

Editorial

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Welcome to Volume 5 of *Dance Research Aotearoa*. This journal volume collects together research that reflects the participation of scholars in recent academic events held in Aotearoa New Zealand. In particular, a number of articles in this volume have been developed from presentations at the *Undisciplining Dance Symposium*, hosted by Dance Studies at the University of Auckland in June 2016. This symposium was run in association with the Tertiary Dance Educators' Network New Zealand Aotearoa and alongside the Tertiary Dance Festival of Aotearoa 2016.

In this volume, we also honour and pay tribute to our late colleague Dr Linda Ashley, Editorial Board member, author and reviewer for *Dance Research Aotearoa*, dance scholar, teacher, colleague and friend. In a specially commissioned article in the *Looking Back* section, Jennifer Nikolai considers Linda's contribution to dance in *Dancing with Dolly: Linda Ashley's enduring legacy*; a legacy also revealed through many articles and her books (Ashley, 2002, 2012). Linda passed away in April 2016. Her infectious enthusiasm, her laughter, her attention to detail, her passion for teaching, writing and dancing within academic, professional and community contexts, occupies a treasured place in our collective memories.

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In the *The Undisciplining Dance Symposium*, the provocation was to consider what it might mean to 'undiscipline' dance. The notion of discipline is ever-present in Dance Studies—creating specific terrains of practice, defining professional attitudes, and connoting forms of punishment that determine acceptability and unacceptability. Discipline can be a gate-keeper, a kind of shame, a pathway to virtuosity and professionalism, a form of sophistication and an application of control and power. Despite the 'corporeal turn' of much recent academic discourse, Dance Studies as a field has produced disciplined bodies persistently

subjected to the commands of writing (Lepecki, 2006). If much of what we teach and come to know from within the disciplinary regime of Dance Studies is founded on a certain kind of mastery, what scope is there to challenge, criticise and undo this knowledge from within the academy? The *Undisciplining Dance Symposium* invited participants to attend to the changing status of disciplinary knowledge in dance and performance in the context of an increasingly transdisciplinarity and decolonised field.

The symposium brought approximately 80 presenters, more than half of whom were international—from Europe, United States of America, the United Kingdom, Brazil, Hong Kong and Australia. The symposium pōwhiri (opening ceremony) brought many generations of Aotearoa-based and international artists into a new space of potentiality. We met in Waipapa Marae, with Tia Reihana, Hinekura Lisa Smith, Marama Lloyd and Tru Paraha sending spine-tingling karanga (calls of welcome), and Cat Ruka and Cathy Livermore responding for the manuhiri (guests). Entering into the whareniui (meeting house), Pita Turei and then Charles Koroneho offered moving whaikōrerō (formal speeches) to honour those past and present, to lay out the kaupapa (symposium purposes) and to connect symposium participants together in readiness for the event. Keynote speakers and dance academics Moana Nepia and André Lepecki both also gave moving and resonant kōrerō (speeches) establishing links across distances and genealogies of both bloodlines and creative practices.

The keynotes for the symposium included Finnish artist and academic Efva Lilja, performance studies scholar André Lepecki from New York University, and Māori indigenous scholar Moana Nepia, currently based at The University of Hawaii. Lilja has spent many years advocating for the role of the arts to be recognised politically as a crucial element of healthy society, and for the independence of artists to develop idiosyncratic, challenging and experimental forms of practice. Lepecki is renowned for his contribution to dance, performance, visual arts and dramaturgy, in terms of defining what it means to think choreographically (2006, 2016). Nepia recently completed a ground-breaking PhD in creative practice research, framed by Māori worldviews and working with choreography and artist-books.

Presenters shared their work through performances, workshops, presentations and site-based interventions so each day of the conference engaged diverse approaches to dance as a field of practice. Performances on every day of the conference evoked the vibrancy of choreographic thinking in opening spaces for

refining and questioning our art form—evoking political, aesthetic, interdisciplinary, improvisational and scenographic (among many other) inquiries. Panels covered topics such as dance and education, inclusive dance practice, the curation of choreographic work in art gallery contexts, post-colonial and decolonising dance practices, somatic education in the dance class, site dance and choreographic practice in the context of climate change and environmental crisis.

Thus, the *Undisciplining Dance Symposium* posed questions about the discipline of Dance Studies in the twenty-first century. It provided a platform for some of the fugitive gestures of multiple dance practices to be shared through discourse and dancing. At a time of precarious survival for dance artists in the neoliberal age, the capacity to share experience, to initiate creative ways of relating, and to choreograph both problems and thinking remains essential for facilitating change and transformation as we inhabit the potential spaces our dances open.

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Volume 5 of *Dance Research Aotearoa* represents the work of international scholars as well as local dance researchers. This volume makes space for chaotic, permeable and leaky practices and ways of understanding the body from the periphery to the centre to celebrate rowdy, inspired, mobile, fluid, surprising, intent, bent, queer, non-confirmist, inclusive approaches to dance making and research. The institutional structures and contexts within which the disciplines of dance and performance in Aotearoa (and internationally) are practiced have been in a process of change since the early 1990s. The growth in tertiary dance programmes and the development of PhDs in creative practice in the last 25 years has offered a context for new questions to arise. The symposium prompted a range of questions, such as whether the disciplinary differences of performance practice have been embraced and recognised by universities, and how the discipline of dance has visibilised the difference of embodied knowledge in the academy. Questions also arose about the foundational assumptions of professionalised embodied knowledge in the academy and considerations of key acts, tropes or pedagogies of undisciplining in the context of various dance industries. This volume contains diverse, partial and sometimes surprising responses from dance scholars to such questions.

Karen Schupp's article *Miss K gets published! A transdisciplinary and autoethnographic investigation of dance competition culture* explores the culture of competition dance in the United States, through a character-led auto-

ethnography exploring Schupp's insider/outsider position in relation working as a teacher and judge in dance competitions. Schupp's use of humour, irony, pastiche and provocation 'undisciplines' expectations around dance scholarship, as she writes in a multi-modal format interweaving humorous short YouTube mockumentaries with scholarly critique. The use of humour in Schupp's work reflects dance as a microcosm of cultural values. This satirical means of research articulation evokes a critical reflection on gender, embodiment, hierarchy and power in a mainstream dance form that has huge levels of participation in the United States and beyond.

In *Cultural connection: Approaches to cultural education through Latin American dance*, Rachel Pedro, Kym Stevens and Stephanie J. Hanrahan present pedagogical methods for undisciplining the teaching of Latin American dance from a focus on technique and movement vocabulary to one that instead focuses on the specificity of cultural and social context, providing students with knowledge of social and cultural settings as central in understanding movement practices. They ask, "How do we support tertiary students in understanding about culturally significant dances?", "What is 'authentic' cultural engagement?", "How do we avoid teaching the 'single story'?" and "How do we design learning experiences to encourage students to value the authentic?" (Pedro, Stevens and Hanrahan, 2017). Through folding social, spiritual and geographic contexts into the teaching of Latin American dance, the authors hone in on the dancing *experience*, enabling understanding of critical reflection on dance within complex weaves of cultural fabric.

Natalie Schiller undertakes an in-depth analysis of one moment in her performance of pole dance, reflecting on her possibilities for undisciplining and destabilising dance performativity. Weaving poetic text and academic literature together as she 'writes herself', Schiller considers the moment in her solo in which she creates a 'crucifix', and the multiple interpretations of this moment that relate to subjectivity, socialisation and values. In her article *Breathe through your vagina! - An attempt to catch ineffability*, she attempts to express intangible and unspoken moments of insight that arose in her lived experience and that sparked choreography and creative practice research.

Angela Woodhouse and Caroline Broadhead's article *Sighted: An overview* discusses the performance work *Sighted* which, with over 100 performances, developed a rich body of performance-audience interaction, enabling careful consideration of porous boundaries between performer and audience. This article

explores the delicate entanglement of performers and audiences in installation work that cultivates what the authors describe as ‘intimate dialogues’ heightening “the audience’s attention to an acute awareness of place and the present moment, a feeling of uncertainty, participation, duality and wonder”. Here, dance is framed as both spectacular and intimate, highly structured and open to dynamic change in relationship with the other. Choreography becomes an act of care, wherein attention to precarious relationships enables space for the meaning to be wrought as moments fall between isolation and community, between movement and stillness.

As significant contributors to dance scholarship and teaching, Alison East (The University of Otago) and Larry Lavender (The University of North Carolina, Greensboro) raise provocative questions and engage in a stimulating critical dialogue about the possibilities of ‘un-disciplining’ dance. In *‘After dance?’ A critical dialogue on possibilities for un-disciplining dance*, they ask how we might discern an ‘undisciplined’ body, and who might have the power to decide whether dance, or dancing bodies, are ‘un-disciplined’. Further, they reflect on what the political implications of ‘un-disciplining’ Dance Studies might be in a time when we may still be defining this ‘discipline’, or still be advocating for the place of dance within the academy, or be investigating ‘transdisciplinarity’. With reference to the perspectives of students in university classes and a range of colleagues, their critical dialogue engages with the messiness and complexities of ideas around disciplined dancers, un-disciplining practices, disciplinary boundaries in academia and transdisciplinarity. This is, as Lavender remarks, a complicated process and a politically precarious one’.

The issues and challenges that arise in integrated dance classes are the focus of Sue Cheesman’s article, emerging from research in the community classes she offers through Touch Compass Dance Trust in Auckland, New Zealand. *Issues and challenges around the fostering of a productive respectful community ethos within an integrated class context*, provides a context for Cheesman’s more detailed considerations of her pedagogical practices arising out of sustained teaching practice. In this article, Cheesman considers how to foster a respectful community learning environment and cultivate a sense of agency for the dancer in integrated dance. This article offers insights gleaned from pedagogical examples in a specific context and is discussed in relation to current literature on integrated dance practices.

We share these articles in which dancing and dancers claim the centre, offering space in *Dance Research Aotearoa* for such satirical, fluid, inclusive, humourous, ineffable, mobile, un-disciplined, transdisciplinary approaches to dance making and research.

Alys and Karen

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