

**AS CLOSE AS POSSIBLE TO THE UNGRASPABLE
– SOMAESTHETICAL AND DELEUZIAN INVESTIGATIONS
ON THE CHOREOGRAPHICAL WORK OF PÁL FRENÁK**

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ABSTRACT: According to Shusterman with the notion of somaesthetics he wants to remind the contemporary readers that “philosophy could and should be practiced with one’s body rather than being confined to “the life of the mind” (Shusterman 2012, 141.)” Consequently a philosophy can be expressible by one’s body especially by a dancer’s body or by a choreographer’s work. I consider it to be a problem that a performance is not only the artwork of a creator but also the embodiment of the choreographer’s philosophy. Not every dance choreographer has his own philosophy but those who have a characteristic “universe” and a peculiar style. I am going to reveal Pál Frenák’s dance philosophy of somatic style while searching for that “existential weight” behind his works that is a crucial element in his artistic universe. How is it possible to approach a philosophy emotionally? Where is the limit between sense and sensibility in the reception of a dance performance? Instead of the analysis of concrete meanings of movements in one piece of art, dance philosophy should examine those processes that lead to a certain set of emotions and associations. I feel that conversation on contemporary dance would be a relevant topic in relation to somaesthetics. In my paper, I would like to attune somaesthetics and the Deleuzian sign theory to show the spiritual richness of the oeuvre of Pál Frenák.¹

Keywords: dance philosophy, Pál Frenák, Richard Shusterman, Gilles Deleuze

“[...] principal writers on dance such as Marcia Siegel expressed skepticism over whether aesthetics had any relevance at all for understanding or writing about dance.² Their argument was that the aim of writing about dance should be focused on describing the dance movement, which presumably did not require any

intervention from philosophical aesthetics” – says Curtis L. Carter in his writing on aesthetics in contemporary art (Carter 2012, 98). My aim with this article is to prove the relevance of philosophical aesthetics in relation to contemporary dance, especially in relation to certain performer’s oeuvre. I am going to focus on the art of Pál Frenák; moreover, I consider the role of Richard Shusterman’s somaesthetics in the analysis of Frenák’s artistic world. Analytic Somaesthetics deals with the theory of the aesthetic way of life, especially through the works of Plato and Foucault. This theory includes the examination of the aesthetic existence. My focus will be on a case when an artist integrates every weight of his life into works of art, thus his works of art become the essence of his life and thoughts.

“Identity of sign as style and of a meaning as essence: such is the character of the work of art” (Deleuze 2000, 50) – this Deleuzian quotation inspired me to deal with the philosophical issue that was earlier only a strong emotion in me for a long period of time. The philosophy of signs of Gilles Deleuze and the somaesthetics of Shusterman will help me in the philosophical investigation to reveal something about dance choreographer’s unique form of expression.

Richard Shusterman evinces the somaesthetical significance of dance (Shusterman 2012, 8.), but in his books, he doesn’t discuss the relevance of a somaesthetical dance philosophy. In my opinion, it is impossible to approach choreographer’s artistic work only by using the classical categories of aesthetics (beauty, harmony, etc.). We can use these notions to describe movements in a dance performance but they do not cover the meaning of a project entirely. According to Shusterman, a philosophical language cannot properly express the emotional background of artistic experience. He experiments with different artistic projects hoping that he can reach the pure aesthetic experience. He offers practical, somatic answers to the questions of contemporary dance theory and dance therapy. Dance philosophy seems useless beside the accentuation of the somatic practices’ experiential character. However, I am sure that aesthetics has to deal

¹ In the summer of 2016 Richard Shusterman gave a great lecture on contemporary art at the Széchenyi István University of Győr (Hungary). As a result of a long preparation, Shusterman could meet with the choreographer Pál Frenák. I see a close relation between Shusterman’s somaesthetics and Frenák’s art of dance because of the crucial role of corporeality in their works and in their lives.

² Carter refers to Marcia Siegel’s book: *At the Vanishing Point: A Critic’s Look at Dance* (New York: Saturday Review Press, 1972, Dutton, 1985).

with contemporary dance's philosophy. We need to give up dance philosophy if we cannot turn from the outward appearances of movements to the essential core of certain choreographers' style.

Dance is art and choreographing is also an art. To reveal the choreographer's style and language, this is the task of aesthetics. Dance can be realized only through the bodies of dancers, thus they have to feel the choreographer's unique style and his aims. According to the opinion of Frenák, it is impossible to communicate prior emotions in words with his dancers. Corporeality is the only way to show the real contents. This challenge would not be possible without the intuitive grasp of some essence. Moreover, the spectators should feel the same essence of the work of art. In my paper, I would like to attune somaesthetics to the Deleuzian sign theory to show the spiritual richness of the oeuvre of Pál Frenák. At the same time in relation to dance performances, I am going to discuss the problems of interpretation.

1. Introduction to the somatic style of Pál Frenák

Pál Frenák is one of the most exciting dance choreographers of our time.³ He works with an international dance company in Hungary. Sign language was his mother language since he learned to read and understand her deaf mother's signs and gestures. Such nonverbal codes became subconscious and developed in unusual ways. For Frenák, this had a determining effect on his life. Bodily communication and corporeality have been more important for him than verbal communication. Frenák reached a refined level in somatic perception. He spent seven years in an orphanage where body experimentations meant the only escape from reality. His visual aesthetics developed

in a special way: experiences were materialized in the body, by the realm of physicality (Péter 2009, 21.). These experiences made him an incredibly sensitive creator: he worked with deaf-mute people in Lille where he did rehabilitative performances for bedridden patients in the corridors of the Amiens university hospital. Frenák learned from different masters from France to Japan: Kazuo Ohno's wordless teaching was his real lesson. The most important elements of his aesthetic existence are the body, self-expression through the body, and the experience of the own body through body-experimentations. His choreographies are fantastic results of an instinctive creative process. In my estimation, Frenák creates a unique art determined by the sign language and inspired by the writings of Gilles Deleuze. Frenák usually uses quotations from Deleuze to introduce certain dance performances on the website of his company.⁴

In the case of Pál Frenák, the somaesthetical way of life is a reality: his works are filled with crucial philosophical questions; he thinks instinctively through his own body and most importantly he builds up the refined art of somatic self-revelation. Frenák's active artistic practice requires a proper theory to reveal its real nature. Dance is a transient art. Without critical works, performances would disappear forever. However, I think the criticism is not enough to preserve something for the future regarding the artist's peculiarities. Somaesthetic investigations can display the background of the universe of Frenák. When I say universe I mean "l'univers d'un artiste" – as the French say that is more than an oeuvre, this is the real and imagined world of someone who expresses himself always in the same manner in his choreographies. How can someone have a world, a universe? This question is a source of inspiration to some of Frenák's choreographies and this question was also the starting point for me to consider the possibility of an aesthetic examination on an artist's

³ See the trailer for Pal Frenak Documentary Movie („Who Cares About Pal Frenak?"): <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1cKfq0697H4> [18.07.2017]

⁴ <http://frenak.hu/?en> [03.12.2017]

oeuvre. Self-knowledge is the crucial feature of Frenák's own 'philosophy of dance' as well as the feature of Shusterman's philosophy of the art of living.

Richard Shusterman is a philosopher who wants to feel the aesthetic experience through his own artistic experimentations. Frenák is an artist whose works express very particular aesthetic existence. I would not go so far to say, that his works communicate a personal ethics but the most important element of an aesthetic existence is authenticity. That's why we should examine his whole life-work, his creative somatic style as a whole and not only certain works.

According to Andrea Olsen, "gesture is instinctive, deeply sourced in your life history, and highly specific. The body knows what you want to say if you listen to its cues" (Olsen 2014, 83). Because of his deaf parents, Frenák was brought up in a sign-oriented milieu. Certain nonverbal codes became subconscious for him and determined his instinctive gestures. His somatic style (formed by the sign-language) determines his somatic relation to other people. He appropriated experiences in different cultures. Japanese culture has made a great impact on his works and thoughts. As he says in an interview:

I think that Kazuo Ohno and other Japanese people I met must have sensed the deaf-mute world of communication in my body language. [...] It happened more than once that I would sit down next to someone, and then soon they would be trying to talk me, as if they couldn't restrain themselves. [...] When a strong impulse hits me then I feel the urge to make contact. I have met some of my dancers that way. (Péter 2009, 29, 33)

"One's personality is [...] expressed in somatic style" – this is the brickstone principle of Shusterman's somaesthetics (Shusterman 2012, 318.). The somatic style of Frenák determines his choreographies because he can merely initiate his dancers to the imagined mood of a piece on the level of corporeality. To be a memorable artist one should have a distinctive personal

style that is good to be the successful artist's signature style – says Shusterman (Shusterman 2012, 322). Frenák develops his signature style growing together with the developing process of his self-knowledge. The tortures of self-expression in his childhood also affected his later experimentations with his body and these practices permeated to his somatic style. That is why Shusterman's opinion can be relevant in the analysis of an artist's somatic style. He rejects the theories on the duality of form and content and he says:

[I]f somatic style, through our body schemata, extends into the deepest habits of feeling, perception and action that constitute the self, then it should be seen as an integral dimension of the individual, the expression of her particular spirit. Spirit indeed seems fundamental to the notion of style. (Shusterman 2012, 333-334.)

Frenák's culture of movement evolved from his somatic style. He sublimated the determinative spiritual effects to his own body-language and this language united with his somatic style. Frenák expressed many times his astonishment at people's rejection towards corporeality. As he says:

I don't quite understand how tendencies to reject the body and disassociate body from mind can thrive alongside of the cult of sensuality. How can these two things be separated, how is it decided which one takes priority over the other? I nurture my body through my mind and the intellect gives the body its physical characteristics, its posture. (Péter 2009, 41.)

This harmony between his body and his spirit creates his homogeneous choreographing style. In the next chapter, I would like to reveal the specialties of Frenák's creative work in relation to the classical meanings of dramatization.

2. Choreographing and dramatization

“Choreographic work is an artistic experience in which a choreographer creates a point of view concerning elements of life. [...] In line with Dewey’s aesthetics, creating a point of view is an embodied process of handling materialistic-physical features as rhythms and energies in relation to spatiality, timing, bodily effort, shapes, and possible variations between all these elements. The sensualities of the choreographer, and of the dancers, take part in this process. For that reason, the act of dancing defines the expressivity of dance, no less than the choreography” – says Einav Katan in his book entitled *Embodied Philosophy in Dance* (Katan 2016, 16.) Frenák as a choreographer mirrors an idea through the body of his dancers. Body is a material for him that makes the idea visible through the choreography. His dancers are the mediums, as he says: “I project something on them – something I am already immersed in.” (Péter 2009, 27.)

The best way to explore the ‘dance-philosophy’ of Frenák is an examination through the appreciation of his aesthetic existence. Frenák brings some philosophical ideas together with art. He has a special style, a unique mode of expression that appears also when he makes choreography to a very known classical topic, e. g. in the Opera of Budapest in 2017.⁵ Frenák’s individual works are fragmented parts of the whole, and the parts are composed of elements that are of the same kind. His choreographies are his sons and daughters; the system of the associations in his works are natural for him, but Frenák doesn’t like to speak about them:

It takes a great amount of energy to stay calm and concentrate on the things that are really important. This is the reason why I have trouble answering questions about my pieces. When I am forced to talk it feels like torture; like my child is being taken away from me. People want

to understand things that cannot be understood in one lifetime. (Péter, 2009, 39)

That’s why he generally rejects the utility of writing on his individual works. How can we understand the “l’universe de” Frenák? I think, it is possible only without reason, and only with intuition. According to Frenák, the rational formulation has to be decomposed. Associative thinking is needed in the process of creation and also in the process of watching his works. As he concludes in an interview:

If I worked with a rational mind, and used measured, logical steps to choreograph, then my pieces would probably be polite and kind, my dancers would present themselves on stage according to certain social conventions, and the audience would fall asleep snoring. [...]

Artists are like animals, ears twitching, listening all-the-time, always turning, ready for the impulse to go after something. Yet, this deeply instinctive layer is needed, and one needs to let go, when the finest micro vibrations come to life...I am like this. But how things are decided, like what will finally go where, I can’t tell you exactly. (Péter 2009, 16, 19)

Without an individual philosophy, he cannot create a homogeneous oeuvre. He does not create the script of the series of movements only, but his works open up a world. The visible connects to the invisible, behind the physical there is the spiritual background. The most characteristic feature of Frenák’s works is sensuality. We can observe the most refined use of sensibility in his works. Deleuze writes in relation to Bacon: “If painting has nothing to narrate and no story to tell, something is happening all the same, something which defines the functioning of the painting” (Deleuze 2004, 12.) One can translate it to dance choreographies: if dance choreography has no story to tell, something is happening all the same, something which defines the functioning of the work of art. I am interested in this “something”. In the case of Frenák, this something can be sensibility, instinct, eroticism, sensuality, or signs – and all of these notions have rich aesthetic significance.

⁵ Bartók: *The Wooden Prince*:

<https://opera.jegy.hu/program/a-fabol-faragott-kiralyfi-67798?lang=en> [03.12.2017]

I feel a very strong authenticity in Frenák's works. It can be possible only because of the fact that there is something common in his performances. He says that "I feel that my work should have either a specific experience or some existential weight behind it" (Péter 2009, 14). His somatic memories and thoughts are transformed into some special creative energy. His personal experiences come from his childhood but also from his everyday experience. He puts this existential weight and all of his experiences into form. Andrea Olsen in her book entitled *The Place of Dance. A Somatic Guide to Dancing and Dance Making* reveals the process of her choreographing work. Olsen's method perfectly describes the tensed process of a creative work. As a result of such an intense work a choreographer can create his or her own system:

Choreographers create their own systems; there is no pre-known script. The process spans time, engaging memory and imagination. Framing, shaping, and finding the arc of the piece from initial impulse to the completed dance requires tenacity — a kind of courage. Form and content are reciprocal. Communicating complex ideas in a complicated world involves decision making. Every choice closes one pathway and focuses on another. Translated through the medium of the body moving in space, the choreographic process makes the invisible visible. Identifying your impulses and images is like tracking a wild animal. (Olsen 2014, 83.)

The works of Frenák do not follow the classical dramatic construction. The audience gets an incredibly strong impulse in the first minute of the performance and the spectacle can keep the spectators' intensified emotive state. Because of the permanent intensity, there is no catharsis. There are no dramatized stories in Frenák's choreographies but complex contents reveal themselves. It is impossible to trace these contents back to their original causes. In my opinion, there are no storylines in Frenák's works. Watching the performances, the spectators do not have to wait for a whole tale. The set of impressions and sensual qualities can take the spectators closer to the discoverable realm. Frenák

doesn't want to give literary proofs for the choreographies. He feels the expectation, especially in France for his work to have some kind of point of a reference. According to Frenák, he usually works "with the material in such a way that the audience is able to associate it to whatever source." Moreover, he has always preferred the freedom of not being tied to any concept:

This is probably too self-indulgent way because people like to link images to concepts. They seek allusions and context, and when they can't find them they get frustrated. [...] I always feel that I have given a concrete message, perhaps even something too explicit. (Péter, 2009, 35.)

Shusterman defines art as dramatization. With this new approach, he wants to highlight "two crucial aspects of art – intensity of presence and formal framing" (Shusterman 2012, 139.). According to Shusterman, in the contemporary English and German 'to dramatize' means to "put something on stage", to put it in the frame of a theatrical performance thus the stage sets the work apart from ordinary stream. In the choreographies of Frenák, the stage or rather the space has an important meaning. He extends the classical frames of ballet with maximization of using the space on the stage. The dancers of Frenák usually have been suspended over the stage, they perform acrobatic movements with extreme talent. This type of space using transgresses the traditional constructional methods in dance. The choreographer frames something essential to his system but with the new mode of spatial limit-transgression; he liberates his dancers from the law of gravitation. "Besides the idea of staging and framing, "dramatize" also has another main meaning, which suggests intensity [...] To make a scene, in colloquial speech, is not simply to do something in a particular place but to display or provoke an excessive display of emotion or active disturbance" – says Shusterman (Shusterman 2001, 368.). This second definition is completely applicable to contemporary dance performances. For the first sight with the union of the two meanings of dramatization,

dance-theory gets a new theoretical approach. However, according to Shusterman's reasoning on dramatization, too many things win the right to call themselves art. Without existential weight behind itself, the dance choreography has no philosophy at all. It is impossible to describe it in the terms of dance philosophy. Movements become dance through stylization and choreography. In one respect choreography is the art of formal organization but in another respect, this organization has to be formed by an aesthetic idea or by some philosophical thought.

How does an artist manage to communicate the essence of his or her work of art, and how can a spectator live the reception of that essence? In my opinion, the philosophy of Frenák's dance can be grasped by the Deleuzian notion of essence based on a sign theory. To comprehend this particular issue, Deleuze's writings on Proust can be used as meaningful sources. I do not want to force the connection of the Deleuzian conception to Frenák's works because there are no direct relations to it. However, I would like to offer one possible way to approach Frenák's "universe".

3. An aesthetic approach to Frenák's oeuvre through the Deleuzian "dematerialized signs"

Dance is underrepresented in philosophical aesthetics. Mark Franko points out that "contemporary thought on dance is frequently split between the concept of dance-as-writing and the concept of dance as beyond the grasp of the language, especially the written language."⁶ Semiotic theories of expression in dance are usually focused on artistic dance expression as a form of communication that functions in a way that is similar to language, through "utterance", or through signs, symbols, and gestures.⁷ We can mention Goodman, Langer or Margolis in this respect.

The opening and exploring of signs would be an alternative key to understanding the choreographies of Frenák. Deleuze writes in his book on Proust, that "learning is essentially concerned with signs. [...] To learn is first of all to consider a substance, an object, a being as if it emitted signs to be deciphered, interpreted" (Deleuze 2000, 4.). According to Deleuze, people in the same system of signs do not think and do not act, but they make signs (Deleuze 2000, 5.).

Frenák's sign-language-oriented utterance gives a special surplus to his somatic style but there is another level of signs in his performances. Beyond the strong presence of a refined sign-language-oriented culture in his works, I feel that the real signs of the art of Frenák are the Deleuzian "dematerialized signs" (Deleuze 2000, 13.). The analysis of the "universe" of Frenák (through the Proustian-Deleuzian notion of essence) can show the way as a particular life-philosophy hidden in artist's work. In my opinion, the integration of one's life-philosophy into a dance-choreography should be a theme of dance philosophy.

The theory of the spiritualization of the substance in art is one of the most important parts of Deleuze's sign theory in his book on Proust:

In art, substances are spiritualized, media dematerialized. The work of art is therefore a world of signs, but they are immaterial and no longer have anything opaque about them, at least to the artist's eye, the artist's ear. In the second place, the meaning of these signs is an essence, an essence affirmed in all its power. In the third place, sign and meaning, essence and transmuted substance, are identified or united in a perfect adequation. Identity of sign as style and of a meaning as essence: such is the character of the work of art. And doubtless art itself has been the object of an apprenticeship. (Deleuze 2000, 50.)

According to Deleuze in art, the meaning of dematerialized signs shows the essence. Essences are "alogical or supralogical" (Deleuze 2000, 37.), they do not refer back to concrete, material things. The revealed world of art spiritualizes the creators own memories and

⁶ <https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/dance/> [19.06.2017]

⁷ Ibid.

experiences and they color them with an aesthetic meaning. Dematerialized signs can enlighten the obscured realities. Real connections become visible through the works of art:

It is the essence that constitutes sign in as it is irreducible to the object emitting is the essence that constitutes the meaning insofar as irreducible to the subject apprehending it. (Deleuze 2000, 38.)

There is no reason to quest for concrete occurrences in a choreography or in any work of art. Deleuze admits that “if reminiscences are integrated into art as constitutive elements, it is rather to the degree that they are conducting elements that lead [...] the artist to the conception of his task...” (Deleuze 2000, 55.). A melody or a movement can reveal essences or ideas. Art’s spiritual nature makes art superior to life. According to Deleuze, “all the signs we meet in life are still material signs, and their meaning, because it is always in something else, is not altogether spiritual” (Deleuze 2000, 41). For Frenák, the act of transformation is an extremely important part of the creative work. He poetically describes the metamorphoses of feeling of energetic motivations:

For a long time this incomprehensible thing is just there, then suddenly it moves, metamorphoses, gushes forth, radiating in every direction. It acts like a channel of information – a way of communication – though nothing concrete can be understood [...]. (Péter 2009, 29.)

In each of his interviews, Frenák mentions that his works are not about his problems but about problems in general, and that he doesn’t flaunt with his dancer’s bodies but he points at certain things with bodies. Art cannot be the simple and fixed reflection of reality but the experience of potential interrelations. Deleuze in one of his earlier papers observes that

[t]he artist in general must treat the world like a symptom, and build his work not like a therapeutic, but in every case like a clinic. The artist is not outside the symptoms, but makes a

work of art from them, which sometimes serve to precipitate them, and sometimes to transform them. (Ramey 2012, 135.)

“[W]hat is enveloped in the sign is more profound than all the explicit significations” – says Deleuze. The non-fixed quality of the meaning gives the liberty of art and interpretation. Perhaps that is the reason why he believes that “a work of art is worth more than a philosophical work” (Deleuze 2000, 30.).

4. The problems of interpretation

According to Deleuze’s opinion mentioned above, because of the artwork’s irrelevance, its objectified meaning cannot be the question of any artistic investigation. On the contrary from the point of view of philosophy, the problem of interpretation has been always the crucial one.

Richard Shusterman in his *Pragmatist Aesthetics* analyses some rival theories on interpretation “in the light of more general pragmatist principles” (Shusterman 2000, 84.) He confronts Knapp and Michaels author-centered intentionalist perspective and Richard Rorty’s theory on the reading, which is – in Rorty’s opinion – independent from the author. Shusterman displays also the theses of Stanley Fish. Shusterman refuses the theories of Knapp and Michaels but he does not compel us to accept an extended and homogeneous theory of interpretation:

“Knapp and Michaels simply assume that intention will ground the meaning and the identity of a text in something fixed and transparent which itself neither needs interpretation nor allows divergent ones. But we have no reason to believe that such a transparent, language-neutral, self-interpreting and unambiguous idiolect of intentionality does or even could exist”. (Shusterman 2000, 98.)

If one assigns a conscious philosophy or a conscious somatic style to a creator expressed in his or her works then one should also accept that there is an explicit

meaning, which is able to express the creator's intention. However, if one accepts that the creator would not be able to formulate precisely the logic leading to the realization of his or her work of art then it is useless to postulate an explicit meaning. Frenák says that he works instinctively. As I mentioned earlier, in his choreographies "finest micro vibrations come to life". Penelope Hanstein has also rejected the notion of intention in her book entitled *On the Nature of Art Making in Dance: An Artistic Process Skills Model*. According to Larry Lavender

For many dance artists, particularly for those who use improvisational or chance procedures, the creative process, as Penelope Hanstein (1986) writes, "... is in no way a sequential ordering of creative activities or the realization of a known solution. The actions of the choreographer are most often circuitous in nature and characterized by a qualitative negotiation with the medium which involves the exploration, discovery, and investigation of new ways of selecting and ordering artistic material. (p. 137)" Seen in this light, the creative process is a revisions process, not a one-time act – or utterance – reducible to a pre-determined linguistic meaning. This is not to say that artists proceed in their work with no ideas or purposes in mind." (Lavender 1995, 27.)

As a conclusion one could say that the interpretation of a dance-choreography cannot allow searching for a pre-determined linguistic meaning, thus the dance performance is incomparable with a text. According to Shusterman

"[S]ince we do seem able to discuss a given work, it is argued that there must be some common intentional object which we are discussing, whether we identify it with the author's intention (Hirsch) or with the objective meaning of the text itself (Beardsley)". (Shusterman 2000, 93.)

Despite of the reasons that Shusterman suggests we should not posit a fixed independent meaning of the work "in order to guarantee identity of reference for its critical discussion" but we can assure the referential identification by accepting a certain minimum of

identifying descriptions (Shusterman 2000, 93). Unfortunately, we do not receive any explanation of how this act would be realized in the cases of certain works of art. Pragmatist attitude is essentially pluralist and opened, thus it does not stand against to the claim of Deleuze who tried to find an appropriate method to analyze opened works. Deleuze was fascinated with the gesture of destroying the illusion of organic totality in the work of art. The fragmented nature of the modern work of art inspired Deleuze to find a new method (Ramey 2012, 134). In my opinion, the Deleuzian essence-oriented sign-theory is not incompatible with pragmatist thinking.

According to EinavKatan, "watching the dance and translating it into words is an interpretative act" (Katan 2016, 5.) but after specifying earlier conclusions above, I am sure that it is impossible to translate the dance into words. It is useless to try to give explicit verbal narration to dances. Because of the interpretation of certain scenes, one would be incapable to concentrate to the whole piece. The interpretation of certain movements cannot transfer the essence that is under the surface. Emotional answers are the best answers. As Kazuo Ohno, the role model of Frenák, once said:

"The best thing someone can say to me is that while watching my performance they began to cry. It is not important to understand what I am doing; perhaps it is better if they don't understand, but just respond to the dance." (Childs 2010)

Certain images can be etched in one's memory and certain images can arouse special associations. The reception of the dance performance depends on the spectators' feelings, memories, and associations. Words are useless when spectators resonate with the feelings of the choreographer. The caught emotional impulses determine the audience's sympathy or antipathy toward the performance. A work of art fundamentally need to induce feelings, it has to be upsetting. Some aesthetic experience is needed for the further rational

considerations. Without an emotional link, rationality would not get the spectator closer to the universe of the choreographer. According to Deleuze

But precisely how is essence incarnated in the work of art? Or, what comes down to the same thing, how does an artist-subject manage to “communicate” the essence that individualizes him and makes him eternal? It is incarnated in substances. [...] [S]ubstances that are expressed equally well through words, sounds, and colors. [...] The real theme of a work is therefore not the subject the words designate, but the unconscious themes, the involuntary archetypes in which the words, but also the colors and the sounds, assume their meaning and their life. Art is a veritable transmutation of substance. (Deleuze 2000, 13.)

Frenák’s works claim active spectators. The spectator gets into contact with the spectacle dreamed by the choreographer through the physicality and bodily textures of the dancers. The dancer’s movements can evoke those associations that go beyond the bodies’ physical realm. The spectators need to catch the vibration of the choreographer’s soul through the dancer’s corporeality.

5. Theoretical and practical limit transgression

According to Shusterman, “The play of limit transgression is a central feature of the field of aesthetics in the West, a key aspects of its history, and structure” (Shusterman, 2012, 128.). I was always curious about what limit transgression means in philosophy. It is clear that Shusterman generally speaks about conceptual limits but in the philosophy of Foucault Shusterman analyses the case of the transgression of experiential limits. In aesthetics, the transgression of conceptual limits can extend the frames of philosophical aesthetics. This change would also be useful in advocating a new field in dance philosophy. In pragmatist philosophy as also in every current philosophy, experimenting has to be the most important tool for making and thinking things differently.

Shusterman has a very clear attitude to limit-transgression. In *Thinking Through the Body* he declares that for Michel Foucault and for George Bataille, limit-experience is described “as an experience of violent intensity typically involving some violent form of somatic transgression that is also typically a transgression of moral as well as somatic norms” (Shusterman, 2012, 143.). In relation to these limit-experiences of Foucault and Bataille, Shusterman concludes that “somaesthetics is committed to studying the use of such forms of limit-experiences, but that does not imply a commitment to advocating them as the best way to enlarge our somaesthetic capacities and to achieve wider transformational improvements of ourselves and our self-knowledge” (Shusterman, 2012, 143.). Radical somatic experiences are important complements to philosophy’s study of self-knowledge but according to Shusterman, they can be also dangerous exemplifications.

Limit-transgression deals with many sorts of issues. One of the crucial features of contemporary dance is the transgression of movement conventions but one would mention the lack of storyline that liberates interpretation. Questioning the social norms and using a refined form of nudity on the stage are also limit-transgression in some way. These limit-transgressions can induce positive changes – both artistically and socially.

The exclusion was always a painful experience for Frenák, thus limit-transgression became one of his crucial traits. “As a child I was always on the periphery, full of uncertainty and emotion, constantly looking for something to hold on to” – says Frenák (Péter 2009, 19.). As a child he felt that the society rejected his mother because of her disability: “With the sign language she was totally isolated. It hurt me to see my mother as an outcast, to see how ignorant and insensitive people are – so early on, this feeling became ingrained in my character” (Péter 2009, 14.). He always felt as an outsider. In the orphanage, through a barred window

Frenák was observing the Lake Balaton for seven years. His new creation entitled *Birdie* is about the walls, the physical and emotional boundaries within ourselves and about the way in which our imagination creates a completely new reality to survive. Isolation and loneliness determined his life because of the suffering in his childhood.

Frenák as a child experienced that “physical pain alleviates spiritual agony” (Péter 2009, 19.). Physical pain in the orphanage gave him the feeling of liberation. He danced before the mirror and experimented with his own body. Later, through his experiences, Frenák learned the manner of psychosomatic curing. He made the same ritual subconsciously that later, Deleuze wrote about the figure on the painting of Bacon: his body attempted to escape from itself, and the mute scream – that is so common in Frenák’s choreographies – was “the operation through which the entire body escapes through the mouth” (Deleuze 2004, 28.).

In the philosophy of Foucault and Deleuze, the body is a social object filled with signs of the institutionalized power. Frenák in his works tries to question the social norms and expectations. *The Hidden Men*⁸ for example “holds a special mirror in front of us, in which we can see the „Macho”, the „Narcissus” and also „Hercules”, and we can closely examine the archetypes of man. Frenák alternately calls up male chauvinist violence, stupid pretentiousness, the balance of power that structures our exchanges with others.”⁹ Frenák offers us a radical vision; he probes male sexuality through its different aspects.

According to *Thinking Through the Body*

[s]ocial norms and ethical values can sustain their power without any need to make them explicit and enforced by laws; they are implicitly observed and enforced through our bodily habits, including habits of feeling (which have bodily roots) [...] Any successful challenge of oppression should thus

involve somaesthetic diagnosis of the bodily habits and feelings that express that domination so that they, along with the oppressive social conditions that generate them, can be overcome. (Shusterman 2012, 31-32.)

When Frenák or his dancers put on an animal’s habits and typical characters of birds, they transgress the limit between a man and an animal. For example, in his works entitled *Un*, a faun-like figure (somewhere between the human and the animal world), the focus is being put on the first solo. And Frenák turns to Deleuze again: Gilles Deleuze wrote in one of his essays, that “if I try to sum up what I find so remarkable about animals, the first thing might be that each animal has its own universe. This is so interesting or bizarre, because so many humans do not have their own universes and they live a life just like anybody else. Or rather, any life, for anyone.”¹⁰ How does our life become really authentic, our own? According to Deleuze, the key is heightened sensitivity and immediate action.

“Dance may be the most paradigmatic of somatic arts” – says Shusterman in *Thinking Through the Body* (Shusterman 2012, 8.). But instead of interpreting it, Shusterman turns to the practice of movements. In my opinion, philosophy has to deal with artists’ oeuvre if those life-works are authentic and homogeneous because of their special universe, and especially because of their special philosophy. Frenák would be the exemplification of the artistic aesthetic existence that is analyzable through analytic somaesthetics. Rich aesthetic existence must be uttered by words. We would know nothing about certain artists and philosopher’s works or lives without descriptions. I think somaesthetics shouldn’t exclude the possibility of the interpretation of a dancer’s life-work. The fundamental theoretical bases are founded in somaesthetics.

⁸ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vN1lle4DvLk> [2017.12.03] Trailer of The HiddenMen

⁹ <http://frenak.hu/production.php?idx=50> [20.07.2017.]

¹⁰ <http://frenak.hu/production.php?idx=180> [20.07.2017.]

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