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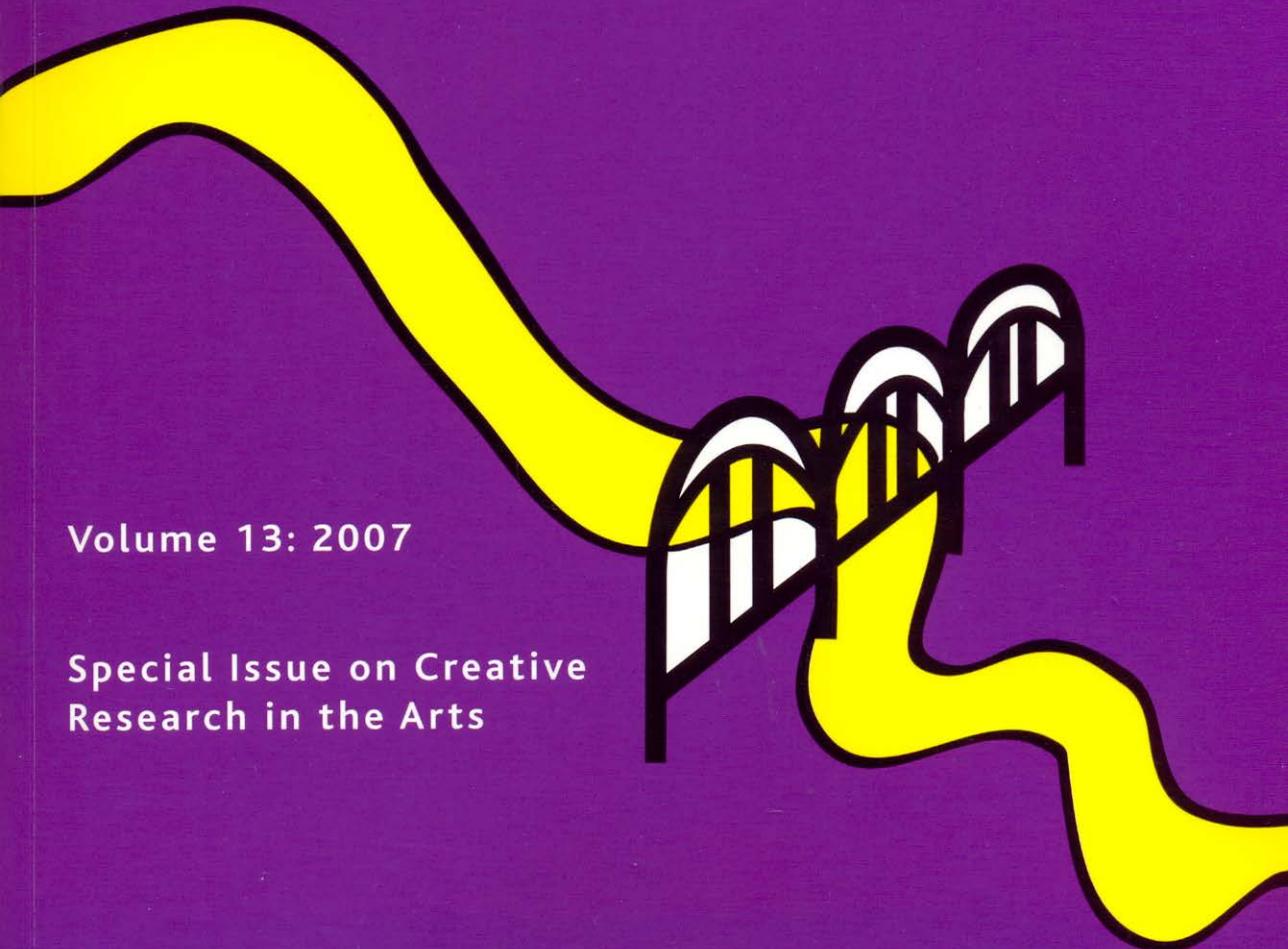
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Call for Papers

Special section 2008: *New developments in curriculum.*

Submission Deadline: 30 October, 2008

This special section focuses on new developments in curriculum, a topic of current interest in view of the introduction of the new New Zealand curriculum in 2007. The new curriculum calls for creative responses from teachers, teacher educators and others interested in the material and content of teaching. For the first time in New Zealand, pedagogy has been included in an account of the school curriculum, so the editors welcome any papers which reflect interaction between curriculum and pedagogy as well as subject-oriented or content-focused papers.

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WAIKATO JOURNAL OF EDUCATION

TE HAUTAKA MĀTAURANGA O WAIKATO

VOLUME 13, 2007

Creative Research In The Arts: Introduction To The Special Section KAREN BARBOUR	3
Art Works As A Re-Presentation Of Research JILL SMITH	7
Through The Eye Of A Needle: The Story Of Two Academics' Use Of Fabric Crafts To Make Defiant Messages BELLA GRAHAM AND JOYCE STALKER	33
Researching Collaborative Artistic Practice KAREN BARBOUR, DONN RATANA, CHERI WAITITI AND KIM WALKER	49
Reflective Practice: Dance-Making And Image Narratives DEBBIE BRIGHT	77
Reflections Through Invisible Glass Walls: Self-Study Of Teacher And Artist COLIN GIBBS	91
The Youthanasia Of Dance: A Research Nexus Diary Of Dance In Tertiary Education LINDA ASHLEY	103
Interweaving Philosophies Of Dance Teaching And Dance-Making: What Can One Practice Teach The Other? ALISON EAST	123
Aesthetics And Didactic Intention: The Meeting Place Of Beauty And Information Transmission In The 2006 Community Theatre Production Of <i>Swamp Treasures</i> JOHN G. DAVIES	139
Experiential Learning: A Narrative Of A Community Dance Field Trip RALPH BUCK AND KAREN BARBOUR	149

Creative Teaching Or Teaching Creatively? Using Creative Arts Strategies In Preservice Teacher Education ROBYN EWING AND ROBYN GIBSON	161
A Case Study: Issues Of Culture, Diversity And Difference In Art Education In New Zealand JILL SMITH	181
Music To Measure: Symbolic Representation In Children's Composition CLARE HENDERSON	197
Safe To Speak? A Teacher's Story Of One Child's Apparent 'Liberation' And 'Transformation' Through The Security Of Role VIV AITKEN AND SHAY COWLEY	211
Captured Voices In Primary School Art Education GRAHAM PRICE	221
Developing Non-Verbal Ways Of Knowing In Dance: Collaborative School/University Action Research CLARE HENDERSON, DEBORAH FRASER, SUE CHEESMAN AND SHIRLEY TYSON	243
<hr/>	
Education's 'Inconvenient Truth': Persistent Middle Class Advantage MARTIN THRUPP	253
Reflecting On The Development Of A New School Subject: The Development Of Technology Education In New Zealand ALISTER JONES	273

THE YOUTHANASIA¹ OF DANCE: A RESEARCH NEXUS DIARY OF DANCE IN TERTIARY EDUCATION

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ABSTRACT *As an ageing dancer and educator I have developed an interest, over the last few years, in the field of study into dance and ageing that has been growing internationally during the last decade. From both reflexive and reflective perspectives, I began to consider how I could present a range of related concepts and issues in both academic and artistic forms. I invented the term 'Youthanasia' to encapsulate the phenomenon of the ageing dancer-academic working in a youth-driven art form. This article records the ongoing creation and performance of the resulting dance research monologue from 2003 to the present day. During the creative and research processes, I engaged with student learning in various ways as part of my work as a dance lecturer in a tertiary education setting. Therefore, I argue that the relationships between students, colleagues and artistic research practice established a mutually beneficial dance teaching-research nexus. Within this nexus students were stimulated to 'discover' research as a 'lived' part of their studies in dance, and to consider issues relating to ageing in their own careers. The dance monologue also aimed to challenge the stereotype of scholarly practice², as found in some current perceptions of research.*

KEYWORDS

Dance, Ageing, Auto-ethnographic inquiry, Teaching-research nexus

SETTING THE STAGE

"Find ways to challenge existing assumptions." (Sprain, 2006, p. 11)

This paper portrays the research journey that began when I faced my nemesis, as an ageing dancer working in dance, an art form traditionally associated with being young. Contemplating my 'lived' experiences of dance and ageing, combined with academic life, prompted curiosity about the precarious position of 'older' dancers. I was motivated to research current issues in the field and compose a 'dance', but somehow that was not enough to evoke the related images and issues. So, I determined that the final research output should combine dance performance *with* script, within a scholarly framework. This unconventional combination of artistic and academic practices would, I considered, express more poignantly the perspective of a senior dance practitioner. Examples of research that has combined dance with written outputs include works by Barbour and Mitchley (2005); Barbour and Thorburn (2001); Bright (2005); Coe (2003); De Leon (2005); East (2005); and Goldberg (1997).

In the research and composition of the dance monologue, I regarded the concrete “touchstone of [my] own experience” (Strauss & Corbin, 1998, p. 38) as being of equal value to abstract, ‘Ivory Tower’ research (Sprain, 2006). I considered my personal, tacit knowledge and experience of thirty years in dance, education, the community and writing, as crucial to the phenomenological validity of this inquiry (see Patton, 2002, p. 88). Such recognition validates the use of less conventional methods of danced presentation, oral history and auto-ethnography in conjunction with a scholarly approach.

This paper also presents how artistic inquiry, which initially emerged from an active teaching-research nexus³ (Clark, 1997; Neumann, 1992), proceeded not only to stimulate further research, but also to enrich teaching and learning. Grounded “in the practical details” (Zubrick, Reid & Rossiter, 2001, p. 5) of personal current academic and artistic practices, this article depicts the teaching-research nexus as a mutually beneficial synergy that develops between students and staff during teaching, learning and research processes. In revealing “intimate and interpretative aspects of knowing” I emphasise that research “involves processes and outcomes that are not reducible to mere outputs” (Zubrick et al., 2001, p. 8). Consequently, I argue that creative processes in the arts have inbuilt potential to inform and develop a vibrant community of discovery between learners and teachers that may be replicated in all sectors of education.

Grounding academic theory in public life and emphasising scholarship in daily dance practice were prioritised in the devising of the dance monologue. I concur with Foote that “making efforts to communicate my research to various publics causes me to reflect differently on what I’m doing in my scholarship and why” (cited in Sprain, 2006, p. 9). Making research more public, relevant and understandable is an apposite strategy for dance, being so particularly performative and embodied in its societal position. Dance research has potential to bridge human everyday experience, theory and artistic practice. Connecting with people informs my research, as much as it may inform them. Ageing is a shared, common experience and the dance monologue shares reflections, contentions and humour around that very topic.

Throughout this paper, the writing style is correspondingly playful *and* scholarly, and I experiment with an intertextual style of presentation in order to increase the sense of kinaesthesia for the reader. The paper is annotated with descriptions of some of the movement, script, stage directions, different fonts and photographs to energise the page.

Opening lines, steps and directions.

The directors of ‘Old Yeller’, Anne Dewey and Liz Kirk, circulated their first-ever invitation to dancers of a certain age⁴ to perform in the 2004 ‘Tempo’, New Zealand Dance Festival. A research project was born.

Early research involved the usual review of literature on ageing in relationship to dance, through history and in different cultures. Later, this was combined with auto-ethnographic narrative to generate material for the monologue script. Our lives and sense of self are ‘storied’ (Martin-Macdonald, 1999), constituted and described

by narratives, and so the choice of ‘narrative identity’ (Bruner, 1987), as a method to frame a collage of auto-ethnographic and academic information, facilitated the consideration of relevant issues and stereotypes. I combined reflective (Smyth, 1989) and reflexive strategies to allow retention of “an objective interest in the relation between the person and his or her role” (Varela, 1994, p. 63), and to ensure critical, responsible thinking. Placing my body and voice as storyteller to the fore aimed to engage the audience in the public arena.

As I focused on autobiographical experiences, I discovered a theatrical device in the form of alter-ego figure, ‘Dolly’, a character who can play the perfect elder spokeswoman for many laudable and laughable issues that surround a dancer in the autumn of a career.⁵ Dolly resists any surrender to fate in some fairytale turret, either awaiting rescue or abandoned to atrophy, be it in dance or academia. Her seniority permits her to comment on contentious issues that surround the world of dance, age, performance and the various stereotypes to be found therein (see Photo 3). The choice of ‘Dolly’ as a name for the subject may appear to confront issues of identity because of an associated, apparent ‘soft’, image. However, the reference is to the confectionery of ‘Dolly Mixtures’, as an analogy of how dancers often have to be multi-skilled in order to make an economically viable living in the dance industry.

With this combination of methods, I aimed to create an “animating synergy” from the “deep excavation” of both the personal and the “literary form” (Abbs, 2003, p. 87).

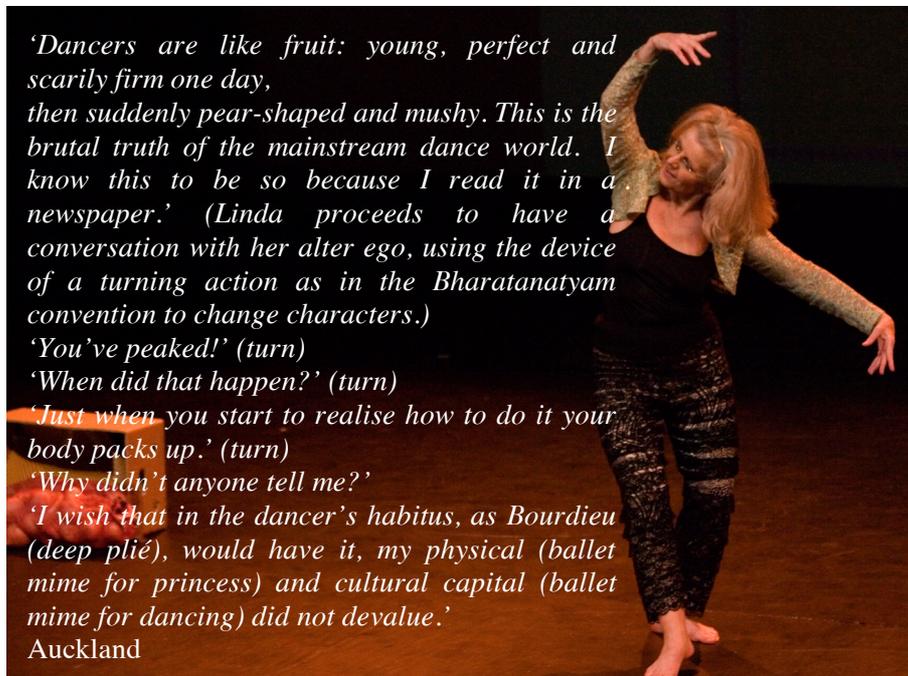
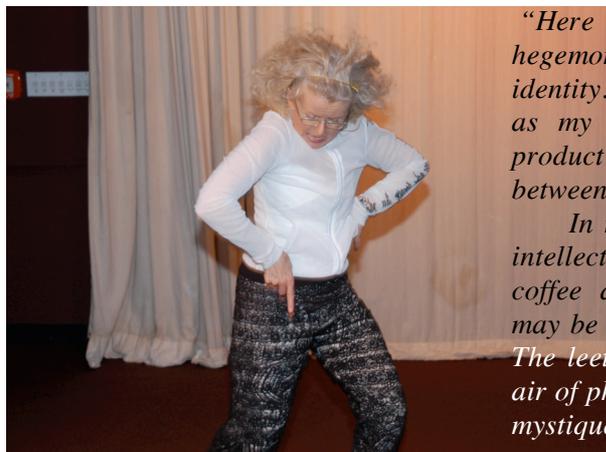


Photo 1. AUT University, Bachelor of Dance Showcase, 3/11/06, Centennial Theatre, Auckland

The monologue is embedded within a challenge to academic research norms, and also takes a less than reverent look at Western dance history in a manner that intended to both inform and appeal to a lay audience. Issues that are interrogated include: changing corporeality (see Photo 1); emotional responses to the ‘gaze’ of others; identity formation and self-scrutiny; ageing in dancers from diverse cultures and through history; coping strategies; and, resistance to surrender. For example, perspectives of the formation of identity and some of the poststructuralist underpinnings of my investigation emerge in the following tongue-in-cheek danced lines:



“Here we are with the Gramscian hegemonic formation of my cultural identity. Here we are with Derrida, as my cultural identity is also a product of conditional consent between dominant and dominated...”

In my humble opinion, Parisian intellectuals drink too much espresso coffee and the Gauloise cigarettes may be the cause of much obscurity. The leetle wisps of smoke create an air of phenomenological mystery and mystique

Photo 2. Auckland College of Education, 08/09/04, Auckland

Intricate theory, script and dance movement are performed simultaneously, and this mirrors the multiple skills that many dancers require to make a living in dance (see Vincs, 2005).

Overall, it is important to note that humour is held as a vital part of the philosophy of my autobiographical narrative style. A Wittgensteinian perspective, that philosophy could consist entirely of jokes, underpins this style: ‘I think therefore I laugh’ (Paulos, 2000), and is the style of choice for this research because of the potential hilarity of the ageing process.

MAKING AND MEMORY

In the following section, I use my journal entries to make the research process and performance more visible and accessible for the reader.

Improvisations

The first version of this light hearted, yet darkly deep, dance monologue, ‘Several Decades in the Life of a Dolly Mixture’ (Ashley, 2004a) was 30 minutes long. As a first attempt at a solo of this length, my learning curve involved integration of literature and theory into choreographic imagery, script and technologies. The

monologue aimed to produce a presentation that would hold the viewers' attention, whilst retaining intellectual rigour.

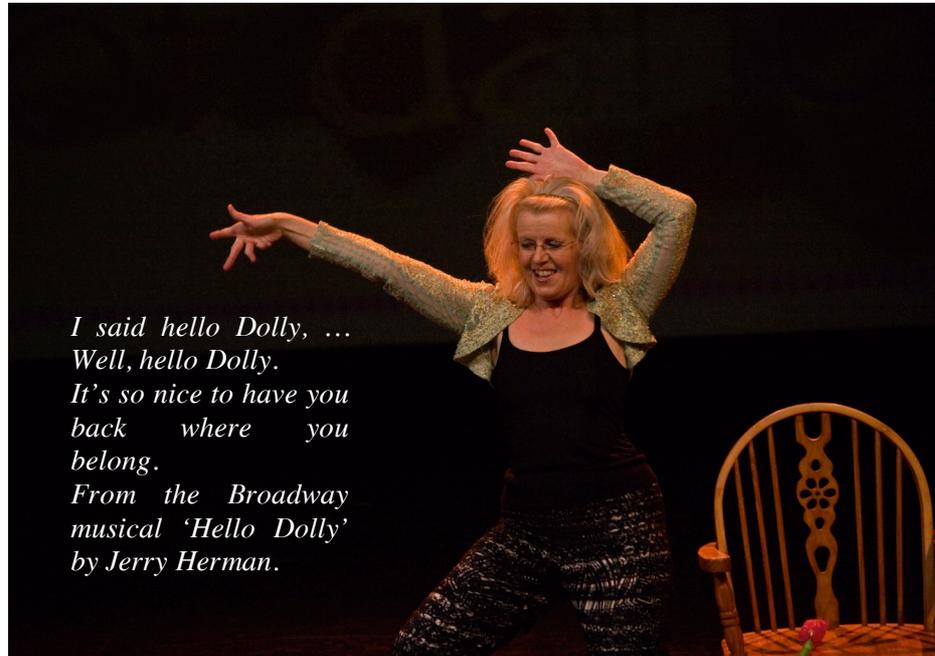


Photo 3. *AUT University, Bachelor of Dance Showcase, 3/11/06, Centennial Theatre, Auckland*

Initially, I chose my voice to be the accompaniment for the performance. Although I had used voice previously as accompaniment for dance, the sheer length and intensity of this monologue produced some interesting complexities in analysis, interpretation and synthesis, not to mention memory, for me as a performer.

The original 2004 version was a collegial collaboration. I integrated voice with live, improvised piano, played by Dr. David Lines (University of Auckland) and a signer in NZ sign language, Janette Third (of the then Auckland College of Education). I rejected an attempt to use pre-recorded music because it lacked the live improvised piano supportive relationship with the movement and voice. Additionally, the pianist played a cameo in the piece as a kind of academic supervisor (and he was an academic supervisor) keeping the wild academic doctorate protégé 'under surveillance'. All of this added to the multiple layers of meaning within the performance and to the comedy.

The script writing was time consuming, as maintenance of an almost musical rhythm was important to the overall structure, aesthetic and intellectual intentions. The creation of reciprocal dance language that incorporated a range of pedestrian actions, generic stylistically recognisable 'dance' phrases, abstract movement and yet retained humour, sense and intensity was enjoyable, even if demanding. This synthesis of spoken, visual, sound, text and movement literacies mirrors those

underpinning *The Arts in the New Zealand Curriculum* (Ministry of Education, 2000).

Then, of course, I had to remember the whole so that it appeared fluid and avoided any ‘senior moments’. During dance rehearsals memorising movement is an everyday reality but adding the layer of spoken vocabulary played havoc with muscle memory. Finally, a synergy was produced but it was not a process that I would advise anyone to take lightly.

Curtain up! Performance and PowerPoint

In this section I present a condensed view of some of the theatricality, movement and text combinations, imagery and issues and a general ‘feel’ for the various versions of ‘The Youthanasia of Dance’ from 2004 to the present day.

Presentations use PowerPoint slides and this positions the monologue in the grey lands between theatre and lecture. An assistant technician, not the performer, controls the slides. These understanding people, alternatively known as ‘Life Support Systems’ on the 2006 PowerPoint opening slide, have been students who are kind enough to volunteer their time as research assistants (see Photo 4). Students have to know the script from rehearsals and change the slides at crucial moments in response to my wave of a magic wand, accompanied by my voice “*Pling!*” The latter imitates the recognisable sound made by a computer when going to print or save, (which is regularly heard as I write this article ‘*Pling!*’), and is intended to connect the performance to my academic life.

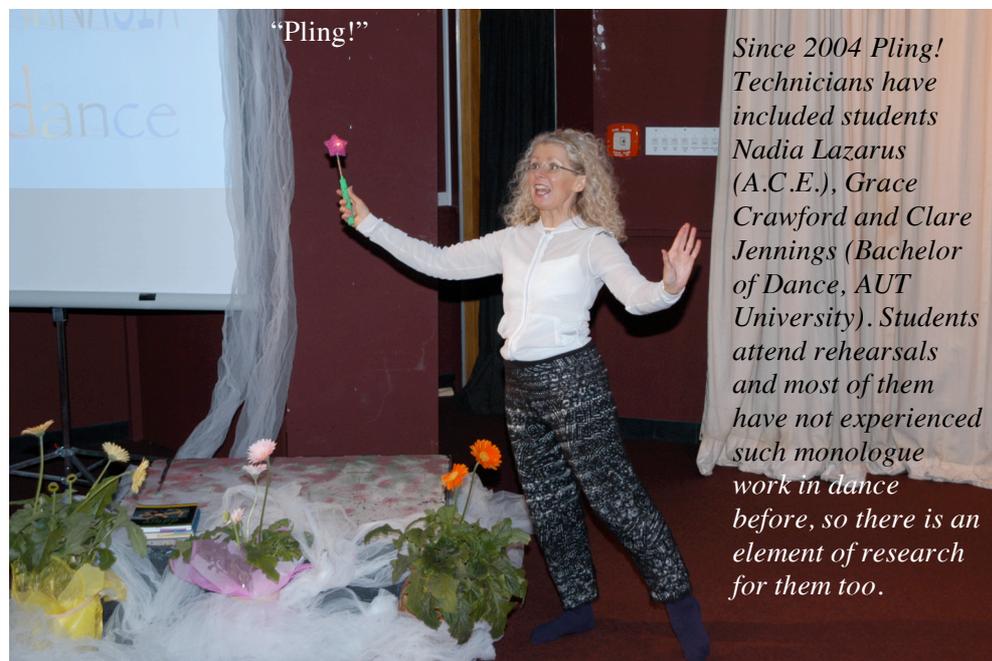


Photo 4. Auckland College of Education, 08/09/04

In performance, dance movement annotates the ideas. For example, during the opening remarks I spell out the word Youthanasia using body shapes and air patterns:

‘YOUTHANASIA is not a real word ... I made it up, but I’m hoping that it will catch on and slowly make its merry way through colloquial use to the Oxford English Dictionary ... That’s how language works I believe – just like dances!’

This section finishes with English folk dance steps, as an analogy of Cecil Sharp’s collections of country dances, compiled between 1907 and 1913 (Sharp & Oppé, 1972). I view Sharp’s lexicon-like preservation of these ‘endangered’ dances as analogous to a dictionary of spoken language.

In ‘The Revenge of the Dolly Mixture’ (Ashley, 2006b), I developed reflections on the challenges of a career in the dance industry and scripted auto-ethnographic experience from years of simultaneously dancing, researching, administrating, choreographing, teaching and writing :



Photo 5. Auckland College of Education, 08/09/04

The monologue also presents socio-historical inquiry into dance and offers students and audiences more of a lived experience of dance history, whilst also allowing for some healthy, sceptical mischief with regard to received legacies. Satire of certain features of twentieth century Western theatre dance is regarded as being commensurate with the status of an elder of that particular dance community – I refer here, of course, to Dolly. For example, one of the mysteries of modern dance is its propensity for the use of chairs as props. Inevitably, therefore, chairs

became a crucial part of 'Youthanasia' at an early stage. The chair also became a foil for age and the atrophy of the dancer's body. This is further reinforced by the PowerPoint slide depicting the late Jane Dudley, ex-principal dancer with Martha Graham, 1936–1946, aged 84, dancing in a wheelchair in 1996 (Ashley, 2002).

"Ahem just for old time's sake ... the chair dance ...

Some of you more senior dance goers in the audience may be thinking...Oh no not the standard modern Marth a – contract – Graham – release – modern contract – dance – chair dance ... Well you may be relieved to hear that I did that in 1974 and have no intentions of repeating such folly today.

No! The chair is here because I am very old and during this dance I may need to sit down for a little rest ... a kind of prop-me-up! In a few more years from now it may be replaced by a wheelchair and the whole dance performed in that!"

Developing this theme in 2006, the script moved on to ponder postmodern dance and I introduced a new prop. As an existential symbol of the angst of some more indulgent postmodern performance, a 20 kilo bag of onions took to the stage (see Photo 6).

Neither is the world of science immune to Dolly's gaze. In one incensed moment of her plight, she hotly pursues the possible benefits of participation in dance during the ageing process. Drawing attention to her online inquiry into scientific research, this was not merely a means of biting the positivist's hand via a rather backhanded commentary on the use of animals in cosmetic testing, nor a means of criticising the seemingly exponential surgical procedures conducted on humans' various anatomical parts in pursuit of the never-never land of everlasting youth. At the time, I was beginning to work with a team of exercise scientists on an investigation into the role of regular participation in dance in improving the health of older adults and I wanted to connect real life with the stage performance (see Photo 7).



“Of course the chair is not really here for that at all NO! It is here to accompany the onions...”

The Postmodern dance movement started in the USA in the 1960s and is ideal for the mature dancer. I mean – we can include things like peeling onions as part of our dances. This, of course is highly suited to one’s energy levels, and to my expressive agenda today because I can peel these in the hope that it brings my audience to tears with laughter!

But seriously – (drags onions to chair and puts them on the chair) – DANCING ONIONS! As a mature dancer I can let the vegetables and the chair do the work for me.”

Photo 6. AUT University, Bachelor of Dance Showcase, 03/11/06, Centennial Theatre, Auckland

“I’ve been pursuing the cause of research into ageing through hyperreality around the world, AND the poor old RATS are having a very hard time trying to avoid the INEVITABLE! So welease the wats! (loudly). “Release the rats” she said darkly (quietly) and just let everybody dance now! It might have similar effects ... you just never know!”



Photo 7. AUT University, Bachelor of Dance Showcase, 03/11/06, Centennial Theatre, Auckland

As the monologue develops it becomes transparent that this is all about thinking – advocating for recognition of the intellectual depth necessary in dance to produce quality and effective performance. This is brought to the attention of the audience near the end of the piece in an interactive manner.

“The reason that dancers can continue until they are very, very, very old is because just like any other art, or epistemological discipline, dancing involves lots of thinking. When I’m dancing I’m thinking. Dancing is thinking and thinking is dancing.

You can hear me thinking ... let’s see. Let’s try it out ... I tell you what, I’ll dance and think at the same time and see if you can hear me. Are you ready?”

(Short dialogue with the audience. House lights are always partly up during the show. Performer waits until they talk to her or show some signs of life.)

“Hey real men dance! Yeah dudes dance, so dudes over 50 discard the stereotype of ageing and manhood. Did you hear that? Let’s try another one ... It’s never too late to start dudes ...”

By the end of the performance not only is the identity of the ageing performer at issue, so are the identities of the viewers.

Not all of the underpinning theory, concerns and issues are presented at every performance. The monologue has appeared in many different situations, from formal research forums to full theatrical performance and different issues are selected as appropriate to a particular audience. For example, at ‘Old Yeller’ (Ashley, 2004b, 2006b) data collection backstage resulted in the calculation of the total and average ages of the performers and I related these to the audience: 2004–630 years, average age 45; 2006 – 932 years, average age 52. It should be noted that in 2006 there was a backstage rumour that a dancer may have lied about her age!

Audiences laugh, sometimes appear bemused and often ask great questions. Women of a certain age, who have some dance experience, relate closely to the humour and interestingly, young people and children really engage with it too. Academics rise to the occasion and usually find some relevant discourse in which to engage. Then again, there are those who find the whole quite baffling, so there lies an obvious similarity with many other scholarly presentations.

Continually being refreshed by new information and literature, the end point, or shelf life, of Dolly and her friend Linda Ashley seems difficult to determine.

THE TEACHING-RESEARCH NEXUS – IT’S ALL ABOUT RELATIONSHIPS!

As I reflected on my research journey in the tertiary education setting (Smyth, 1989), I slowly realised that the dance monologue was having unforeseen, beneficial effects on student learning. Experiencing the spirit of discovery, reflexive perspective and skill development are the staple diet of dance studies. Ongoing practice in a teaching-research nexus that enhanced such experiences, and was mutually beneficial for students and lecturers in a tertiary education setting, is described in the next section.

The relationships between the teaching-research nexus and student learning

The interrelationship between teaching and research is recognised as basic to higher education but can present a challenging balancing act for teachers who are trying to fulfil the needs of their students alongside research requirements. Pascarella and Terenzini’s (2005) research from student surveys in the USA found a decline in teaching quality as research outputs increased. This finding indicates that as staff intensified their own research they became less available for students, and highlights the problematic nature of balancing teaching with research.

The belief that the research process “needs to be made more explicit and visible for all students” (Zubrick et al., 2001, p. 226) underpins the manner in which I conducted this inquiry. As Brew and Boud suggest, teaching and research correlate “when they are co-related, i.e. when what is being related are two aspects of the same activity: learning!” (1995, p. 268).

The possible “hidden” benefits to student learning of an open and public research process are identified in Neumann’s “intangible nexus” (1992, p. 162). Neumann refers to intangible “subtle and diffuse links” conveyed by active researchers (1992, p. 163) that stimulate students to develop a questioning approach and critical attitude towards knowledge. She perceives such exchanges as producing qualitative differences in teaching, such as inspiring enthusiasm about scholarship, rigorous methodology and sharing the pursuit of the unknown in a learning community. The latter particularly emphasises developing an appreciation of how knowledge can change and a sense of excitement about the discovery process.

Tracing the intangible nexus through my own teaching and research revealed that there were gains for the students’ learning. As discussed in more detail below, the dance monologue interfaced with student learning during dance composition assignments, participation in dance monologue rehearsals and during dance performances and post-performance feedback sessions.

1. Dance composition assignments

Students on the AUT University Bachelor of Dance Programme, as in many tertiary dance courses, regularly study and research choreography through collaboration with their lecturers or in choreographic assignments. Such dance studio practice has parallels with the research-teaching nexus active in higher education today. This

can be traced back to the early 19th century discovery approach of German chemists such as Leibig (Clark, 1997, pp. 244 – 246).

In student choreographic assignment work, I scaffolded their learning experiences to include their own autobiographies and reflexive viewing of the formation of their identities. I also introduced students to techniques of scripting for dance and the use of voice as accompaniment. This was built into their group choreographic assignments alongside study of specific choreographic skills and was then assessed in relation to their creative achievements. There was no sheep-like cloning of 'Dolly' but, rather, an emphasis on exploring the students' own auto-ethnographies and creative processes in dance composition. For the majority of students whose previous dance learning was often far more of a behaviourist learning style, such work was a first-time experience in dance and, as they came to understand it, research.

2. Participation in dance monologue rehearsals

As students joined me in rehearsals they were directly involved as research assistants. Whilst active in observing, critiquing, prompting and with technical assistance, they expressed intrigue with both the topic and the methodology. There is reason to suggest that through intangible connections established during rehearsal, students infused values of what dance research 'is' (Ashley, 2006a). During the making of the piece, students' approach towards dance knowledge was enlivened. Seeing their lecturer suffer, during personal performative inquiry in rehearsal, was also probably enjoyable for them.

A study by Lindsay and Jenkins (cited in Patrick & Willis, 1998) reported that students' perceptions of features such as the lecturer's enthusiasm and use of personal research experiences to annotate teaching have positive effects on the quality of learning (see also Robertson & Blackler, 2006). Undergraduate experience of 'live' (if constantly ageing) research has also been recognised as having positive impacts on student learning in the United States and England (Robertson & Blackler, 2006). Without doubt, such features were inherent in this inquiry.

Rehearsals provided students with more of an insider's view of the lecturer's own learning curve, as they experienced and shared scholarship that was redolent with the excitement of risk, creativity and discovery. As students came into close and influential contact with my roles as an ageing dance practitioner and an academic in the 'lived' world of research practice and theory, they reflected on an extended life of dancing after 35 years of age. Once students had encountered the liminal Dolly, 'dancerly' stereotypes were reconsidered. Research assistants have commented that they had not contemplated the longevity of their dance careers until they encountered moments such as the concern for the dancer as a person struggling with a shifting sense of identity.

3. Dance performances and feedback

Students have occasionally viewed the finished performance, rehearsals or early drafts during their lectures, or in shows when they are also performing.

Occasionally, students have distributed and collected pre-performance questionnaires to collect audience opinion on dance and the ageing process. Such interactions have stimulated their curiosity about connected issues.

As I have often explained in response to audience and student questions, much of what is presented on stage is factual. This underpinning of a seemingly otherwise fanciful performance makes for a research process, product and teaching-research nexus that has multiple relevances academically, artistically and educationally. Consequently, students are stimulated to contemplate what research 'is', who researchers 'are' and what they 'do'.

The students shared in the discovery of the unexpected, for example, dancing with onions. One student remarked that it reminded her of her own "scattered mind approach to choreography – anything is possible" (Bonnelle, November 7, 2007, personal communication). Another student, Hayley McAleer, introduced onions into the final curtain call of the 2006 AUT University Bachelor of Dance 'Showcase' (Ashley, 2006c), an amusing extension of my research in which I was only too pleased to participate.

In 2006, 'Old Yeller' produced a further tentacle of the teaching-research nexus. AUT Bachelor of Dance student Siobhian Glancey-Ross produced, for the first time, a public performance from a dance movement group of older adults that she had been running since 1998. The seven dancers included herself, three women over 70 years of age who had never appeared in such a public dance event before, and three mature students from the AUT Bachelor of Dance in their 40s. One of the women was the mother of one of the students.

Gradually, the students' involvement in, and awareness of, the monologue began to unravel their own sense of dance research as they lived the realities of integration of theory and practice in dance research, an appreciation and enjoyment of investigating new ideas, and a positive attitude towards a long-term career in dance. The positive attitude may be particularly "epiphanic" (Abbs, 2003, p. 67) for students; that is, the revelatory moment that Abbs (2003) aligns with cognitive apprehension and growth in understanding. The experiences arising from this teaching-research nexus invoked learning of a deep and effective kind.

A MUTUALLY BENEFICIAL RELATIONSHIP

Neumann's identification of the manner in which researchers' interactions with "youthful contact" can provide positive stimulation for academics (1992, p. 165) is particularly apposite for this research. The resulting symbiotic relationship between student and researcher has benefits for both parties. For example, researchers may enhance their own understanding when they are forced to clarify their process and issues for students. Neumann (1992) also identifies how the teaching-research nexus can keep academics 'on their toes', an analogy that prompts more than just a metaphoric image in the case of research into dance and ageing and may well make an appearance in a future dance monologue.

An instance of producing productive links for the researcher happened in the making of the first dance monologue in 2004. A dance motif of energetic repetition of collapses and recoveries whilst pronouncing,

“I’m falling apart! Reference, Victoria Hutchinson May 31st, G2 dance studio, Auckland College of Education. I borrowed this move and accompanying words from said student who, at the time didn’t think she was dancing.”

resulted from the research process, but it would never have existed without a shared dance learning experience in what may seem an unlikely well-spring for artistic research. I was then working at the Auckland College of Education and when Victoria came to the premiere she was most appreciative of how such an idea had emerged from a dance education lecture, during which she had experienced some physical exhaustion.

The relationship between student and teacher as co-learners can be a fertile garden of choreographic ideas. In this instance, a student had contributed inspiration for the teacher’s choreography during an everyday learning experience. A “scholarship of discovery” (Boyer, 1990, p. 17) was activated and contributed to the intellectual climate of dance learning and creative process for the teacher.

Neumann’s intangible nexus also connects academic colleagues and can contribute to a “stimulating and rejuvenating milieu for academics” (1992, p. 162). In the University of Auckland’s Postgraduate Research Competition ‘Exposure’ (Ashley, 2004c), the initial performance occurred in a tiny lecture space alongside papers on recycling and fisheries conservation. In performance terms it was rather like dancing on a postage stamp. The academics in this gathering asked questions about the creative and research processes and the memorising of the whole. In some ways, such a venue has advantages over what may appear to be the more empathic theatre stage, in that the audience are of a type that have cultivated avoidance behaviour of anything with ‘dance’ in the title. This particular ‘intangible nexus’ brought dance onto the radar of wider academia, advocating for a place on the research agenda. In the monologue’s connection of voice, script, dance and theory, Boyer’s “scholarship of integration ... making connections across disciplines ... often educating non specialists too” (1990, p. 18) was made flesh.

In 2006, I invited a second dancer on stage for the first time. In the spirit of the elder wild child, Dolly allowed colleague Jennifer Nikolai (Programme Leader, Bachelor of Dance at AUT University) exactly 30 seconds on stage, before it was discovered that she was not old enough! A ‘certain exquisite revenge’ motif (Ashley, 2002), accompanied by green flashing lights, a loud cackle and the sound effect of thunder, emphatically stated ownership of the footlights for those over 35 years of age. The appearance of this dancer further reinforced the collegial intangible nexus – the fun was becoming infectious.

Neumann’s “tangible nexus” (1992, p. 162) identifies development with regard to current leading-edge international research. It seems no coincidence that as of 2007, an AUT University team of exercise scientists, dance lecturers and research assistants began to research the benefits of participation in dance for older adults.⁶ Such dissemination of knowledge, and how the teaching-research nexus operates in dance education generally, are worthy of further study.

PIROUETTES: RE-PRESENTING A DANCE RESEARCH MONOLOGUE

This journal article offers an opportunity to unpack some of the underlying theories and issues via a re-presentation of the dance research monologue. A particularly embodied view of an academic researcher, wearing a pair of dancer's spectacles,⁷ is presented in this paper. When performing the monologue I wore spectacles as a sign of my age and dual dancer-academic status. Dancing research findings is a less conventional method of scholarly presentation, given that academics' physical expressivity is usually confined to pedestrian movement. Therefore, in publicly dancing and role-playing, I challenged the stereotypical 'Ivory Tower' image (see Barnhardt, 2002; Sprain, 2006) of scholarly life. A dancing academic confronts both dance and scholarly stereotypes in a surprise ambush.

I raise the importance of giving due consideration to how 'quality' may be determined by the differences between diverse types of research outputs and by the nature of the process as well as the product. Recognition of the exclusive boundaries of 'traditional knowledge' (Barnhardt, 2002) results in the need to include different epistemologies in the research landscape and consider specific worldviews on a case-by-case basis.

Consider the writing of this journal article as part of the process of this inquiry, highlighting a convoluted dance research journey from the page (performance script and reading) and the corporeal, to public stage, and then returning to the page. This article depicts dance knowledge as a primary source not only of making dances, but also of thinking about the research process as an holistic public endeavour (Alter, 1991; Barbour, 2006; Janesick, 1994; Stinson, 2006). Sprain draws attention to the malleable appearance of "public scholarship" (2006, p. 2), listing some outputs that may surprise traditionalists by including publishing research in popular media and conducting public workshops or presentations. Boyer, too, urges that "a broader range of writing be included in faculty assessment" (1990, p. 35).

The following story may serve to illustrate how dance epistemology can be re-presented in such a research journey. In 2005, 'The Youthanasia of Dance' was performed at The NZ Tertiary Dance Conference 'Dance Canopy, Tuanui Whakamaru'. Later, it was accepted for the conference proceedings (Ashley, 2005) and I experimented, for the first time, with how to re-present the monologue for a reader. Such experimentation with scholarly writing "rarely fits into what we already know how to read, [and] evokes questions about the articulation of dance in relation to the printed word" (Goldberg, 1997, p. 317). My choice of an inter-textual format of re-presentation permitted the reader to graze through the whole more like a theatre audience might view a dance. The eye is free to wander around the pages and select what to focus on, whether it be the movement descriptions, the photos, stage directions or text. The reader becomes "a co-creator of a mobile text, breathing new life into a dancing text" (Adshead-Lansdale, 1999, p. 21). This inter-textual form may facilitate more of a feel for the live performance – although it should be said that the latter is funnier.

This is not to dismiss the live performance as lacking in rigour but, rather, to suggest that re-presentation as a textual record facilitates prolonged contemplation after the event. A poster produced for 'Exposure' (Ashley, 2004c) proved to be an

effective means of exposing research sources and process for those who viewed the performance. Additionally, such re-presentations may prove useful to prepare viewers for the performance and deepen their understanding.

Sprain notes that “the first barrier to making academic research accessible to the public is the content of the research itself” (2006, p. 3). To continue her line of argument, “obscure and narrow sub-fields of disciplines that the public may not even be aware of – like critical discourse analysis” are considered to be inappropriate (Sprain, 2006, p. 3). To run slightly at a tangent, I seek to re-present all sorts of issues and discourses related to dance and ageing to the public that indeed may not have been considered previously, but are possible to comprehend. Extensive diatribes on Foucault and Gramsci may not ‘catch on’ but should the public be excluded and dismissed from such ideas? Consider this extract from the monologue script:

“Et, mesdames et messieurs encore un fois, ici nous sommes avec Foucault, (actually many people know ‘fouc’ all about Foucault!) – because of him we may no longer institutionalise stereotypes in the same way.”

There is some considerable reason to think that the audience may recognise the name Foucault again after hearing this, and may even want to know more about the man’s work as it applies to their lives – likewise students. One never knows ... but I heed Sprain’s warning to be wary that “certain kinds of public scholarship might appear less credible to academic colleagues” (2006, p. 7). However, I would respond by turning a pirouette and make a case to reassess what research ‘is’, and consider how theory, practice, process and product interrelate to validate dance as a scholarly endeavour when researchers, students and the public co-relate in sharing various re-presentations.

CURTAIN CALL

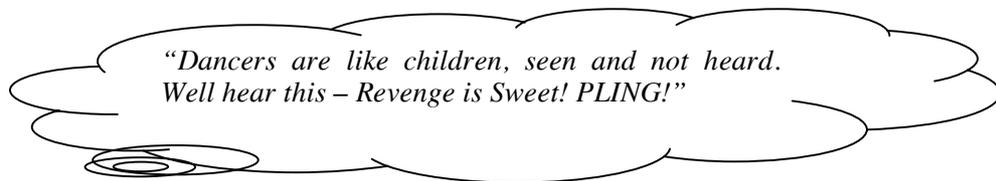
On a daily basis, the enrichment that my research has brought to the teaching-research nexus and relationships with students, colleagues and the public is palpable. I would challenge art educators to allow personal, creative research practice to permeate their working relationships with their students and vice versa, as appropriate, whatever their ages. The sharing of personal experiences of discovery in this dance research process connected individual and social knowledge in a vibrant fusion, and produced “a culture of inquiry” (Clark, 1997, p. 253).

As a re-presentation of the performed dance monologue, this journal article employs an unconventional format and tone and expands the nexus out to reach a wider audience. Albeit more scholarly in appearance than the performed version, in point of fact this paper and the monologue are more closely related than the reader may first assume. In order to reinforce this homogeneity the reader is encouraged to view the stage performance, if at all possible.

This re-presentation of the dance monologue as a scholarly paper indicates that the research is based in academic inquiry. Logically, therefore, the performed monologue qualifies as worthy of a place in the hallowed halls of academia. I would further propose that dances without words also have potential validity as academic and scholarly inquiry, capable of attaining the highest standards of intellectual rigour alongside 'other' research fields.

This paper has described instances of the relationships activated through dance research practice and reveals that the explorations shared within such a teaching-research nexus can be particularly productive of quality learning and discovery, for all concerned. Thus, further research would be worthwhile into the efficacy of such teaching-research relationships in arts education.

The final words go to Dolly ...



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¹ 'Youthanasia' C. Linda Ashley, 2004.

² The scholarly stereotype is portrayed in the image of the 'Ivory Tower' – a symbol of detachment of scholars from the real world. The image first appeared in the early 19th century, as an indication of "a life of seclusion, divorced from everyday life" (Casper, 1998, p. 3). The resulting positivist, 'scientific' stereotypical image of research reverberates today and is, more often than not, associated with a disembodied, academic presence. In universities it can define how 'A Grade' research should be conducted, setting the parameters of what constitutes 'quality', scholarly inquiry that does not prioritise embodied practices (see also Barbour, 2006). Additionally, the scholarly research process is commonly conceived of as taking place outside of the public 'gaze'. This is summed up rather adroitly by the need for scholars to become "more aware of the assumptions that guide our own work – to be able to see ourselves as others might see us [and] avoid being incurable academics" (Demerath, 2006, p. 109).

³ During a tutorial when supervising a Masters dance student in 2003, a discussion arose around the need for more humour and making dance performance more accessible for audiences.

⁴ The glass ceiling of 35 years is a commonly accepted watershed point for retirement from performing dance, as associated with certain genres such as ballet and certain contemporary dance styles (Schwaiger, 2005). This is also the age boundary for joining the NZ showcase for older dancers, 'Old Yeller'.

⁵ Dolly is a name that plays on layers of images including musical theatre and the multiple skills needed to make a living in dance. The actual name 'Dolly' recalls an image of the English confectionery *Dolly Mixtures*. These are mixed delicately fragrant sweets redolent with memories of my English childhood and as such represent the auto-narrative methodology of the research.

⁶ This research was awarded a Sport and Recreation New Zealand grant in 2007 – a first for the dance industry in New Zealand.

⁷ Not that one often sees dancers wearing glasses as they are a sign of age, wisdom or scholarly status and these are usually detached from the 'received wisdom' of 'being' in dance.