

# Editorial

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## **Editorial *JDSP* 7.1**

**Emma Meehan, Hetty Blades and Rebecca Stancliffe**, Coventry University

We are happy to introduce another diverse open call issue of the *Journal of Dance and Somatic Practices*. Forms and approaches that are explored in this edition include Pilates, Contact Improvisation, Experiential Anatomy, Feldenkrais, Dalcroze Eurhythmics, Alexander Technique and Budō, amongst others. The first few articles in the issue deal broadly with discourses in somatic practices which are examined as a means to challenge dominant perspectives or to indicate the inherent bodily ‘concepts’ being conveyed in specific somatic forms. The experience of the mover/dancer in relation to the self and the world is often addressed in somatic practices, and this is exemplified in the issue through attention to sensation, touch, sound and contact. The relationship between visual art and somatic practices is also drawn out through focus on stage properties such as lighting, but also through the drawing practices in somatic training and live art performance works. Meanwhile, the resonance of non-western practices and philosophies with somatics as a field is raised in several of the articles, through identifying both concerns and significances.

### **Keywords**

discourse

touch

visual art

non-western

dance

somatic

In 'Moving in, out, through, and beyond the tensions between experience and social construction in somatic theory', Jill Green provides an auto-narrative discussion of her movement through somatic and postmodern theories, going on to suggest that there is a lack of emerging theory in somatics and questioning the positioning of the field within Dance Science in the United States. Foregrounding her postpositivist methodology, Green outlines the socially constructed nature of both our bodies and beliefs. The self-reflective challenging of established belief systems is further explored in 'Somatic education and embodied discourses' by Lucie Beaudry. In this article, she provides an auto-ethnographic account of the ways in which practicing the Feldenkrais Method allowed her to overcome damaging bodily perspectives triggered by sexual abuse, by rethinking dominant discourses and developing a somatic understanding of self.

In 'Muscle memories in Pilates', early career researcher Sarah Holmes queries the discourses contained within somatic approaches, specifically focusing on Pilates. Her research interrogates the underlying embodied content exchanged in the form and the normalizing of specific body attitudes through teaching practices. At the same time, Laura Glaser in 'Reflections on somatic learning processes in tertiary dance education' reminds us of the value of somatic learning approaches within dance training as a means to challenge personal and professional discourses on the body-mind in performance. Interestingly, she focuses on young contemporary dancers who can sometimes be perceived as not having 'the maturity or self-reliance to cope with

the demands of somatic pedagogy' (Glaser) and queries this through describing student journals, drawings and responses in pre-professional teaching.

Reflecting upon her own experiences through the discussion of journal entries, Nicole Jenvey provides a description of the ways in which anatomical information can be used to conceptualize bodily change. Her article, 'Sensing possibility: Anatomy, sensation and dancing' develops the concept of 'dancer's anatomy' to refer to the synthesis of imagination, sensation and anatomical knowledge that informs the development of movement. The senses, and specifically sound, play a key role in the following two articles. Emerging researcher and experienced Alexander practitioner Korina Biggs shares a case study on her 'somatic podcast' where she uses audio technologies to reconnect the individual with their sensory experience and the urban landscape. In 'The touch of sound: Dalcroze Eurhythmics as a somatic practice' Karin Greenhead and John Habron examine Dalcroze Eurythmics as a somatic practice, drawing on examples from both discourse and practice to discuss the confluence of sensory experience, paying particular attention to the 'touch-like nature of sound' (Greenhead and Habron).

Touch appears again in 'Contact Improvisation as an art of relating' by Anna Jussilainen, who acknowledges that although physical contact needs to be dealt with carefully, the positive benefits within community contexts have emerged in her work. Continuing on the theme of Contact Improvisation (CI), Jess Curtis' article 'Movement in the Men's Movement' traces the historical convergence of the 'Men's Movement' since the 1970s alongside the development of CI, making a case that the interweaving of these has had implications for social change. Here CI can be seen as a

valuable personal and political tool in varied community and public spaces, connecting with themes from our last issue of the journal on Contact (and) Improvisation edited by Malaika Sarco Thomas and Misri Dey.

Another practitioner who works with improvisation, Chris Crickmay discusses his collaborative performance practice with Ellen Kilsgaard, a visual artist with a background in architecture, in his article 'Light-dark-light-heavy'. Crickmay outlines the 'emergent' nature of their improvised practice, and draws on theories from Hans-Thies Lehmann (2006), to propose non-hierarchical, 'relational' interactions between the body, movement, space and light. A democratic relationship between movement and visual art is further explored in 'Body-mapping and the Human Spirograph' by Tara Chittenden. This article analyses Tony Orrico's performance of *8 Circles* (2010) through an interdisciplinary analytic framework. Chittenden adopts cultural geographer Edward Soja's spatial methodology 'Thirdspace' (1996) to discuss the way in which performance drawing can both convey and shed light upon, the experience of the body in space and the production of bodily knowledge.

In the next article, Tony Shinro Doubleday brings the reader back to consider the non-western underpinnings of somatic approaches raised earlier in Sarah Holmes' article. He shares spiritual dimensions to somatics in his article 'Somatic commonalities in the study of Budō and Zen' and specifically investigates the body-mind interrelationship in these practices. In the last contribution to the journal, the interview with Cecilia MacFarlane is situated in her extensive experience in undertaking dance projects in Japan. Her interview raises several strands of discussion – from traditional

dance to community practice and from personal loss to public devastation – all interwoven in the conversation where the meeting of cultures is explored.

Finally, we would like to welcome Hetty Blades and Rebecca Stancliffe who are providing support on upcoming journal issues. The journal has been developing with the efforts of the editorial team, board members, peer reviewers, authors and readers, with an increasing number of submissions to the journal each year. We are pleased to share the news that the *JDSP* has been accepted for indexing on *SCOPUS*, the largest abstract and citation database of peer reviewed literature, with them commenting that ‘This is a leading journal in its field and strong in every respect’.

### **Contributor details**

Emma Meehan (Ph.D.) is a research assistant at Coventry University’s Centre for Dance Research and editorial assistant on the *Journal of Dance and Somatic Practices*. She is currently completing a co-edited collection called *Through the Virtual toward the Real: The Performing Subject in the Spaces of Technology* (Palgrave, 2015) with Matthew Causey and Neill O’Dwyer.

Hetty Blades is a final year Ph.D. Candidate at the Centre for Dance Research, with a studentship from the School of Art and Design at Coventry University. Her research is concerned with the way in which digital technology impacts on dance ontology.

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research looks at how the use of annotation impacts dance analysis, criticism, practice and reception.

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