

Editorial

Karen Barbour

The University of Waikato

Ngā mihi mahana ki a koutou katoa. Welcome to Volume 6, 2020 of *Dance Research Aotearoa*.

This journal volume collects together research that reflects the participation of dance scholars in rich and diverse activities undertaken in Aotearoa New Zealand and Australia. In particular, the articles collected here feature voices across multiple generations of dance researchers, including recent dance graduates and experienced academics, who offer a range of interdisciplinary perspectives in engaging with lineage, legacy and relationships with land as well as advocacy for change.

There are many significant elders and lineages to trace in dance in Aotearoa. On the occasion of the *Leap Dance Symposium*, hosted by the School of Performing Arts at the University of Otago in November 2019, we recognised the legacy of the inspirational Dunedin dance elder Shona Dunlop MacTavish who passed away earlier that year. The theme for the symposium was ‘Dancing heritage, tracing lineage’. Along with celebrating Shona’s remarkable contributions in dance, we took time to recognise the end of an era as the Dance Studies programme at The University of Otago vacated the treasured dance studio on Union Street in Dunedin, dance leader Alison East (Ali) retired and the programme began transforming in new directions. In Auckland at the same time, the dance community celebrated the 30th anniversary of the School of Performing Arts/Unitec School of Performing and Screen Arts, a dance programme originally founded by Ali and colleagues. These events all brought particular lineages and legacies into focus, as discussed in four of the articles published in this volume.

Carol Brown honours the breath and beats of the heritage she channels through her own remembering of Shona Dunlop MacTavish. Returning to her own corporeal archive and to the collection of Shona’s notebooks, photographs, costumes and performances, Carol reveals a history of breath in dance as a politicised act, offering poignant reflections for the year of the 2020 global pandemic. Ali offers a sensuous tracing, identifying ecologies of connection as she reflects autobiographically on her

life of dancing and teaching in Auckland, Dunedin and beyond. She draws on comments from former students and weaves her own experiences as a teacher articulating further practices of connection and co-existence in community and environment. Connected through the land and dance community in Dunedin, Shona, Carol and Ali are significant in a lineage that a new generation of artists and dance researchers continue today.

Traces of this lineage are found in the corporeal archives, in the embodiment of others connected to these dance programmes and elsewhere throughout Aotearoa. The connection with Ali through the School of Performing Arts/Unitec School of Performing and Screen Arts brought Becca Wood and myself together as dancers in the 1990s. In this volume, we each reflect on Ali's legacy: I focus on understanding relationships with environment, land and site fostered through dance, and Becca considers pedagogies that empower dancers to understand themselves as potential agents of change.

Kaylee Bird and Courtney Richmond share their own stories of meeting as students of dance and advocate for increased pedagogical knowledge and positive change in private dance studio pedagogy. Narrative excerpts of their experiences as learners offer the beginning point for their critical engagement in dance research literature that details alternative pedagogies and broadens the agenda of the dance studio to include community building, empowerment and valuing of dancers, and celebration of diversity.

As a member of the community of researchers working in site dance, Sue Cheesman discusses her creative process in making a site-specific dance and evaluates the role of reflection on feedback from dancers and colleagues. Her reflexive discussion reveals some of the tensions artists and researchers may face in engaging with feedback during the creative process as well as the genuine curiosity and agency she found that the reflective process supported.

Engaged in researching the creative process, Merophie Carr details her work in understanding the relationships between audiences and performer in *Weekly Ticket Footscray*, a durational dance performance by David Wells in Footscray Train Station, Melbourne. As a dramaturg, she offers an analysis of proxemic zones in personal and public space to understand relations between audience members and performer.

Gabriel Baker also discusses creative process in dance-making, focused on expressing environmental themes through the lens of ecological-feminism in her own solo performance. Drawing on poetic practices and stories of eco-feminist activism,

she reveals a lineage of feminist and environmental considerations that resonates in current research.

Finally, Lara Rangiwhetu, Garrett Winters, Nevil Pierse and Philippa Howden-Chapman generate discussion through their research into an example of how dance may function to support public health communication agendas. Based on participation in the popular ‘Dance Your PhD’ contest, they discuss the value of non-traditional methods of communicating housing concerns, and support the potential of dance to communicate with a wide public audience.

While the year of 2020 was extraordinary in its challenges for dancers and dance researchers globally, the authors, academic reviewers, copy editors and administrators all demonstrate commitment and energy in contributing to this volume of *Dance Research Aotearoa*. This volume embraces the insights that arise from dance research and celebrates the role of dance researchers and artists in understanding creative processes and pedagogies, and in engaging as agents of change in the world.

My sincere appreciation as editor to Margaret and Nikki for their work in proof-reading and copy editing and my thanks to the Research Committee, Te Wānanga o Ngā Kete, Te Whare Wananga o Waikato, for supporting the publication of this journal volume.

Ngā manaakitanga

Karen