much larger work, which is continually evolving over time, thus neglecting the entire process of creating and enacting performances[11].

In order to discern all issues arising from the need to consider the experience in its changeability and the limits imposed by capturing systems, it is first necessary to ascertain the meaning of ephemerality applied to performance, and attempt to trace its evolution to performing arts scholars[12].

2. Performance's remains or performance disappearances? Different approaches meeting on solutions

What emerges from studies on the ephemeral is the coexistence of two major approaches among scholars: one may be defined *performance as disappearance*, and the other *performance as remains*. The former focuses on the vanishing character of the event and its disappearance, which, in some cases, coincides with the refusal of any kind of archiving method to preserve it. The latter group of scholars adopts a more flexible approach: despite admitting the ephemeral nature of performance, they also value its preservation aims. The notion of ephemerality as disappearance, vanishing and loss is based on the belief that the act of preserving the performance is incompatible with the perception of performance as ephemeral. Schechner, one of the founders of the New York University Department of Performance Studies, laid the foundations of this line of thought by defining theatre as a convergence between permanence (drama) and ephemerality (performance), giving priority to ephemerality in the claim that theatre can have no originals[13].

He considered theatre as evanescent, characterized by ephemerality and immediacy. In the wake thereafter, Marcia B. Siegel, the dance critic who joined the faculty in the 1980's, reflected on the existence of dance «at a perpetual vanishing point", in terms of an "event that disappears in the very act of materializing»[14].

These premises introduced the concept of "ephemeral" in a time when dance and theater studies were concerned with other aspects such as the analysis of the-

atrical scripts or dance choreographies. They laid the groundwork for the change of perspective in the 1980s, when the concept of disappearance was immediately placed in contrast with the need to preserve the instant. The incompatibility between recording devices and the nature of performance is highlighted by the very Schechner, twenty years after his reference to ephemerality in "Theatre criticism", as quoted below: «Performance originals disappear as fast as they are made. No notation, no reconstruction, no film or videotape recording can keep them»[15].

Following his analysis, Peggy Phelan addressed the concept of performance liveness from the opposite pole of its absence: since performance cannot be captured by something set such as archives and records, it is a form of art that cannot be turned into a commodity or into an object[16]. The moment I transcribe the memory, I allow myself to forget and deny the concept of performance by presenting its copies as authentic. I thus deprive it from its actual nature that is the possibility of being continuously dynamic and creative. In this sense, she perceives performance in its true nature through disappearance: its social value is attributed in terms of its absence, as something fleeting and irreproducible, more than in terms of its presence. Phelan can thus be considered the spokeswoman of the association between ephemerality and loss, disappearance and death[17].

Her position and the "performance as remains" approach find a strong connection in Eugenio Barba's article *Eftermaele*[18]. In his work, Barba explains how the importance of performance lies exactly in its remains throughout audience memory. By saying that «what really matters is what will be said afterwards when we who worked at the task are gone[19]», he means that time will decide the meaning of our actions, and with time he intends the people who will come after us. Then, the question lies in how the value of our actions is affected by the afterword, assuming that theatre has been defined art of the present[20]. The tension between Phelan's conception of theatre as the art of the present[21] and the importance of its legacy ensured by a living memory as raised by Barba becomes evident and turns into a paradox of liveness and death:

In the age of electronic memory, of films, and of reproducibility, theatre performance also defines itself through the work that living memory, which is not museum but metamorphosis, is obliged to do. We can leave as a legacy to others only that which we ourselves have not wholly consumed[22].

Although Barba uses the term metamorphosis to contrast the stability of museums, its connection with Bergson's memory and *durée* is essential. Whereas for Phelan performance is truly itself through disappearance, Barba substitutes

the means with metamorphosis. In this way, he perfectly introduces the second school of thought in the notion of ephemerality, whose starting point is the possibility for ephemeral entities to remain, though in different ways. Specifically, Schneider criticizes the notion of ephemerality as loss by stating that Western archival culture[23] itself is responsible for determining the disappearance of performances. She holds that disappearance is not antithetical to documentation, as it denotes all documents, all records and all material remains, since they too express their true nature through disappearance. Essentially, she denounces the excessive emphasis on loss in the concept of ephemerality, and argues that the very concept of archive produces loss[24] because it «performs the institution of disappearance, with object remains as indices of disappearance and with performance as given to disappear»[25]. She argues that we have grown accustomed to viewing the archivable object in its true nature only through loss, and she inquires whether this perception is limiting us to an understanding of performance predetermined by our cultural habituation to the logic of the archive[26]. Schneider's approach fits perfectly into the concept of "traces of performance" mentioned by Muñoz, who intends "ephemeral" as something which does not disappear, but is instead distinctly material. In his essay on queer acts, he states that:

Ephemera […] is all those things that remains after performance, a kind of evidence of what has transpired but certainly not the thing itself. It does not rest on epistemological foundations but is instead interested in following traces, glimmers, residues and specks of things[27].

But what are those elements that remain after performance? Barba would have said that these traces lie in the audience's memory. The dynamism inherent in the concept of performance would resist time only through the transformation occurring in individual memories of individual spectators. According to Barba, performance is, in fact, what happens in the minds and memories of the audience, rather than what happens on the stage[28].

In the wake of the idea that sparing live performance from disappearance is not incompatible with the ephemeral nature of performance, Reason (2003) has followed up with a definition of remains. Starting from Barba's premises, he combines the mutability of the audience's memory and liveness of performance in his concept of *archive of detritus*. In this new interpretation, performance remains are a mixture of different traces that, due to their detachment from the claims of authenticity, succeed in revealing performance through subjectivity, dynamism and variety. This is not only about recording the performance through video and pho-

tography, but also involves combining the "official archive"[29] with something that replicates in the reader the audience's experience. In other words, Reason merges the two key concepts theorized by Diana Taylor: *archive*, made by material representation, and *repertoire*, consisting of immaterial experiences and memories[30]. In this way, instead of attempting to transform immaterial signs into manageable objects, the connection between archive and repertoire allows to communicate meaning through transformation, which is distinct from a purely static representation and consistent with the nature of performance.

From the literature review we can observe how the two positions - *performance as disappearance* supported by Schechner, Siegel and Phelan, and *performance as remains* acknowledged by Barba, Reason, Schneider and Taylor - converge in the pursuit of a final solution to the problem of representation. More precisely, it can be observed that, although from different perspectives, they agree on the choice of a dynamic formula for event archiving and museum solutions[31].

Despite initially stating that performance cannot be saved, the same Schechner eventually formulates the need for a vocabulary and methodology able to sustain immediacy and evanescence[32] while Phelan addresses theorists arguing the need to pursue a performative, creative and analytical discourse for analyzing performance in a way that enhances its ephemeral qualities, instead of trying to pin it down into conventional academic or journalistic prose[33]. Furthermore, she moves towards Barba's position by quoting Sophie Calle's *Last Seen* and *What Do You See?* exhibitions held in 1991 and in 2012 at the Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum in Boston after the 1990 theft where 13 objects were stolen from the museum[34]. In Phelan's view, the interaction created by Calle's exhibition between art object and spectator is performative, since the interviewed viewers described the Stewart Gardner Museum's stolen paintings in slightly different ways each time. She further underlines how, on that occasion, the museum was not institutionally suggesting an 'official' view of the painting with an imposed commentary. Despite not being the representation of a performance, yet this exhibition shares its characteristics with it and embodies the notion of mutable memory, which, in this case, forgets the object itself and enters into the subject's personal interpretation and associations[35]. Following the same trend is Damian Smith's performance entitled *Action Drawings [fig. 1]*, created in the San Francisco Museum of Performance and Design in April 2014, in collaboration with San Francisco Ballet and Catharine Clark Gallery. The performance consisted of a dancer painting with her feet on a white surface while doing a ballet class and her daily rehearsals. The aim of the project was exactly to preserve movement and reinvent how dance as embodied knowledge could be recorded and kept alive.

3. Intangible cultural heritage and challenges for museum and archive conceptions

We have just seen how, despite different starting points, the two apparently antithetical positions dealing with loss and remains of performances converge on the point about inadequacy of traditional archive and museum concepts dealing with ephemeral representations.

Extending the problem to the general definition of cultural heritage, the very entry of intangible assets into UNESCO[36] introduced the issue of the original mission of museums and archive. Upon comparing the old definition of museum by ICOM[37] and the notion of immutable and objective record inherent into the definition of archive, the entrance of ephemeral assets into the cultural heritage definition clearly poses a problem in terms of a concept originally designed for other purposes. Archives, always conceived as a fixed medium, performing the task of saving, were perceived too as inadequate for the preservation of non-objects such as folkloric memories. In spite of changes in definitions and concepts, the debate over possible, problematic available practices of documenting both performance and our experience of it, is still heated.

Due to parallel developments in new technologies, museums and archives have found increasing solutions to face the problem. In this change of function or, better, extension of responsibilities, the technological revolution has played a primary role in facilitating the preservation and communication of the 'ephemeral'. It actually has improved interaction quality rather than interaction quantity (what usually happens when technologies are applied to objects in traditional museums). In order to communicate performing arts, technologies have been regarded as the only tools able to achieve effects close enough to the original performance.

Examples may be found in some dance digital archives, seeking to provide an exhaustive documentation system for an art with a particularly strongly felt fear of disappearance[38], i.e. The Digital Dance Archive[39]. Following the inadequacy of traditional techniques (images, video and photos) in communicating the volatility and fluidity of the ephemeral, new technologies and the fusion of multiple methods of archiving and communication seem to respond to the need exposed by both previously analyzed schools of thought. It is yet to be determined how such failure has been expressed throughout the technological evolution, when the attempt to document motion implied a new vision of time and its representation in space.

This will lead to a reflection on how the visual recording of movement should be distinguished from attempts to represent an artistic performance.

4. Performance preservation through traditional devices: representing motion or dance?

Photography and cinematography have always been drawn by the representation of the instant: Muybridge revelations from the 1870's on the true position of the horse in movement and his publications in *Animal Locomotion* were an important documentation showing animals and human beings shot in sequences while performing their daily life movements[40]. Degas's drawings inspiring his work on dancers were based on photographs of the horse included in Volume 9 of Muybridge publication[41]. He was among the first painters who considered photography as a model for painting and he made use of specific techniques in order to communicate dance dynamism. He often cut off figures and objects at the edges of the canvas to imply continuity outside the physical dimensions of the picture area. His choice to portray subjects from unusual angles is a technique that has remained extremely rare also in dance photography.

Thanks to Muybridge's work and Marey's chronophotography, a high-pitched debate was initiated on the potential of the human eye and of the camera while observing actions in motion. According to Marey, it was possible to perfectly divide movement into units[42]. He was certain about the possibility to measure movement and capture time through representation. His view was in conflict with Bergson's conception of *durée*, which implied the impossibility to divide movement because of its continuity, beyond chronological time and geometric space[43].

Linking again Bergon's durée with the concept of ephemeral, the use of mechanical means of representation seems very unfit to represent the artistic moment of the performance. Hence the need to differentiate the concept of motion and that of artistic event, which is the focus in this essay and may also (but not necessarily) imply movement.

A possible reference may be found in the distinction between instant and moment provided by Cutting, who points out that before the advent of the *photographic instant,* there was an *artistic moment*: «The moment could capture the psychological truth of the event, something that no instant could do[44]». In other words, the camera representation of the instant shows an excessive reality, permitting to see more than what is comprehensible to the human eye, able to capture the moment. This was perceived as a distortion of the optical truth and consequently seen as pernicious to art[45].

Anton Giulio Bragaglia's *Futurist Photodynamism* similarly questioned Marey's chronophotography, considering it as a mere realistic representation unable to render the transformation of the body in motion. As opposed to instantaneous photography photo-dynamic photography used long exposure techniques in order to capture durational shots involving continuous deformations occurring over a period of time [Fig. 2][46]. Following Bragaglia, snapshots produced through photography «arrested motion in absurd positions which were merely transitional states», while by avoiding the «precise, mechanical, icy reproduction of reality», photo-dynamic photography captured «a movement which produces sensation, the memory of which still palpitates in our consciousness»[47].

We can easily transpose this concept for the purposes of our essay, dealing with an artistic object mutable and unstable in itself, by referring to Benjamin's famous masterpiece entitled «The work of art in the age of mechanical reproduction». In his renowned work, he writes that mechanical reproducibility of photography deprived art of its of its unique value of authentic work, thus implying the decadence of the aura[48]. His critique, especially focused on cinema, could also be applied to videos representing performances. Despite not being designed as a movie, with an actor performing directly for a technical device, the effect achieved by a video record is the same: the impossibility for the audience to judge the performance, due to the lack of personal contact with the interpreter[49], which leads people to identify only with the instrument. Therefore, video can be seen as a suppression of the observer, which is replaced by a mechanical object. But, in the case of performance, what the archival device aims to communicate is far from objectivity: the objective effect itself is in contrast with the illusion of the senses created by live performance. The use of video and photography in order to collect and represent performances is thus a paradox, in its attempt to enable standardization of documentation in a domain marked by the uniqueness of the event. Again, the case of dance is indicative of the paradox. A vast dance iconography flourished throughout Europe in the years between 1910 and 1935 in painting, graphic arts, sculpture, and photography. Karl Toepfer argues that the majority of people during that period experienced dance through pictures of dancers far more often than through performances, because this art «couldn't rely on performance or on serious criticism to expand its authority within the cultural sphere[50]». Representation of dance through image also had an artistic significance, because of the dancers' extraordinary physical abilities, especially suitable for portrayal. According to Toepfer, the supposed purpose of photography to document the reality of performance by scientific means was turned into another efficient way of idealizing it rather than realistically documenting it[51]. In this regard, she recalls that before

1920 dance photography emphasized the dancer rather than the movements of the dance, being part of the portrait genre rather than action photography, and only after 1920 the interest for the dancer's personality shifted from scenographic poses to movements[52], as in Charlotte Rudolph photographs[53]. An exception, however, may be found in the dancer in motion immortalized by Muybridge in his book Animal Locomotion [Fig. 3], where the subject is indeed a dancer, but the focus is on movement, although being in 1887. What, then, makes Rudolph's photographs different from Marey's sequence of movements? What expedient is used to communicate that what is represented is a performing art and not just a woman exercising?

Upon a direct comparison between the two images [Fig.3 and Fig. 4], the diversity of purpose, content and technique becomes more evident. Muybridge's aim to record movements in order to document them through an objective scientific device is clear. Charlotte Rudolph's photography [Fig.4], instead, responds to Toepfer's considerations and succeeds in restoring what Reason would have called *remains of the performance*. Through an artistic perception, it gives an idea of the instant, consciously playing with light and shadow, thus succeeding in being subjective, although by means of a device conceived for objective observation. By looking at Muybridge's sequence, we see two different moments suggesting a movement, whereas, in front of Toepfer's snapshot, we feel closer to an artistic instant of a spiral jump.

Given that the camera is a device which removes the "aura" of the performance, photographers had to overcome the issue of faithful representations. Technical artistic expedients became the answer to the problem of preserving ephemerality through a medium unsuitable for this purpose.

Several examples may be found, one of the most interesting ones being Kesting's technique of superimposition: by being close to the dancer with his camera, he was able to communicate the tension between the dancer's hands, arms and face, conveying to observers the intensity of the performing act[54]. Another interesting method was experimented around 1930 by Arthur Brenda, who took high-angle shots to offer an alternative view of the dance, different from the spectators' viewpoint in the concert hall, and possible only through his photographs[55]. In the case of video camera, among various expedients, it is worth mentioning the "dance" of the camera. In particular, Fritz Boheme regarded videos as able to achieve dance-like features, not merely by observing the dance, but by verging on dynamic abstractionism or by means of dynamic effects in the montage editing.

Conclusive remarks

The reflection on the representation of performing arts' ephemerality initiates a multidisciplinary discourse which is likely to appear as overly inclusive and heterogeneous. Instead, such approach is required, from our standpoint, because of the peculiarity of a universal concept applied to the singularity of the performance. An in depth reflection on the scholar approaches towards ephemeral challenges combined with a digression on history of movement representation, permits to analyze the context and trace possible paths in the development of a conscious and coherent methodology of preservation. Thus this research attempts to expose the complexity of the subject through a creative approach, able to create links between different sectors in order to achieve a comprehensive analysis of the phenomenon.

It is superfluous to state that there is no effective solution for the translation of performance into a faithful representation. However, a correct approach may be reached through an in-depth analysis of the content we seek to communicate. The tool employed to make the 'ephemeral' a more lasting experience depends on what kind of truth about a live performance one is attempting to save. There could be a factual intention that prioritizes the event in space and time, or the desire to capture the event in order to make it visible to others, or moreover, to use it as a source of inspiration for other performances. The aim may also be to address a specific target (author, performers, audience), to convey multiple representations and multiple media/devices, or to represent only specifics (costumes, script, details, venue of time and period).

This creative and critical discourse is the basis for analyzing performance by enhancing its ephemeral qualities: it allows to reflect on the mutable live performance archive so as to embrace the transformative power of memory. In line with a constantly changing and reinterpreted conception of performance, scholars' views suggest that the constraints of museums and archives may be overridden through models that encourage records to evolve and be challenged. Traditional definitions of archives are no longer applicable to the dynamism of both the creative process and audience experience, which ought to be included in the final recording as a component of immaterial traces and embodied knowledge.

1   H. Collins, Collins English Dictionary, *Glasgow,* 2010. In this regard, it is worth mentioning the noun *Ephemera* (ἐφήμερα), the neuter plural of *ephemeron* and *ephemeros*, which refers to any transitory written or printed matter not meant to be retained or preserved. It derives from the world *hemera,* which means "day". In the ancient sense it was used to refer to the mayfly (in Italian *efemera*) and other short lived insects and flowers, living only for a short period of time. For an in-depth analysis see M. Rickards et al., *The Encyclopedia of Ephemera: A Guide to the Fragmentary Documents of Everyday Life for the Collector, Curator, and Historian*, London, 2000.

2   K. Stanislavski, *My Life in Art*, Abingdon (UK), 1987 (1st ed. 1924), p. 570. The "Stanislavski method" was based on emotional memory, observation and analysis of character motivations in order to portray believable, natural people on stage.

3   R. Schneider, *Performance Remains*, in «Performance Research», 6, 2001, 2, pp. 100-108.

4   For further insight into the transition from text to performance, see C. Ginzburg, *Invisible texts, visible images*, in *Coping with the past: creative perspectives on conservation and restoration*, P. Gagliardi et. al. (eds.), Firenze, 2010, pp. 133-144: pp. 136-137, where the author argues that «the crucial shift from performance to transcription necessarily implied a loss […]. A loss -or, more precisely- losses of gestures, intonations, even words, since the transcription of oral poetry has always erased the innumerable variations that occur from performance to performance». In regard to this transition and the difference between image and text reproduction, see also C. Ginzburg, *Miti, emblemi, spie. Morfologia e storia*, Torino, Einaudi 1986, p. 172: «Dapprima furono considerati non pertinenti al testo tutti gli elementi legati all'oralità e alla gestualità: poi, anche gli elementi legati alla fisicità della scrittura. Il risultato di questa duplice operazione è stato la progressiva smaterializzazione del testo, via via depurato da ogni riferimento sensibile […]».

5   R. Schneider, *Performance Remains: Art and War in Times of Theatrical Reenactment*, London, 2011, pp. 87-90.

6   G. Stein, *Lectures in America,* Boston, 1957, p. 94.

7   H. Bergson, *Matter and Memory*, New York, 1896, p. 43.

8   According to Bergson, the first kind of memory is entirely a matter of the body. It is identified with the "durée" in which consciousness is resolved. The immediate reaction determining motor responses comes from habitude, at a physical level, on the basis of past experiences translated by the body into automatic mechanisms. Automatic mechanisms resulting from this type of memory are nothing more than a selection of some of the many remembrances stored in the pure memory. For this reason, there is a very close interconnection between the two memories. At the same time, however, the memory of habit allows the recovery of many memories, which may return to the surface and be materialized into images. *Ibidem*.

9   For a reflection on the definition of temporal art see J. Levinson and P. Alperson, *What Is a Temporal Art?*, in «Midwest Studies In Philosophy», 16, 1991, 1, pp. 439-450.

10 S. Horton Fraleigh, *Dance and the lived body. A descriptive Aesthetics*, Pittsburgh, 1987, p.170.

11 D. Abbott, S. Jones and S. Ross, *Curating Digital Records Of Performance*, Proceedings of the 2008 Annual Conference of CIDOC, 1518, 2008, p.3.

12 In the 1980's the New York University established the first department of performing arts where Marcia B. Siegel and Richard Schechner focused their work on dance, music and theatre. The term performing arts covered only subsequently a broader spectrum, including anthropology, folklore studies and literature. See R. Schechner, *What is performance studies?*, in «Rupkatha Journal on Interdisciplinary Studies in humanities», 5, 2013, 2, pp. 2-11: 3.

13 R. Schechner, *Theatre criticism*, in «The Tulane Drama Review», 9, 1965, 3, pp. 13-24: 22.

14 M. B. Siegel, *At the Vanishing point, a critic looks at dance*, New York, 1968, p.1.

15 R. Schechner, *Between theatre and Anthropology*, Philadelphia, 1985, p. 50.

16 In her article *Performance, live culture and things of the heart (2003),* Phelan explains that when she was writing her book *Unmarked: the politics of performance (1993),* she was trying to think about resistance to commodity culture: «As the performance artists of the 70s made clear, one mode of resistance is to think about things that don't consolidate into objects that can be sold. I was interested in the *immaterial* allure of performance as one possible way to imagine new economies of value. One of the reasons why capitalism is so damn successful is that it understands we have an implicit system of value, discernment and end-judgement. I was trying to propose an economy of intersubjectivity, if you will, or an economy – now this has become a problematic term, but at the time it wasn't so bad – an economy of cultural capital independent of object commodification». From P. Phelan, *Performance, live culture and things of the heart*, in «Journal of Visual Culture», 2, 2003, 3, pp. 291-302: 294.

17 P. Phelan, *Unmarked: the politics of performance*, London and New York, 1993, pp. 147-191.

18 In his article, E. Barba explains that the Norwegian word *Eftermaele* can be translated by the sum of the two words *Reputation* and *Honor*. Barba founded the first International School of Theatre Anthropology in 1979, focusing on the study of the performer's pre-expressive scenic behaviour. For further insight into his work, see E. Barba, *The Floating Islands*, Holstebro, 1979 and E. Barba, *La canoa di Carta. Trattato di antropologia teatrale*, Bologna, 1993.

19 E. Barba, *Eftermaele: that which will be said afterwords,* in «The Drama Review», 36, 1992, 2, pp. 77-80: 77.

20 Barba defines the art of the present as the «art called upon to fight against its destiny and its specificity in creating ephemeral works», *Ibidem*.

21 The opening words of the chapter "The ontology of performance: representation without reproduction" are «Performance's only life is in the present». Phelan, *Unmarked*, p. 146.

22 Barba, *Eftermaele,* p. 78.

23 Schneider recalls the origins of archives in the Greek world by highlighting the connection between the word *archive* and the head of the Greek state, named *archon*. Thus the word includes in its own meaning the institutional power of making and representing the law, and social power over memory. Throughout history, archives have been used with imperialist purposes with a focus on objects, which is considered by Schneider as ruling mode set against memory. There is an extensive literature on the concept of archive: Jacques Derrida's and Michel Foucault's works lead to in depth reflections on archives and their *system of enunciability*. See J. Derrida, *Archive Fever: a Freudian Impression*, in «Diacritics», 25, 1995, 2, pp. 9-63, and M. Focault, *The archaeology of knowledge*, trans. by A. M. Sheridan Smith, New York, 1972.

24 Schneider connects Western society's emphasis on loss with the consequent increase in archiving technology, which produced, in the late twentieth century, a tendency to celebrate deaths (deaths of authors, of important figures in science, literature etc.). She argues that «culture that privileges object remains as indices of and survivors of death, to produce such a panoply of deaths may be the only way to ensure remains in the wake of modernity's crises of authority, identity, and object. Killing the author, or sacrificing his station, may be, ironically, the means of ensuring that he remains». R. Schneider, *Performing Remains: Art and War in Times of Theatrical Reenactment*, London and New York, 2011, pp. 144-145.

25 R. Schneider, *Performing,* p. 145.

26 Ibidem.

27 J. Muñoz, *Ephemera as Evidence. Introductory notes to queer act*, in «Women & Performance: a

Journal of Feminist Theory», 8, 1996, 2, pp. 5-16: 10.

28 The interpreter, who acts as a mediator between the author and the public, is in turn influenced by the audience's response. The interdisciplinary field of art and neuroscience, a subject extensively explored in the last 40 years, investigates how theatre affects—and is affected—by the human mind, focusing specifically on the role that our brain play in the performance and reception of theatre. See B. Mc Conachie and F. Hart (eds.), *Performance and Cognition: Theatre studies and the cognitive turn*, London, 2006; F. Bortoletti, *Teatro e Neuroscienze: L'apporto delle neuroscienze cognitive a una nuova teatrologia sperimentale*, in «Culture Teatrali», 16, Bologna, 2007; G. Sofia (ed.), *Dialoghi tra teatro e neuroscienze*, Roma, 2009; C. Falletti and G. Sofia (eds.), *Nuovi dialoghi tra teatro e neuroscienze*, Roma, 2011.

29 By official archive Reason refers to «theater programmes, brochures, leaflets, photographs, video and sound recordings, press releases and cutting of reviews, details of marketing strategies, figures for ticket sales, contracts with performers and confidential budgets, correspondence, details of sponsorship arrangements, venue plans, set and costume designs, stage and lighting plans, production notes, annotated scripts, interviews with directors and actors, actual costumes and examples of stage properties». M. Reason, *Archive or Memory? The detritus of live performance*, in «New Theatre Quarterly», 19, 2003, pp. 82-89: 83.

30 D. Taylor, *The Archive and the Repertoire: Performing Cultural Memory in the Americas*, London, 2005.

31 A concept that extends to theatre studies in the Italian context. In this regard, Marco De Marinis (2014) emphasizes the importance of studying theatre as a process, rather than as a product marked by an intangible impermanence, embracing Schechner definition of performative behavior, the «twice-behaved behavior» (Schechner, *Between*, p. 35) and Schneider «body to body transmission» (Schneider, *Performance*, 2001, p. 105). M. De Marinis, *Il corpo dello spettatore. Performance studies e nuova teatrologia*, in «Lettere», 9, 2014, 2, pp. 188-201: pp.192; see also M. De Marinis and R. Ferraresi (eds.), *Pensare il teatro. Nuova teatrologia e performance studies*, in «Culture Teatrali», 26, Bologna, 2017.

32 R. Schechner, *Between*, p. 50.

33 P. Allain and J. Harvie (eds.), *The Routledge Companion to Theatre and Performance*, New York, 2013, p. 169.

34 *Last Seen* was created in 1991 and consisted in a series of photographs and texts collected by the French artist Sophie Calle from interviews with curators, guards, conservators, and other Gardner Museum's staff members on what they remembered of the missing pieces (five drawings by Degas, a vase, a Napoleonic eagle, and six paintings by Rembrandt, Flinck, Manet, and Vermeer). *What Do You See?* was created in 2013 when four of the stolen paintings' frames left by the thieves had been restored and reinstalled, empty, in the museum's Dutch Room. Calle once again asked people in the Museum to respond to what they saw before them, without mentioning the missing paintings to the staff and visitors with whom she spoke. See <https://www.gardnermuseum.org/experience/contemporary-art/artists/calle-sophie>, [last accessed: 27/12/2018].

35 See also Phelan, *Unmarked*, pp. 146-149.

36 Japan, with its 1950 Law for the Protection of Cultural Properties, first introduced a legislation to preserve and promote intangible and tangible culture, later followed by other countries. In 2003, the UNESCO convention led to agreements on an acceptable definition of intangible cultural heritage: «The "intangible cultural heritage" indicates practices, representations, expressions, knowledge, skills - as well as the instruments, objects, artifacts and cultural spaces associated therewith – that communities, groups and, in some cases, individuals recognize as part of their cultural heritage. This intangible cultural heritage, transmitted from generation to generation, is constantly recreated by communities and groups in response to their environment, their interaction with nature and their history, and

provides them with a sense of identity and continuity, thus promoting respect for cultural diversity and human creativity». See UNESCO, *What is intangible Cultural Heritage?* <http://www.unesco.org/culture/ich/doc/src/01851-EN.pdf>, [last accessed: 27/12/2018].

37 ICOM defines museum as «a non-profit, permanent institution in the service of society and its development, open to the public, which acquires, conserves, researches, communicates and exhibits the tangible and intangible heritage of humanity and its environment for the purposes of education, study and enjoyment». The voice intangible heritage was added in 2003, according to the 2003 Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage. See art. 3 of ICOM mission <http://archives.icom.museum/definition.html>, [last accessed: 27/12/2018].

38 Traditionally, dance has been very difficult to document because of the necessity to indicate movement within two-dimensional variables, time and space. Although the preservation process usually occurs in a studio where the legacy of choreographies is passed on from the choreographer to dancers through embodied memory, there have been many attempts to create a written system of symbolic representation. The most widely known systems are Labanotation (1928), a system based on symbols indicating nine different directions in space and the level of the movement, and Benesh notation (1940, also known as choreology and dance script), a system of five line stave representing head, shoulders, waist, knees and floor with bar lines marking the passage of time.

39 The Digital Dance Archive is a project hosted by The University of Surrey, which links together different dance archive collections in order to represent one century of dance history in Britain. It includes photographs, drawings and moving images. It allows to interact and explore the digital archive materials by selecting and compiling items into personally created virtual scrapbooks, where users can tag and share content, annotate videos and find items through visual similarity. See <www.dance-archives.ac.uk>, [last accessed: 27/12/2018].

40 Muybridge's first photographs were taken in California in 1872 and 1877 and appeared in Paris in *La Nature* in 1878. The 1972's negative showing his horse at the trot was lost, but the image survives through woodcuts made at the time. See M. Braun, *Animal Locomotion*, in *Helios: Eadweard Muybridge in a Time of Change*, P. Brookman (ed.), London, 2010, pp. 271-281.

41 A. Scharf, *Painting, Photography, and the Image of Movement,* in «The Burlington Magazine», 104, 1962, 710, pp. 186-195.

42 M. Braun, *Picturing Time. The work of Etienne-Jules Marey (1830-1904),* Chicago, 1992.

43 In the fourth chapter of *L'évolution créatrice*, Bergson describes the cinematographic mechanism by which we think the unstable through the stable and the movement through the immobile. His position has been interpreted as a critic towards the time of mathematics, since he believed that real time, whose essence lies in its very flow, escaped the artificial arrests conceived by mathematicians. Scientific knowledge at that time started from immobility and, by means of various entities, assembled an imitation of the movement replacing movement itself. Bergson's thought moves towards a scientific knowledge that operates in a different way taking into account the experience in its mutability, and reality as a creative and free evolution of events. H. Bergson, *L'évolution créatrice*, Paris, 1907.

44 J. E. Cutting, *Representing motion in static image: constraints and parallels in art, science, and popular culture*, in «Perception», 31, 2002, pp.1165-1193: 1167.

45 Scharf, *Painting,* p. 186.

46 D. Rosenberg (ed.), *The Oxford Handbook of Screendance Studies*, New York, pp. 156-162.

47 A. G. Bragaglia, *Fotodinamismo futurista*, Torino, 1970 (1st ed. 1911), transl. by L. Rainey, *Futu-*

rist photodynamism, in «Modernism/Modernity», *15*, 2008, 2 (363), pp. 366- 369.

48 W. Benjamin, *L'opera d'arte nell'era della sua riproducibilità tecnica*, Torino, 2000 (1st ed. 1936), p.17.

49 *Ibidem*, p.19.

50 K. E. Toepfer, *Empire of ecstasy: nudity and movement in German body culture, 1910-1935*, Berkeley, 1997, p. 358.

51 *Ibidem*, p.374.

52 The Dresden photographer Charlotte Rudolph (1896-1983) founded in 1924 a photography studio with Hugo Erfurth specialized in dance photography, among the dancers photographed by the two artist there were Palucca and Mary Wigman.

53 Toepfer, *Empire,* p. 376.
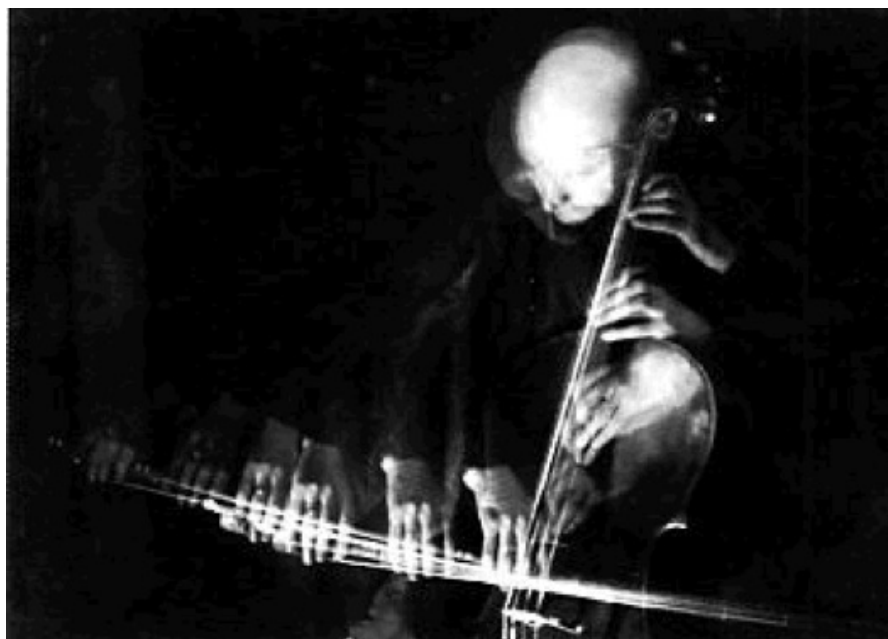
54 *Ibidem*, pp. 378-379.

55 *Ibidem*, pp. 377.

Fig. 1: Damian Smith, *Action Drawings*, Image from the performance © Museum of Performance + Design, San Francisco Ballet and the Catharine Clark Gallery, 2014.

Fig. 2: Anton Giulio Bragaglia, *Uomo che suona il contrabbasso, 1911* (in Bragaglia, A. G., *Fotodinamismo futurista,* 10, Einaudi, 1980).

Fig. 3: *Woman Dancing (Fancy)*, 1887 (in Muybridge E., *Complete Human and Animal Loco-motion.*, Dover Publishers, 1887).

Fig. 4: Charlotte Rudolph, *The Jump of Palucca*, c.1922-23, © Philippe Migeat - Centre Pom-pidou, Paris.