

# CONVERSATIONS

ACROSS THE FIELD OF  
DANCE STUDIES



*Teacher's Imprint — Rethinking Dance Legacy*

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# Table of Contents

<b>A Word from the Guest Editor  </b> Sanja Andus L'Hotellier.....	6	<b>Contemporary Arts Pedagogy in India: Adishakti's “Source of Performance Energy” Workshop  </b> Shanti Pillai.....	26
<b>The Body of the Master (1993) followed by The Dance Master (In Question) (2017)  </b> Dominique Dupuy.....	8	<b>The Entity as Teacher—The Case for Canada’s National Choreographic Seminars  </b> Carol Anderson & Norma Sue Fisher-Stitt.....	35
<b>On Dance Pedagogy and Embodiment  </b> Jessica Zeller.....	17	<b>Lost (and Found) in Transmission: An Awakening of the Senses  </b> Elizabeth Robinson.....	40
<b>Rethinking Pedagogy and Curriculum Models: Towards a Socially Conscious Afro-Cuban Dance Class  </b> Carolyn Pautz.....	21	<b>What Will Survive Us? Sigurd Leeder and His Legacy  </b> Clare Lidbury.....	43

<b>In Conversation with Jacqueline Challet-Haas  </b>	
Sanja Andus L'Hotellier.....	47
<b>Teaching Without Trace: An Aspiration for Dance Pedagogy?  </b>	
Jayne Stevens.....	52
<b>Contributors</b> .....	57
<b>News</b>	
SDHS Awards .....	60
SDHS Publications .....	60
Forthcoming Conferences .....	62

# A Word from the Guest Editor

## Dear Reader,

*Teacher's Imprint—Rethinking Dance Legacy* pays homage to French dance scholar and critic Laurence Louppe (1938-2012) and germinated from conversations with Professor Emerita Dr. Vera Maletic (1928-2015) from the Ohio State University. Resolutely internationalist, Maletic was a member of the third generation of Laban-trained teachers and taught extensively throughout Europe and the US. This issue of *Conversations Across the Field of Dance Studies* emerged from the desire we shared to bring together teachers, dancers, and scholars from different countries and mother tongues, across a wide range of dance practices, in a discussion around the notion of the teacher's imprint.

When discussing the nuanced and complex concept of transmitting dance, Laurence Louppe (1994, 16) states that beyond language, and beyond sign, the passing of knowledge consists less in offering the movement no matter how sublime, than in opening up a threshold to a secret and indefinable zone.<sup>1</sup> If teachers create a founding reference ground for the experience of the body, then their imprint, according to Louppe, relates more to a form of nomadic memory, intercorporeal "mysterious contagions," travelling from body to body, amongst groups of dancers, from one aesthetic imaginary to another, and this, even in their absence.

Over twenty years after Louppe's text which served as the starting point for this volume of *Conversations*, *Teacher's Imprint—Rethinking Dance Legacy* moves with this nomadic memory to record and ask how a dancer participates in the making of a teacher and what in turn makes someone a disciple. According to which modalities of transmission and tacit agreements are both figures—that of the teacher and that of the dancer—constructed and shaped? Coming from diverse generations and perspectives, the authors explore and interrogate this two-way kinesthetic negotiation and dialogue, and the underlying, radical and durable effects of a teacher's presence in structuring a dancer's body and work.

*Teacher's Imprint—Rethinking Dance Legacy* reserves an important part in engaging the reader to read translated published and unpublished writings such as an interview with the distinguished French notator and teacher Jacqueline Challet-Haas on the subtleties of defining Atty Chadinoff's and Albrecht Knust's imprint. For the first time, two texts by the eminent French dancer Dominique Dupuy are offered in English: "The Body of the Master" published in 1993, followed by "The Dance Master (In Question)" written in 2017 as a follow-up specifically for this translation of his earlier work. Not only does this publication introduce Dupuy's work to a readership of English-speaking dancers and researchers that has so far been available only to a Francophone

public, but it also sheds light upon the shift in perceptions in this artist's life and work over the twenty-five years that separate these two historically significant texts laying a foundation for our current inquiries.

In the spirit of *Conversations*, the ensuing articles respond implicitly to the challenges posed by Laurence Louppe and point to questions that address the issues of social consciousness and responsibility encountered in Afro-Cuban folkloric dance courses in US higher education institutions, the essence of knowledge and modalities of transmission and roles of teachers in the emerging workshop culture in India, and the shift from the influence of a single teacher to that of an entity embodied in a series of four National Choreographic Seminars. Emerging as well as established artists and scholars invite us into the archives of the dance experience with pieces dwelling on the insights into the sensory experiences developed in workshops with Pascale Houbin and Sylvie Pabiot, the Sigurd Leeder's legacy, and the development of dance pedagogies in and through the bodies of dance pedagogues.

Finally, through a curriculum based on the Alexander Technique proposed at the Dance department at De Montfort University, Jayne Stevens opens up the discussion as she queries whether the ultimate aim of teaching should be to teach without leaving a trace.

In all its diversity of experiences, research methodologies and corpuses, the collection of articles in this present issue of *Conversations* reflects the force of SDHS (as well as the newly formed Dance Studies Association) as an international platform of progressive dance scholars and artists committed to shared inquiry in an on-going dialogue. It is also in this sense that the lifetime of work of French and American scholars such as Laurence Louppe and Vera Maletic are honoured and continued here.

I wish to address my appreciation to our authors for generously sharing their work with *Conversations*. For continuing support and inspiring enthusiasm in building bridges between the French and American scholarship, I am particularly grateful to Sarah Davies Cordova. My gratitude goes to Candace Feck for the many discussions that we have had since the beginning of this project and many more to come in pursuing Vera Maletic's legacy. I extend my thanks to our designer Stephanie Hazen, Ann Cooper Albright, Cindy Lemek, Rebecca Rossen, the Editorial Board of the SDHS, and to SanSan Kwan and Linda Tomko for their constructive help and advice in enabling *Teacher's Imprint—Rethinking Dance Legacy* to appear.

**Sanja Andus L'Hotellier**

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<sup>1</sup>Louppe, Laurence. 1994. "Transmettre l'Indicible." *Nouvelles de Danse* 20:16–20.

# **The Body of the Master (1993) *followed by* The Dance Master (In Question) (2017)**

*Dominique Dupuy*

## **Editor's Introduction**

The contributions of the French dancer, teacher, choreographer and writer, Dominique Dupuy (b. 1930) have shaped the European dance landscape over the last seventy years and they continue today to form and inform generations of dancers and choreographers as he continues to interrogate his practice. Dominique Dupuy is a key figure in the development of modern dance in France, a position that he shares with his closest collaborator, his wife Françoise Dupuy (b. 1925). Together, the couple has evolved with and alongside the influential practices of Jacqueline Robinson, Karin Waehner and Jerome Andrews.

Dominique Dupuy began his dance training with the German expressionist dancer Jean Weidt, then studied ballet with Alice Vronska and Olga Preobrajenska, and acting with Charles Dullin and Marcel Marceau. Working from the start as a couple and known as Françoise and Dominique, their dual career began on the music-hall stage in the early 1950s. In 1955 they founded Les Ballets Modernes de Paris (BMP), one of France's first modern dance companies to receive state funding. Key to their trajectory was the founding of their Paris studio in 1954. Located at 104 Boulevard de Clichy, the studio became a hub for dancers to come to as a center for experimentation in teaching, performance, choreography, education and research. Françoise and

Dominique Dupuy, like Jacqueline Robinson, never taught a codified technique but instead sought to train well-rounded dancers.<sup>1</sup>

The couple's encounter with the American master-teacher Jerome Andrews (1908-1992)—whom they consider their “maître”—was equally defining for them.<sup>2</sup> Through his workshops, they were introduced to his interpretations of both classical and modern dance techniques as well as yoga and Pilates. Andrews choreographed three pieces for the Ballets Modernes de Paris: *Le Jour où la Terre Tremblera* (*The Day When The Earth Will Tremble*, 1960), *Capture Éphémère* (*Ephemeral Capture*, 1967) and *Le Masque de la Double Etoile* (*The Mask of the Double Star*, 1968).

After disbanding Les Ballets Modernes de Paris in 1978, the Dupuys undertook individual projects whilst continuing to work together. Françoise focused on conducting teacher-training courses at the Rencontres Internationales de Danse Contemporaine (RIDC) and, beginning in 1985, directed *Danse à l'Ecole*, a successful project incorporating contemporary dance into the primary public school curriculum.

As choreographers and writers themselves, they have sought tirelessly to foster spaces for dance research, study and writing and to raise the visibility and status of dance professionals. They founded in 1969

Rencontres Internationales de Danse Contemporaine (International Encounters of Contemporary Dance, RIDC), a pioneering teacher-training institution, and in 1996 Le Mas de la Danse (The Provençal House of Dance), a research and study center for contemporary dance as well as a publishing house.<sup>3</sup> Along with Jacqueline Robinson, the Dupuys were active in the Syndicat National des Auteurs et Compositeurs (National Union of Authors and Composers, SNAC), Conseil National de la Danse (National Dance Council, NDC) and Société des Auteurs et Compositeurs Dramatiques (Society of Dramatic Authors and Composers, SACD), working determinately to raise the status of dancers, choreographers and teachers. Now in their late eighties and nineties, they continue to explore the themes of heritage, memory and the aging dancer.

Prolific choreographers, the Dupuys have collaborated on many works, as well as produced dances individually. Among their best known works are *Marinada* (1953), *Le Mandarin Merveilleux* (*The Marvellous Mandarin*, 1965), *Le Bal des Gueux* (*The Beggars' Ball*, 1976) and *Faits d'Artifice* (*Artificial Facts*, 2001). They also contributed choreography to theatre works such as *Le Bourgeois Gentilhomme* (*The Bourgeois Gentleman*, 1960) and *Médée* (*Medea*, 1965). The Dupuys also made a number of works with broadly defined political themes. *Visages de Femmes* (*Faces of Women*, 1973) dealt with the status of women in wartime Algeria. Dominique's solo works *Le Cercle dans tous ses États* (*The Circle in All Its States*, 1979), *Trajectoires* (*Trajectories*, 1981) and *En Vol* (*Flying*, 1983) on the solitude of the dancer. *L'Estran* (*The Strand*, 2005) and *Le Regard par dessus le Col* (*A View Above the Peak*, 2007) featured Françoise dancing at the age of eighty.

Generations of French dancers and choreographers, including Brigitte Hyon, Joëlle Bouvier, Régis Obadia, Marie-France Delieuvin, Bernadette Leguil and José Montalvo, were trained by the Dupuys, and in 2001 the Dupuys co-authored a collection of essays on their dance practice entitled *Une Danse à l'Œuvre*. Still active today, they continue their research based in practice and teach master classes at the Centre National de la Danse (National Centre of Dance) in Paris as well as abroad. Dominique is currently directing at the Théâtre de Chaillot in Paris with Philippe Ducou, Paola Piccolo and Wu Zheng, a project entitled "Silence, on danse !" focused on the different body states that are at stake during and in finding silence: breathing, gravity, presence... These workshops are open to children, adults, the elderly and people with special needs.

As an introduction to Dominique Dupuy's practice as "Maître" or Master-Teacher, *Conversations Across the Field of Dance Studies* makes available in translation<sup>4</sup> for the first time to a readership of English-speaking dancers and researchers his 1993 article entitled "Le Corps du Maître."<sup>5</sup> Originally published in French by the Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique (CNRS)<sup>6</sup>—a pre-eminent publishing venue in the French academic context—the article circulated widely during the 1990s throughout France among dance practitioners and researchers. Conscious of how his thinking and work have changed, and in the spirit of *Conversations*, Dominique Dupuy offered to revisit the twenty-five year-old piece and to write a follow-up specifically for this translation of his earlier work with which he opens up a space of dialogue with the master that he was, inviting us to join him in reflecting on the teacher's imprint.

As Dupuy himself explains:

*This article, published by the CNRS comes from a moment in my career when I had been away from professional life for a while and was coming up against new teaching experiences that were unfamiliar to me. Much of what I knew or thought I knew was not always very useful for tackling the various situations that I had to deal with, some of which were quite extraordinary or comical. From the experienced teacher that I had been when I was working with professionals who expected me to get them into peak condition to practice their profession, I became a quite different character, having quite different responsibilities—more engaged perhaps, at least for me, feeling that I knew nothing that would be useful to me and so needing to come up with a "modus faciendi." And so this article became a sort of account of a profound personal experience, without me intending it to be. Today, almost twenty-five years later, the article—that I would never disown—seems inadequate, given the experiences I have had since. My thinking has evolved, especially with all sorts of writing and in particular with my book, *La Sagesse du Danseur* (*A Dancer's Wisdom*, 2011), as well as the work that has led me today to an important project around the "dancer's center." That is why I asked Sanja Andus L'Hotellier if this old piece could be complemented with a few thoughts from the present day, to act rather like a counterpoint to a reading of the original text.*



In some ways Dupuy's texts are a poetics of process that we hope will trigger a critical reading from today's perspective in dance studies. Reading Dupuy in French is challenging. Translating Dupuy's highly complex poetic language even more so. Nevertheless, including his first text and his generous revisiting of that earlier thinking is fundamental to understanding a key era in French dance. For the first time, his text offers Anglophone readers the possibility of understanding the imprint of modern French dance heritage on ensuing generations of dancers and choreographers, including Dupuy himself. The opening quote and the reference to Montaigne's *Essays* in his second text is central to understanding his writing-back to his earlier self.

In this spirit, here are some notes on the French original. Firstly pertaining to the word "le maître" in French, a masculine noun and in Dominique Dupuy's two texts consciously reflects his personal practice, his own experience and thinking. The term "maître" signifies teacher, and yet it is applied to someone who masters a special set of skills/knowledge in the arts as in "un maître-artisan" (a craftsman) or "un maître-cuisinier" (a chef) for example. Dupuy points out in his 1993 text: "rather than the term "teacher", I prefer to use "master"—not a person who keeps others under control and is in charge, but rather a former learner who, having mastered his art, is recognized as someone who is able to pass it on in turn."

Secondly, the author plays quite overtly with words and he uses neologisms—making nouns out of past participles and present participles—which is a long-standing deconstructive practice, a necessary and theoretical move in French.<sup>7</sup> Dupuy's "la dansée" has no equivalent in English. It is not "a dance" and yet it is a noun. "The danced" or "that which is danced" may be the closest translations.

Lastly, this translation often integrates the French genderization of words and therefore of concepts and subjects into its rendering of Dupuy's poetics. As a reminder to the reader, "le corps" (the body) being a masculine word and "la danse" (the dance) being a feminine word in the French language, the pronouns and possessive adjectives are translated as "he/him" and "she/her." This is the choice of the translator and as in all translations, it is a debatable one, yet it reflects the tensions that are at stake in writing about teaching a creative dance practice that emanates first and foremost from the body, from seeking to source knowledge in the body.

## The Body of the Master (1993)

I am going to discuss the master<sup>8</sup> of the art of contemporary dance in particular and the art of movement. Teaching dance is a serious matter. It is less about the body itself and more about the domain of the mind. I shall speak about the master's body as if it were a place of (theatrical, crafted) performance, of knowledge and wisdom, of contact and love, and of mystery.

### A Place of Action

The master of the art of movement is an actor surrounded by actors who are not passive spectators but rather seers-performers ("voyants-exécutants"); they are not passive consumers, they are part of the game; they fully intend to take part in it and to get something out of it. The master has to set up a double relationship with them of partner and actor, in which his body is the privileged mediator. He attempts to take them on a journey. It is a delicate sensitive situation.

The master proposes movements that, in theory, do not belong to a set dance genre or lexicon and that he has to set out clearly and describe with words and with corporeal motion.<sup>9</sup> The more I pursue my own work, the more I have come to think that oral description is important. It is a way of distancing oneself from a mimetic, mechanical, mechanistic reproduction of movement, and of steering the research towards a

true creation, or towards the realm of the movement's image and of a consciousness of the body, through movement.<sup>10</sup> But the moment what is being expressed passes via the body is no less important, and is perhaps even more so, when, enunciating it orally, since this is rarer and so much more preferred by those taking part. This moment is very distinctive. It is not about executing a movement that the others try to imitate to reproduce mimetically. The master is not asking them to identify with him, nor to reproduce his image in the mirror in front of them, but rather to find their own identity through a movement that he is suggesting, that he expresses with his own body and that they will attempt to make their own.

In this theatrical dialogue—this staging one could say—that is established between him and the others, he does not project himself or present a body to be looked at. It is not he who goes towards the others but the others who come to him. Their gazes come to read his body, which is read rather than seen. “To be a good mime artist, you need to be a great listener.”<sup>11</sup> I say that one cannot be a dancer if one does not know how to read movement. The master enunciates a movement with his body. The others train their eyes on it, staring at it. For me this moment is unique; it is exquisite, and more theatrical than any other. It is a substitute, a consolation, the antidote to the fact of no longer dancing on stage. In this subtle play between doing and not doing, the master's body is not addressing an anonymous audience as a whole, in the darkness of an auditorium. It is speaking, point blank, to each and everyone in particular around him, whispering in each person's ear. As if equipped with his or her own opera glasses and headphones, everyone is under the impression of being the only one to see and hear (in a one-on-one with the master). The space is both vast and intimate. The master does not inscribe his movement within a frame; it evolves freely in limitless space. If he makes a movement forwards, he goes forward but not to the forestage; if he moves sideways, he goes to the side but not to stage left or stage right. The others watch him without the stage's fourth wall, the ramp, the lights... They are on the same plane as him.

Intimacy of being present. To participate in the game one needs to attain a state of doing without doing, to leave the stage, to remove oneself from the equation. Movement is expressed and described through this body, without the possibility of any artifice, or of any corrective measure. It must appear in a pure state, free from all baggage and

romantic notions. The stage tends to magnify the line, to give more. Here, what is needed is less. Fewer intentions and so fewer tensions, fewer intrusions from outside. The body of the master proceeds by omission, ellipsis, and yet is present in the evidence of what it states, without emotion or passion. On stage, we ourselves cannot know if we have danced well; we often get a false impression. In teaching, we know what we are doing. We leave ourselves enough space to see ourselves in action at the same time as we act; we can appreciate our action, which is not always the case during a performance. This absorption in the act (which is not a projection of the action itself) is close to what is experienced by a craftsman throwing a pot or forging iron, working a shuttle, imposing silence and compelling admiration.

But what does the master produce? Nothing. The movement he sketches is not made to last. It is not a piece of choreography. It is just a suggestion that will live briefly and then disappear. He is like a miner hacking out a tunnel or a digger sinking a well. He seems to construct a space that it is impossible to go back over or to spread out from, that renders the movement so fragile and yet so definitive. He is a craftsman without a product. This is a consciousness in action.

## A Place of Wisdom

The master is an open book, a memory in a state of total and continual transformation, adjustment and updating, a work site. What it contains is not definitive but evolves with work and over time. Age also weighs in as part of this necessary adaptation to the moment, and is a source of riches, not difficulties. A book open at today's page. What is important is what is lived and said from one day to the next.

Years of study, practice, techniques, schools and experiences have left their marks on this body but they are just traces. They are latent and only come to the surface at just the right moment. Sometimes they come from way back; they emerge and have a subtle connection with things of the past. This old knowledge does not force itself on him and he does not force it on others. It is not his major asset and it only serves as an *aide-mémoire* to corroborate his experience. The master demonstrates more experience than learning. He is a practitioner. He does not force a science, a school, a style on anyone; he suggests a praxis.

On a purely physical level, all that remains in this body is what is strictly necessary for deep movement. Little by little, all the superficial has melted away. What remains is a beautiful, well-pruned plant. One sees the years of work in the oriental masters, such as those immortalized by Michel Random in his books and films. The master is positioned to learn at every moment. His teaching teaches him. He needs to cast off many constraints to attain this state. “We are only in truth” Michel Foucault says (1971, 37) “when we obey the rules of a *discursive policy* that has to be reactivated in every speech.” This physical and mental transformation is very specific to the master of movement. If he wishes to remain mobile, he must, at all times, rid himself absolutely of the inevitability of the “static.” He cannot be content with accumulating learning. He must start down the path of metamorphosis. This is how he remains constantly in touch with the experience of intuition, with his referent sense of clear, immediate knowledge of truth, without the use of reasoning. He does not preconceive; he invents in the moment. He cuts to the chase. Picasso would say, “He does not seek, he finds.” He is a body in spirit.

## A Place of Contact and Love

What we teach is less important than whom we teach. We should therefore prioritise our relationship with them. But the presence of our body is likely to be ambiguous. One body addresses another. Their proximity, their contact—provoked or fortuitous—creates an intimacy that needs to be taken into account, measured and adjusted, and advisedly utilized.

Touch—if touch even occurs—is subtle. The deepest thing about man is the skin, Valéry says, and whoever touches the latter is likely to reach the former. This touching is neither too soft nor too hard, neither cajoling nor reproving. It does not flatter too kindly nor punish too harshly. If the Japanese masters are to be believed, when one places one’s hands on someone it is not his body that one touches but their soul. Touch guides, directs the movement of a muscle, of a joint or of a segment. It is not a manipulation.

The contact is neither amorous nor therapeutic. It must not jar, or it would likely create even more tension and cause blockage and rejection. The master is not a therapist. He has no ready-made spells to hand, no magic potions or miracle cures. Neither is he a coach, a fairground barker of the “drill” denounced by Doctor Le Boulch’ (1971, 18). What

he proposes is not a “training”—a horrible word, not just because of its Anglicism, but because it vehiculates an old sports heritage which is totally inappropriate for the art of movement. The master is all about quality. He does not appeal to willingness, courage or endurance. He is not an animal tamer. He does not crack the whip or hand out titbits. His manner is concerned with tact, contact and objective listening. His voice is in tune with his body. It suggests rather than gives injunctions. It solicits the images that will open the gates to movement.

A peaceful meeting of bodies, neither excessively indulgent nor excessively harsh. It is a relationship of mutual trust and respect. Here, again, we are in the realm of intuition, but drawing on its second meaning, that is its capacity to foresee, divine, anticipate, just as one foresees an accident. The body of the master, a diviner detecting what is possible, is a body of presence and attention. It is passed through. It does not address itself to emotion but goes straight to consciousness. It speaks to the listening.

## A Place of Poetic Alchemy, Blooming and Mystery’s Metamorphosis

The body of the master performs the task that Antonin Artaud (1990, 108) assigned to the theatre: it “brings to light through active movements that part of truth that is buried beneath forms in their encounter with the process of becoming.” Of the movement proposed, indicated, described, the body of the master suggests the whole and the parts, the genesis and the end point, the inside and the outside, the roots and the flower. It gives a multiples in one. It reveals the interior and the exterior, just as the Noh master described by Zeami (1960, 95) reveals the visible beauty of a flower—*hana*—and its secret or invisible beauty, enclosed or hidden, its deep beauty—*yugen*.

In the realm of dance, what is shown on stage, is not the body in its maturity, but the body of an Adonis, of a feline, of a bird, and rarely simply that of a man. (I myself had the good fortune of seeing José Limón<sup>12</sup> in his prime, the only true man-dancer [“homme-dansant”] I ever came across.) The body of the master reveals the beauty that comes with age, the beauty of living things reaching their end, the peaceful beauty of old age, what the Japanese call *rogaku*. In a subtle mixture—yin and yang—it possesses at once virile strength and feminine charm, ambiguity, the profound duality of the androgynous. It is approaching gracefulness. What attracts irresistibly in this body

in action is the witness's certainty of being led to a place of origin and of being present at the birth of the movement. It is about creation. The intensity of the solitude in which it moves gives incommensurable force to the act; the movement is then the only thing that exists, as if its very being were at stake. It is completely in the moment.

It is not reciting yesterday's text; it is not elaborating a text for tomorrow. Shaped by the past, projected towards the future, the discourse it expresses is fleeting, entirely in the present tense, simultaneously creation and interpretation. It is a sort of meditation. The body of the master is the body of a meditator.

Thus the body of the master of movement is a body of action, thought, love and mystery. It is a master of work ("maître d'œuvre"). But this mastery is particular. It is a master's work without a product.

An actor without a theatre, who has a singular presence,

A craftsman with rare a skill, who refines nothing,

A scholar without a book, whose rigour is exemplary,

A healer without a potion, with cutaneous vigilance,

A poet without words,

An alchemist of the void,

Its work, because of it being set to work itself, consists simply of putting those around to work.

This body—laid bare, keeping watch—is ready to wage a peaceful combat in which the death of the "static" is at stake.

It is solid as a rock and crystal-clear.

It is memory; it is forgetting.

It is, in the present, the path leading from the past towards the future.

It is the essence of an image, the quintessence of action. If a dancer's movement gives off a fragrance, that of the master exhales its essence.

It is more than a body at stake; it is a body being called into question.

Its presence is based on absence; its matter is emptiness, silence. It has the efficaciousness of a chalice, whose emptiness leads to fullness.

It is constantly learning from itself and from others. It knows how to recharge itself from its disciples. One disciple said to his master, "My art finds new resources by watching you practise your art," and the master smiled and replied, "My art finds new resources by watching you practise yours."<sup>13</sup>

It is the "wise apprentice" so dear to Moshe Feldenkrais. It does not have the mind of an expert focused on having and knowing. It sometimes wishes it had less to be more.

Intuition leads it to the essence of what will be and to knowledge of what is.

Architect of the void, sculptor of the invisible, it makes immobility shake and space shift; it is a demiurge. It is the enigma's messenger.

Silence around it is dense. One witnesses a revelation. The body of the master is then simply the projection of his mind. His thought becomes movement and his movement thought. It is a passageway, a non-place. And if one holds on to the image of a teacher, of someone who takes the child to school, it is the child, it is the path and it is the school.

It is the prince of the beginners.

# The Dance Master (In Question) (2017)

« Ce n'est pas ici ma doctrine, c'est mon estude ; et n'est pas la leçon d'autrui, c'est la mienne. »<sup>14</sup>

In the STUDIO,<sup>15</sup> the domain over which he presides, before some of those who come to him, alone in his in-depth investigation into dance and yet in complete empathy with those who are there present, following him in their present-ness, he does not seek to simply rehearse something that he already knows. He starts off in the unknown and traces a new path that sometimes surprises him. He discovers what he is doing as he is doing it.

He is certainly knowledgeable but that is not what he demonstrates, for he is experimenting. He neither repeats nor exhibits all that he knows. He starts to speak and the words that emerge are not words of knowledge but of experience, about what he is doing there, in that precise moment—words that will mostly be lost, since no one is there to record them. And besides, are they worth preserving? What would be done with them? A collection of teachings?

They will return, in the experience, sometimes identical, often changed, quite different depending on the circumstances.

Instead of looking to impose a pre-set knowledge, which would be the explanation of the state of things, a top-down knowledge, he goes back, in an experience that is still wordless, to a “childhood of experience”, from which words might come forth aptly. This moment, when the Master begins to speak as he dances, is not unlike when a child talks as he plays, a sort of commentary that is not there as an explanation, but as a spoken expression that is totally bound up with what is happening. “If dance were to be told to us like a story.” The master is like the child in the story, or the storyteller in front of a child.

We might ask ourselves if he too is not questioning himself, trying, on the spot, to answer questions that come to him spontaneously. In trying to present something to others, he may be discovering something himself that, of course, is not foreign to him but which manifests itself then, at that particular moment.

A happy conjunction of act and thought. What he says comes from what he does. They are not applied words, but the very expression of something he would not know, that he would not know he knew.

The Master's move is gesture in the present; it is not reminiscence, nor anything to do with a legacy. The Master does not show us treasures, neither his own nor the ones he has acquired over the years. He does not open up a coffer to us, he does not unpack his jewels. He is the treasure. A living treasure, according to the Japanese saying, who gives us his move of the day.

And so he is man in action, in all the beauty of a simple act that he gifts without emphasis but with empathy. He is not the person who danced, he is the person who, at this very moment, is dancing for us, and just for us. He is in what I call “la dansée” [the danced].

Putting his body to work—as in the French expression “mettre la main à la pâte” which means immersing oneself completely in what one is doing—he offers his body up to those who surround and are considering him. What he is doing, of course, is shaped by what he knows, but in this ineffable moment, he is inventing it. He is inventing something that he is the first to uncover, sometimes with astonishment, rather like grasping at last the meaning of a text at the very moment that one reads it before an audience.

To come back to the uttered words, they are not in any way intended as “gospel,” nor are they “empty words.” His utterances as a craftsman of words as well as of movements are divulged as if he were confiding in himself, except that he does not keep them to himself and spoken out loud they are heard by those around him. At that moment, he is not an orator, far from it; he is confiding in everyone present and they can be in on confidences.

It is a unique moment, when words are most closely tied to movement, when they are neither explanation, nor unproductive and useless additions. Any other speech act would risk being metaphorical, explanatory, discursive or spuriously poetic. Those words that are unique, rare, and yet the most “dansante” [“dancing”].

The Dance Master is the one who, without exhibiting any learning or science (yet backed up by them), proposes an experience; he seeks to relive it himself before his disciples, at his own risk. The Dance Master is a master *par excellence*. What he knows, he has not acquired it as learnedness, but he knows it from experience.

Dance has the good fortune (or misfortune, depending on the chosen point of view) to be a stranger to generally accepted—“normal”—forms of knowledge expressed in writing and in books. To say so is not to put dance down. It situates dance where it is positioned, inexorably tied to the experiential that no learnedness can replace.

Of course, one wants—one would really want—to rescue and save this unfortunate one from such disgrace. This is well intentioned—one can recognise this—but it is not necessarily going to help her. It is wanting, in a way, to “bring her into line” but such a bending is very foreign to the lines, she invents through her own ingenuity, through her affective relation to the sentient.

Dance is not a form of knowledge. It is an experience of the sentient that can sometimes take on the quality of a form of learning, but without the accompanying knowledge. Dance does not accumulate methods. The experiential that criss-crosses dance does not get stored up, which does not mean to say that it is ephemeral. This experience, which comes from a tireless practice, is not without a tomorrow, however its tomorrow is to be re-incarnated without the crutches of knowledge.

The teacher is in the choreographic, the master in the dance. He is the link between the choreographic and dance; he seeks with the choreographic to encounter dance, to find the dance. The master is the paragon of dance. To refuse the Master, as some dancers do today, is to cut oneself off fundamentally from experiencing being in the dance.

“Terpsichore, finder of dance”

With these seemingly trivial words—words that to my long-held regret, Paul Claudel penned—the wordsmith that he was highlighted dance’s true path (1967, 221). The Master of dance is Terpsichore’s lover; he seeks her and, better than that, he sometimes happens upon dance.

Picasso: “I don’t seek. I find.”

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## Notes

1. Teacher, dancer and prolific writer, Jacqueline Robinson (1922-2000) published several books on dance teaching (*Une Certaine Idée de la Danse, Réflexions au Fil des Jours; L’Atelier de la Danse 1955-1995—Souvenirs; Mon Enfant et la Danse*) as well as the seminal chronicle on the development of modern dance in France. See Robinson, Jacqueline. 1997. *Modern Dance in France: An Adventure 1920-1970*. Amsterdam: Harwood Academic Publishers. Translated by Catherine Dale. For complete biography on Jacqueline Robinson, Françoise and Dominique Dupuy, see the *Routledge Encyclopedia of Modernism* (2016). [Editor’s note].
2. On Jerome Andrews’s work in France, see Robinson, Jacqueline. 1997. *Modern Dance in France: An Adventure 1920-1970*. Amsterdam: Harwood Academic Publishers. Translated by Catherine Dale. See also Jérôme Andrews, *Forwards and Backwards*. A film directed by N+N Corsino; interview: Laurence Louppe, Dominique Dupuy. <http://www.nncorsino.com/en/creations/jerome-andrews-forwards-backwards/20>. However, outside of the French context, this Franco-American collaboration and Andrews’s teaching influence seem to be less known. In a very interesting way, this connection signals a potential host of teachers whose impacts in the 1950s and 60s have not been much noticed in histories of modern dance. I thank Linda Tomko for pointing out this important aspect. [Editor’s note].
3. Publications and co-editions by Le Mas de la Danse include: *Danse et Politique* (2001); the journal *Quant à la Danse* (2004-2008); and the complete collection of Dominique Dupuy’s writings for the journal *Marsyas* from 1991-95 during his tenure at the Institut de Pédagogie Musicale et Chorégraphique under the title *Danse Contemporaine, Pratique et Théorie, Marsyas, Ecrits pour la Danse* (2007). [Editor’s note].
4. Translated by Wendy Lee, The Charlesworth Group. [Editor’s note].
5. This piece, originally a conference presentation, dedicated to Jerome Andrews and entitled “*Le Corps du Maître*”, was published in 1993 in Aslan, Odette, ed. 1993. *Le Corps en Jeu / Etudes de G. Aperghis, O. Aslan, G. Banu... [et al.] ; Témoignages de C. Bernhardt, M. Bozonnet, P. Brook... [et al.]*. 246–50. Paris: CNRS. I am grateful to Odette Aslan and Béatrice Picon-Vallin, as well as Martine Berteau, for their kind permission to reproduce this article. [Editor’s note].

6. The Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique (CNRS—National Centre for Scientific Research) is a prestigious public research body. <http://www.cnrs.fr/index.php>. [Editor's note].
  7. See Kritzman, Lawrence D., ed. 2006. *The Columbia History of Twentieth-Century French Thought*. New York: Columbia University Press. [Editor's note].
  8. Rather than the term “teacher”, I prefer to use “master”—not a person who keeps others under control and is in charge, but rather a former learner who, having mastered his art, is recognised as someone who is able to pass it on in turn. [Editor's note: The term “maître” is a masculine noun in French and in Dominique Dupuy's two texts consciously reflects his personal practice, his own experience and thinking].
  9. Even today, the vast majority of teachers still teach movements from the repertoire's standards and canonic pieces and it is only the phrasings' arrangements that change.
  10. Alain Berthoz rightly talks about mental training. See Berthoz, Alain. 1993. “La Cooperation des Sens et du Regard dans la Perception du Mouvement.” In *Le Corps en Jeu / Etudes de G. Aperghis, O. Aslan, G. Banu... [et al.] ; Témoignages de C. Bernhardt, M. Bozonnet, P. Brook... [et al.]*, edited by Odette Aslan, 17–26. Paris: CNRS.
  11. Marcel Marceau quoted by Alfred Tomatis. See Tomatis, Alfred. 1993. “Ecoute-Voix-Espace.” In *Le Corps en Jeu / Etudes de G. Aperghis, O. Aslan, G. Banu... [et al.] ; Témoignages de C. Bernhardt, M. Bozonnet, P. Brook... [et al.]*, edited by Odette Aslan, 350. Paris: CNRS.
  12. José Limón: a dancer of Mexican origin, a follower of Doris Humphrey, and a leading dancer and choreographer (1908-1972).
  13. Tradition passed down orally.
  14. [“This is not my teaching here, it is my study; and it is not someone else's lesson, it is mine.”] Montaigne. 1978. *Essais*, Paris: Gallimard, Pléiade, quoted by Giorgio Agamben in *Enfance et Histoire*. 2002. Paris: Petite Bibliothèque Payot, to which this article is much indebted.
  15. The Studio is playing the same role as Montaigne's study. [Editor's note].
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# On Dance Pedagogy and Embodiment

Jessica Zeller

Dance pedagogies develop in and through the bodies of dance pedagogues. My contemporary body, shaped by my heterogeneous American ballet training background, provides the foundation for my pedagogy and that which I disseminate when I teach. I approach this conversation, then, from a present-day, phenomenological perspective—through my embodied understanding of Western pedagogies, dance forms, and philosophies. Because this essay originates with my pedagogy and my body, I do not purport to present these musings as universal perspectives. Rather, I seek to make space here for any who find resonance in these ideas.

## I. Dance Pedagogy as Embodied Philosophy

As dancers and teachers, our bodies shape our perspectives. We develop our pedagogies using embodied inquiry: reasoning with our muscles and inferring with our senses; setting parameters, quite literally, with our bones and connective tissues. Our somatic wisdom inspires a cohesive philosophy and our pedagogies are then grounded in what our bodies understand. As extensions of our embodied selves, our pedagogies reflect who we are and what we value; they are personal and professional, emotional and intellectual, vulnerable and empowered.

As dancers, we gravitate toward teachers and coaches whose perspectives make sense in our bodies. Their ways of looking at dance, including their aesthetic and stylistic sensibilities, become central to

how we know our bodies: they become part of our dancing selves. Our experiences with these pedagogues, and our embodied responses to their teaching, provide a foundation that we draw from as we make our own pedagogical inquiries and build our philosophies. We may also, during this process, consider the work of teachers whose approaches seemed incompatible with our bodies. In spite of our discomfort with their perspectives, they are valuable to our pedagogies in that they provide ideas we can push against. They help us define our pedagogic values inversely: by showing us that we do not align with certain ideas, they allow us to locate our principles.

*“It is not just that our bodies and brains determine that we will categorize; they also determine what kinds of categories we will have and what their structure will be...What is important is that the peculiar nature of our bodies shapes our very possibilities for conceptualization and categorization.”*

—George Lakoff and Mark Johnson (1999, 18–19)

We sort through elements of our teachers’ pedagogies as we develop our own, using our bodies as the mediums through which we piece together our philosophies. We exercise rigorous embodied analysis as we consider elements of our teachers’ work that we will preserve, adjust, or discard in our own. We avoid establishing as tenets of our pedagogies those concepts that our teachers may have believed but which failed to make sense in our bodies, although they may benefit



our broad pedagogic knowledge. Rather, we embrace the principles that we are able to validate somatically. Our bodies reason; they describe how and why we align with or diverge from these pedagogies. Because our bodies and our ways of being embodied are different from those of our teachers, we cannot, despite common perceptions, pass down our teachers' work indiscriminately. Our bodies automatically revise our teachers' ideas and offer new physical contexts for them, and it is this embodied reinterpretation of dance pedagogy that results in its perpetuation over time. When we engage with pedagogy as an embodied philosophy, we assume the entwined roles of *messenger*: passing down what we have learned; and *progenitor*: originating ideas through the filters of our unique bodies and our somatic experiences. We thus become part of the pedagogic oral tradition in dance: the lineages that comprise our histories and our field (Zeller, 2016).

*"Soma does not mean 'body'; it means 'Me, the bodily being.'"*  
—Thomas Hanna (1970, 35)

The locus of dance is in our somas—our embodied selves. Dance training changes our bodies and shapes us affectively. We learn to harness our emotions for artistic ends, for example, and we come to love our most influential teachers. We develop close relationships with them; they foster our development as dancers and as individuals—as somas. Because our pedagogic perspectives tend to reflect our strongest relationships with our teachers, we often choose to perpetuate concepts in homage to those who supported our growth. More comprehensively, we may build our pedagogies on the major tenets of our teachers' pedagogies, albeit through the lens of our unique embodiment. We may even try to replicate personality traits of our teachers in an effort to reproduce an environment in which we thrived: if it was meaningful for us, then perhaps it would be equally as meaningful for our students. Likewise, it is possible that the emotional effects of any dysfunctional relationships with our teachers may seep into our pedagogies, despite our best intentions. If we endured abuse—often disguised as a teaching methodology—we may unconsciously perpetuate, or more insidiously, rationalize this abuse as we develop our own pedagogies. Lineage runs deep: it is ingrained in our somas. In doing the work of perpetuating our dance lineages, we pass forward affective elements of pedagogy—the beneficial parts as well as those that may be so entrenched in our experiences that we fail to see them as problematic or in need of revision.

*"Whether a system of motor or perceptual powers, our body is not an object for an 'I think,' it is a grouping of lived-through meanings which moves towards its equilibrium. Sometimes a new cluster of meanings is formed: our former movements are integrated into a fresh motor entity, the first visual data into a fresh sensory entity, our natural powers suddenly come together in a richer meaning, which hitherto has been merely foreshadowed in our perceptual or practical field, and which has made itself felt in our experience by no more than a certain lack, and which by its coming suddenly reshuffles the elements of our equilibrium and fulfils our blind expectation."*

—Maurice Merleau-Ponty (1962, 153)

Our bodies become sites of experimentation as we reconcile distinct pedagogic perspectives—even conflicting ones. One of our teachers says "Up" while the other says "Down," and our bodies make these concepts compatible. Perhaps "Up" allows us to feel more at ease than "Down;" or maybe we find that "Up" and "Down" are not mutually exclusive, but seem to work together as complements. What began as discrete concepts find new significance and reorganization in our bodies, as we conceptualize "Up" and "Down" anew. Our individual embodiment as pedagogues thus precludes the implication that genres, forms, and pedagogies—codified or not—are monolithic. We may name genres and forms, and we may consider them whole entities, yet our unique bodies necessitate a substantial degree of variation inside these definitions. Ballet is never just ballet, for example; we always ask *who* will be teaching.<sup>1</sup> Because our bodies and our embodied experiences are distinct, and because they are the cornerstones of our pedagogical development, we can say that even inside of forms and genres, there are as many pedagogical philosophies as there are pedagogues.

## II. The Body of the Pedagogue

Her spine was at ease, her right leg appeared to grow longer, and she squeegeed the floor with her foot. The white leather of her jazz shoe pulled against her bunion as her instep came to rest on the tip of her toe. She closed with a retrograde; metatarsals alive and resisting; pressing into the floor underneath her first position. I flashed on a memory of another teacher once telling me that some people are born with a *tendu*. My mouth went slack as I tried to absorb her body. I hadn't learned the exercise, but the expectation was beyond question.

Like a rank beginner, which I was not, I followed the person in front of me. I doubted, in that moment, that her foot had ever not known where it was going.<sup>2</sup>

Is our embodiment alone enough to constitute a pedagogic philosophy in dance?

Our depth of knowledge is visible in our bodies as we teach, and our embodiment is central to whether our pedagogies, or we as pedagogues, can establish legitimacy (Zeller 2016). Our embodied wisdom is perceptible in an instant, while our pedagogies only become clear to others over time. As students, the first thing we do in a dance class is to look at how the body of the teacher engages; it offers insight into what is expected of us, and it serves as evidence of the teacher's experience—a reason to be confident in their knowledge. As pedagogues, we can feel students' eyes on our bodies as we demonstrate, and we can feel their unspoken responses. Our bodies are their keys to our pedagogies, and through our embodiment, we earn their trust.

When I am in a studio with a class of students, I engage them to help me understand their somatic experiences and what they feel, beyond what my eye perceives that they know. In part, this helps me extend my embodied knowledge to every student who does not share my body's structure and understanding—which is to say, all of them. It is the differences between students' bodies and my own which compels me to seek knowledge that originates outside of my body, and I thus endeavor to learn more about bodies, somas, and pedagogies from several perspectives. My body may not be the source of this knowledge, but it is my sole framework for understanding it. I cannot learn through a different body, or through a disembodied mind. My mind and my body are one as I learn new approaches: my mind feels my body's analysis. My pedagogy, then, is my embodied wisdom, which derives from multiple sources. My role as a pedagogue is to extend this embodied wisdom to each student, with consideration of each student's unique way of being embodied.

Claiming that embodiment is central to the development of dance pedagogies is not to suggest that as teachers we are without physical limitations or that our embodiment does not change over time. As questions arise in our teaching, we can rely on our bodies' abilities to

answer them. We demonstrate concepts in classes or "try on" ideas when in conversation with colleagues or students. If we can feel it in our bodies, we can validate it. So when our bodies change, after childbirth, for example, our embodiment changes in tandem. Aging, likewise, alters our somatic realities. Despite the deep irony of the aging process for us whose bodies enable our work, aging shows us new ways of harnessing and even deepening our embodiment. We learn to do more—to feel more—with less pliancy and less range. When our aging bodies find places of resistance or limitation, we can still locate the feeling of the full form in our bodies, as a phantom limb that we can feel whether or not the full extent of the form is still physically possible. Our embodiment, in this way, is both cumulative and accessible: we can still feel the full capacities we once had access to, and we continue learning through our bodies as they are. We can thus fulfill the ongoingness that pedagogy demands, beyond our momentary bodily states.

When I am still and quiet in my body, I am a more effective teacher, both when planning and during the class itself. Sometimes my body, its patterns and preferences that have changed over time, can make my pedagogy feel myopic. Deliberately preparing and teaching classes without stepping inside the dance is not comfortable or easy: actively avoiding my body's movement impulses is a challenge because my embodiment, always and by its nature, affects my choices. Making the attempt to sidestep my patterns, however, helps me expand the range of material I choose and the nuances my eye perceives. I am always my body and yet I often reach beyond its framework: the students' bodies are their own, and they need to work beyond my body.

One of my teachers once said that she could tell whose class she was watching by looking only at the students.<sup>3</sup> Watching another teacher work with my class of students offers a similar insight. I appreciate the opportunity to see another's pedagogy—another's body—reflected in the bodies of the dancers who I usually see through the lens of my pedagogy and my body. I see the ways the students' bodies respond to a different teacher; how they hear the music, traverse the space, or engage their focus. The context of another pedagogue's embodied philosophy makes clear to me how the framework of my body shapes my pedagogy. It is pedagogic sorbet.

### III. Communicating and Perpetuating Pedagogy

Despite its central role in pedagogic inquiry, our embodiment of dance knowledge is not enough to comprise a pedagogy on its own. Our dancing bodies—while they may convey some of our perspectives—cannot communicate the depths of our pedagogic inquiry and our resulting philosophies. Key to pedagogy, then, is methodology: the means by which we communicate and enact our perspectives. No pedagogy is complete without a methodology; dance’s embodied philosophies cannot be perpetuated without a means of transmission.

From the student’s perspective, our pedagogies and methodologies are one and the same. What we ask of them in the dance class is what we believe and espouse, which we have come to through our bodies and our somatic experiences. Students understand our pedagogies because our methodologies articulate them. We strive to transmit our embodied philosophies such that students can interpret them through their own bodies.

Taken a step further, we could say that pedagogy’s desired end is not only the student’s embodiment, but the subsequent empowerment of students to draw on that embodiment. Dance lineages are built on students’ moments of deep discovery: the instances when students somatically understand their experiences enough to articulate them and reformulate them through their own embodied lenses. As pedagogues, these moments offer us a glimpse of how our pedagogies might look in future incarnations—as our students take hold of dance’s legacy of embodied inquiry.

Without exception, methodologies express pedagogies: they define the relationship between teacher and student; they assume that the student arrives with more or less knowledge; they ascribe cultural, political, and socio-economic perspectives to the body; they reflect worldviews, principles, and standards. Methodologies cannot be dissociated from pedagogies, and thus are never value-free. If we are not diligent, our methodologies have the power to distort our pedagogies. When well aligned with our pedagogic intentions, however, methodologies can communicate not only the contents of our pedagogic philosophies, but our meta-pedagogic processes: they can make transparent the complexities of pedagogic development and

offer our students a framework for developing their own. It is not only form and content that we perpetuate when we teach, but the mantle of dance’s pedagogic lineage.

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#### Notes

1. I extend my appreciation to Dr. Karen Eliot for many fruitful discussions challenging the notion of ballet as monolithic.
2. My thanks to Susan Dromisky for the burned image of her *tendu*, and to Rochelle Zide-Booth for the reality check.
3. I thank Susan Hadley for sharing this perspective.

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# Rethinking Pedagogy and Curriculum Models: Towards a Socially Conscious Afro-Cuban Dance Class

*Carolyn Pautz*

This article proposes to explore and analyze issues of social consciousness and responsibility encountered in Afro-Cuban folkloric dance courses in US higher education institutions and arises from awareness of two important factors: Afro-Cuban dance forms taught in American higher education dance departments are increasingly common and are framed as folklore.<sup>1</sup> These points must be interrogated to understand the effects of these relatively new curriculums on Afro-Cuban folkloric dance. I am particularly interested in the impact of categorization (i.e. classical, contemporary, folkloric), how Afro-Cuban dance material is transmitted, and how this impacts socio-cultural awareness of the religious community from which this material is sourced.

Zoila Mendoza defines folklore as a hypothetically authentic product of “hypothetically common knowledge (lore)” assumed to be attributable not to any individual but to a “hypothetically unified community (folk)” (1998, 170). Mendoza emphasizes the de-contextualized, distant and communal origin whose author remains anonymous, and whose product is temporally and spatially fluid. Considering the adaptability this definition implies, Afro-Cuban dance teachers concerned for the local religious and social communities from which notions of authenticity, lineage and production are drawn must develop a socially responsible and conscious curriculum that achieves the following criteria:

- Engagement with intersectional factors of development including the religious, socio-political, geographical and socio-economic.
- Deep interaction with artistic, pedagogical and religious lineage.

- Development of technical skill, style, and musicality.
- Development of creative license that displays consciousness of the social codes of the communities of origin.

The goal of this inquiry is to identify where action can be taken in order to develop an interethnic pedagogy, which employs techniques that demonstrate “the values and experiences of subaltern groups” for the purpose of education (King-Calnek 2006, 145). Interethnic pedagogy is an alternative to mainstream education models that reinforce structures of domination and misrecognition (King-Calnek 2006).<sup>2</sup> It is intended to develop students capable of practicing critical awareness regarding their relationship with both dominant and subaltern cultures. Considering most Afro-Cuban folkloric dance is sourced from Lucumi socio-religious practices this article examines how the spiritual philosophies of this community might define the parameters of an interethnic Afro-Cuban dance curriculum that allows the history of the subaltern to surface while relocating artistic oversight in the Lucumi community.<sup>3</sup> In addition to classroom observations, I utilize cultural studies analysis and auto-ethnography applied to my own experience as a Lucumi priestess. These methods provide a useful lens to interrogate current folkloric pedagogical practices while allowing for the inclusion of minutiae necessary for the analysis of bodily, spatial, and ideological relationships.

Afro-Cuban folkloric dance curriculums, often partially emptied of historical context, represent an extraction and distillation of diasporic

social (for example rumba) and religious practices (for example Lucumi and Palo) emerging in Cuba at various historical junctures between the 18th and 20th centuries, and that have since been collated into a national folkloric form by the Cuban government since the mid-20th century. However, the majority of content for courses in the United States is comprised of Orisha music and dance sourced from the Lucumi religious community.<sup>4</sup> Orisha are the divinities of Yoruba-based religious practices. Each Orisha is characterized with a particular natural element and has unique characteristics. However as opposed to a pantheon, which implies a sort of departmentalization, Orisha are considered interrelated in their functions.<sup>5</sup>

In addition to content dislocated from its context, the pedagogical tools and curriculums used by many Afro-Cuban teachers are inherited from the schools in Cuba. However, these methods and tools are embedded in a historical, socialist, Caribbean-conscious moment. Thus students seeking training in the United States do not necessarily have the same historical relationship to the methods or the material. The confluence of extraction/distillation and lack of relationality creates an artistic neocolonial consumption hidden under the neoliberal rhetoric of diversification. Consequently, responsibility to the Lucumi community and the social consciousness that defines the dance form as Afro-Cuban is made invisible or remains illegible to American students. Therefore we must reckon with the fact that in a social system that separates public and private, and state and religion, the education that takes place in the domestic sphere is fundamental to the development of a relationship and an understanding of Orisha. Orisha do not live extant from those who worship them. As priests/priestesses we have been given codes of how we are to interact with others, how to develop our creativity, how to keep our home, how to carry ourselves in the street, and the list goes on. For every one of us that code, oriented towards the development of *iwa pele* (good character) and *agbon* (knowledge), is completely unique.

Such an approach presents a fundamentally different worldview from the foundational Euro-American essentialism that bleeds across educational institutions. Essentialism neatly packages and legitimizes certain spheres of learning (the secular and the state-legitimized) by strategically leaving out other spheres of learning (the spiritual and the domestic). This compartmentalization impacts the manner in which Afro-Cuban folkloric dance is taught. Thus, if we are to decolonize dance curriculums<sup>6</sup> we must acknowledge that it is problematic that the content of Afro-Cuban folkloric dance is rooted in current, vital, social and religious practices but categorized as folkloric.<sup>7</sup> The process of secularization imposed on arts education has had a two-way impact—it has allowed for Orisha dance to enter arts education institutions

as folklore while developing dancers who carry the disjunctures of secularization back into their socio-religious settings. Since religion is rarely taught from a critical perspective in the public sphere, the arts that arise from religion are often taught as aesthetic objects rather than cultural processes. In view of this, it must be remembered that hierarchies of aesthetics exist, which imply hierarchies of knowledge (see Hellier-Tinoco 2011; King-Calnek 2006; McCarthy-Brown 2014; Mendoza 1998).

After observing Afro-Cuban folkloric dance classes held at popular black arts education institutions and listening to concerns expressed by teachers who have taught workshops at three degree granting universities with dance programs, I noticed some common themes. In contrast to regular or permanent instructors, all of the teachers who taught single-event workshops self-identified as Afro-Cuban (regardless of US practices of racialization), were initiated priests/priestesses,<sup>8</sup> and received their training in one of Cuba's national arts schools or folkloric groups.<sup>9</sup> All of these teachers commented that they have been forced to leave contextualizing elements out of the classroom as a result of time limits, the demand to attract a broad demographic, and lack of cultural literacy. As a result, portions of technical instruction, originally embedded in socio-religious knowledge that would serve the development of aesthetics were regularly glossed over. For example, one teacher explained that for the Orisha Obatala the undulation is supposed to occur from the mid-thoracic and move upwards, because Obatala is old and hunched over. I understood the affect immediately. The thoracic spine lacks mobility and the pelvis is limited in a hunched over position. Thus the undulation should be subtle. However, in classes taught in the United States, he commented that students exaggerate the shoulder roll because they have no relationship with Obatala, rarely danced in settings with the elderly, and are more comfortable learning presentational dance as opposed to participatory dance.<sup>10</sup>

In addition, bodily practices based on socio-religious domestic and ritual practices were often left out. Without these bodily practices, which contextualize technical subtleties, spatial relationships, teacher-student relationships, and aesthetic details, the teacher's instructions seemed abstract or anecdotal. As an initiated priestess who has lived with elder priests and priestesses in the past, I can attest to how sacred practices and spaces define bodily habits in and outside of our homes and ritual spaces. During the classes I observed, I found most of the movements that constitute a material and bodily relationship with Orisha in the domestic realm, which we will call reflexes (Brandon 2008), were entirely absent in the curriculum. Thus, I have spent significant time theorizing the impact of the absence of these reflexes.

Having Orisha in your home guides your every movement. For example, your home may be kept in an organized and uncluttered manner, because certain Orisha do not like chaos. You may cook for Orisha to share your prosperity. You may play music for Orisha when you wake up to remind yourself to be joyful. You might put your bed against a windowless wall so the wind does not disturb your sleep. As George Edward Brandon said, “Body movements, gestures, placement of objects in space and demarcation of boundaries concretely convey ideas and conventions” (2008, 450). Cooking, cleaning, playing music and arranging your bedroom in a particular way are hardly overtly mystical or spiritual to an uninterested observer. However, these domestic bodily practices overlap as material ritual interactions with Orisha. For the non-initiate, the absence of this tangible material relationship with Orisha outside the studio creates a deficit of kinesthetic empathy. This is complicated by the fact that higher education dance curriculums have secular conventions and goals. In Pierre Bourdieu’s words, “By a necessary paradox, [we] let slip the best hidden and socially most determinant educational investment, namely the domestic transmission of cultural [knowledge]” (1986, 243). Those often responsible for raising questions concerning the educational investment in dance fail to consider the impact of the embodiment of knowledge that takes place in and through the domestic sphere. There is either an unawareness or unwillingness to recognize that ability, talent, and socio-cultural literacy are the “product of an investment of time and [embodied] cultural capital” (243). This “typically functionalist definition of the function of education” manages to do two things concomitantly: it buries the impact of domestic sphere while ignoring “the contribution which the educational system makes to the reproduction of the social structure” (243).

The conservatory model used for most Afro-Cuban folkloric dance training is a product of what has been developed in Cuba, but fails to translate here in the United States for a number of reasons, not least of which includes the American secularization processes (which differs from secularization in Cuba). Thus I propose a curriculum that radically departs from current models—a curriculum that incorporates a structure, a technique, and a feedback system that takes into account the everyday, seemingly common bodily practices that make up the actual lives of those responsible for sustaining Orisha veneration in the United States.

Bourdieu’s words necessitate a somatic reorientation. When I dance Orisha, my demeanor matches the relationship I share with Orisha. The bodily habits of my home form the bodily rhetoric used when I dance. How could one learn to dance Orisha (in a manner that honors its heritage) without ever having been versed in the physical practices

that make a relationship with them so profound? The need to develop a socially-responsible, Afro-Cuban dance curriculum demands the validation of domestic bodily techniques as ways of thinking. An understanding of Orisha dance practices is developed through both a mental and an embodied rhetoric learned and reinforced via a domestic-everyday material education. Taken from domestic and ritual practices and adjusted for a classroom composed of non-practitioners, the following example provides an intervention into spatial and bodily relations and privileged movement patterns.

When teaching Obatala’s dances, students store their items neatly to one side (as opposed to the chaos characteristic of most dance studies), sweep the floors, greet one another, greet the drummers and then greet the teacher. Embodied here are the principles of order, goodwill, and respect. Following this, the oldest students and students with disabilities or movement restrictions honor all present by dancing at the front (if they are comfortable). Embodied here are the principles of humility and deference to age and those who endure in the face of hardship.

Reflecting on Leon Wieseltier’s words, “the everyday as impenetrable, and the impenetrable as everyday”, I argue that in order to successfully make an intervention into the dominant dance pedagogy structures, commonplace events must be “mined for their explosive meanings”, “every perception [must] be a revolution” (Wieseltier 1968, viii) such that the idiosyncrasies of embodied knowledge, as gained through domestic-everyday education, become their own mystic revelations. These revelations transform the dancing body. Thus developing a socially responsible Afro-Cuban dance curriculum is not important simply because it critiques the insufficient overtures made by secular educational institutions to the religious heritage or ritually-oriented origins of these dances. It is also important because it resists alienation of the arts by reinstating a life-practice (that need not necessarily be religious) in dance curriculums.

In conclusion, the goal of a radical, interethnic pedagogy and Afro-Cuban dance curriculum is to somatically reorient dance students so that the everyday practices that compose a relationship with Orisha might be mined during class. This is done by incorporating bodily practices that represent either abstractions of or actual common habits of Orisha practitioners. Theoretically, in an effort to lessen disjunctures that exist between folklore as an aesthetic object and the actual community processes that result in these art forms, this pedagogical model creates a shift so that the student’s relationship with their own bodily knowledge and a socio-cultural understanding of Orisha religious practices in relation to a long artistic, social, and religious lineage is situated at the fore.

## Notes

1. Humboldt State University had one of the longest running Afro-Cuban drum and dance programs in the country (1996-2011). University of Iowa found its Afro-Cuban drum and dance program in 2003. Both programs held close ties to the folkloric group, Los Muñequitos de Matanzas. While this is not a complete list, some other notable programs include Duke University, USC, California State University-Northridge, SUNY-Brockport, Stanford University, and Barnard College, which have all added courses and regular workshops to their curriculum since the early 2010s. In these programs, it is not uncommon to see Orisha, Palo, Salsa and Rumba all taught as part of a single “Afro-Cuban Folkloric” syllabus. Various Orisha traditions (Lucumi, Candomble, Yoruba) are frequently taught together under the term “roots” (as an example, see <http://exploreddegrees.stanford.edu/coursedescriptions/dance/>).
2. Misrecognition is a term developed by Pierre Bourdieu whereby the positions of dominant and dominated appear as natural instead of as positions constructed for the purposes of allocating power.
3. A term used internally by the community that practices a religion popularly known as Santería. Santería was originally a derogatory term, and in recent years has fell out of use in favor of Cuban Yoruba. Lucumi and Cuban Yoruba are used interchangeably, though both have political purposes.
4. Music and dance sourced from the religious practice Palo Mayombe and rumba account for a much smaller portion in workshops held in the United States, though in Cuba, South America and Europe they are more common.
5. I found the “pantheon” to be a highly problematic, yet common, method of explanation given by non-initiated teachers to students unfamiliar with Yoruba-based religious traditions.
6. For more on issues of racial, ethnic and even aesthetic equity in higher education dance programs see McCarthy-Brown (2014) who addresses several important issues including who is (and is not) hired, what is taught, how much credit each course is worth, and which aesthetics are privileged.

7. The category of folkloric dance has been explored and problematized for its connection to nationalism and for eschewing vital practices of those deemed “assimilated”, for once a group of people is assimilated, the power of resistance is diluted. See Buckland 1983, Hellier-Tinoco 2011; Mendoza 1998.
8. The majority of teachers leading recurring courses were non-Cuban and non-initiates. The makeup of adjunct instructors versus workshop instructors brings up important issues of racial and ethnic equity in higher education as well as migrancy and precarious forms of labor that I am not able to address within the limits of this article.
9. These included Escuela Nacional de Arts, Los Muñequitos de Matanzas and Raíces Profundas.
10. See Andriy Nahachewky 1995.

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# Contemporary Arts Pedagogy in India: Adishakti's "Source of Performance Energy" Workshop

*Shanti Pillai*

The traditional mode of knowledge transmission in the Indian performing, music, and visual arts is known as *guru-shishya parampara*. In this paradigm a student surrenders to the guru's guidance for long periods of time, usually living with the guru and engaging in tasks to ensure the guru's sustenance, in exchange for training and overall inculcation into the guru's way of life and worldview. This institution continues to this day in modified forms, although the advent of modern schools, academies, and universities, the diminished influence of hereditary-based occupations, as well as the rise of a sense of individuality at odds with unquestioning acceptance of the guru's authority, have significantly shifted teacher-student relationships (Chatterjea 1996; Gaston 1996; Prickett 2007). Yet what about the expanding world of contemporary artistic practices, rooted in experimentation and the motivation towards personal aesthetic and social statements, as opposed to the rote mastery of technique and repertory?<sup>1</sup> What constitutes knowledge in this varied terrain, how is it transmitted, and what are the roles of teachers?

In this essay I direct myself towards this question in the context of reflecting on the emerging workshop culture in India. The concept of the workshop, as a short, intensive model for imparting technique or repertory in ways organized to maximize efficiency of time, is a relatively new phenomenon in India. However, in recent years, more

such contexts are being convened for dancers and actors operating within both traditional and contemporary vocabularies. Opportunities to acquire skills for contemporary work are relatively few.<sup>2</sup> This makes the workshop an important pedagogical project.

Its economic potential further amplifies its significance. Generally speaking, state patronage of the arts in India, as well as common thinking about performance, have long privileged traditional arts, positing heritage against innovation (Bharucha 1993). Traditional forms are seen as vessels for Indian national identity, which the state claims as a primary objective for its patronage (Cherian 2009). "Modern" practices can be construed as vague products of Western influence (Dharwadker 2016). As a result, contemporary performance does not really exist as a funding category (Singh 2017). Running regular workshops can be a viable source of income for established artists.

A compelling example of an influential performance practitioner who has contributed to the emerging workshop culture in India is the late playwright, director, and institution founder, Veenapani Chawla (1947-2014). Veenapani founded her company, Adishakti, in Mumbai in 1981 and shifted its base to Pondicherry in South India in 1993. Since 1990 the company has created and performed ten devised works on main stages and festivals throughout India, other countries in Asia, as well as in Europe and the US.



Veenapani Chawla. Photo Credit: Vinay Kumar 2009.

Adishakti began conducting workshops in 2008. Since then approximately 1,500 people from all over India and the world have participated, making this kind of training opportunity among the most prolific in India.<sup>3</sup> The quality of teaching, as well as the effective repeatability of the instructional format, has served numerous working and aspiring stage and film artists working in dance and theatre. It has also attracted people who do not come from the world of performance, but want to participate in a “retreat” they believe might foster techniques for self-knowledge and reflection. Currently, Adishakti offers six, ten-day workshops throughout the year. The “buzz” surrounding these events in recent years has guaranteed a high demand and wait lists for the twenty-eight spots are usual. In addition to offering personal and professional tools to a broader community, the workshop has also

become a platform for disseminating knowledge about the work of Adishakti throughout India, and is in part instrumental in the company receiving an increasing number of performance opportunities.

The workshop revolves around the performer’s energy and presents the results of years of research. Veenapani is arguably the most significant innovator of Indian performance to have created a highly systematic psycho-physical approach (Gokhale 2014). The technique she developed creates in the actor the ability to move with precision and grace, to produce visceral representations of emotion across repeated performances, a dominion over rhythm and timing, the potential for multiple modes of vocal expression, and the capacity to propose stage action through improvisation in collaborative rehearsal processes.



Lead actor and instructor Vinay Kumar instructs a workshop participant in the breathing pattern and facial masks for the expression of karuna (sadness). Photo Credit: Anoop Davis 2016.

Her trajectory is the result of her lifelong aim to demonstrate the continued validity of the art of live performance. She believed theatre needs to embody “aesthetic and perceptual pluralism,” meaning that it should present an array of stories and modes of expression, as well as invite multiple perspectives on the content. To this end Veenapani drew from several artistic forms, seeking to build bridges between various historical periods, places, and genres. She experimented with stage strategies that posited a theory of reception that recognizes “the contemporary mind can take in more viewpoints than one—even contrary ones—at the same time. It can see the same thing from all angles and distances” (Adishakti 2015). At the heart of her work was a belief in “truth” as composed of varied and even contradictory interpretations. In this view, truth is an ongoing process, an endeavor that invites continuous intervention.

Although she is usually identified in relation to theatre practice, I reference Veenapani’s work as *natyam*, the concept elaborated in the ancient Sanskrit treatise on performance, the *Natyashastra*. Unlike Western stagecraft that establishes a primary genre distinction between theatre and dance, *natyam*, roughly translated as drama or performance, refers to practices that involve both disciplines as well as music and ritual elements (Vatsyayan 1968). As is evident in the practice of India’s myriad performance forms, the dramatic enterprise involves in varying combinations and to varying degrees word (as spoken text and/or music), movement (gestural and in decorative relation to rhythm and music), spectacle (costume, makeup, and perhaps props) and narrative (as conveyed through embodying of characters, storytelling, etc.). Adishakti’s works involve all these approaches.

The performance research that has produced these works has always been rooted in exhaustive, embodied explorations of traditional Indian performance praxis and myth. Veenapani and her company members’ intensive study under traditional masters with an eye to underlying principles has included folk forms such as *chhau*, the classical, Sanskrit-based *koodiyattam*, and the martial art of *kalaripayattu*, among other modalities. It has also meant drawing from a multidisciplinary array of transnational sources, including Western approaches such as the voice work of Patsy Rodenburg of the Guildhall School of Music and Drama in London. The training emphasizes the physical presence of the actor who communicates not only through verbal text, but also through athletic full-bodied movement and subtle articulations of the face—all in non-codified ways. The body is the vessel for attaining a

live presence charged with an extra-daily consciousness of breath, emotion, energy centers, the sonic power of words, and rhythm. The cultivation of such presence is the focus of the workshop.

Although Adishakti conducts shorter workshops occasionally in Mumbai and Bangalore, its signature 10-day session takes place at the company’s spacious campus, also called Adishakti, located in a bucolic setting on the outskirts of Pondicherry. Facilities include a theatre, guesthouses, a dining hall that serves three meals, and a swimming pool. Since the campus’ inception in 2000 it has developed into one of India’s most active centers for artistic exchange, hosting performances and workshops with practitioners from around the world, as well as providing space for artists and writers in residency. Grants from state and private sources, including the India Foundation for the Arts, the Ford Foundation, and the Sir Ratan Tata Trust, have supported programs and infrastructure.

That the workshops take place for the most part on the Adishakti campus is integral to the pedagogical praxis. Adishakti stands adjacent to Auroville, an international, intentional community founded in 1968 and rooted in the teachings of philosopher Sri Aurobindo and his collaborator, a French-Egyptian woman named Mirra Alfassa, known as the Mother. Although Adishakti is not formally associated with Auroville, the two projects share a philosophical base. In this syncretic worldview, shaped by Hindu mysticism and Western scientific rationalism, humans are one step in a progression towards ever expanding forms of consciousness. This process of evolution involves the transformation of the physical world and the advent of more harmonious forms of social organization based in a “human unity” impossible to realize with the current mental consciousness that predominates today. The ultimate purpose of spiritual life—configured broadly to incorporate all activities committed in the spirit of enacting a divine consciousness—is to facilitate evolution. Veenapani was a long-time devotee and shared with Aurovilians a belief that the very ground in this once barren, rural region is charged with Mother’s “force,” making it particularly conducive to endeavors with an inner and outer progress as their goal. Since Veenapani saw her theatre making and the task of the actor as forms of *sadhana*, or spiritual practice, she believed that Adishakti’s activities benefitted from and were manifestations of Mother’s grace (Chawla 2014). The connection with this philosophy forms an integral part of Adishakti’s identity and manifests visually through the photographic images of Mother and Sri Aurobindo near



the entrance of the theatre and in all of the guestrooms. The spiritual connotations of the atmosphere, combined with excellent infrastructure and the relative quiet of the rural setting away from distractions, make the workshop a fundamentally site-specific mode of pedagogy.

Adishakti certainly intended to secure a sustainable income, however they also prioritized the dissemination of knowledge that had not previously travelled beyond company members. Veenapani believed that any individual's search for truth—in art or in life—depended upon a collective commitment to a true “democratization of knowledge.” She sought to assert that the sharing of knowledge is a natural product of the hybridity that characterizes life today. Moreover, because she believed that the act of instructing allowed a teacher to make a leap in understanding, she was keen to encourage her company members in teaching as an integral part of their own artistic practice (Kumar 2016). At the outset Veenapani participated as instructor, overseeing the classes on voice and text analysis. Over time she delegated teaching to the actors so that she could use such occasions to dedicate herself to the more reflective work of the creative process, as well as the numerous administrative matters she had to attend to as the director of an institution. Most of the teaching has been in the hands of Vinay Kumar, Veenapani's collaborator since 1993, and Adishakti's lead actor. The other primary instructor is Nimmy Raphel, the company's lead actress who joined Adishakti in 2001 after years of training as a performer of the classical dance-theatre forms of *mohiniyattam* and *kuchipudi*. Other company members impart the drumming sessions and may act as teaching assistants for the primary instructors.

The workshop day begins with a multifaceted approach to training the body's flexibility, control, and stamina. At 7 a.m. participants undergo an hour of exercises to train the muscles of the eye and to instill awareness of the body's energy centers (*chakras*) and their applicability in relation to specific movements. The second hour is spent in basic training of the martial art form, *kalaripayattu*. This ancient practice has received some interest from contemporary performing artists in India, among them Daksha Sheth, Sankar Venkateswaran, and others, as an indigenous system of rigorous mind-body training that does not precondition the body towards a codified, theatrical language. This is the only part of the workshop in which Adishakti company members are not the instructors.

Kalari classes take place at Kalarigram, adjacent to the Adishakti property. The founder of this center, Guru Lakshmanan, who is referred to both respectfully by his many Indian and foreign disciples as “Guruji,” had been invited by Veenapani to come to Adishakti and work with the actors in 1999. For years he traveled back and forth monthly from the neighboring state of Kerala. His orientation to the teaching of the martial art gradually shifted and he found the broader audience for his knowledge stimulating to the point of inspiring him to establish Kalarigram in 2012.

The Adishakti actors train with Guruji or his disciples daily at 5:45 a.m. Workshop participants who are up early may see them, drenched in sweat and covered in the red earth of the kalari space's flooring as they return to the Adishakti campus to bathe quickly before beginning their teaching and administrative duties. The recognition of the fact that the Adishakti actors are themselves students embodies for the workshop's participants Veenapani's conviction that for her kind of theatre, a performer does not seek solely to arrive at the absolute attainment of technique so much as to continuously challenge the body, augmenting its capacities by dislodging it from the inertia of routine and allowing it to encounter multiple movement vocabularies. Thus, the authority of the actors as practitioners resides in part in their commitment to process and not solely as inheritors of a system of theatrical exercises.

After breakfast the workshop moves on to voice work and the study of the physiological construction of *bhava*, or emotional states that comprise the palette for depicting all sentiments in Indian traditions of acting. Later in the day participants receive breathing exercises in the swimming pool, drumming lessons on the *mizhavu*—the drum used in koodiyattam—and then a long nocturnal session that involves the study of rhythm through group clapping exercises and improvisatory scene work. The day ends around 10 p.m. and conveys clearly the high-level multitasking demanded of Adishakti performers.

The workshop also communicates the complexity of Veenapani's concept of theatre and thereby raises the question of what constitutes the role of a teacher in short-term training contexts such as this one. In contrast to the guru-shishya model characterized by the teacher wielding as much influence as a parent and governing even the moral aspects of a student's life, teachers in workshops are relatively ephemeral, detached guides. Moreover, while in traditional modes of learning, a student might hope that the teacher bestow the status of



A voice class session at the Adishakti workshop. Photo Credit: Anoop Davis 2016.

public affiliation with a lineage through which to forge one's performance opportunities, workshops generally aim to dispatch students back to the places from whence they came and most participants do not necessarily seek to participate in a teacher's own work. There is also the fact that only a limited level of proficiency in any technique can be acquired in a short period of time. Gaining mastery of the sort implied by becoming the inheritor of a legacy is not what the workshop is about. Nevertheless, in spite of the impermanence of the pedagogical bonds established, behind many workshops is a progenitor of the knowledge imparted. That figure forms an important part of the atmosphere, even if not directly engaged in the proceedings.

Although over time she stepped away from direct involvement in instruction, the figure of Veenapani was very much present during the workshops. She conducted the initial introductions in her patrician

and eloquently soft-spoken voice, quietly observed an occasional session, and was regularly seen walking around the campus in her modest but elegant cotton *salwars*. During a workshop I attended in September 2014 I remember the lowered head and respectful gestures of participants, hands pressed together in a prayer position or lightly placed at the chest when she passed by, and the ways in which they would whisper with curious excitement about "Madam" if she came into the dining hall. With a couple of exceptions, none of the participants had known much about Veenapani prior to the workshop and most had never seen the company in performance.

Veenapani's relationship to the workshop shifted dramatically in November 2014 when she passed away suddenly. Her departure was greeted with shock and deep sadness on the part of all who knew her. For Adishakti it was a powerfully decisive moment. Carrying



Workshop participants learn rhythm structures and basic drumming technique on the mizhavu, the instrument traditionally used in the Sanskrit theatre of koodiyattam. Photo Credit: Anoop Davis 2015.



on a company's work without its founder and visionary leader prompted spiritual, artistic, as well as practical considerations. The company made a number of changes, including the launching of the Remembering Veenapani festival in April 2015. The festival has since grown into a month-long platform of performances from India and the world. As stated in a promotional email of February 15, 2017, the events celebrate Veenapani's "25 years of time and effort to create an ideal space that welcomes artists from across cultures to realize their creative aspirations." Veenapani's longest collaborator, Vinay Kumar, assumed the role of Artistic Director and became the Managing Trustee of Adishakti's charitable trust. He immediately set to work on generating a script for the dream project Veenapani had left behind, a work based on Sita, the heroine of the epic story the *Ramayana*. Concurrently, the company has focused more energy on securing performance opportunities for its existing repertory as well as conducting more workshops.

Beyond its significance as consistent income, the workshop has become a context in which to honor Veenapani's spirit. At a workshop in January 2017 I observed the ways in which Veenapani's presence manifests through the oral narratives about her that company members relate informally both during the course of instruction and at break times. Some of these narratives take the form of anecdotes inspired serendipitously through encounter with an object or through the elaboration of a particular technique. For example, during the class on emotional expressivity, teacher Vinay paused to allow the students a moment's rest from the taxing practice of breathing patterns. He got up to adjust the light switches and commented on the confusion one commonly experiences in India over which switches on a wall correspond with which lights and fans. This act reminded him of a time years ago when Veenapani had looked up from an office computer where she was urgently compiling a grant application with an impending deadline and asked a staff member to switch on the fan. In encountering the bewildering array of switches, the staff member inadvertently switched off the power line to the computer, prompting the loss of hours of work. Vinay chuckled with another company member who was assisting him in the class as he described the situation as one of the few moments in which Veenapani broke her even demeanor and displayed great anger. The tenderness with which Vinay reminisced affirmed Veenapani's humanity, as well as his own affective bond with her. In making private memories public through such frequent, conversational performances

with workshop attendees, Veenapani's company members re-envision their own identities as her students and collaborators, their authority as inheritors of an artistic legacy acquired through years of intimate contact with her, as well as the historical significance of Veenapani's contributions to Indian performance.

In another instance, while having dinner in the dining hall after a successful public performance in the Adishakti theatre space by a workshop participant who was a magician, actress Nimmy Raphael related to me, other workshop attendees, and a long-time friend of Adishakti that throughout the show she had not been able to stop thinking about how much Veenapani would have loved it. The long-time friend reached across the table to hold Nimmy's hand and said, "She was here. She was watching." Nimmy nodded and responded quietly, "Yes, I know. She is present." On one level I read this as an exchange prompted by the shared act of spectatorship in a theatrical space that is both concrete artifact and symbol of Veenapani's valuable labors. As the center for company rehearsals and workshop classes, it is a space inhabited through daily, disciplined embodied acts that bear the imprint of Veenapani's vision. To remember her fondly in this context is to acknowledge the ways in which feeling, somatic memory, and knowledge intersect to produce a performance history as significant as any archival documentation. Yet on another level, the performer's expression of a wistful longing is a constitutive act that reimagines and conjures Veenapani onto the stage of the present where she continues to live as teacher, director, institution founder, and friend.

Speaking more broadly, these anecdotes demonstrate that the workshop model of training is important not only as a means for transmitting knowledge that opens avenues of possibility for the emerging world of contemporary performance in India, but also as a context in which the significance of a teacher—whether presently or posthumously—is performed in the cultural public sphere. Unlike the traditional guru-shishya model that does not lend itself to large numbers of people being brought into contact with the nuances of a particular mode of artistry, the workshop in the ephemerality and regularity of its offer is a platform where a broad audience can witness public declarations of gratitude to progenitors of performance knowledge. Affect as embodied in reminiscing about Veenapani establishes her lineage and shapes the ways in which those who attend the workshop receive the principles and techniques to which they are introduced, no matter how briefly.



As participants return home, incorporating to greater and lesser degree their interpretations of what they might have learned, a sense of Veenapani—the guru and director—travels with them. The impressions people have of her artistic trajectory as gained through direct experience with her performance research contribute to distributing awareness about Veenapani’s groundbreaking work throughout India and abroad. This will only continue to have significant consequences for the Adishakti company as its members carry forward Veenapani’s aspirations through the performance of existing repertory, the development of new works, ongoing research into the nature of theatre, and the promotion of the Adishakti campus as a fertile and welcoming ground for the practice and exchange of artists from around the world.

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### Notes

1. For a discussion of the problem of defining the “contemporary” in the context of Indian artistic practices see Sarukkai 2016.
  2. Exceptions include sustained, collaborative work in theatre collectives and newer programs at institutions of higher education such as the diploma in Theatre for Education and Social Transformation at Shiv Nadar University outside Delhi, private academies such as the Movement Arts and Mixed Media diploma program (associated with the Bangalore-based Attakkalari Centre for Movement Arts), or the Post Graduate Diploma in Acting and Theatre-Making at the Drama School Mumbai.
  3. I participated in and observed workshops in September 2014 and January 2017, attending all the training sessions and speaking at length with participants.
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# The Entity as Teacher— The Case for Canada’s National Choreographic Seminars

*Carol Anderson & Norma Sue Fisher-Stitt*

As stated in the call for contributions to this issue of *Conversations*, the French theorist and historian Laurence Louppe (1938-2012) proposed that the passing of knowledge extends beyond offering the movement to involve “opening up a threshold to a secret and indefinable zone.” The role assumed by individual teachers in providing the grounding, guidance and inspiration that is essential to the development and careers of dance artists frequently is documented and acknowledged in biographies and oral histories. In this conversation, we shift the emphasis from the influence of a single teacher to that of an entity on a group of emerging dancers and choreographers: specifically, a series of four National Choreographic Seminars (NCS) that took place in Canada between 1978 and 1991.

We propose that situations and/or events, in extraordinary confluences of time, circumstances, and opportunities, may serve as teachers. In this context, the National Choreographic Seminars fit an iteration of “situation as teacher.” Prior examples of this phenomenon can include the seismic changes related to form, content and choreography provoked by activities within Judson Church Dance Theater in the USA, while the far-reaching effects of 15 Dance Lab, a 41-seat black box theatre located in a converted foundry in downtown Toronto, fulfilled a similar purpose in Canada in the early 1970s. With his initiation of the Seminars, Grant Strate (the founding chair of the York University Dance

Department in 1970) pursued his vision and activated his mission to develop Canadian contemporary/modern dance choreographers and to foster collaboration across disciplines and across the country.

Analogous to any inspired and inspiring mentor, the content of the National Choreographic Seminars evolved over time. The first two Seminars, held at York University, Toronto in 1978 and at the Banff Centre for the Arts in 1980, focused on formal “modern” dance questions, evoking explorations of time, space, relationship between dance and music, etc. The third, at Vancouver’s Simon Fraser University (SFU) in 1985, included actors, in acknowledgement of the prevalent exploration of dance-theatre and spoken text in Canadian modern dance in the early to mid-1980s; while the fourth and final Seminar held at SFU in 1991, was folded into the Contemporary Arts Summer Institute. This final version of the Seminar included dance, film and video—signaling the increased interest in dance on film and screen dance that was emerging at that time.

How was it that the NCS assumed the role of teacher? To begin, while there were directors in both the choreographic and music areas, there was no syllabus. Each day presented the participants with a creative challenge, formally framed, but absent of desired or prescribed learning outcomes. The prevailing educational and traditional dance



## Choreographic Seminar

JUNE 5---JULY 1, 1978

### Sponsored

Dance and Music Departments of  
York University

### Directors

Robert Cohan, London  
Adam Gatehouse, London  
John Herbert McDowell, New York

### Participants

6 Choreographers  
6 Composers  
24 Dancers (Professional and Student)  
8 Musicians (Student)

All applicants are eligible to apply for financial assistance.

For information contact: Grant Strate, Dance Department, York University, 4700 Keele Street, Downsview, Ontario.  
Phone: (416) 667-3445

York University Libraries, Clara Thomas Archives & Special Collections, Faculty of Fine Arts fonds (Dance Dept.), 1984-021 / 008 (241) Choreographic Seminar, 1978.

studio authoritarian structure of knowledgeable master and silent student was disturbed. Rather, the Seminars offered a shift in the notion of authority. While participants created responses to a set of problems that were offered by the Seminar directors, there was no “right” or “wrong,” no sense that there was a body of knowledge that must be mastered. Rather, the pressure of creating new work every day in a rehearsal of short duration and in an environment of collaborative circumstances, was intended to short-circuit pre-existent expectations and the reliance on “tricks” or habitual choices. As one dancer participant recalled: “At these seminars I watched intently as choreographers were pushed to go beyond their habits and tricks and we saw by the end their true interests and instincts.” Artists really had no choice but to step into the scary air of the unknown. The result was a work environment that “was so intense—everyone had a breakdown—[but] the willingness to be open was profound.” In this way the overall situation was, effectively, the teacher. Participants gained an experiential knowledge and understanding that THEY were literally authors of their own creative output.

In *Passion and Pedagogy: Relation, Creation, and Transformation in Teaching* (2002), the chapter titled “Creating the Teacher and Changing the World” opens with the author, William Ayers, communicating his core pedagogical philosophy: that teaching is about the dispersion and sharing of power. Referring to the work of Paulo Freire, Ayers examined the pivotal role of dialogue. The concepts of dispersed power and ongoing dialogue offer additional linkages between our concept of entity as teacher and the experiences of NCS participants. Ayers states: “[W]hile in every dialogue there are mistakes, misperceptions, struggle, and emotion, it is the disequilibrium of dialogue that leads to exploration, discovery, and change” (2002, 42). “Dialogue, Ayers noted, “is improvisational and unrehearsed” (2002, 42). Similarly, each day the “disequilibrium” experienced by the NCS choreographers ultimately resulted in seismic personal and artistic changes.

The main choreographic director was Robert Cohan, selected for the task by Strate in recognition of his connection to the Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation Seminars, where he also had assumed the role of choreographic director. In the UK, the Gulbenkian Foundation had supported various initiatives pertaining to arts education. In 1965, they published an investigation into the professional training of musicians. This report subsequently was followed by the 1978 report prepared for the Gulbenkian Foundation, titled *Training Musicians*.

In this report, the “true teacher of a young composer” is described as “essentially an understanding and perceptive guide” (Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation 1978, 82). The other requisite condition for the development of composers is identified as “practical experience, to hear what he has written and to learn from that experience” (Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation 1978, 83). This model, in which the student is to be deftly guided, prodded and challenged during the process of creation, and then immediately to see the product performed, was integral to the NCS experience. In his memoir, NCS instigator Grant Strate recalled,

*With the Gulbenkian workshops as a practical example, I set out to design a choreographic seminar that would be appropriate to the Canadian setting. I arranged for the York dance department to sponsor the first National Choreographic Seminar in the summer of 1978. Robert Cohan, a former leading dancer with the Martha Graham Company and by then artistic director of London Contemporary Dance Theatre, joined us as choreographic director. Adam Gatehouse, a composer and conductor associated with Ballet Rambert, was invited to be the first music director. Both Bob and Adam were in a good position to help me design the process, having worked together in previous Gulbenkian workshops. (Strate 2002, 165)*

Cohan brought to Canada’s Seminars the intent of provocation. A modernist, his aesthetic was reflected in the “assignments”—choreographers’ and composers’ daily tasks included making dances based on themes such as space (strange space), movement (make a dance without running), and time (make a dance that changes time). The rapidity of the processes—the average rehearsal time allocated for each daily task was 3 to 4 hours—the strategies that emerged from desperate creative strikes against the relentless clock and the reality of nightly showings and critiques, were revelatory.

The Seminars created an environment for learning that featured “multiple entry points for learning and various pathways to success” (Ayers 2002, 48). For Freire, and echoed by Ayers, an important role of teaching is the cultivation of questions and questioning with the intent to make changes in the world, the result being that “when consciousness links to conduct and upheaval is in the air, teaching becomes a call to freedom” (Ayers 2002, 51). When interviewed, more than one participant employed the word “freedom” in their description

of the impact of the Seminar. Karen Jamieson, an accomplished Canadian choreographer who attended the 1978 Seminar, reflected that “It freed me from the tyranny of content.” Another choreographer, who participated in the 1980 Seminar, presented a contrasting view, stating: “I was freed from the tyranny of abstraction.” While a call to freedom might have been shared, the constraints from which individuals sought to be liberated varied. The commonality of this profound creative realization was that it galvanized many changes in their choreographic evolution. Similarly, if realization took longer, at this remove—forty years later—there is a definitive sense of the importance of these four Seminars in the growth of individual artists and in the ethos of the national contemporary dance community. “I remember a boldness and eagerness to absorb critical feedback...a sense of courageous investigation,” recalled one participant, while another noted, “it [the Seminar] allowed me to reinvent myself.”

While the Seminars adapted to change over the thirteen years spanning their existence, they undoubtedly were reflective of an entirely different era. The ideas and practice explored were grounded in western theatrical modern dance concepts prevalent at the time. Assignments intended to investigate time, space, and music were carried forward from the Gulbenkian Foundation seminars, affirming the cultural colonialism that persisted in Canadian dance during much of the twentieth century. The participants in the Seminars, indicative of the national dance community as a whole at that time, were almost exclusively white. This is no longer true; Canadian dance works and dancers exist and perform a rich variety of forms and traditions, and a diverse range of dance artists contribute to the fabric of the national tapestry.

The Seminar years, as described by participants, were eye-opening, life changing, and galvanizing. Embraced by a situation of trust and possibility, they were “of the time” and fostered many connections, with artists creating new collaborative partnerships. Simultaneously, an ongoing sense of creative depth and national character for contemporary dance emerged in Canada. The Seminars were a threshold experience for participants—choreographers in early stages of their careers, dancers either young, or on the cusp of professional activity, musicians and composers new to dance, or seeking fresh inspiration for working with choreographers and dance. The Seminars also closed national gaps. In those pre-internet days, various solitudes extended across Canada. By mixing up composers, musicians,

choreographers and dancers from the West Coast, Montreal’s largely Francophone dance community, and the Toronto community, with participants from Winnipeg, Edmonton, Calgary, and Maritime provinces, the Seminars shifted this sense of isolation.

The challenging, intensive nature of the work, and the structure of the Seminars, were intrinsically transformative—a site of learning. They were designed and intended to push creativity to a breaking point. One participant observed, “The hothouse atmosphere pressurized – it encouraged you to get rid of habits, to go further.” For some participants, this catalytic experience happened in the moment. For others, effects continued—a trickle-down of realizations, possibilities, connections, long after the fact. Many participants of the Seminars have risen to artistic prominence in Canada, including choreographer James Kudelka and the artistic director of Toronto Dance Theatre, Christopher House. In the years following the Seminars there also have been many instances of artistic collaboration among artists who met, worked and discovered together in this learning environment. The legacy of the entity continues through its students, the participants. The Seminars proved to be a key factor in the development of a national modern dance identity. In the early 1970s, Strate had railed against the power held by ballet within the Canada Council, and the NCS nurtured a critical mass of independent choreographers who proceeded to found companies and to produce works outside the balletic vocabulary. The upheaval that was in the air in the late 1970s, combined with the disequilibrium experienced by the NCS participants, resulted in a call to freedom that continues to exercise its presence in Canadian contemporary dance. The ongoing legacy of the National Choreographic Seminars aligns with that of the most respected master teachers.

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## Notes

1. All quotes are taken from our interviews with NCS participants in the following order: Tedd Robinson, Karen Duplisea, Karen Jamieson, Savannah Walling, Kathryn Ricketts, Marilyn Biderman.
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# Lost (and Found) in Transmission: An Awakening of the Senses

*Elizabeth Robinson*

As a student in the “Choreomundus” dance masters program<sup>1</sup>, myself, my cohort, and several local students spent two days in practical workshops with French contemporary choreographers Pascale Houbin<sup>2</sup> and Sylvie Pabiot.<sup>3</sup> Even after such a short time with these two different artists and teachers, the knowledge transmitted remains not only registered in my mind, but also in my body, transforming the way I learn and perform movement. Similar to the performer’s imprint upon the spectator, when viewing a dance performance becomes a truly “felt” experience, a teacher’s imprint upon the learner of any kinesthetic technique is also generated through the senses. However, it is established through a circular process flowing *between* teacher and student, not from one to the other. In this essay, I will describe and reflect upon my experiences and interrogate the essential processes of transmission as both choreographers led me to discover them.

After working with the hearing impaired, artist Pascale Houbin became interested in studying gesture in depth. Her ongoing work in 2016, *Aujourd’hui à 2 mains*, stems from this curiosity.<sup>4</sup> For this project, she observed and analyzed the routine gestures of several different kinds of workers. She then worked with them to repeat these gestures for film, but without their tools or materials. After a full day, about four minutes of footage per worker was produced, and she shared these results in our morning session. We observed the deliberate signals of fighter pilots, the detailed finesse of a seamstress, the showmanship

of a card dealer, the heavy labor of a blacksmith, the hunched pounding of a farrier, and the careful efforts of a plasterer. Each short excerpt reflected a high level of technique, and the gestures remained coherent, even without materials. In particular, the convincing gaze of each worker, as if deeply focused on their material or product, brought a sense of life to each movement.

In the afternoon, we personally experienced the task Houbin’s artisan-performers undertook in attempting to recreate their own routine gestures. But before beginning, Houbin led us in a mental exercise designed to relax each part of our bodies as we lay on the floor, releasing our weight into it one body part at a time. Afterwards, we rolled to our sides and stood, followed by gently rolling and unrolling our spines while bending and flexing our knees, then expanding our rib cages while reaching our arms high. We coordinated our breath with our movements, drawing air deep into our bodies and delivering blood to each extremity. With each body part now free of tension and full of oxygenated blood, we revisited the morning’s theme afresh. Houbin asked us to remember some of the gestures we had seen in order to replicate them, and I was among the first of the students asked to demonstrate. Without hesitation, I began to replicate what I felt I could recall instantaneously. I first chose the fighter pilots, one of whom’s fist smacked against his forehead, perhaps in place of his helmet, while the other responded with a “thumb’s up.” Then I chose the seamstress,

who slowly “threaded a needle,” even licking the “thread” at one point to help it pass through the “eye.” Next, I chose the farrier, whose downward swinging arms stopped abruptly just before inward turned knees, uncomfortable and awkward, yet necessary to hold a horse’s hoof in place for shoeing. Lastly, I chose the card dealer. Houbin’s reaction was immediately observable as I flicked “cards” and collected “chips” by dragging them off the “table” in this last demonstration. She cocked her head to one side and furrowed her brow. “But, he didn’t do that at all!” she finally said, perplexing me.

As attention shifted to the demonstrations of the next students, none of whom performed the card dealer in the same way, I ruminated on her comment, finally coming to understand the true power of the footage we had seen. As I performed the gestures, I visualized the poker chips and the cards as they appeared in my memory of the video. But suddenly, I realized that there were no materials, so there were neither cards nor chips—there were only empty hands in an empty space. My mind had in fact placed these items in the dealer’s hands in my memory. As Houbin stated early on when presenting her work, the human mind often focuses on the product or what is manipulated when one sees a work gesture as opposed to the person performing it. Similarly, the gaze doesn’t always connect with gesture in the performance world as it does in reality, and for this reason, it can be incoherent. As Houbin’s workers attempted to recreate their gestures for *Aujourd’hui à 2 mains*, she directed their attention so that they could do so convincingly. When the materials are removed, the accompanying eye motions then powerfully spotlight the movements themselves, rendering them hyperreal. As Houbin commented, this effect even left one artisan she worked with overcome with tears by the beauty of her own movements, which she had never before truly witnessed. At the same time, the eyes of the spectator also interpret the movements of the gestures in hyperreal ways, translating them into mimetic signs, which became clear to me when I realized I had imagined the materials present in the card dealer’s hands.

The following workshop was led by choreographer Sylvie Pabiot, who stressed the importance of everyday gestures (“*gestes quotidiens*”) in dance as bringing an enhanced sense of realism to a work, which allows the spectator to connect with the piece on a visceral level—a “felt” experience. To arrive at this sense of realism, she finds inspiration for her works in watching bodies in public spaces, observing their banal, routine actions as they interact with their environment and with other beings. With this idea fresh in mind, Pabiot separated the class

into two groups in order to work with eye gestures. My group was instructed to watch an imaginary fly as she described it buzzing around the room. This required me to visualize the nuisance so clearly that, crossing my eyes as it “landed” on my nose, a sneeze was triggered. The other group was instructed to watch an imaginary bouncing ball hurling from one corner of the room to another. We performed each instruction as described once, then repeated it with vague rather than focused glances. As I watched the others, it became clear that there is a difference between simply seeing (“*voir*”) and looking or watching (“*regarder*”), with the latter emphasizing a particular intention. Seeing is passive and vague, whilst looking or watching implies active engagement with and focus on the object of attention. Later in the day, Pabiot explained that including the gaze (“*le regard*”) in a choreography humanizes the movement, bringing a certain vitality to the performance by creating a connection with the audience and with other dancers. When viewing a performance, what is expressed is only truly transmitted if it is experienced at the visceral level. Spectators must not only find the movement pleasing to the eyes, if at all—they must be affected from the inside out as well as the outside in for the movement to be fully understood.

Pabiot later commented that she often works with the eyes closed *because* she works with the gaze, which we understood through the stimulation of our other senses in the afternoon session. We worked in pairs, taking turns guiding our partners’ pelvis, feet, hands, and arms across the space, the partner following each impulse given with the eyes closed. Pabiot called this “waking up the skin.” Without sight, I discovered I felt more intensely my partner’s gentile nudging as well as my own weight sinking into the floor. I found I was more conscious of this relationship in the next exercise, pushing into the floor as we walked across the room, eyes closed, to our partners, stopping only when we sensed they were near. After this, we formed clusters and attempted to stay near each other while traveling through the space, eyes closed. As I did this, I found my ears suddenly became attune to each creak in the floorboards and the faint sound of my colleagues breathing as I lost and then searched for them. At times, I felt the hairs of our arms tickling each other before realizing just how close we were.

Both of my experiences working with Houbin and Pabiot included deliberate attention to the senses, but with different pathways. Nonetheless, both pathways shared the same essential elements, thereby forming not a trajectory, but a circular transmission process. Houbin worked first from the body outwards, bringing blood and



oxygen, the very forces of vitality, to the whole body before engaging in transmission. Pabiot, on the other hand, first worked from outside of the body inward, focusing on sensory relationships with the environment and internalizing them.

With both choreographers, one sense was reduced, and through this exercise, I found the other senses were awakened. This idea is articulated in Juhani Pallasmaa's seminal work on architectural theory, *The Eyes of the Skin* (2012), in which he contemplates the privileging of sight above all other senses in Western cultures. Pallasmaa signals a problem in separating sight from the other senses, restricting the eye only to the field of vision, which "fragments the innate complexity, comprehensiveness and plasticity of the perceptual system, reinforcing a sense of detachment and alienation" (2012, 36). In her works, Pabiot seeks what Pallasmaa calls a "participatory and empathetic gaze" (2012, 36), creating relationships with other beings and objects, as in real life. Yet the gaze is not simply seeing, but looking, in way that penetrates, that is "felt." As Pallasmaa claims, "all the senses, including vision, can be regarded as extensions of the sense of touch" (2012, 42). As Pabiot commented during the beginning of our afternoon workshop, closing our eyes as we rolled on the floor was intended as "waking up the skin." In this case, the skin may be interpreted not only as the epidermis, but also the sensory nerves inside the body, as exemplified by my sneeze triggered earlier in the morning. Houbin also worked with the gaze, but again, from outside the body inward, focusing on how the eyes respond in habitual ways to routine tactile stimulus, such as when manipulating tools.

However, the process does not stop here, and this brings me to a question that Houbin posed to our group: How are movement and gestures transmitted, if not through imitation or mimesis? In bodily work, it is not sufficient to only watch, or even to take in through all the senses while learning an embodied technique or skill. The technique must also be actively expressed and reinterpreted back through the senses. What appears to be imitation or mimesis at the surface level truly involves so much more. In this way, a comment Pabiot had made that morning rings true — that choreographer, student, and teacher are really all the same. When a teacher or choreographer is "passing down" a technique or movement sequence, the student or dancer is simultaneously "passing it up." When an apprentice learns to perform a set of work skills, he or she engages in the same process. As Tim Ingold writes, "Copying is imitative, insofar as it takes place under

guidance; it is improvisatory, insofar as the knowledge it generates is knowledge that novices discover for themselves" (2016, np). Only when both imitation and improvisation are initiated through the senses is it possible for a kinesthetic technique or movement sequence to be taught, learned, and perfected or coherently conveyed.

In conclusion, I have found through my experience with these two choreographers that the senses are indeed the gatekeepers and essential devices of transmission. In a teaching environment, tacit knowledge cannot be handed down as a reified set of practices to be imitated, but instead must be embodied through lived, sensory experiences that are alternately absorbed and expressed by both teacher and student.

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## Notes

1. "Choreomundus" is the Erasmus Mundus international master in Dance Knowledge, Practice, and Heritage. The program investigates dance and other movement systems as intangible cultural heritage and is offered by a consortium of four European universities. A first draft of this essay was procured during the course "Transmitting Dance as Embodied Culture, Knowledge, and Experience" held at Blaise Pascal University in Clermont-Ferrand, France and taught by Professor Georgiana Wierre-Gore.
2. Pascale Houbin is a Paris-based contemporary dance choreographer and artist.
3. Sylvie Pabiot directs the dance company "Wejna," founded in 2004.
4. "*Aujourd'hui à deux mains*" is *double entendre* in French. It is translated as written as "today by two hands" yet could also be heard as "*Aujourd'hui à demain*" or "today to tomorrow".

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# What Will Survive Us? Sigurd Leeder and His Legacy

*Clare Lidbury*

What was it about a single gesture by Peter Wright that made me exclaim “He must have studied with Leeder” (BBC TV 1988). What I had seen was a “central movement” of the arm which Wright was using to demonstrate a possible intention for a reaching gesture.<sup>1</sup> “Central movement” is very distinctive and rarely performed, in my experience, by those who have not had some contact with the Jooss-Leeder training. In fact Wright had worked with Sigurd Leeder from 1944–47 receiving his first dance training and performing experience as an apprentice travelling with the Ballets Jooss on tour in the UK (Wright 1993). Subsequently Wright studied and worked with many other teachers, mostly in classical ballet, and went on to play a significant part in the development of British Ballet in the second half of the twentieth century. Some forty years later, that work with Leeder was still clearly imprinted in Wright’s body.

Sigurd Leeder worked with Kurt Jooss for over twenty-five years. At the beginning of their partnership, in the early 1920s, both were dancers but, in relation to the Ballets Jooss and the training schools that existed alongside, Jooss was the recognized choreographer and Leeder the teacher. They devised a training method which involved their principles of movement derived from Laban’s theories, particularly eukinetics and choreutics, applied to and explored through dance technique, improvisation, choreography, and Labanotation. Unusually

for pioneers in modern dance Jooss and Leeder did not abandon what classical ballet had to offer, rather they used what seemed useful to them—that is the adherence to anatomical principles with regards to placement, line and turnout, the structure of a ballet class (barre work, centre work and extended study) and, when practice gives way to performance, the integration of the theatrical elements of costume, lighting and décor into the conception of the work. There is no virtuosity for its own sake (e.g. multiple pirouettes) and no pointe work. Their method then was a synthesis, created from existing elements to make a meaningful theatrical language.

By all accounts Sigurd Leeder was an outstanding teacher—Ann Hutchinson Guest for example describes him as “incomparable” and outlines that it was his imagination and use of imagery, his sense of humour and his ingenious choreographic ability which made him so (Hutchinson Guest 1991).<sup>2</sup> His development of the Dance Study, choreographic miniatures which explored a specific theme, designed to be danced and enjoyed rather than viewed by an audience—much as a Czerny Etude develops a pianist’s technique and appreciation of composition but may not make great listening—was Leeder’s unique contribution to the Jooss-Leeder Method. A Dance Study is built up over a series of classes as the initial idea, usually derived from the principles of movement, is worked on and developed dynamically

and/or spatially. Over a period of time a range of studies are created each complete in themselves, but related to one another—a study that works on the contrasts of central and peripheral movement could well have moments of swing, but which are not emphasised in that particular study. However the focus of the three basic rhythms in the next study would inform those swing movements in the performance of the previous study; when the first study is revisited, the swing is better for having experienced the second study.

In 1947 Jooss and Leeder went their separate ways and Leeder established his school in London. One of the first students at the newly opened Sigurd Leeder School of Dance was Jane Winearls, already an experienced teacher and choreographer, who trained with him for three years attaining his coveted diploma. His impact was profound for she “found in Leeder’s teaching the perfect balance between the organised and the organic, between form and content and between freedom and discipline” (Winearls 1990, 94). Winearls both embraced and embodied Leeder’s work, so much so that she was immediately employed by Leeder to teach with him in his rapidly expanding school<sup>3</sup> and then spent a year or so with Kurt Jooss at the Folkwangschule in Essen, Germany. On her return she opened her own school in London before gaining the post of Lecturer in Dance at the University of Birmingham in 1965.<sup>4</sup> Winearls had no academic qualifications but wanted dance to be accepted as a valid academic subject:

*All work was based on the theatrical form of work which had been developed by Sigurd Leeder and Kurt Jooss from Laban’s basic analysis of movement. I knew that I could build an integrated form of dance that would be conducive to creative freedom married to articulate expression, documented by the discipline of dance notation. (Winearls 2000, 5)*

Winearls taught in an integrated way many aspects of dance—historical dance, improvisation, choreography, Labanotation, dance history, social dance—whatever she thought appropriate or necessary for the students in front of her. She utilized the Jooss-Leeder Method filtered through her own personality and life experiences both prior to her work with Leeder (which included numerous courses with Rudolf Laban) and after (the Alexander Method). Andy Adamson recalled that her “special gift” was to “assimilate” their work and “with it to create her own.” “It is not enough to say that what she did was the Jooss-

Leeder Method or Central European Modern Dance,” he wrote. “It is the Winearls’ Work; a unique approach to training and nurturing all those interested in dance and the theatre, in which an attention to inner and outer technique must be balance.” (2001a)

Winearls had an unusual teaching style; she appreciated those who worked hard but had an acerbic tongue for those who seemed not to try. She demonstrated frequently and also used a strong “hands-on” approach to mould students physically as well as verbally cajoling, encouraging, or occasionally ridiculing them in her efforts to make her message understood. Her knowledge of the Jooss-Leeder Method was unique to her—many people studied with Leeder, few went on to work for Jooss and then taught for Leeder, and no-one but her has articulated Jooss’s and Leeder’s dance language in print. Her book *Modern Dance—The Jooss-Leeder Method* (Winearls 1958) remains the only text on the method; the accompanying books of dance studies in Labanotation show her work in practice (Winearls 1968). She could be frightening, formidable and forceful with a fiery nature, but could also be warm, kind and supportive. As Adamson said, “It was impossible to be neutral about Jane... you either loved her or you hated her, but you certainly remembered her. There’s no question that Jane was a person who changed people’s lives” (2001a).

She certainly changed Adamson’s life—in the early 1970s he had arrived at the University of Birmingham to study music intending to be a professional trumpet player. He encountered Winearls through “the Opera Course,” a subsidiary subject offered alongside music in which students studied dance and drama for two years, and was hooked; he by her and she by him. She recognised in him his potential as a dancer and choreographer and gave him opportunities to do both. When she retired he was appointed in her place at the University of Birmingham continuing to work from the Laban-Jooss-Leeder principles as taught to him by Winearls, incorporating the Alexander method into the training and bringing great musicality to the work.<sup>5</sup> His embodiment of these principles gave him freedom as a teacher to create some remarkable dance studies of his own for the many students who passed through his classes; his use of verbal imagery, metaphor and physical props to enhance his demonstration was stimulating while his exploration of the principles of movement in his teaching of choreography was often inspirational. As a choreographer for various student and small-scale companies and in his direction of plays and operas he inspired

movement ideas in the improvisation and creative processes which he shaped and formed into his vision. What he wrote of Winearls could equally apply to him:

*Many will remember with fondness their classes [...], often full of hugging and squeezing of sweaty bodies. Truly cathartic [...] classes helped dancers to explore their own creative impulses through improvisation and composition [...] all aspects of the individual were simultaneously challenged and stimulated. (Adamson 2001b)<sup>6</sup>*

I first encountered Adamson as an undergraduate on the new BA (Special Honours) programme in Music, Dance and Drama in the early 1980s at the University of Birmingham. I had danced for many years before going to university but in the training I received from him I discovered a whole range of ideas, such as the importance of the use of weight or the limitless range of dynamics for example, which were new to me. My enjoyment and sense of fulfilment at discovering through his dance studies and choreography there was so much “in” dance—that it was a means of communication, a medium of expression that could incorporate my experience as a musician and actress—were supreme. This Jooss-Leeder-Winearls based work, filtered through Adamson, still forms the basis of my teaching, my choreography and my research.

While much of the legacy I have inherited is intangible, that which is tangible has survived because of the importance Jooss, Leeder and Winearls placed on the teaching of Labanotation, and its use in recording their work; Adamson’s development of Calaban, a computer-aided-Labanotation system now used by professional notators throughout the world, demonstrates his commitment to the importance of movement notation. “The *Big City* Project” a restaging of Jooss’s 1932 ballet, brought the tangible and intangible legacies of Jooss and Leeder together for it was brought to life by teachers and students descended, so to speak, from Leeder, and who were immersed in the Jooss-Leeder heritage. Indeed, I staged Jooss’s ballet from the pencil copy of the Labanotation score on student dancers who had experienced Jooss-Leeder-Winearls-based teaching and dance language from Adamson and me. The Jooss-Leeder dance language is inherent in *Big City* (1932) as it was made at a time when Jooss and Leeder were working closely together training dancers to embody their expressive vocabulary in the creation and performance of the work. I recognised this in the score and taught the ballet to the students using

this physical and verbal language. Students then received coaching from Anna Markard (Jooss’s daughter and guardian of his work at that time) using the Jooss-Leeder language of her inheritance.<sup>7</sup> This process was a remarkable experience for all concerned in the way it brought together so many different strands of Jooss’s and Leeder’s legacies; the tangible outcome was, after corrections had been made, the publication of the Labanotation score produced on Calaban (Lidbury 2000a, 2000b).

Leeder found in Winearls, and she in Adamson, and he in me, bodies and minds through which to transmit a way of thinking about, and articulating, dance; we are but few of many who have encountered the Jooss-Leeder work. It survives when it is imprinted in the body, and embedded in the psyche.

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## Notes

1. Central movement is just one element of the Jooss-Leeder dance vocabulary. It is more than the anatomical sequential unfolding of a limb or the torso; the term “central” implies that the starting point of the movement is in the centre of the body or at the joint in the limb where it is attached to the body, and is motivated by an outflowing intention giving the movement some expressive significance.
2. Hutchinson Guest was a student at the Jooss-Leeder School in Dartington, Devon from January 1936 until the outbreak of WW2. Leeder introduced her to Laban’s movement notation system.
3. Leeder became one of the leading teachers in London during the 1950s. In 1960 he moved to Chile to become director and teacher at the Escuela de Danzade Universidad de Chile in Santiago, while his school in London continued to run under the directorship of Simone Michelle and June Kemp. In 1964, he moved to Switzerland establishing the Sigurd Leeder School of Dance in Herisau. Since his death in 1981, and that of his fellow teacher Grete Müller in 2001, the school has passed into the hands of Christine von Mentlen. Some of Leeder’s choreographic work is available in published Labanotation scores, although much remains unpublished. Hutchinson Guest has just published a selection of Leeder Studies.

4. Dance had been part of teacher training in colleges of physical education for many years, but this was the first post of its kind at a university in the UK. (In the hierarchy in higher education in the UK at that time universities were at the top and polytechnics and teacher-training colleges beneath).
5. Winearls retired from the university convinced that dance had earned its rightful place in academia. She worked on completing her second book and continued to freelance, often working with former students and serving as artistic adviser for their dance companies (such as Masque Dance Theatre, directed by Lynda Ryder).
6. In 2002 the University of Birmingham closed the dance degree program, thus ending the Laban-Jooss-Leeder-Winearls heritage there. Adamson retired and now applies that heritage in the teaching of Pilates.
7. Markard studied at the Leeder School in London in the late 1940s with Winearls. During the 1960s and '70s she worked with her father on preserving his extant works, later staging them all over the world.

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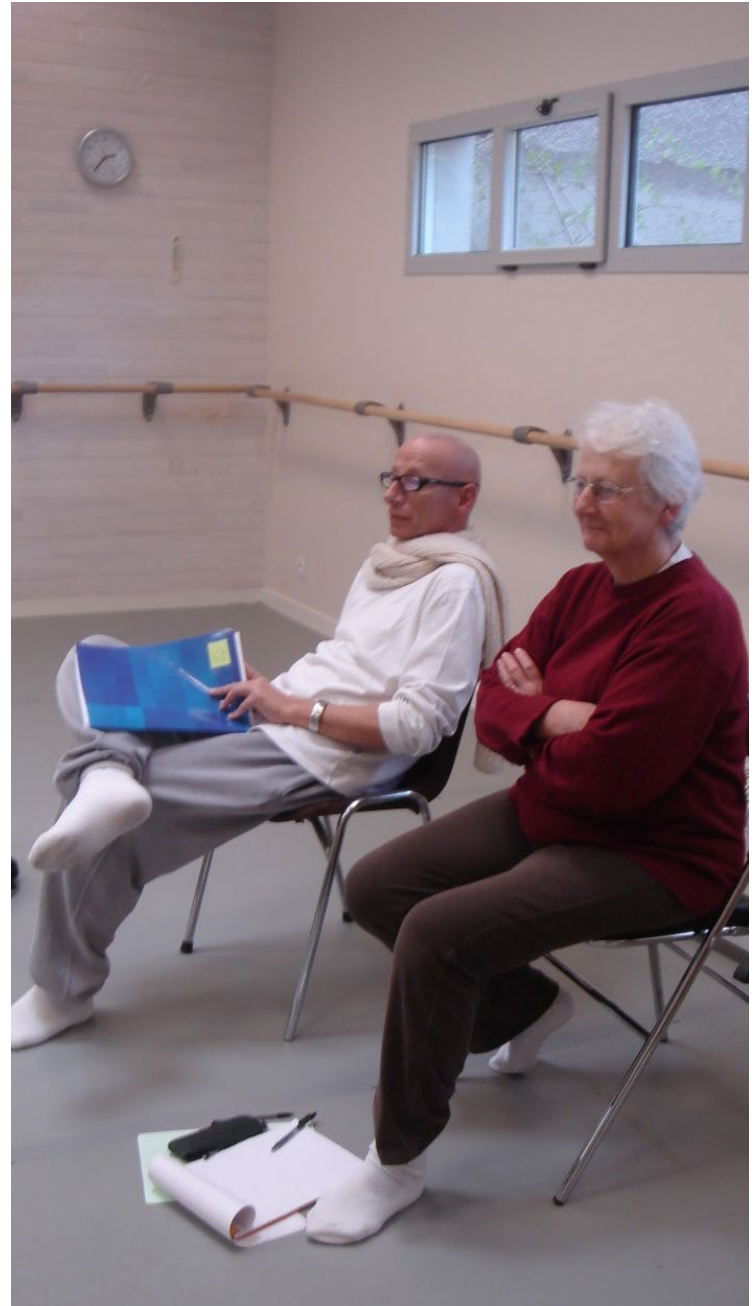
## In Conversation with Jacqueline Challet-Haas

The renowned French notator, teacher, author and translator, Jacqueline Challet-Haas, discusses the notion of the teacher's imprint with Sanja Andus L'Hotellier. The interview took place in Crépy-en-Valois, in France, on February 28, 2017.

**SA:** You had the privilege of studying ballet in Paris with the distinguished Russian teachers: Lubov Egorova (1880-1972), Alexandra Balachova (1887-1979), Olga Preobrajenska (1871-1962) and Atty Chadinoff (1908-1991). How would you describe your teachers and your experience in their class as a young dance student?

**JCH:** From when I was eight and until I was seventeen, I took ballet classes from a very inexperienced young woman who simply taught us what she was learning in Paris from Lubov Egorova without adapting the class in any way! We were enthusiastic and passionate, happily skipping about without, I must admit, any real training.

In 1953 I graduated from high school and went to Paris to study literature at University. There I met a young Russian woman, belonging to the white Russian *émigré* community in Paris. She was passionate about dance and she wanted me to meet her dance teacher: Alexandra Balachova. Intimidated, feeling rather provincial, and gauche, I did as best I could in her classes which were taken by non-professionals, real amateurs as well as professional dancers: a whole world lay before me!



Jacqueline Challet-Haas and Mic Guillaumes. Training workshop in Motif Notation, Poitiers. Photo Credit: H el ene Leker 2010.

Alexandra Balachova was dashing with her snow-white hair and beautiful light gray eyes. Her stature was rather imposing and she was relatively distant with her students apart from some regulars who were of Russian origin too. I followed along as best I could, and was rarely corrected since I tended to stand away from the center. However it was with her that I discovered the *danse de caractère* that she taught us from time to time, in little segments. I think I took her classes for about a year or eighteen months or so, for in the meantime, and I can't quite remember how I had been introduced to Lubov Egorova, most probably by the same young woman who knew all the Russian diaspora in Paris. I remember most vividly the grace and frailty of this old lady, who always taught sitting down. All the *étoiles* and soloists from the Paris Opéra took her classes and we the "others," the "aspiring," the "amateurs," we skipped around behind these magnificent dancers admiring them and trying our best to follow Madame's very complex and long *enchaînements*. There were no corrections or very much individualized attention given, but I loved the lyricism of her compositions, their *enchaînements* as well as their musicality. With two fellow students, I tried out some private lessons with her however I was deeply disappointed because there was no real difference with her regular classes: beautiful set up but with few or no corrections. There too I can't remember exactly how long I took her classes, a year, maybe eighteen months? I imbibed the aura of those great artists as well as the presence of all those fashionable dancers who came to these classes; obviously I didn't count for much amongst them, but I wasn't bitter about it. Little by little, I was gaining a foothold in the milieu...

In 1955, I decided to drop my university studies to dedicate myself entirely to dance. Then two decisive and simultaneous events took place: finding out about the Ecole Supérieure d'Études Chorégraphiques (the ESEC) and meeting Atty Chadinoff. This school offered dancers general artistic training and formal teacher preparation. Atty Chadinoff danced modern and character and was first trained by Isadora Duncan's pupil Mila Cirul. After a brief career dancing solo, she began studying ballet with Olga Preobrajenska.

Olga Preobrajenska was the third "great Russian dame" teaching in Paris and she was by far the most pedagogic of the three. She trained an impressive number of French (mostly from the Paris Opéra) and foreign dancers who then went on to great fame. She was a tiny person with a badly bent back, pleasant and distant at the same time, gifted

with an incredible energy in spite of her grand old age. She would conduct class with great gusto, noticing everything, correcting each and everyone, even those students "with no future." I took her classes at the tail end of her professional life thanks to Atty Chadinoff who had sent me to her at a time when I had become a fervent and passionate student of hers. Despite her age, her classes were extremely well thought through, varied, apart from the barre that never changed, and several movements that she loved in particular and that reappeared constantly, and that we repeated a hundred times. At that time, I had probably progressed enough, thanks to Atty, to no longer seem transparent!

**SA: What was the essence of Atty Chadinoff's approach and in what way was your work with her decisive in your career?**

**JCH:** Atty Chadinoff was unusual for the times because she left *danse libre* for ballet and became one of the pillars of Preobrajenska's classes, a disciple in fact. As such, she knew how to perpetuate the great Russian classical ballet technique tradition and adapt it at the same time to the needs of the time. Indeed she perceived the necessity of developing a classical ballet pedagogy that enabled the child to grow and progress into adulthood whether as an amateur and/or a professional.

For years, Atty also placed great importance on the question of basic alignment work for a dancer. In order for the dancer to gain a solid and balanced technique she devised a wide range of targeted floor exercises destined to prepare the body before the actual training itself. And this she did without ever losing an ounce of her instinctive poetic momentum which was also something that she knew how to pass on so very intuitively.

There too she was a pioneer, offering classical dancers a training specifically adapted to the body, before their actual technical pedagogy. Meeting Atty was a determinant moment in my training and in my personal and professional life. Without Atty, I would never have become who I am today! This is what Laurence Louppe calls the "imprint" which is given and received without us knowing. I trained with her for many years and even became her assistant. I learned the ropes of teaching dance from her and had the good fortune of not only being a disciple but also a friend. Steeped in her teaching, I have tried to transmit it in my own way, as best I could, to the many students that I have had: amateurs of all ages and young professionals aspiring to

become teachers themselves. I even consigned her methodology in the pages of the various works I have written about classical ballet and the teaching of classical ballet to children.

**SA:** You are regarded in France as the highest authority in Labanotation. You have taught notation extensively and created notation scores for Anton Dolin's *Pas de Quatre* (1941) restaged at the Paris Opéra in 1975. You have notated different variations of the classical repertory from *Faust*, *Giselle*, *La Belle au Bois Dormant* as well as a number of traditional French regional dances. There is also a second volume of your scores of the Irmgard Bartenieff exercises, co-written with Angela Loureiro de Souza coming out later this year at the Ressouvenances publishing house. What brought you to the study of Labanotation?

**JCH:** In order to further his goal of introducing dancers to some general notions of culture, the enlightened director of the École Supérieure d'Études Chorégraphiques, the Russian patron Théodore d'Erlanger, who had dedicated his fortune to its very creation, organized various workshops notably with musicians, as well as choreographers like Kurt Jooss, some well-known theater people, and courses which taught "Laban kinetography," Rudolph Laban's movement and dance notation system.

Monsieur d'Erlanger was a keen amateur musician and despaired that dance didn't have a notation system...! I was one of the very first students at this first workshop organized in March 1958. This encounter was as decisive in my career as was my meeting with Atty. From the start, I was fascinated by this notation class and the feeling hasn't weakened since, despite all of life's trials and tribulations and the difficulty of promoting and raising awareness of the notation's many and irreplaceable advantages.

Diana Baddeley-Lange was the invited professor who taught the class. She was a student at the Laban Center situated close to London and at that time, she was also Albrecht Knust's assistant. And it was as Laban's disciple that Knust had been entrusted with developing Laban's notation system. In Paris, Diana gave three short workshops over the course of two years. We became great friends, and it is thanks to her that I met Vera Maletic in England in 1959 on the occasion of the first international meeting of the specialists of Laban notation organized by Lisa Ullmann, Laban's last partner and his testamentary executor.



Jacqueline Challet-Haas and Richard Digoué. Training workshop in Motif Notation, Poitiers. Photo Credit: Hélène Leker 2010.

**SA:** What kind of a teacher was Albrecht Knust?

**JCH:** Following these three workshops, I went to perfect my skills with Albrecht Knust at the Folkwang Hochschule in Essen, Germany which Kurt Jooss directed. He had hired Knust to notate the Jooss ballets and to teach kinetography at the school. Knust was a very kind man, shy but very welcoming, quite withdrawn but conscious of his worth. A fine notator and an extraordinary theorist, Knust was a tireless worker devoted body and soul to the development of kinetography, really to anyone interested in kinetography. We established a sort of a "contract": every day he would give me a private class during which he would correct the notation scores that I had done in Paris: for example, excerpts from the classical repertory and Atty Chadinoff's floor exercises.<sup>1</sup> Thus I learned the rules and the basics of the notation system through the theoretical points that Knust's comments raised. In exchange, he asked me to translate into French his book *Abriss der Kinetographie Laban* which had already been translated into English by Valerie Preston-Dunlop as *Handbook of Kinetography Laban* and which I duly did.



I remember these “lessons” so fondly. I never actually received an education per se, I nibbled little by little and gradually understood elements of the notation system and it wasn’t until I was teaching kinetography myself from these very dispersed notions that I was able to really train myself. As soon as I returned from Germany in March 1960, the director of the ESEC hired me to teach a regular kinetography class to all first year students (a most daring move in the context of the time) and elective classes to any second year students who wished to follow them! I was still very much a beginner and so learned as I went along thanks to my students’ questions but also thanks to the on-going correspondence I maintained with Knust to whom I would systematically send my new notation scores for review. Tirelessly he would answer my questions and meticulously correct the slightest mistake I made and our exchanges continued until his death in 1978.

If Atty developed my artistic taste and gave me an understanding and especially a sensitive and poetic approach to dance, Knust nurtured my curiosity, let us say my need for intellectual knowledge. The irrefutable logic of his comments and his solid common sense never at fault, have always fascinated and inspired me. The sheer quantity of observations and proposals for notation scores that he has produced during his lifetime is so impressive. The importance of Knust’s legacy to the development of kinetography ever since Laban’s official presentation of the system in 1928, which was rather rudimentary then, remains to this day a treasure trove for learning and research data.

**SA: In 2011, the French Ministry of Culture decorated you Knight of the Legion of Honor for your eminent merit and for your gifts to the dance profession for over fifty-three years. What led you to teaching rather than to a professional dancing career?**

**JCH:** To everyone’s surprise, I was never interested in becoming a dancer, on the contrary... I rarely performed on stage (apart from the end-of-year shows, children’s shows...) and have no fond memories of such occasions. This caused me much contempt and a lot of unkind criticism from the dance community! Only in the study of dance, the bases of its different techniques and its transmission have I always and to this day found my passion.

At the same time as I began my studies at the Ecole Supérieure d’Etudes Chorégraphiques (the ESEC), I started teaching dance to young students in the little town north of Paris where my parents

lived. With the innocence and ignorance of a beginner, I threw myself wholeheartedly into teaching, and carried by my enthusiasm and great desire to transmit the little bit I knew, the response I got from my students exceeded my expectations. I was very fortunate to have the support of Atty Chadinoff who had taken me in as her assistant for a year and watched me teach her students with a strict and critical eye. There was truly no better training than that!

Furthermore I was fortunate to be part of the “reformist” dance education movement in Paris that fought for the establishment of the state diploma for the teaching of dance (“diplôme d’Etat de professeur de danse”) and to meet at different meetings and workshops teachers and researchers of all stripes who were working on a progressive and adapted form of teaching dance to amateurs and to professionals. The 1960s, 70s, 80s and 90s were in this sense foundational. I was enrolled in all sorts of workshops as a student as well as a teacher of dance and most often of Laban notation. This is how my professional life developed with its ups and downs...

**SA: You have taught generations of dance notators : Noëlle Simonet, Dominique Brun, Simon Hecquet, Pascale Guénon, Béatrice Aubert, Christine Caradec, Hélène Leker, Chih-Hsiu Tsui to name a few. What was guiding you the most in your teaching? What was important to pass on and is it possible to say that there is a “Jacqueline Challet-Haas imprint” that your students share?**

**JCH:** How to define a teaching method? First and foremost, one should not consider teaching dance as compromise solution, because one has not landed a position with a company, which was very often the case. One should take all students as they are and simply help them develop their creative and human potential. I think that one should never fail to remember that teaching amateurs and teaching professionals are two different things. Professional dancers have made their choice and they must realize the high demands set by the profession. The amateurs on the other hand need their teacher’s guidance and help. While all dancing requires rigor, the highly demanding practice of dance should not be an excuse for breaking the amateur who has neither the physical nor the emotional potential to become a professional dancer.

At the end of the day, what do we teach if it is not what we are? I have never looked to impose anything and have only tried to bring to each

seeker what she or he came for. I have always rejected the notion of method because most of the time it is an illusion! Every teacher has his or her own method which is really not transmittable at all as a method or only with the necessary adaptations due to each one's temperament, and then it's no longer a method in the strict sense of the word that we are passing on!

I think it is impossible to evaluate what one brings to one's students and one is often surprised to learn haphazardly what impressions come to the fore. The teacher's role is to pass on what she or he has learnt without holding back, unconditionally, tirelessly and straightforwardly. Each student will take in what she or he can.

To conclude, now at the end of my life, I am very happy to have been able to pay tribute to what my two "masters," Atty Chadinoff and Albrecht Knust, gave me through my books<sup>2</sup> and translations<sup>3</sup> and over the long years during which my teaching has been imbued with their influences.

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# Teaching Without Trace: An Aspiration for Dance Pedagogy?

Jayne Stevens

*The way I work, the way I look at work, the direction I've moved in, were influenced by what happened at De Montfort University—by the atmosphere created there. De Montfort University offered me teachers who were constantly asking questions. They were on a journey, they were artists themselves, so they were asking questions to themselves and we were witnessing them asking those questions. So in a way we were empowered to start asking ourselves questions.<sup>1</sup>*

These words from the internationally acclaimed British choreographer Akram Khan recall his time as a dance student at De Montfort University in Leicester (UK) where I have been teaching dance for many years. I had the joyful privilege of teaching Akram and very many other students who have gone on—to name but a few career pathways—to be choreographers, dancers, educators, community artists, curators and dance managers. Khan's observations reveal something of the "imprint" his experience has had. He recognises his teachers as artists and sees both teachers and students engaged in a shared experience of journeying through questioning. I will return to these ideas later. Implicit in Khan's observations is a conceptualisation of a relationship between teacher and student, which is at odds with the whole idea of transmission.

The concept of teaching and learning as transmission has underpinned much conventional dance pedagogy especially, but not exclusively, in professional dance training (Buckroyd 2000; Price 2009). This concept can encourage students to see their dance teacher primarily as expert and authority. The hierarchical power relationship between teacher (as knowing) and student (as unknowing), which this concept presupposes has led, in some instances, to authoritarian practices (Lakes 2005) and to a focus on the student as a body (Ross 2004, 169) and moreover a docile body (Smith 1998).

Recently, however, constructivist views of learning have become more significant in all areas of dance education. Key to such views is the suggestion that every student actively constructs her or his own understanding (and practice) and there is no transmission from teacher to learner as traditionally envisaged. Constructivist theories underpin a range of innovations in dance pedagogy involving, for example, peer and collaborative learning, problem solving, personalised learning and critical reflection (Stevens 2006). Such pedagogical approaches cast the dancer in the role of active co-contributor rather than in "the traditional passive role of being taught through demonstration and repetition" (Main 2009, 48). In the acquisition and development of skills, such as happens in dance technique, however, this re-positioning may not be immediately apparent. In dance class the teacher often supplies



Jayne Stevens coaching Hettie Holman (final year BA Hons Dance student, De Montfort University). Photo Credit: Michael Huxley 7 March 2017.

the movement content to be learned through replication. Movement material is communicated via non-verbal demonstration, observation and imitation. Conscious practice, which could conceivably appear to be mere repetition, is a necessary part of technical learning.

Learning has been understood traditionally as the acquisition of skills and knowledge. However, Phillip Martin (a former Dean of Arts and Humanities at De Montfort University) suggests that arts education is “not primarily structured around the imparting of skills and competences, but one primarily structured around a series of engagements with a body of knowledge or (in the case of the practical arts) a body of practice” (2014, 301). His distinction is, I think, important. It suggests that both teacher and student engage with, develop and are developed by a shared body of practice. It also questions the notion of an essentially two-way transmission between teacher (teaching) and student (learning). In fact Martin goes further to suggest that “teaching” and “learning” are not separate or even conjoined activities but an “undivided practice” (Martin 2014, 303).

Recent thinking about processes involved in learning has also challenged the primacy of the teacher-student interaction. Illeris (2009) summarises many social and experiential learning theories in a triangular model of learning. This triangle comprises the content to be learned, the learner’s acquisition processes and the environment in which activity takes place. Content includes not only skills and knowledge but also beliefs, values, strategies and behaviours—whether taught or learned consciously or unconsciously. The learner’s acquisition processes involve prior learning, expectations, assumptions and feelings (Illeris 2009, 10). The learning environment may involve action, imitation, communication, cooperation or competition. Learning then is the outcome of complex interactions between all these dimensions rather than a two-way transaction between teacher and student. This is not to deny, however, that teacher and teaching can exert a significant influence on learning. In this respect what matters is not only what the teacher does but also how the teacher is.

These considerations lead me to see my prime function as teacher to be that of enabling each individual student to consciously construct his or her own practice—whether that be choreographic, creative, pedagogic or technical—in relation to an established and an emergent body of practice that is broadly recognised as dance. This means encouraging

students to see that they are in charge of their own learning (or non-learning) and to provide a practical means of constantly learning something new. At De Montfort University this has meant offering dance students the opportunity to learn the Alexander Technique and to apply this to their dance practice.<sup>2</sup> My colleagues have described their understanding of Alexander’s technique and its application to dance in detail elsewhere (see Leach 2009; Stevens 2000; Leach & Stevens 1996; Huxley, Leach & Stevens 1995a & 1995b). In this article I confine myself to a consideration of the implications for the idea of a “teacher’s imprint”.

Let me consider a dance technique class. Whilst many dance educators and theorists have been critical of learning through replication, a common strategy in dance technique teaching remains that of the teacher demonstrating a sequence of movement, which then becomes the focus of the content to be learned. As well as demonstrating the dance teacher will need to articulate the intention and thought processes that the movement embodies and suggest strategies for optimum performance. Nevertheless, in my experience, many students initially see the demonstration as key because they assume that their goal is to mimic the teacher. They see the teacher’s performance as the authentic, authoritative and “correct” one. Such imitation is, as Harbonnier-Topin and Barbier (2012) have illustrated, a highly complex activity. It is not, however, from my point of view, the real essence of the task that the dance student is being asked to undertake.

The task is for dance students to investigate the movement for themselves and so make discoveries about themselves and the basis of their technique. However much the dance student may feel that some form of direct transference from body to body is happening and even allowing for what has been called an empathetic, kinaesthetic resonance (or imprint) on observing the movement of others, each dance student must, in practical terms, voluntarily direct her or his own performance.

When dance students watch a teacher’s demonstration they form ideas as to *what* the movement is but have to determine *how* the movement comes about and how to direct themselves in order to perform it. The realisation that everything dance students do, regardless of how it might feel, is the outcome of their own direction in terms of both thought and action is vital. In higher education we talk about developing an independent learner but in fact every student

already is independent and in charge of their own learning. The ability to consciously direct oneself is the prime purpose of learning to apply the Alexander Technique.

Similarly, dance teachers can only really teach meaningfully from the basis of their own investigations and ability to consciously direct their own activity. It is in this sense that teacher and student together engage in what Martin called an undivided practice in which all parties are involved in a continuous, constructive, self-determined learning process. Whilst not wishing to deny the teacher's example, the reality is that teacher and student are, in fact, companions in learning (as Akram Khan recognised). In this relationship teachers employ their experience of, progression in and engagement with the Alexander Technique and the body of dance practice to aid the dance student's own journey.

The aim of teaching then is that each student should consciously construct her/his/their own practice rather than adopt that of the teacher. We all "store memories of past experiences including those of lessons learned and taught" (Stinson 2004, 154). However, it is the capacity not to be bound by these—a capacity honed through learning to apply the Alexander Technique—that provides a means for significantly new practice to emerge. It is in this sense that I wonder if the ultimate aim of teaching should be to teach without leaving a trace?

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## Notes

1. Akram Khan, De Montfort University: *What People Say*. [online] [Accessed 6/3/17]. Available from: <http://www.dmu.ac.uk/what-people-say/alumni/akram-khan.aspx>
  2. The Alexander Technique has been taught at De Montfort University by Dr. Martin Leach since 1992. It was previously taught by Dr. Susan Davies having been introduced by Brian Door in 1985.
- .....

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# Contributors

**Carol Anderson** has pursued a long and diverse career as a dance artist. A dancer, choreographer, teacher, director and writer, she started her performing career with Canadian dance pioneer Judy Jarvis' first company in 1968. A founding member of Toronto's Dancemakers in 1974, she worked with the company for fifteen years, dancing, choreographing, and culminating her association with the company as artistic director from 1985–88, and resident choreographer in 1988–89. From 1988–2011 she frequently taught and choreographed for youth company Canadian Contemporary Dance Theatre. Anderson is the author of a body of writing on Canadian dance and other cultural matters, often collaborating with Dance Collection Danse on text and electronic publications, including two long-form interview resources, "Choreographic Dialogues" and "Enter, Dancing: Narratives of Migration." Her titles to date include *Rachel Browne: Dancing Toward the Light* (G. Shillingford, 1999), *A Portrait of Peggy Baker* (DCD, 2008), *Lola MacLaughlin: A Life in Dance* (Lola Dance, 2010), and, with Joysanne Sidimus, *Reflections in a Dancing Eye: Investigating the Artist's Role in Canadian Society* (Banff Centre Press, 2005). Since 1987, she has written forty-two editions of "Carol's Dance Notes" for DanceWorks. Anderson is an Emerita of the Department of Dance at York University, where she taught studio and studies courses at the undergraduate and graduate levels. She is a certified instructor of Pilates matwork and Level 1 GYROKINESIS®.

**Sanja Andus L'Hotellier** holds a B.A. (Hons) degree in Dance from De Montfort University, an M.A. and a Ph.D. from the Université de Paris 8 Vincennes Saint-Denis where she is Associate Researcher. Her monograph, *Les Archives Internationales de la Danse: Un Projet Inachevé 1931-1952* [The Archives Internationales de la Danse: An Unfinished Project 1931-1952], was published in 2012. She has served on research projects with the Dance Museum, the Centre National de la Danse, the IMEC, and the Mas de la Danse, and has received research awards from the French Ministry of Culture, Rolf de Maré Foundation and the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs. She was a Visiting Scholar in History at Columbia University, then Fellow of the Columbia Oral History Institute. She has contributed chapters to *Mémoires et Histoire en Danse* (2010), *Les Archives Internationales de la Danse* (2006) and entries to the *Routledge Encyclopedia of Modernism* (2016) and *Dictionnaire de la Danse* (1999, 2008). Her

recent research papers were presented at the Harriman Institute Symposium *Russian Movement Culture of the 1920s and 1930s* (2015), at the *Event Danse: A Glossary* (2015) organized by the Cultural Services of the French Embassy in New York and at the *Dance Studies Colloquium*-Temple University (2016). She currently serves on the editorial board of the SDHS as managing editor of *Conversations Across the Field of Dance Studies*.

**Jacqueline Challet-Haas** is a French dancer, teacher, Labanotation specialist and mentor. She studied ballet with Lubov Egorova, Alexandra Balachova, Olga Preobrajenska and Atty Chadinoff, modern dance with Kurt Jooss and Laura Sheleen, and notation with Diana Baddeley-Lange and Albrecht Knust. Having graduated with the highest honors from the Parisian Ecole Supérieure d'Etudes Chorégraphiques in 1957, Challet-Haas taught notation there from 1961 to 1986, ballet and modern dance from 1968 to 1986 and teacher training course from 1971 to 1986. In 1990 and on the initiative of Quentin Rouillier—at that time the director of the Dance department of the Conservatoire National Supérieur de Musique et de Danse de Paris (CNSMDP)—she founded the notation curriculum within the CNSMDP. Challet-Haas is a Fellow of the International Council of Kinetography Laban (ICKL) since its foundation in 1961 and has led with Dr. Roderyk Lange, the European Seminar of Kinetography Laban (1980–96). Jaqueline Challet-Haas has taught notation at the Dance department of the Université de Paris IV from 1984 to 1988, and at the Dance department of the Université de Paris VIII from 1989 to 1991. Prolific writer and translator, Challet-Haas has published extensively on dance teaching and Labanotation and together with Laurent Sebillotte she has catalogued the Albrecht Knust collection held at the Centre National de la Danse in Pantin. In 2011, Jacqueline Challet-Haas was decorated Knight of the Legion of Honor. She is currently working on the translation of Rudolf Laban's book *Choregraphie* (1926) into French and continues to mentor dance notation students.

## Dominique Dupuy

Sixty-five years of dance jointly with Françoise Dupuy, shared with others, the audience, the dance community, especially those who, like him, do dance on a daily basis, in teaching, events, research. And this not just in performances, even if he has some well-known creations



to his credit—dance as an institution too, as a campaigner for the recognition of dance as combat. Today, his thinking, his reflections and his writings unite with action, ever-present, on the fringes of conventional or fashionable dance. The Americans say, “Dance is a weapon.” As for him, he says, “Dance is a fight.”

**Norma Sue Fisher-Stitt** is a graduate of Canada’s National Ballet School and a former dancer with the National Ballet of Canada. She is the Associate Dean Academic in the School of the Arts, Media Performance and Design at York University in Toronto, where she also is a Full Professor in the Department of Dance, teaching dance education and dance history. Dr. Fisher-Stitt is the author of *The Ballet Class: A History of Canada’s National Ballet School 1959-2009* and she has presented papers at the Society of Dance History Scholars, the Canadian Society for Dance Studies, the European Association of Dance Historians, the International Conference on Dance Education (ICONDE 2014) and the Popular Culture Association. Together with colleague Carol Anderson, she was awarded a SSHRC Insight Development Grant for the project: “Collective Historical Acts of Social Memory (CHASM): Exploring Canada’s National Choreographic Seminars.” This research project will culminate with an open access virtual exhibition, to be hosted on the Dance Collection Danse web site.

**Clare Lidbury** completed her Ph.D. on Kurt Jooss and his masterpiece *The Green Table* in the early 1990s. For ten years she worked intermittently with Anna Markard, Jooss’s daughter and guardian of his work, on the preservation of Jooss’s ballets in Labanotation through recording the process of reconstructing the works on several dance companies including Joffrey Ballet and Ohio Ballet. She edited the Labanotation score and wrote an extensive introduction to *Big City*, Jooss’ 1932 ballet, published in 2000 and contributed to the correction of the Labanotation score of *The Green Table* prior to its publication in 2001. Since then her research has continued to focus on the work and legacy of Jooss and his partner Sigurd Leeder, and their debt to the work of Rudolf Laban. Published work includes: “The Jooss Heritage—One Perspective” (Proceedings, *Congress on Research in Dance*, 35:2, 2004); “Dear Jane...Affectionately Doris H.: The Friendship of Doris Humphrey and Jane Winearls” (*Dance Chronicle*, 32:2, 2009); and “Kurt Jooss and Sigurd Leeder: Refugees, Battle, Aftermath” (in *German Speaking Exiles in the Performing Arts in Britain after 1933*, Charmian Brinson and Richard Dove, eds, New York: Editions Rodopi, 2013). She is currently Reader in Dance at the University of Wolverhampton.

**Carolyn Pautz** is a second year Ph.D. candidate in the Department of Dance Studies at Temple University. Her research areas include Afro-Cuban religious dance forms, issues of secularization and de-secularization in neocolonialism, US and international foreign trade policy, and Caribbeanist anthropological theory. She teaches courses on race, gender and class in 20th century dance at Temple University and most recently worked as the Graduate Editorial Assistant for Dance Research Journal’s issue commemorating Randy Martin. She holds an MA from New York University’s Gallatin School of Individualized Study where she conducted interdisciplinary research in dance ethnography, religious studies and performance studies. She also holds a BA in Dance from Webster University. Carolyn continues to teach and perform contemporary and Afro-Cuban modern, most recently working with the following: Sekou McMiller, Noibis Licea, and Common Thread Dance Company.

**Shanti Pillai** is Assistant Professor of Theatre Arts at California State University at Long Beach. In 2017 she received a Fulbright Research Award for her project on women artists’ contributions to contemporary performance in India across theatre, dance, digital media, and performance art. Her writing appears in *TDR*, *Dance Research Journal*, and *Women and Performance*. As a creator and performer her work has appeared at the Teatro Trianón and Fundacion Ludwig in Havana, Cuba and most recently as a co-founding member of Third Space Performance Lab at UCLA, Brown University, and USC.

**Elizabeth Robinson** is a member of the fourth cohort of the “Choreomundus” international master’s program in Dance Practice, Knowledge, and Heritage, which trains ethnochoreologists and heritage managers. This program is convened by the Norwegian University of Science and Technology (Trondheim, Norway), Blaise Pascal University (Clermont-Ferrand, France), the Scientific University of Szeged (Szeged, Hungary) and the University of Roehampton London (London, UK). Her dissertation research centers on Cuban popular dance in a globalized world.

**Jayne Stevens** studied History at the University of Nottingham, Education at the University of Birmingham and Dance at the Ohio State University before working as an independent dance artist. She was co-director of Glasshouses Dance Company from 1989 to 1994. She is a qualified teacher and member of The Professional Association of Alexander Teachers. Since 1997 she has been a Principal Lecturer in

Dance at De Montfort University in Leicester, UK. She was one of the first recipients of a National Teaching Fellowship in 2000 designed to recognise excellence and innovation in teaching in Higher Education in the UK. She was Head of Pedagogic Research in the Centre for Excellence in Performance Arts at De Montfort University from 2005 to 2009 and Head of Dance at De Montfort University 2012 to 2016.

**Jessica Zeller** is an Assistant Professor of Dance in the TCU School for Classical & Contemporary Dance. She holds a Ph.D. in Dance Studies and an MFA in Dance from The Ohio State University. Zeller's monograph, *Shapes of American Ballet: Teachers and Training before Balanchine*, was published by Oxford University Press in 2016, and unearths the work of several ballet pedagogues in the context of early twentieth century America. Her research has been published in *Dance Chronicle* and in *Dance on Its Own Terms: Histories and Methodologies* (Oxford, 2014), edited by Melanie Bales and Karen Eliot; and she has presented research at the annual conferences of CORPS de Ballet, International. Zeller serves on the advisory board of *Dance Chronicle* and on the board of CORPS de Ballet, International. A New York native and student of Maggie Black, Rochelle Zide-Booth, and Jan Hanniford Goetz, Zeller's teaching approach references their work and is complemented by her research into ballet's styles and pedagogies. Most notably, Zeller has danced the role of Giselle in *Giselle*, the Sugar Plum Fairy in *The Nutcracker*, Cygnets and the Act I Pas de Trois in *Swan Lake*. She has danced in Bebe Miller's work, as a guest artist with the Indianapolis Opera, and with project-based companies in New York. Before joining the TCU faculty in 2012, she was on the ballet faculty of the BalletMet Dance Academy in Columbus, Ohio.

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*Guest editors: Melissa Blanco Borelli and Anamaria Tamayo Duque*

*Deadline for submissions: December 1, 2017.*

### Popular Dance: The Popular as Political

In 2011, *Conversations Across the Field of Dance Studies* published "Dancing the Popular," an issue dedicated to the multiple ways one might consider the practices of popular dance discursively, methodologically and historically. Questions for contributors centred around definitions, canon formation, choreographic innovation and the historicization and historiography of the genre. This volume of *Conversations Across the Field of Dance Studies* seeks to showcase the development of popular dance discourse six years later.

In this issue, we would like to think about the intersections of the popular with the political. We are primarily interested in how popular dance, broadly conceived, emerges as a mode of communication, citizenship, resistance, and pleasure. Here we are thinking about how Nunavut youths in Canada use popular dance competitions as a literal means of survival given the high suicide rates in their province; we are thinking about the communities of survivors of the Colombian Civil War who use champeta and hip hop to forge communities of healing; we look to the dances and choreographed gestures of the Black Lives Matter movement as vocabularies of citizenship. Overall, we wonder how might the practice of popular dance—both past and present—become a political tool for social change and impact? For whom is the practice important? What are the pedagogies of political popular dance? How do we use popular dance as both practice, performance and pedagogy to consider new ways of knowledge production? How are these practices being instrumentalized for national/civic discourses about public art for disenfranchised communities?

We seek contributions in the form of thinking pieces, scholarly dialogues, practitioner critical reflections, reports from the field, ethnographic considerations, introductions to archival repositories, theoretical provocations, or interviews (not to exceed 1,500 words) that document, analyze, critique, and/or theorize popular dance and its relationship to the political.

Please forward inquiries and submissions to Melissa Blanco Borelli (Melissa.Blanco@rhul.ac.uk) and Anamaria Tamayo Duque (A.M.Tamayo-Duque@lboro.ac.uk)

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