

danceWEB Scholarship Programme 2016
report mentorship collective
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It was a gift to be 10 mentors.

Having been a dancewebber myself in 2006, I know how much expectations are placed on the whole experience. There is the feeling of being “chosen” and having access to a kind of abundance that you might not even ever known possible. There is the feeling of not knowing if you deserve it. There is the feeling of not knowing if it is even fair that such a thing exists. You begin to see all sorts of power dynamics, how it all works as an industry, and it is all a little decadent. And yet you also cannot stay immune to the levels of solidarity and cooperation that this weirdly concocted situation allows. You get so much from the other people, you learn things, you get curious, you form alliances, you take sides, you question yourself and you have all sorts of feelings about all sorts of things.

So this is just to say that a mentor has a lot to deal with. I imaging it can be rather overwhelming if you're only one or two people. You become like a projection screen. Some people want a decisive leadership and expect some kind of authority, others are already suspicious of you just because you're even in this position, and so on. All those gazes are just irreconcilable. And that's the richness of it!

We were also already a group, also irreconcilable, but we had set up a dynamic of play and learning from each other that drew on that difference. It came natural to just continue doing this with each other and with the webber from the first moment we met them. Playing and learning does not need to be explained, it happens all the times and if you enter a place where people are doing it and you're interested, then you can just pick it up or get infused by its charms. Otherwise you can witness it, see what does not interest you and use it as a reference point to begin doing something quite different.

It was very nice to share throughout the whole festival the danceweb space, which became a place of non-organised encounters and conversation that might not have taken place otherwise. I was so happy to listen to and take part to the conversations and conflicts about race. It is so necessary to raise those questions. And even more to figure out ways, practices, dances and anything else that can explode a space of representation that is so unaware of its own premises and blindly perpetuates forms of oppressions that have been so naturalised we give them for granted. I am thinking of conversations we had around the unsettling and depressing feeling of not being able to imagine how a black body could even begin to exist on those stages, or thinking about the race and gender statistics that compose the festival. Those conversations keep making me think and question and navigate the working conditions and ethics I encounter.

And I hope this conversation that was opened will not be closed by the next generation of mentors and webbers.