

Ethical Agility in Dance

Rethinking Technique in British
Contemporary Dance

Edited by Noyale Colin, Catherine Seago,
and Kathryn Stamp

First published 2024

ISBN: 9780367628673 (hbk)

ISBN: 9780367628635 (pbk)

ISBN: 9781003111146 (ebk)

Chapter 4.9

A chorus of dancing voices curated
by Katy Coe

Katy Coe

(CC BY-NC-ND 4.0)

The chapter DOI: [10.4324/9781003111146-35](https://doi.org/10.4324/9781003111146-35)

Funded by the University of Winchester

4.9 A chorus of dancing voices curated by Katye Coe

Katye Coe

Katye Coe is a dancer and activist based in the UK. Her work as a performer spans over 20 years of international performance practice. Katye teaches independently across the UK and internationally and her teaching practice is an extension of her performance practice. Katye is a certified Skinner Releasing Technique teacher and has worked extensively with Helen Poynor through the Walk of Life Training. She guest teaches regularly at London Contemporary Dance School and at Independent Dance.

... I extended an invitation to a handful of dancer performer folk that I have been inspired by/ disarmed by/ learned from in recent months. Each of their responses came in the form of a 'prayer, spell, incantation, or wish'. I have curated them here as a chorus of dancing voices.

Contributing voices

Temitope Ajose

Ay De La Fe

Elena Rose Light

Catherine Long

Patricia Okenwa

Amy Voris

Natifah White

This is a calling in and a breath out

This is why and this is what I have

This is ordinary and this is loving

This is thinking and resisting and listening and multiple doings and getting on with something useful

This is not steps or fitness or flexibility or special intelligence or youth or class or philosophy or on stages or being good or better ... this is body attention training and taking care and giving attention and being ready and it is about preparation and practice and

This is about showing up and getting out of the way

This is to-get-her ... these dancing

KC (*she they*)

Let's get lost.

Let's move until our bodies disentangle themselves from language, until we don't know who or what or where or when we are anymore, until there is no more until.

Let's disorient our directions, lose our center, grasp at the air, fall into the sky.

Let's root so deep into the Earth that we come out the other side.

Let's unbecome ourselves.

That will be dancing, I think.

ERL (*they them*)

Before considering what 'dance' and 'technique' mean to you, please pause and take a moment to breathe. Staying present with your breath, allow yourself to notice what happens internally when you hear the word 'technique'... and what happens when you hear the word 'dance'?

There may be as many different dance styles as there are people in the world, but techniques are often prescriptive and exclusionary. What might happen if we rethink technique as methodology and begin from the notion that the impulse and desire to move is 'enough' and 'right' exactly as it is.

When dancing is imbued with intention, disciplined practice and supported knowledge, and you inhabit that movement, that technique becomes yours.

It does not require the fulfilment of any normative ideals.

It makes a priority of exploring, expressing, communicating, surviving in one's body as an emotional experience.

Is there a way you can take ownership of your body and the way our bodies are positioned in a society? Can technique be a path to belonging or not belonging?

Is it about truth, and 'pride'...?

CL (*she her*)

Softening towards

what is present

*following
desires and curiosities
for moving*

*receiving
the details of experience*

*and the uniqueness
of each moment*

*allowing things to
surface and
pass through*

*welcoming
shifts in intensity
and duration*

*welcoming the presence of
imagination and emotion
as companions*

*witnessing
your movement
and your movement
witnessing you
your movement
as a witness
to this space and time
this space and time
as a witness
to your movement*

*movement growing out of
and grounding in
the particularities
of circumstance*

*working with what is
present
and what is
potentially present*

Contemporary dance is a seed seen, seeping, seeking, receiving and sealing – say this three times

NW (she her)

Ode to spider

Take note, take heart: From her legs, she shoots out fine silk. She allows the wind to carry her fine threads and she continues to fire her silk threads along its path. Up to 25 metres, until a suitable anchor is found. She secures and strengthens her threads and builds diligently a pattern intrinsic to her DNA. The silk web is stronger than steel. Her silk will feed and sustain her. Take note, take heart.

T A (she her)

A symbol as full answer. Lazy? No, not lazy. Ambiguous, surely. Ambiguous yet to the point. Dot, dot, dot. Three dots forming a recognisable and semantically multilayered punctuation. Known by many names; Open to interpretation. Or rather, sentencing-awarding you with the embracing of the paradox.

A mutis. From mutating, changing, and use with a meaning of changing location and ultimately of leaving the scene. Getting off stage. Making an exit. Or is it from mute? The impossibility, inability, indifference or refusal to speak/ing. A silence.

Either way, mutis as an imperative would have the same effect regardless of its etymology. Yet, it will probably leave us wondering:

Ellipsis or censorship? Termination or adjournment? Break or Broken? Void or Hope? Absentmindedness? Exhaustion? Resignation? Wait? Pause? Or end?

ADLF (they them)

Only If dance was an entity, what would Dance want from us, with us, for us? Would we listen, follow, use, distribute with upmost care and sufficient irreverence, so Dance would be free? Self perpetuating, omnipresent, evo- and revolutionary and consistently abundant Dance?

Would Dance help with the answers or become a distraction? Dancing on the precipice, dancing into the abyss, dancing while the world goes up in flames and could we find the movement and the hunger to travel through, around, beyond to find the ways and be fed while we do so?

Could Dance be for all, everywhere, like open sourcing a technology, or just remembering that it has been there all along, is always there, potentially transcending categorisation, but embrace variation and nuances, as a way off being together and apart, stringing, flowing, navigating, standing or holding close, aligning, making space, magnifying, surrendering, remembering and being present, staying present, taking space...

Figuring it out as we dance it through?

PO (she her)