



Marathon Words

by Louise Hakim, No. 7

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The months and days before the marathon, my questions and preoccupations were mostly about my limits: what are my body and mind limits and how will I experience them through the marathon? I was curious to explore, to observe these physical and mental limits; if I would be so tired that I would not dance any more during the marathon, or so exhausted that I would not appreciate to be there, to do what I would be doing in this closed environment, etc. The day before I was anxious and I wondered if my body would be enough "powerful" to do it, I wondered if I was enough prepared physically and mentally.

I am a professional dancer and I practiced walking for long hours or during several days very few times. I practiced the walking very little but I really appreciate it. The project Dancing Days interested me in the prism of the interrogation of our own limits and through its meditative aspect.

Although, I was surprised to see that these aspects were present and important but that they were not the main aspects of my experience of Dancing Days.

The feeling of a constant inside beat

I had the chance to experiment few sessions of walking in a studio on the beats, with several little tacks, with Stefan and Johanne the days before the marathon.

Stefan once reminded me something that helped me a lot after during the marathon. He reminded me to always keep the feeling of the beat. Simply the feeling of it, inside the body, like an invisible presence inside me that is always in movement.

This thought helped me a lot. When I felt tired I just had to think of this beat inside me that were supported by the pulse of the music and more energy was coming little by little. I felt that thinking of a constant beat inside me, like little fire in the center of my body, constantly shining, placed my attention closer to my spine and that this energy was organizing itself inside me in a smooth and calm way. This feeling reminded me the feeling I went through during an African dance class when the repetition of a step based on the same rhythm put me into a state where a beat inside me was moving me and I was not in the want of producing it. It was here, inside.

The beautiful path of repetitions

I enjoyed a lot repeating a movement. I could then see the "life" of a movement, its evolution in my body and the space (in the changes of speed, size, shape and tension) but also in the relation with the others movements and energy. It was very nice to see and to feel how a group organizes through all the individual choices and needs. Very beautiful moments appeared when mostly all the group was into the same "story" and when singing were appearing inside it. Sounds of jazz, dialogues of smooth sounds. Murmurings, repetitions of details. Rocking.

Inside and outside

I was sometimes surprised by the importance to cross the eyes of someone. It was a real support. The dancers didn't know each other before the marathon and I felt it really interesting because not any souvenirs, good or bad memories came to me when I was looking at someone's eyes. I could only be in the present moment with the person. I often felt the need to cross the eyes of someone in the audience or of a coach. It helped me with making the link with the a part of the "external world"! Before the marathon, I thought I would need, at one point, to isolate, to protect, to close myself in order to generate more energy and not to spread myself in several directions, to be able to finish the marathon. But the eyes of others helped me with being more in my skeleton, in my axis, grounded. Does it mean that we need the support of the others

in order to find our force and balance? Perhaps it is very important, but not enough for sure.

A lot of memories of my dance studies came out; techniques I learnt but mostly personalities I admire like Merce Cunningham, Pina Bausch and Trisha Brown came to me, like peaceful, joyful and permanent presences in me. It was like, in a way, creating a filter of my dance background, of the performances I saw and that followed me, that I integrated in my way. All these movements had to come out through my body and I was just the material through what it could happen. The movement became more important than me who was producing it.

Universal situations

Through the marathon, very clear and meaningful situations has been created and dissolved. We went into very beautiful situations that I consider universal and happen with the body and voice work on every continent of the world.

We often created circles, small or big, but also dances in couple. Unissons.

Dancing face to face was also often really powerful.

The repetition of a movement was very important because it helped me dropping some tensions and really get into an action with someone else. To follow and to be followed in a movement is a very strong feeling because it underlined the importance of every little movement. Every little movement that we do can have a consequence in our environment because it can "talk", "touch" someone.

Landscapes

During the marathon, I could see the faces of the people around me, dancing or watching, as several little landscapes that were constantly changing; Excitement of the beginning and end of the marathon, tiredness, complicity, solitude, joy, doubts. The organization of the dancers in the space created a constant moving landscape that I found beautiful to feel and watch from inside and from outside. It was like the seasons changing! Each moment had its more or less long composition, energy and story!

Acceptation and simplicity

This project underlined the importance of resting! I realized how important it was to manage ourselves moments of rest in our day and our week. The body is constantly absorbing and rejecting energy, transforming it and needs to rest in order to be responsible of its actions, to be open and aware of the outside.

I also realized the importance of the simplicity in the movement and that the word "simple" didn't mean at all "easy"! To dear to go into simple movement, into the basic principles of the body is a

big step. Walking is something that we do everyday but we often don't really know "how" we do it.

The aspect of performing, giving and receiving

I wondered, during the marathon and still now how I felt the audience. Why did some people stay for hours watching and listening? I wondered what we were "giving" to the audience by doing this performance. Personally, I felt that I would have been very different if there would not have been audience in the room. I felt responsible of what we were creating during this 24 hours. I also felt that I would not be able to control it entirely and that I had to "let it be", let it move and be sincere with my movement in order to give something to the others.

Dancing everywhere

Since Dancing Days, I feel that I can "dance" everywhere.

I now consider dance more as the encounter of several aspects: the consciousness of our body and its permanent movement, the relation we have with the others and the joy and the necessity to communicate with the world.

"Ca marche!"

I would love that the Dancing Days takes several shapes, size and faces and that it continues to live in other places, artistic or not, indoors and outdoors, in one only space or traveling through a city, through the nature. Walking has been a beautiful act in history for many peoples and I think it is a beautiful way of gathering people. By visiting the universal aspect of the body, I feel that I know more and more what I personally want and wish to do in my future. Present, past, future, physical training and daily life, me and the outside became more peaceful between each other.. They communicate better!

In french when something works we use to say "ça marche!", that is to say "it works!".