

Centre for Dance Research, University of Roehampton Events 2014/15

Research Seminars

Angolan kuduro dance: pleasure politics, aesthetic duelling and the term 'carga'

Stefanie Alisch, Institut für Musik, Carl von Ossietzky Universität Oldenburg, Germany
21 May 2015, 6-7.30pm

Kuduro is electronic dance music from Angola that is inextricably intertwined with expressive dance-moves called 'toques'. Kuduro emerged in the Angolan capital Luanda during the 1990s out of a long and strong history of popular dances, and today is the country's most popular youth culture. After an introduction into the history of popular dance in Luanda in general and kuduro in particular, I will discuss specific 'toques', look at the interaction between dancer and animador (dance-caller), and explore how pleasure politics and aesthetic duelling facilitate the emergence of an effect of performative surplus called 'carga'. I will show footage filmed during research trips to Luanda, introducing the method of interactive video-interview that I developed during the kuduro research. I will discuss how my own dancing informs the production of knowledge around kuduro.

Stefanie Alisch studied musicology, Portuguese and English in Berlin and Salvador da Bahia while working as a DJ. She did doctoral research into the pleasure politics and aesthetic duelling of Angolan kuduro music and dance. Further publications, teaching and creative projects have centred on groove, sound system culture, farsi pop, and mazurka.

Dramaturgy at Work

Dr Simon Bayly (Drama Theatre Performance, Roehampton), **Dr Konstantina Georgelou** (Utrecht/ArtEZ), **Dr Nina Power** (Humanities, Roehampton), **Dr Efrosini Protopapa** (Dance, Roehampton), **Dr Danae Theodoridou** (Groningen)

26 February 2015, 6-7:30pm

Addressing contemporary European perspectives on and practices of dramaturgy, this roundtable discussion crosses between dance, theatre, performance and the domain of the social. Dramaturgy here is conceived both as a significant working process that is immanent in the creation of contemporary performance, and as a critical practice that is able to interrogate and reinvent the social. This seminar will consider dramaturgy as a process of 'working on actions'. Departing from the etymology of the term (deriving from the Greek drama = action + ergon =work), we are interested in 'drama-turgy' as a shared working practice amongst collaborators that focuses on the creation of actions in the making process and in performance. At the same time, we remain carefully attentive towards the connection of these actions with their social and political context. What are the implications of such propositions for dramaturgy? And what further issues emerge? For example, what might it mean to be working on actions; how does one act; what are the boundaries or crossovers between art and activism; how is dramaturgy to be thought of in the context of activism? A two-year project by Georgelou, Protopapa, and Theodoridou, 'Dramaturgy at Work' consists of and develops through a series of workshops and roundtable discussions that approach dramaturgy from different perspectives. These are taking place all over Europe in 2014 and 2015, and will lead, in 2016, to a book provisionally titled *Dramaturgy at Work: Artistic Encounters as Sites of Social Imaginaries*.

Agents of Control or Creativity? Leading Social Dancers of 1920s London

Professor Theresa Buckland, Department of Dance, University of Roehampton

8 December 2014, 6-7:30pm

During the 1920s, the modern English style of ballroom dancing was developed by an influential group of middle-class dancers and teachers in London's fashionable dance clubs and studios. Within academic discourse on popular dance practices, the codification of social dancing by an elite is typically examined as the machinations of cultural appropriation and socio-political control. Recent literature from the fields of social, cultural and literary history and geography has analysed the emergence of the English ballroom style through the lenses of class, race, nationalism and mobility. Although such interpretations are justifiable from the historical record, the actual practice of dancing is often side-lined or lost from such studies. What were the kinetic contributions and dance backgrounds of key people such as Josephine Bradley, Victor Silvester, and Maxwell Stewart? What problems did they perceive in the social dancing of the time? When, where and how did they address them through their dancing and teaching? Placing the dancers and the dancing at the centre of this inquiry, I aim to redress this imbalance by exploring issues of a creative and choreographic nature in the early years of making of the modern ballroom style.

The Art of Making Mistakes: Dance Improvisation as Performance

Dr Renee M. Conroy, Visiting Fulbright Scholar, Department of Dance, University of Roehampton

27 May 2015, 1-2pm

Jazz legend Miles Davis claimed boldly, 'I do not fear mistakes. There are none.' But he also chided European audiences for being too forgiving of musical flaws in their assessments of live jazz performance. Davis' remarks reflect a common tension in the views expressed by those who specialize in improvisatory performance as an art form, viz., that improvisations both can – and cannot – contain aesthetic or artistic missteps.

In this talk, I examine improvisation as a performing art in several stages. First, I argue that traditional accounts of improvisatory performance that rely on concepts such as 'extemporizing', 'problem-solving', or 'ephemerality' are conceptually insufficient to distinguish the accomplishments of improvisers from those of other kinds of performing artists. Second, I suggest that a useful supplement to standard accounts may be afforded by close consideration of the various ways improvisatory artists and philosophers appeal to the concept of 'mistake-making' when discussing the distinctive character of improvised artistic events. Third, I articulate and assess several views about the potential relationship between improvisations as art offerings and mistakes. I argue that although these approaches may appear theoretically opposed, philosophical rapprochement between them is possible. I also claim such reconciliation to be desirable insofar as it is well-poised to highlight the 'twin virtues' typically associated with improvisation: risk and recovery.

Renee M. Conroy is an Assistant Professor of Philosophy at Purdue University Calumet in Indiana (USA) who specializes in aesthetics and metaphysics. Her primary publication interests are focused on issues in the philosophy of dance and the performing arts. As a Visiting Fulbright Scholar at the University of Roehampton, she will develop her research during the spring semester of the 2014/15 academic year under the sponsorship of the Department of Dance.

'Grace' Under Fire

Dr Renee M. Conroy, Assistant Professor of Philosophy, Purdue University Calumet

5 February 2015, 6-7.30pm

Gracefulness is often considered a hallmark of dance art. As critic Edwin Denby writes: 'Susceptibility to ballet is a way of being susceptible to animal grace of movement. Many people are highly susceptible to the pleasure of seeing grace of movement who have never thought of going to ballet to look for it Art takes what in life is an accidental pleasure and

tries to repeat and prolong it.' But what, exactly, is grace? How do we recognize it in live dance performance? And what kind of role should this elusive concept play in theoretical treatments of dance as an art? A brief survey of the philosophical literature dedicated to analyzing 'the graceful' reveals substantive theoretical disagreement about the nature of grace and, hence, about its potential relationship to the distinctive value of dance. This presentation explores the complexity of grace as a multi-faceted normative property with aesthetic, ethical, and religious dimensions. I argue that several well-regarded theories of grace fail to illuminate its unique aesthetic character, and recommend an alternative strategy for developing an account of this byzantine property that can honor its salience in dance appreciation without overstating its importance in this artistic domain.

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Publishing Choreographic Ideas: Discourse from Practice [*Click to watch online*]

Scott deLahunta, Senior Research Fellow, Coventry University and Deakin University;
Director of Motion Bank, The Forsythe Company
14 January 2015, 6-7:30pm

This seminar will circle around and through a growing collection of materials published in different formats including books, various book and DVD combinations, exhibitions and Internet websites. These publications have been authored or co-authored by and with leading choreographers in the dance field. Not developed as artworks, but with the aim of furthering understanding of choreographic ideas and processes and bringing these into newly productive relations with both general audiences and other specialist practices. The Motion Bank research project of The Forsythe Company was one of the latest to publish such material. Lots of observations to be made and questions to be asked. The talk will be streamed live to Coventry University.

Scott deLahunta has worked as writer, researcher and organiser on a range of international projects bringing performing arts with a focus on choreography into conjunction with other disciplines and practices. He is currently Senior Research Fellow in partnership with Coventry University (UK) and Deakin University (AUS) and Director of Motion Bank/ The Forsythe Company.

Back to Grass-roots: Performance and Resistance in the Heritage Site

Dr Felicia Hughes-Freeland, Research Associate, Centre of Southeast Asian Studies, SOAS
10 November, 6-7.30pm

This work-in-progress re-visits the theoretical characterisation of intangible cultural heritage (ICH) and explores how collaboration and cooperation are being used to challenge a top-down approach to ICH in a festival in Indonesia against a background of major changes in cultural politics. Felicia Hughes-Freeland was Reader in Anthropology at Swansea University and is now an independent scholar, writer, and visual anthropologist.

The Body Says What Words Cannot? Dance as Mechanism for Claiming Human Rights

Dr Dana Mills, Lecturer, Hertford College, Oxford
20 November 2014, 6.15-7.30pm

In this lecture I will discuss the application of human rights theory to dance. I will present a close reading of a case study, a piece called *Quiet* (2010) incorporating Israeli and Palestinian dancers. I argue that the piece enables a challenge to the aporia of human rights in theory and practice. In the lecture, I draw on the work of Jacques Ranciere (who in turn draws on the

famous discussion posed by Hannah Arendt), according to whom those most marginalised, hence most in need of human rights, cannot in fact claim them. I argue that the paradox of human rights, as discussed by Arendt (and later elaborated by other radical democratic political theorists such as Seyla Benhabib and Bonnie Honig) has not disappeared but just changed guise. It is one of the central challenges our contemporary community faces. Dance enables a novel prism to rethink - and challenge - the paradox of human rights. I argue that dance draws on embodied egalitarianism and hence transcends other methods of marginalisation.

'Let's Watch a Little How She Dances': Woman as Dancer in Early Russian Cinema (1908-1918)

Dr Rachel Morley, Lecturer in Russian Cinema and Culture, University College London
23 April 2015, 6-7.30pm

Ballerinas and Oriental dancers, gypsies and peasant girls, barefoot, Duncanesque performers, the daring and scandalous tangistka (tango dancer): the figure of the female dancer is ubiquitous in the cinema of pre-Revolutionary Russia. From the first Russian-made feature film, Vladimir Romashkov's *Sten'ka Razin* (1908), to Viacheslav Viskovskii's *The Last Tango* (1918), made shortly before the pre-Revolutionary film industry was dismantled by the new Soviet government, the dancing woman remains central.

This paper explores how Russian film-makers exploited different versions of the female dancer archetype during this decade of cultural, social and political upheaval. Drawing on a wide range of films and situating the representations of the female dancer in their cultural and socio-historical contexts, it argues that early Russian film-makers used this archetype to explore key contemporary concerns, such as changing conceptions of femininity and female gender roles, the emergence of the so-called New Woman and concomitant gender anxieties among both men and women, as well as broader questions concerning gender identity. By focusing on the visual representation of the female dancer protagonists, it also seeks to demonstrate that early Russian film-makers repeatedly harnessed their experiments with the new artistic medium of film to the figure of the dancing woman, making her central also to their attempts to develop a specifically cinematic means of expression.

Rachel Morley is Convenor of UCL's Russian Cinema Research Group. Her current research explores connections between contemporary Russian cinema and the pre-Revolutionary cinematic tradition. Her monograph, *Performing Femininity: Woman as Performer in Pre-Revolutionary Russian Cinema*, is forthcoming from I.B. Tauris in 2016.

Căluș – A Romanian Male Dance Ritual Between the Past and Present

Dr Silvestru Petac, Ethnochoreological Study Center, Cluj, Romania
14 May 2015, 1-2pm. Presented by the Centre for Dance Research, Roehampton, in collaboration with Footprint Dance Festival

In this seminar, I will examine the principal characteristics of a Romanian ritual complex known as Căluș. Enacted at Pentecost by a group of men, accompanied by musicians and a masked character, the Mute, this ritual includes practices of initiation, fertility and healing as well as dance. Moving through the village, the performers, known as Călușari, dance from house to house. Drawing on my doctoral and postdoctoral research, I will illustrate the main rites and dances of the Călușari with examples of film recordings from my fieldwork and suggest that this ritual shares commonalities with other calendrical dance customs performed by men elsewhere in Europe.

Dr Silvestru Petac is an ethnochoreologist at the Ethnochoreological Study Center and a museologist at the Transylvanian Museum of Ethnography, both in Cluj, Romania.

Dangerous Dances: Leonid Yakobson and Jewish Identity in Soviet Ballet

Professor Janice Ross, Theatre and Performance Studies Dept., Stanford University
17 February 2015, 6-7:30pm

Professor Ross will discuss the regulation of Jewish identity in 20th-century Soviet Russia through the lens of ballet as an archive of cultural exile. Her talk, which includes rare archival videos and images from her research in Russia, Israel and the U.S., traces how the ballets of Leonid Yakobson (1904-1975), the leading experimental voice in mid-20th century Soviet ballet, created a rupture with Socialist Realism by embracing a modernist aesthetic and valorizing shunned images of the cultural outsider in Yakobson's signature work, *Jewish Wedding*. Yakobson was the target of highly successful strategies of erasure and silencing during his most productive years, years that coincided with the quarter century of Josef Stalin's regime of terror. (1922-1953). Her research was propelled by questions about how Yakobson represented on stage the displacement caused by maintaining a Jewish identity in ballet. It is about the 'Why?' underlying the censorship Yakobson was subjected to for attempting to inscribe a corporeal presence of Jewishness on one of the most regulated Western ideals of the pure, culturally unmarked body – Russian classical ballet at the Kirov and Bolshoi Ballets.

Professor Janice Ross is the author of *Like A Bomb Going Off: Leonid Yakobson and Ballet as Resistance in Soviet Russia* (2015), *Anna Halprin: Experience as Dance* (2007), *San Francisco Ballet at 75* (2007) and *Moving Lessons: Margaret H'Doubler and Dance in American Education* (2001). Her awards include Guggenheim and Fulbright Fellowships.

Learning to see...body, place, memory, image

Susan Sentler, Senior Lecturer of Dance, Trinity Laban Conservatoire of Music and Dance
25 September 2014, 6-7:30pm

In this seminar, Ms Sentler, a dance artist and choreographer, will engage in an open dialogue on her practice and its evolution through her MA studies (MACP, professional practice pathway) at Trinity Laban, in partnership with Independent Dance, which she completed in 2013. During this journey, three main works evolved - all using video, and all focusing on the body, duality and identity of place, memory, and image. Ms Sentler will speak to each work, revealing a specificity of self-inquiry in each and examining the underpinning threads that weave within all three and into her practice as a whole. She will discuss the theoretical, artistic, and collaborative companions that allowed each project to open to a richer discourse.

Residency Seminars

***Shouting Out Loud Reconstructed, 2014 – What Can We Learn from Reconstruction?* [[click to listen online](#)]**

Gaby Agis, independent dance artist and choreographer
16 October 2014, 1-2pm

Shouting Out Loud was originally created in 1984 in London for 13 women. In a residency at Roehampton in September 2014, funded by Arts Council England, Ms Agis reconstructed the dance work and included Roehampton students and staff in the cast. (*Shouting Out Loud* will be performed on campus on 22 October and at Chisenhale Dance Space on 24 October.) In her research seminar, Ms Agis will ask, 'What can this reconstructed work tell us about ourselves as women, dancers, and artists today? The 1980s were a period of great social and political unrest. Thatcherism was in full swing. The miners' strikes and the gay pride, anti-racist and feminist movements dominated the landscape. This provided the context and backdrop to artists' lives. Again, we live in turbulent and uncertain times. By reconstructing *Shouting Out Loud*, I am interested in discovering to what degree art reflects the times that we live in.'

THIS IS HOW I WORK

Nicole Beutler, NBprojects, Amsterdam
30 April 2015, 6-7:30pm

In this seminar, choreographer/theater-maker Nicole Beutler gives an insight into the development of her works through time and talks about her current concerns. She talks about

working in a collective and as independent maker, about working with professional and non-professional performers, about the natural inter-disciplinarity of her interest, having a background in visual arts and physical theatre. One of her main interests is the relation of the works to time and the collective cultural history in the Western world.

Living and working in Amsterdam since 1993, Beutler has developed her work in the context of the cultural politics of the Netherlands, where in the recent years the role of the arts has been deeply questioned. With an unstoppable idealism she believes in the necessity of art and engages in many projects beyond the production of art: she is co-initiator of WE LIVE HERE, a yearly summer academy that takes place in Amsterdam, creating a platform for meeting and exchange of professionals in the performing arts and related fields. She co-initiated many contextual events and amongst these lecture series THE OLD BRAND NEW.

Nicole Beutler is an Amsterdam-based choreographer, whose work is situated on the threshold of dance, performance and visual arts. Her performances are composed with a high sense of musicality, and suffused with subtle humor. She also frequently engages in and initiates projects that enable reflection and encounter. Her company nbprojects regularly presents at Frascati Theater in Amsterdam, and tours the Netherlands and abroad. Nicole has been a permanent cast member of *The Show Must Go On* by Jérôme Bel since 1999, and is a guest teacher at the Theatre School of the AHK in Amsterdam. This seminar is given in conjunction with a week-long residency at Roehampton Dance that she is running with Felix Ritter.

Dance Bites

Bring your lunch and join in a debate with bite. Four panellists, one big question, five minutes each to address it. Then 30 minutes of open discussion with the audience.

Embodied Ethnography: What Good Is It?

Dr Ann David (Dance, Roehampton), **Dr Carine Plancke** (Dance, Roehampton),
Dr Jonathan Skinner (Anthropology, Roehampton)

4 February 2015, 1-2pm

Artists as Scholars: Seriously?

Dr Emilyn Claid, **Dr Simon Ellis**, **Gillie Kleiman** (PhD student), **Dr Efrosini Protopapa** (all Roehampton Dance)

12 March 2015, 1-2pm

Three panellists' statements were subsequently published in [Bellyflop](#) magazine. Read them here: [Efrosini Protopapa](#), [Simon Ellis](#), [Gillie Kleiman](#).

Report Back

Not giving up on history, not giving up on dance (as) history, quite yet

Dr Helena Hammond, Senior Lecturer, Department of Dance, University of Roehampton
25 March 2015, 1-2pm

In this new series from the Centre for Dance Research, researchers returning from sabbatical report on the work they did and the questions they grappled with while away. Dr Helena Hammond, Senior Lecturer, inaugurates the series.

This presentation takes as its point of departure the striking coincidence of the rise of European dance performance as part of the institutionalisation of lyric theatre from the early nineteenth-century onwards, with the rise and reconceptualization of history as a discipline during the same period. Considering the entwinement of dance practices with those of history in the period since – one only has to think, for instance, of the Wagnerian danced total art work and its antithesis in Brechtian epic dance as two such examples – Dr Hammond asks what is at stake in retaining the categories of history and dance as history as concepts that, in the Nietzschean sense, are societally useful. What continuing traction might the danced representation of history offer in the face of calls - from postfeminism and post-race among others - to give up on history?