

REVIEW ARTICLE

THE PERFORMER-AUDIENCE CONNECTION: EMOTION TO METAPHOR IN DANCE AND SOCIETY. Judith Lynne Hanna. Austin, Texas: University of Texas Press, 1983, x + 273 pp., \$19.95 (cloth).*

This is Hanna's second book that explores the difficult problem of dance and communication. Her first book, To Dance is Human: A Theory of Nonverbal Communication (Austin, Texas: University of Texas Press, 1979) was not critically acclaimed by other dance researchers, partly because of its inability to come to grips with any focused empirical data or to use these data successfully in her theoretical constructs. This may account for Hanna's special pleading that her second book is an "empirically informed essay". Indeed, there is a great deal of data in this book which is derived from 598 responses by self-selected members of the audience who filled out questionnaires distributed to them by Hanna before eight dance performances at the Smithsonian Institution in 1980-1981. These performances included four in the Western tradition (three of which were modern dance, and one of which was tap dancing), and four in non-Western traditions (two from India, one from Japan, and one from the Philippine Islands).

There is a chapter devoted to each of these eight concerts, and Hanna begins by attempting to give background information "on the dance form and dancer ... because it mediates the relationship between the performance and reaction to it" (p. 15). However, it is never quite clear at whom this information is aimed. Since the traditions that are presented are not those on which Hanna has done original research, there is nothing new for the reader of dance literature. Furthermore, since this background information was not given to the audience (except as summary program notes), it did not "mediate" between the performer and members of the audience who answered the questionnaire. Before each concert, Hanna interviewed one or more of the performers in an attempt to find out what they hoped to convey to the audience. Although the focus of these interviews was on feelings and emotions, the answers varied from "credibility" (p. 58), to a wish to convey deep feelings and passions (p. 71); and from "I have no idea about the audience" (p. 99) to happiness and joy (p. 150).

* This article is reprinted with kind permission of ANTHROPOLOGICA, N.S. 26(1), 1984, pp. 61-63.

The next section of each chapter deals with audience response as distilled by Hanna from answers and comments on the questionnaires. The questionnaire is published in the appendix, and each chapter has a table that summarizes "how (the) audience perceived (the) emotions" as well as summary statistics about the backgrounds of the respondents. The respondents were primarily middle-class white females with higher education and high incomes. They represented only one-third to one-half of the audiences; people under fifteen years of age and professional dance critics were excluded. Their answers were quite varied. Some recognized no emotion, while others identified specific emotions with specific parts of the body and specific gestures. Unfortunately, Hanna did not have the performers fill out the questionnaire, nor did she question them in a way that she could fill it out for them so we would be able to check if these responses "connected".

Thus, although there are many interesting comments and other information by both performers and self-selected audience members, the interpretation of these data cannot really help clarify what Hanna set out to do, that is, to offer insight on "how emotion is communicated" (p. 26). Although anthropologically naive, Hanna's "hypothesis, that people who differ by age, gender ethnicity, education, income, occupation, and knowledge about dance will differ in perception" (p. 20), is relatively harmless. It is a pity that she did not really confront the thorny problems of cross-cultural perception of dance communication or use her data to suggest in any meaningful way that dance is not a universal language. This is because dance, like spoken language, cannot be understood cross-culturally unless one understands the structure and semantics of the motifs and how they are put together. Instead, Hanna seems happy that her findings "clearly disprove Sachs's and others' notion that all dance is and gives ecstasy" (p. 187). Didn't we know that before?

Adrienne L. Kaeppler
Smithsonian Institution