Victoria Hunter

# Spatial Translation and 'Present-ness' in Site-Specific Dance Performance

In this article Victoria Hunter considers notions of spatial translation, 'present-ness', and 'embodied reflexivity' within site-specific dance performance. Through a discussion of the author's site-specific dance installation entitled *Project 3*, she explores choreographic processes that aimed to facilitate, transform, and heighten the lived experience of site by the performer and the audience through phenomenologically informed movement inquiry. Forming part of the author's practice-led PhD investigation into the relationship between the site and the creative process, the performance was the third in a trilogy of site-specific works exploring the potential for site-specific dance performance to 'reveal' the site through movement, challenging both performers and audience members to engage with new ways of experiencing the site-world. Victoria Hunter is a practitioner-researcher and lecturer in dance at the University of Leeds. Her research is practice-led and is concerned with the nature of dance-making processes within site-specific choreography. She completed her PhD in site-specific dance performance in December 2009.

PROJECT 3 (July 2007) was developed as a site-specific durational dance performance situated in a gallery-esque site – the orangery and adjoining conservatory spaces within the mansion of Bretton Hall[1] (see images opposite). The aim was to construct a work that relied upon the choreographer's and performers' embodied site-responses as revealed through phenomenological movement inquiry and to employ this material as the sole form of bodily and kinaesthetic communication between performer and spectator.

This resulted in a quest to produce a performance experience that moved away from exploring a site's formal, historical, and contextual components[2] and aimed instead to encourage the audience member to engage with the site through a corporeal, experiential encounter with the site phenomenon. Put simply, this project aimed to produce a sense of 'fit' (see Wrights and Sites in Wilkie, 2002) in which the final work constituted a performance *of* site in the moment as opposed to a performance *about* the site and its architectural, historical, or factual components.

*Project 3* explored the potential for site-specific 'encounters' to increase the audience members' awareness of site through their engagement with the live, real-time performance event, leading to the potential invocation of an increased awareness of *self* in the here and now. As opposed to feelings of self-consciousness, the term applies here to an individual's increased awareness of themselves in the site leading to an increased sense of 'present-ness'.

To this end, a creative approach aimed at producing a work with a congruous sense of fit was developed to prioritize the individual's engagement in a self-aware and present manner. Through the application of an organic[3] form of creative and choreographic process, the project explored how the moving, dancing body could be the main facilitator of this process, effectively bringing the individual 'closer' to an embodied experience of the site, reliant upon their corporeal and kinaesthetic experience.

The purpose of this particular site-specific work was to explore an interaction with the site which would in turn invoke for both performer and audience member an increased awareness of self: in this place, at this time, in this moment. During this process of 'exchange', the dancers' skills and spatial 'tuning' was employed to produce a form of site-specific encounter facilitated by the

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https://doi.org/10.1017/S0266464X11000030 Published online by Cambridge University Press



Fig. 1. Clockwise: orangery, conservatory, orangery terrace, lavender lawn.

performers' spatial 'translation', metaphorically transforming the site into movement. In this sense, the role of the performer became one of a spatial 'guide' engaging in a form of 'corporeal signposting' as defined by Persighetti (in Smith, 2009).

Performed by six dancers, the work was situated in the orangery and adjoining conservatory spaces. The surrounding lavender-edged lawn was also used as a space for performance, audiences being free to navigate themselves in the site as they wished.



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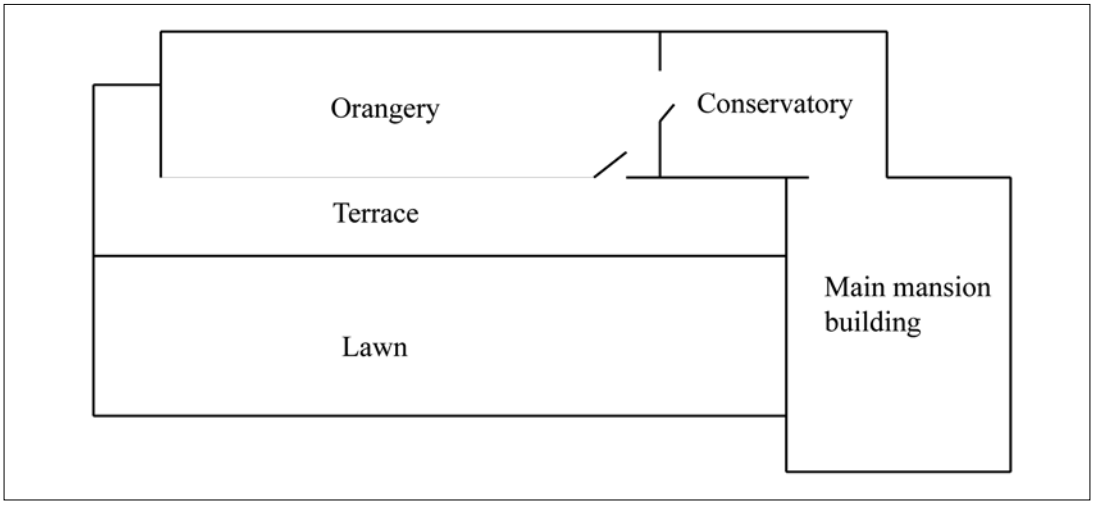



Fig. 2. Floor plan of installation site for *Project 3* (not to scale).

Each space presented the audience member with a distinct installation experience as the orangery space contained three dancers while the outside site and the conservatory site contained solo dancers.

The creative processes employed within the project are discussed here in a chronological format in relation to the concepts of Present-ness, Exploration, Improvisation, Translation, and Co-existence.

**Present-ness, Exploration, Improvisation**

The term 'present-ness' describes here an active process involving the individual's deliberate focusing of attention on themselves, their environment, and their actions and interactions in the present moment. This is facilitated through a process of phenomenological reduction described by Mickunas and Stewart (1974, in Fraleigh, 1987, p. 6) as 'a narrowing of attention to what is essential in the problem while disregarding the superfluous and accidental', thereby enabling an immediate and direct through-line of connectivity to develop between site, performer, and audience. The term describes a practical form of movement inquiry drawing upon Merleau-Ponty's notion (1962) of the 'whole-self', comprising a synthesized mind and body. Present-ness, therefore, implies an active process experienced by the individual in an attentive manner requiring awareness and receptivity.

To enable the dancers' present-ness to flourish, *Project 3* explored and utilized dance improvisation as a choreographic tool. This tool facilitated an exploration of the site during the early stages of the creative process and functioned as a performance structuring device in its own right, through the application of site-based movement 'scores', leading to the presentation of a live 'choreographed' dance improvisation installation. During the early stages of the creative process, the dancers and myself explored the site on a purely intuitive level, gathering experiential data of our initial site responses, as summarized at the head of the page opposite.

From this process, dance improvisation 'episodes' were developed utilizing the dancers' phenomenological movement inquiry, enabling their bodies to get to know the site world 'well' and ultimately to 'speak' of the site and translate these embodied site-based responses to other moving, living bodies in the site through the final performance installation.

At this stage of the process, Halprin's notion of movement 'exploration' implying a more focused and 'directed' approach to dance improvisation influenced the development of tasks aimed at corporeally accessing


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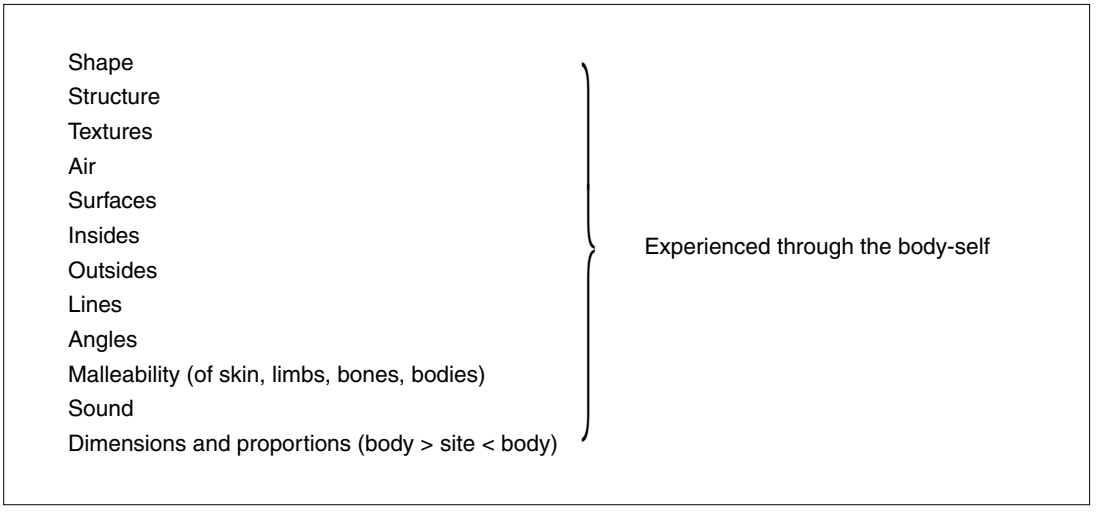



Fig 3. Diagram depicting *Project 3* initial site responses.

this particular site. In conversation with Nancy Stark-Smith, Halprin discusses her approach:

> What I called 'dance explorations' was different, because we would take a specific idea – you might take space or you might take time, you might take force – and we would work with a very specific focus and then we would explore what are all the possibilities around working with space for example. And in the process of exploration, we would come up with information that then later on I began to call 'resources'. But 'exploring' was much more focused and controlled than 'improvising'. (Halprin and Kaplan, 1995, p. 191)

Informed by the concept of phenomenological reduction, I began to develop tasks that equated to a narrowing of the dancer's attention (through movement explorations) to particular key site essences. Drawing upon the initial observation tasks, a number of movement explorations were then undertaken by myself and the dancers. Some of these tasks drew upon generic site-based movement improvisation tasks outlined by movement practitioners and theorists. For example, Tufnell and Crickmay's (2004) exercise entitled 'Find the Skin' (p. 125) required the dancers to explore the space around them informed by the sensations experienced by the body's skin receptors. In this particular exercise the skin is considered as a 'place of meeting' (p. 125) between the body and the site, resulting in movement explorations stimulated by the 'conversations' occurring at the nexus of interaction between physical body and site. Additional tasks were developed specifically to investigate particular essences and aspects of the site through a 'lived-body' approach (Fraleigh, 1987). The following task, for example, emerged in response to the initial observation exercise in which the dancers recalled a desire to bring the space inside the body and conversely explore the body's effect upon the space:

- Explore the notion of 'capturing' the space with the body.
- Capture and bring the space into the body – allow this space to play, explore and develop its journey internally within the body, then release this force back into the environment.
- Consider the body and its actions simultaneously affecting the space and being affected by the space.
- Acknowledge the effect of your intervention within the space – respond to the changing, energized space.
- Repeat and develop the process, capturing, exploring, and releasing space. Respond. Repeat.

(V. Hunter, 2007, *Project 3*, Choreographic Process diary extract)



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Through this task and subsequent tasks aimed at 'imprinting' the body's movement upon the site, the dancers engaged with the space through a form of cyclical 'dialogue' as they became aware of their responses to the space while simultaneously acknowledging the effect of their actions upon the space. The resulting movement content generated by these tasks possessed a sculptural quality and a sense of dynamic responsiveness to the ever-changing site environment influenced by the movement and motion of the other dancers in the space.

Following discussions and evaluation sessions with the dancers, it was identified that these 'bespoke' tasks (as opposed to more generic dance improvisation tasks) proved most useful in finding a 'way in' to exploring the site in a more meaningful and present manner, as they developed from our ongoing experiences of the site. For example, when moving through the orangery room, the dancers recorded feeling a sense of 'directed-ness' or 'compulsion to travel' dictated by the site's dimensions and the length of the room. Through discussion, the description of this sense became identified as a sense or essence of 'linearity' experienced through the body.

To focus attention towards this particular phenomenon, I designed a task whereby the dancers were asked to stand at one end of the space and draw the 'vectors of direction' suggested by the space. This task engaged the dancers in a free-drawing exercise akin to a literary stream of consciousness. Unlike writing, however, the dancers captured in diagrammatic form an impression of their compulsion to move in response to this felt sensation of 'linearity'. Once this task was completed, they entered the space and explored through the body this sense of linearity and responded to the associated sense of push and pull elicited by the sense and played with it further by travelling along the pathways suggested.

As the task developed, the dancers were encouraged to expand their explorations, to incorporate movements, running, rolling, and to explore other linear pathways which presented themselves to consciousness, incorporating a range of vertical, horizontal and planar dimensions. Following this exercise, they returned to their original observation points at the ends of the room and recalled their embodied sensations of moving through the space during the task. This corporeal and sensorial information was recorded in diagrammatic form effectively representing each dancer's phenomenological impression of how the original vectors of energy had been disrupted and rewritten following their movement interventions.

When placed side by side, the two 'maps' of the space provide an illustration of their original perception of the space alongside a new-found record/impression of some of the new patterns of energy and spatial 'flow' resulting from their actions and interventions in the space. An example of one dancer's recording is presented here:

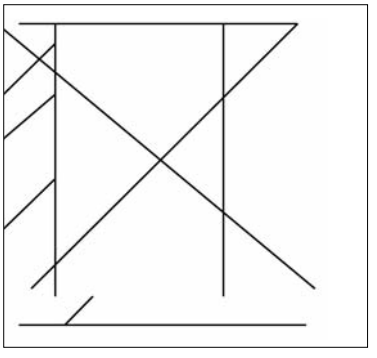


Fig. 4. Phenomenological movement exercise diagram. Dancer's impression of the site prior to moving.

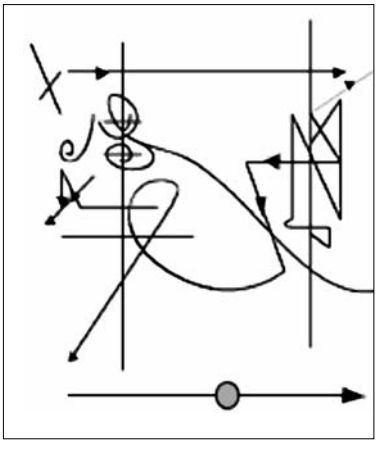


Fig. 5. Phenomenological movement exercise diagram. Dancer's impression of the site following the movement exercise.


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In phenomenological terms, the original mapping document (Fig. 4) shows a representation of the site's linearity as perceived by the subject from 'over there', while the second (Fig. 5) presents an illustration of the individual's experience and exploration of the phenomenon of the site's linearity as experienced 'from within' through a process of embodied exploration. Again, this example illustrates how this task and others engaged the dancers in an embodied exploration of something *in particular* informed by the concept of 'phenomenological intentionality' (Merleau-Ponty, 1962).

The dancers' experiences gained while exploring these tasks began to form the basis of movement 'scores' (after Halprin, 1975) that became embodied by the dancers and were played out and explored during the final durational performance event. These movement scores and associated instructions are outlined briefly here:

- 'Vectors' of direction (discussed previously).
- 'Capturing' the space (discussed previously).
- 'Swirling mist' – Responding to the energy of the space and the other bodies in space by equating the shifting dynamics and movement trace patterns to a 'swirling mist' which moves the body in space while simultaneously contributing to the stirring of the 'mist'.[4]
- 'Imprinting' – feeling the body's tangible sense of imprinting shapes, pathways, and movement patterns upon the space, experiencing the space as a dense and malleable entity affecting and being affected by the dancer's movement interventions.

Each dancer embodied four movement score, each score exploring a particular aspect of the site including atmospheric and spatial qualities and the site's 'essences' as experienced by the performer.[5] The scores encouraged the dancers to listen and respond holistically to the site and to the other bodies in the site, and to acknowledge how their interventions in the space impacted upon and altered the site phenomenon. Through this process, the dancers began to explore and develop their knowledge of the site corporeally and kinaesthetically and, through their enactment of this embodied knowledge, began to 'translate' the site into movement.

## Translation and Co-existence

Addressing the phenomenon of site-specific spectatorship and 'hybrid identities', Fiona Wilkie (2005) discusses site-specific spectatorship 'as an imaginative experience, which cannot be wholly contained by either space or the performance' (2005, p. 5) The utilization of real-world locations inhabited by created performance works, combined with performance techniques which (often) explore the blurring of boundaries between performer and audience, present the individual's encounter with the site as an estranged yet recognizable version of the world in which a range of spectator 'identities' can be encompassed.

The ultimate aim of *Project 3* was to create a work that enabled both the performer and audience members to immerse themselves within a performance experience, and to encounter the site in an embodied and immediate manner through the medium of movement. To this end, it was decided that the work should take the form of a durational dance installation to allow the individual's experience of the work to evolve over a period of (self-determined) time and the role of the audience member be defined as a 'witness'. The term 'witness' in the context of performance studies is defined by Etchells (1999, p. 17):

> To witness an event is to be present at it in some fundamentally ethical way, to feel the weight of things and one's own place in them, even if that place is simply, for the moment as an onlooker.

Etchells discusses how, in the case of performance works that challenge conventional modes of theatrical presentation, the witness is presented with 'an invitation to be here and be now, to feel exactly what it is to be in this place and this time' (1999, p. 18). It is this element of audience 'witnessing' which


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*Project 3* explored in particular: the notion of the witness being 'invited' to participate, react, respond, or simply observe as determined by themselves.

The term 'witness' describes here a process of spectatorship in which the audience member takes responsibility for their actions and responses in order to inform and develop their experiencing and understanding of the work. In this sense, the participatory role offered to the witness in *Project 3* possessed a degree of autonomy requiring the individual consciously to engage with the work, choose their role within it, and navigate their journey throughout the installation experience.

Audience members were free to choose their level and mode of interaction with the performers, while the dancers were encouraged to acknowledge openly the audience's presence and to reflect their body language and movement within their own movement explorations. In order to maximize the individual's experience of this transcendental world, the work sought to develop in both the audience and the performer a heightened sense of awareness, encouraging encounters between self and site and self and 'the other' in an awakened manner leading to a state of present-ness.

## Development of the Dancer's Role

As the rehearsal process developed, it became apparent that, in order to facilitate this process, the dancers' own awareness of themselves in the site and sense of present-ness and engagement with the work required careful development. As opposed to adopting a form of performance persona derived from character portrayal or narration, the dancers were required to explore and present their movement explorations to the witness in a naturalistic and present manner, with a limited amount of artifice, acting, or overt sense of performance. The aim of this role was to act as a corporeal guide extending Persighetti's notion of the actor as 'signpost' wherein the 'extended organism of the actor operates as a signpost to the immediate site' (Smith, 2009, p. 170). This form of sharing the dancers' explorations of the site with 'the other' (Merleau-Ponty, 1962) through a process of embodied spatial translation inevitably meant that the dancers' role began to develop in its complexity. To develop this role, therefore, the dancers were required to address questions of how to achieve present-ness and how to maintain a state of present-ness in their own practice while acknowledging and responding to the work of others.

To facilitate this, a number of phenomenological concepts were explored through discussion during the rehearsal process, then applied to the dancers' exploration of the movement scores. Jaana Parviainen discusses Merleau-Ponty's notion of 'flesh' as a phenomenological concept used to 'convey the notion that the human body and the world originate from the same source' (1998, p. 62). In a practical sense, this concept aided the performers' facilitating an important perceptual shift between considerations of the body as a physically limited and bounded entity to a consideration of the body-self as a permeable being.

Merleau-Ponty in *The Visible and the Invisible* (1964, p. 63) explains the concept further:

> My body is made of the same flesh as the world, and moreover this flesh of my body is shared by the world, the world reflects it, encroaches upon it and it encroaches upon the world.

However, Parviainen (1998) explains that within this concept the body and the world do not disappear into 'sameness'. The example of breathing is provided to illustrate this point and exemplify the interdependent nature of the body and the world.

One dancer explained how the application of this concept within her dance explorations helped to develop a stronger sense of connection between self and site:

> My body felt open both physically and mentally, I felt a definite exchange between myself and the site informed by the idea of the space moving through the body as the body moved through the space. My movement felt natural but explorative at the same time.
>
> (Performer diary extract, July 2007)


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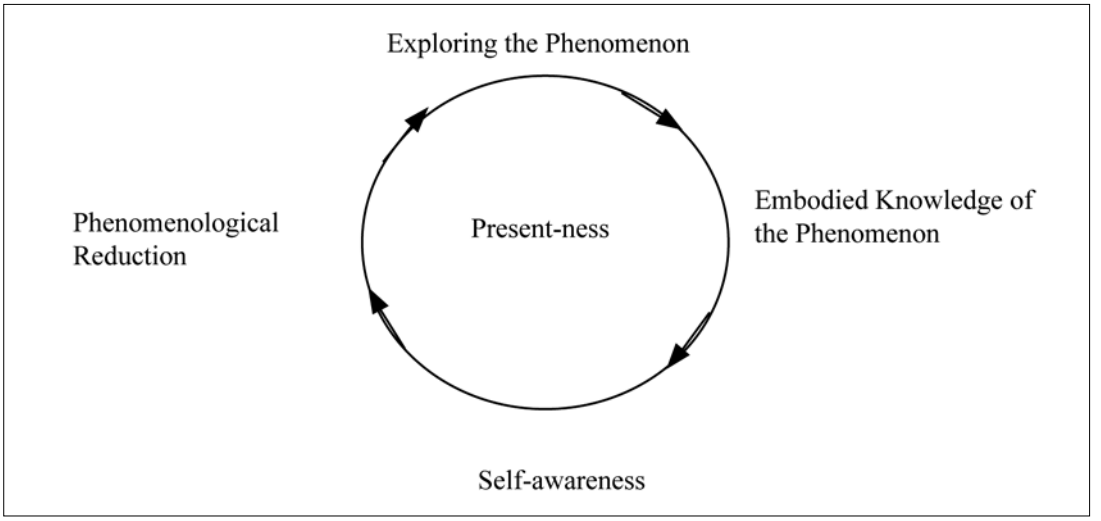



Fig. 6. Model of embodied reflexivity.

This description reveals how the concept helped to develop the dancer's sense of engagement with the site in a reciprocal manner, as she became aware of her interventions in the site while simultaneously responding to the evolving site phenomenon as it became altered as a result of her movements. In this sense, a process of reversibility is enacted between subject and object and through this process both are defined and redefined by the other.

This does not imply, however, that inanimate objects become animate through this process. The reciprocal act in this context emerges through the individual's engagement with the phenomenon of the other (the site and other bodies in this context). This is described by Crowther (1993, p. 2) as a process of 'ontological reciprocity' experienced by the lived-body facilitated by 'our sensorimotor capacities in operation as a unified field'. He expands upon the concept:

> The unity of this field, and the consciousness of self emerging from it, is both stimulated by, and enables us to organize the spatio-temporal diversity of otherness. We give it contour, direction, and measuring; thus constituting it a world. On these terms, the structure of embodied subjectivity and of the world are directly correlated. Each brings forth and defines the other. Their reciprocity is ontological as well as causal.
>
> (Crowther, 1993, p. 2)

In this sense, the dancer's embodied exploration of the site phenomenon can be seen to operate in a spiralling format equating to a form of 'processing' the space through the dancer's body in a process of 'present-ness'. The process of present-ness is presented above in diagrammatic form and provides an illustration of the dancer's process of experiencing, processing, and revisiting phenomena through the body-self's updated and re-informed knowledge.

In this process, the dancer begins by exploring the site phenomenon and, while engaged in this exploration, simultaneously creates an embodied sense of how the world of this phenomenon feels though the lived body experience of moving through and engaging with this world. As the dancer's movement exploration develops, they begin to respond to their embodied perception of the site world while simultaneously creating this world through their bodily, kinaesthetic engagement, constituting a relationship that, as Crowther (1993) suggests, is both causal and ontological.

## Co-existence

Once the dancers had begun to develop their own sense of present-ness through phenomenological engagement with the site, the phenomenological concept of 'self and



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otherness' (after Merleau Ponty, 1962) combined with the concept of simultaneity (after Massey, 2005) to develop the creative process[6] further. These two concepts were explored and applied firstly to the dancers' simultaneous explorations of the site during the rehearsal process, and secondly to inform the dancers' preparation for the final process of sharing the work with the witness.

Throughout these explorations, however, the dancers frequently reported a sense of frustration with themselves for 'failing' to achieve a consistent state of 'present-ness' throughout the duration of an improvisation episode. The dancers became concerned that, while engaged within a movement exploration they would often find their attention wandering or would frequently struggle in their attempts to be 'pre-reflective' and effectively quieten their minds sufficiently to 'be in-the-moment'.

As the process developed, 'witnesses' were invited to attend rehearsal sessions to enable the dancers to develop their experience of communicating and co-existing with others outside the rehearsal process. However, the dancers frequently reported a sense of alienation and distance between themselves and the visiting witnesses, while the witnesses themselves reported a sense of being 'excluded' from the dancers' explorations.

During this phase of the process, the practical explorations revealed a requirement for a re-evaluation of the notion of pre-reflexivity and 'being in-the-moment' as previously understood through phenomenological dance discourse. Additionally, the concept of 'communing' with the witness required closer attention.[7]

## The Concept of Personhood

At this stage of the rehearsal process, the concept of 'personhood' proposed by dance anthropologist Brenda Farnell (2007) was introduced. In her conference paper 'Choreographic Process as Live Theoretical Practice',[8] Farnell presented the notion of 'personhood' pertaining to an individual's embodied knowledge, informed by their own personal history, identity, and cultural makeup. Farnell's discussion of a 'dynamically embodied personhood' seeks to acknowledge the individuality and personal make-up of the dancer, recognizing them as an embodied being and (using the example of abstract dance) seeks to recover the 'mover from movement for movement's sake' (Farnell 2007).

Farnell's concept of personhood develops Fraleigh's (1987) concept of the lived-body experience by enabling the dancer to bring their whole sense of self to the dance experience and consider themselves as a 'dancing person' as opposed to a servant of the dance or a supreme dancing being striving to become 'at one' with the dance in a pre-reflective manner. Farnell proposes that the concept of personhood bypasses notions of dualism as it automatically seeks to address the individual as a whole person in an holistic sense consisting of mind, body, cultural, social, and historical context.

To develop the dancers' sense of present-ness, the concept of personhood was explored practically within the various dance exploration tasks. In particular, the concept enabled the dancers to acknowledge and observe themselves and the various states of consciousness experienced throughout the explorations. As opposed to experiencing a constant sense of engagement and immersion within the various tasks suggested by notions of pre-reflexivity, the dancers were able to identify and observe their own individual process of ebb and flow as they experienced moments of immersion, lapses in concentration, and moments of re-engagement with the various tasks.

This was identified as a significant development in the dancer's exploration of their role within this type of improvisatory process, as they became aware not only of *what* they were doing but *how* they were doing it. Through this process, the dancers became more aware of their own sense of connection to the site and were able to identify and acknowledge in an honest manner when their movement explorations felt authentic and inauthentic. Furthermore, it became apparent that this sense of ebb and flow between the dancers' sense of connec-


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*Project 3*, 2007. Above, left: improvisation. Above, right: group rehearsal. Below: lavender lawn improvisation.





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tion and disconnection with the site was an important and significant element of their site exploration, as it exemplified their real-time exploration of the site in the moment and was therefore worth sharing with the other dancers and ultimately the performance witnesses.

To facilitate this process, the 'pedestrian rule' was introduced, enabling the dancers to acknowledge openly their sense of disconnection and simply to walk, pause, observe, and take time to reconnect with the site and the other bodies before re-commencing the explorations. One dancer explains how this rule enabled her to relax more when engaged in movement explorations:

> Knowing that I didn't have to force movement when my concentration lapsed enabled me to move more freely, and probably sustained my concentration for longer periods of time as I felt less pressured to achieve a specific aim.
>
> (Performer diary extract, July 2007)

The concept of personhood made a significant impact upon the dancers' explorations of present-ness in *Project 3* as they became empowered to explore the various movement scores as real 'people', individuals who were aware of each other in space, and also moved through stages of consciousness which incorporated moments of total immersion within the movement explorations combined with less 'immersed' explorations which were allowed to evolve albeit in a less connected manner.

In this sense, the concept of personhood encompassed the essence of a range of complex phenomenological theories presented by Heidegger (1927), Merleau-Ponty (1962), Crowther (1993), and Fraleigh (1987) in a format directly related to the dancer's creative processes of experiencing the site encountered within *Project 3*. The dancers were therefore able effectively to employ the concept within their own movement explorations and engage in dance improvisation episodes in an authentic manner. From this point onwards, the dancers' movement explorations appeared freer and less constrained as they engaged more with the tasks in a present manner, evidencing an increased sense of embodied awareness of themselves and of the other dancers in the site.

Through this development, the dancers appeared to begin dancing simultaneously in response to and *with* the evolving site phenomenon, as opposed to attempting to impart a narrative or theme *about* the site. The story of their experience appeared to communicate through their new-found sense of engagement with the site and their awareness of themselves *being* in the site. Crucially therefore, the concept of personhood appeared to enable the dancers to be aware of themselves while moving, as opposed to seeking constantly to 'switch off' and not notice themselves as previously experienced.

### Performer–Witness Interaction

The concept of personhood, then, became a crucial element in the development and facilitation of the final installation performance exchange between the dancers and the witnesses. It enabled the dancers to relate to each other and to the witnesses through a form of address which acknowledged the presence of each other in the site in the 'here and now'. This was achieved by the dancers' noticing the witnesses' presence through direct eye contact and bodily acknowledgement as the performers were encouraged to move in close proximity to the witnesses, make eye contact, smile (or not!), and respond to their movements, patterns, and postures, and ultimately engage in movement dialogue and exchange through dancing with them.

One audience response reveals how this approach led to 'a sense of bonding between the audience and performers'.[9] Another response reveals a sense of becoming immersed within the performance world as the boundaries between performer and audience became blurred:

> I enjoyed being gently folded into the performance, being allowed to look closely at the particular spaces, their structure and detail, and feel how they work, what they do to bodies. I enjoyed the interaction of the dancers and the space and how this gradually came to mean *all* the bodies in


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the space had a very particular relationship to the space. We were all placed there, part of the picture, not simply dancer and audience.[10]

The following performer observation reveals how this process of inter-subjective exchange and co-existence between performer and witness resulted in the co-creation of performance experiences and movement 'episodes':

> When witnesses entered the space I felt a discernible shift of atmosphere, a 'charging' of intensity as the other person entered the space and moved with me, often requiring from me a new set of rules, points of orientation responding to their interventions while offering up some of my own. (Performer diary extract, July 2007)

This example provides an insight into the nature of the dancers' experience within the inter-subjective exchange and illustrates how the exchange provided fresh movement stimuli to explore, both in a collaborative and solo manner, dependent upon the nature of the performer–witness interaction.

*Project 3* broke down conventional modes of performer–audience relationship in order to bring the witness 'closer' to the dancer's experience of site, effectively operating as a translator/guide through their corporeal explorations of the site. In this sense, the dancer's exploration of the site was 'offered up' to the witness who may or may not choose to engage the dancer in a new journey or exploration through the site instigated by themselves.

In phenomenological terms, this final stage in the creative process constituted a form of inter-subjective exchange between self and other. Merleau-Ponty discusses the concept:

> Between my consciousness and my body as I experience it, between this phenomenal body of mine and that of another as I see it from the outside, there exists an internal relation which causes the other to appear as the completion of the system. (Merleau-Ponty, 1962, p. 410)

The 'completion of the system' of perception posited by Merleau-Ponty here is exemplified in the performer and witness observations discussed above and is equatable to the sense of completion of the final performance work achieved via the process of corporeal inter-subjective exchange occurring between performer and witness. Through this final process, the work achieves a sense of wholeness and destination, and secures a degree of completion and purpose through the dancer's communion with ' the other'.

## Conclusion

This discussion of *Project 3* reveals how techniques employed within the creative process contributed towards the production of a work that engaged the audience and performers in a process of spatial translation and exchange situated within an ephemeral place of performance. In order to achieve this, an appropriate form of performance product was required which contained a degree of naturalism yet was still able to utilize the abstract medium of dance to achieve this, thereby enabling a simultaneous unfolding of process and product.

The durational performance 'installation' format provided an optimum environment in which to house the evolving improvisation, comprising a form of 'choreography in the moment'. According to Quick (in Heathfield, 2004), the live event possesses 'a materiality that is also resistant to certain drives to commodify it and make it known' (p. 93). It is argued here that the lack of commodification that resulted from the 'unknown' improvised content contained within *Project 3* facilitated the witnesses' ability to be 'present', immersed within and engaged with the live event.

While this notion of 'live-ness' and unpredictability is not exclusive to site-specific dance performance, it is suggested that, as opposed to pre-set, pre-rehearsed forms of choreographic presentation, the improvised nature of the choreography 'in the moment' featured within the *Project 3* performance installation contained an additional element of 'live-ness' making the witnesses' and performers' 'prediction' of the experiential outcome particularly illusive. This degree of unpredictability presented a 'freeing-up' of potentiality for the experi-


https://doi.org/10.1017/S0266464X11000030 Published online by Cambridge University Press

encing of place, space, and self by those engaging with the event, encountered within an experiential place, and defined by the individual's encounter with the lived site-world as it unfolded before them.

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## Notes

1. The mansion building dates back to the eighteenth century and is situated in West Yorkshire in the grounds of the Yorkshire Sculpture Park. It housed the School of Performance and Cultural Industries of the University of Leeds from 2003 to 2007.

2. These aspects were explored within the author's previous site-specific works – *Beneath* (2004) and *The Library Dances* (2006).

3. The term 'organic' in this context refers to a form of creative and choreographic process that relied on the spontaneous production of movement material arising from improvisation tasks. The form of choreographic process also relied more on an intuitive form of decision making occurring in the moment, as opposed to imposing any pre-determined, pre-designated form of structuring or compositional design upon the emerging material.

4. This task was developed from a similar task experienced during a series of Skinner Releasing workshops led by Rebecca Skelton – SCODHE, Bretton Hall, 2003; Laban, 2005.

5. Some of the qualities and 'essences' explored included notions of 'linearity', explorations of the space as a 'malleable' entity, and responses to perceptions of the site's 'vectors of direction' experienced corporeally by the dancers.

6. In *For Space* (2005) Massey argues for a re-consideration of space as multiplicitous and 'a simultaneity of stories-so-far' (2005, p. 9), prioritizing an acknowledgement of the simultaneity of experiences encountered by individuals in space and places.

7. Both Sheets-Johnstone (1979) and Fraleigh (1987) discuss notions of pre-reflexivity in dance as prerequisites for phenomenological exploration; the practical explorations contained within *Project 3* problematized *how* 'pre-reflexivity' was actually achieved in practice.

8. Presented on 24 June 2007 at 'Re-Thinking Practice and Theory: International Symposium on Dance Research', Centre National de la Danse, Paris.

9. Audience questionnaire response, 4 July 2007.

10. Ibid.


https://doi.org/10.1017/S0266464X11000030 Published online by Cambridge University Press