

Social Empowerment through Dance and Media Performance

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This paper presents research carried out with individuals from Dancehearts, a performance group for young people with disabilities. The author seeks to show that interactive media technologies can significantly increase the level of social empowerment experienced by individuals taking part in group public performance by magnifying the effect of their own actions and movement in the space. Using custom designed wireless electronic controllers, the dancers “play” music and sound using the movements of their bodies and wheelchairs. They are no longer purely a choreographed performer, but in addition they cause affect to the whole performance space through aural interaction, controlling the soundscape used in the performance. For the differently-abled person, the ability to harness media technologies for artistic expression challenges their perceived public role as passive object. They become, through their own actions, active subjects causing affect to the whole audience experience.

Bio:

Andy Best-Dunkley is a media artist, sculptor and educator, specialising in playful and provocative interactions and installations. Andy’s work tackles social and political themes, and he seeks collaboration in diverse spheres such as data visualisation, live performance, and physical interaction design. Between 2002 and 2013 Andy was principal lecturer of Digital Arts at Turku University of Applied Sciences. Since 2014 he has been lecturer in sculpture at Aalto University. He is a doctoral student at Aalto Media Lab, researching possibilities for social empowerment through collaborative interaction in media environments, with emphasis on working with people with disabilities.