

Centre for Dance Research, University of Roehampton Events 2015/16

Research Seminars

The Beauty of Tchaikovsky's *Sleeping Beauty*

Dr Maureen Gupta, independent researcher, USA

27 October 2015, 1-2pm

Tchaikovsky's music for *The Sleeping Beauty* is unquestionably one of the great – if not the greatest – of ballet scores ever written. But what is it about this complex work that merits our accolades? In this presentation I aim to delve deeper into *The Sleeping Beauty's* music, showing how Tchaikovsky's understanding of the ballet world of *The Sleeping Beauty*, and his ability to expand – through music – the meaning of the ballet, distinguish his score. Focusing on the music related to Aurora – her adagios and variations – reveals much about the young princess. The Lilac Fairy's harp timbre supports Aurora at times; and at others its absence enables her fledgling steps. As with Aurora's choreography, her music gradually incorporates some of the fairies' musical attributes. In her adagios, Tchaikovsky highlights Aurora's essential strengths: her royal status, the powerful shelter of the Lilac Fairy and her sister nymphs, and in the finale, the love of Prince Désiré. Aurora's three variations employ different solo instrument timbres to epitomize beauty and technical accomplishment. Further, Tchaikovsky structures the variations differently and offers a nuanced interplay between what lies on the surface – the texture and shape of the melodies – and the music's harmonic underpinnings.

Maureen Gupta, an independent scholar, is a musicologist and dance historian currently writing a book on *The Sleeping Beauty* and its establishment in the West. Her doctoral dissertation, from Princeton University, focused on Diaghilev's *Sleeping Princess* of 1921-22. She has taught at Columbia and for the Dance Theatre of Harlem.

The Performing Brain: Dance, Cognition, Emotion, and Movement

Dr Judith Lynne Hanna, Affiliate Research Professor, Department of Anthropology, University of Maryland

17 February 2016, 1-2pm

Be surprised about what is hidden from our sight. Technological advances in neuroscience are helping to unravel secrets about the cognitive, emotional, and movement power of dance. Its multisensory language shares places in the brain for verbal language, and thus dance has powerful communication potential in expressing ideas and feelings. Equally important, do you need smarts? Dance as physical exercise sparks new brain cells, their interconnections and neural plasticity - the brain's amazing ability to change throughout life. Moreover, dance helps us to reduce, resist, and escape stress that interferes with performance and the acquisition of all kinds of knowledge. The mysterious brain choreographs the operations underlying the complex feat of dance.

An anthropologist/dance scholar at the University of Maryland, US, Dr. Judith Lynne Hanna has explored the relationship between dance and society in African villages and cities and American theaters, school playgrounds and classrooms as well as adult entertainment clubs and their communities. Dance and the brain is a current interest. See www.judithhanna.com.

Acts of Transformation: Strategies for Choreographic Intervention in Mark Morris's Musical Settings

Professor Stephanie Jordan, Department of Dance, University of Roehampton
2 February 2016, 6pm-7.30pm

The use of existing (concert) music as a choreographic process is often read wrongly, seen as the poor sister of artistic collaboration, which is so often celebrated as the most fruitful meeting of great minds. To go one step further, using existing music has been seen as an assault, a distortion of intention. For sometimes music has been used as basis for the most unlikely connotations, even a full-blown plot, or ironically, as source for a joke. Or certain musical structures have been emphasised and others ignored. The whole shape and meaning of a piece of music can be subverted by choreography.

Using existing music is not an easy way out – I challenge fiercely the common notion that collaboration from scratch is somehow the most noble or stimulating way of going about things. For a start, the choreographer has longer opportunity to get to know the music, perhaps through several recordings, and to think about playing with and against its grain. Music can also open up a rich tradition of historical connotations, and an opportunity to be musically deeply analytical, thereby awakening our ears.

My examples stem from the work of the American choreographer Mark Morris. While virtually always using existing music, he introduces many different choreomusical approaches across his work and is unusual in this respect. As for history, Morris has adopted at different times, for different purposes, a number of choreomusical approaches that resonate with previous approaches by other choreographers. This means that his work can be seen as commentary on the past, indeed drawing upon existing choreomusical 'styles' or 'practices'. The seminar draws from my new book *Mark Morris: Musician-Choreographer* (Dance Books, 2015), but also includes examination of his *Sang-Froid* (2000), transitioning into the subject of my next research project, Chopin and dance.

Stephanie Jordan is Research Professor in Dance at University of Roehampton, London.

Join us afterward for a glass of wine to celebrate the publication of Professor Jordan's book *Mark Morris: Musician-Choreographer*.

Not only Bollywood... Dance & Dancers in Indian Cinema(s): Some Thoughts

Dr Tiziana Leucci, Chargée de recherche CNRS (Research Scholar), Centre d'Etudes de l'Inde et de l'Asie du Sud, Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique (CEIAS/CNRS), Paris
26 November 2015, 6-7.30pm

My presentation will examine the role played by the dance in Bollywood films and in other forms of Indian regional cinema(s). Special emphasis will be given to those dancers, masters and musicians belonging to the hereditary communities of temple, court and salon performing artists (known in South India with the generic terms of devadasi, rajadasi and nattuvanars) who acted, choreographed and sang for those movies, making many of them highly successful. Some members of these hereditary performing artists found in the cinema a way to continue to practice their profession after it had been taken away from them by other communities through the application of the Devadasi Act, voted into law three months after the declaration of the Indian Independence in 1947. Stigmatised and criminalised by that law, for a short time they found in the cinema a form of patronage, though not devoid of ambiguity. I will also discuss my bharatanatyam dance master, the late nattuvanar V.S. Muthuswamy Pillai, who worked in the cinema during the 1940s and 1950s. He trained a number of dancers and film actresses by choreographing the items they performed in Tamil and Hindi movies.

Dance historian and anthropologist at the French National Center for the Scientific Research (CNRS/CEIAS, Paris), Tiziana Leucci's research focuses on Indian courtesans' cultures. She teaches bharatanatyam at the Conservatoire 'G. Fauré', Les Lilas, and is co-editing a volume on *Dance in Early South Indian cinema* with Daves Soneji (McGill University, Montreal) and Hari Krishnan (Wesleyan University). More: ceias.ehess.fr/index.php?/membres/statutaires/1780-tiziana-leucci

Choreographies of 21st Century Wars

Dr Gay Morris, USA

14 October 2015, 6-7.30pm

Wars today differ from the major conflicts of the 20th century, which were dominated by the so-called 'great powers', the sovereign states that engaged in two world wars and the 40-year Cold War. The major conflicts of this century are more amorphous and shifting, the boundaries and enemies less clear, the difference between war and peace less distinct. War and choreography have long been connected through dances and rituals, military training and drills, parades, and formal processions. Gerald Siegmund and Stefan Hölscher call warfare 'dance's notorious partner in the eternal duet of order and chaos'. Since war and choreography are closely related, and war has changed, the question is whether the role of choreography also may have changed. Jens Giersdorf and I have investigated this question, and our conclusions are the topic of my seminar. Within the context of what Antonio Negri and Michael Hardt term the new 'global state of war', we argue against concepts of choreography as solely a structuring mechanism, and an aesthetics of politics that is exclusively resistant. Instead, we call for a rethinking of choreography that incorporates the disorder and dispersion of power away from nation-states, which is central in this era of wartime all the time.

Gay Morris is a New York based art and dance critic. Her book, *A Game for Dancers: Performing Modernism in the Postwar Years, 1945-1960*, won the 2007 De La Torre Bueno Award for outstanding contribution to dance literature. She is also the editor of a collection, *Moving Words, Rewriting Dance*.

'Seven Veils' at the Windmill: Anatomy of a Dance

Dr Lorraine Nicholas, Honorary Research Fellow, University of Roehampton

20 January 2016, 6pm-7.30pm

In the Coronation Year of 1937 a moral panic set in around the supposed importation of striptease from America, now increasingly being seen in clubs, and music halls. The management of the Windmill Theatre, famous for its static female nudes, had always positioned its productions as 'middle-brow', more decorous and artistic than vaudeville or music hall. In the midst of the striptease debacle, a new attraction, a 'Dance of the Seven Veils', was introduced into a Windmill show. In this paper I will attempt a description of the dance from pictorial and paper records. To what extent did it draw on the historical genre of performances with this name from earlier in the century? Was it more like a striptease disguised under another name? Discussions about the dance also reveal the workings of theatre censorship under the Lord Chamberlain's Office and its interactions with theatres and morality campaigners.

Lorraine Nicholas was a Senior Lecturer in the Department of Dance at the University of Roehampton, 2000-2014. She is currently Honorary Research Fellow there. Her research centres on twentieth century dance in Britain across genres of ballet, modern dance and musical theatre. She is author of the monographs *Dancing in Utopia: Dartington Hall and its Dancers* (2007) and *Walking and Dancing: Three Years of Dance in London, 1951-53* (2013). She currently investigates the professional lives of dancers at the Windmill Theatre, London, 1932-64, including an oral history project.

Medical Humanities Research Seminars

Presented by the Centre for Dance Research as part of Roehampton's cross-departmental Medical Humanities Seminar Series, organised by the Department of Humanities and the Department of English and Creative Writing

Choreographing Lived Experience: Eating Disorders Through a Medical Anthropology and Contemporary Dance Lens

Dr Karin Eli, Postdoctoral Fellow, University of Oxford's Institute of Social and Cultural Anthropology and Junior Research Fellow, St Hilda's College
17 November 2015, 1-2pm

This seminar is based on a recently published article analysing a collaborative project in which contemporary dance choreographer Rosie Kay and I studied the experiences of women who had eating disorders. To foreground the body in our investigation of subjective and intersubjective aspects of eating disorders, we designed a project that explored women's experiences through eight weeks of integrating dance practice-based, discussion-based and interview-based research. Grounded in the participants' own reflections on choreographing, dancing and watching others perform solos about their eating disordered experiences, our analysis examined the types of knowledge the participants used in choreographing their dance works, and the knowledge that they felt the dance enabled them to convey. We found that the participants consistently spoke of feeling as guiding their choreographic processes; they also said the experiences they conveyed through their dance works were centred in feelings, rather than in practices or events. We suggest, therefore, that through engaging participants in contemporary dance practice, we can begin to identify and address embodied experiences of illness and recovery that may be silenced in speech or writing alone.

Karin Eli is a medical anthropologist whose research focuses on the subjective experience of eating disorders. She is a Postdoctoral Fellow at the University of Oxford's Institute of Social and Cultural Anthropology and a Junior Research Fellow at St Hilda's College, where she has co-founded the Body and Being Network, a new research initiative that brings together scholars and performing artists for collaborative discussions about embodiment.

Feeling Lovely: examining the value of beauty for people dancing with Parkinson's

Dr Sara Houston, Principal Lecturer in Dance, University of Roehampton
3 November 2015, 1pm-2pm

Parkinson's is a common neurodegenerative condition that impairs movement and encourages social isolation, striking people typically after the age of 50. Research suggests that dancing may relieve some symptoms of Parkinson's. Studies to date mainly have been instrumental in focus, attempting to explain what dancing may do in order to counteract Parkinson's. There has been little discussion about how dancing may help people live well with Parkinson's. This talk will focus on the value of dancing for one woman who claims that it makes her feel beautiful and as a result has changed her attitude to life with Parkinson's. As an aesthetic value that has been largely ignored by the contemporary art world, disability arts and community dance, I will discuss how we might re-envision and re-articulate beauty within the context of community dance and of dancing with a movement disorder. (Dr Houston will share this session with Dr Rachel Darnley-Smith, Department of Psychology, whose talk is entitled 'The practice of free improvisation as active imagination'.)

Dr Sara Houston is Principal Lecturer in Dance, University of Roehampton. She leads a five-year research project examining dancing with Parkinson's with English National Ballet. Awards include the BUPA Foundation Vitality for Life Prize 2011, Finalist of the National Public Engagement Awards 2014 and in 2014 a National Teaching Fellowship.

Residency Seminars

"She touches my hand to know me"

Rosemary Lee, choreographer, presents her current explorations & ponderings

12 November 2015, 7pm

This event is supported by the Bonnie Bird Choreography Fund, 2013 BBCF Biennial New Award.

Rosemary Lee received a Bonnie Bird New Choreography Award in 2013. Since then she has taken time to ponder one poem alone: *Touch* by Michael Donaghy, out of which comes the title of this presentation. The further she delves into the various strands of enquiry that the poem opens to her, the more a web of interests expands and tangles and sends her to a new book, thought, confusion or person to talk to.

Through words and even perhaps movement, she will reveal her continuing exploration of this poem and how it has affected her. Touch, knowledge, intimacy, motherhood, evolution, time, communication, the origins of words and language, the hand and its extraordinary capacity to discover and to express... this one simple poem opens the door to the rich and complex business of being alive and human.

Rosemary Lee has been choreographing, performing and directing for over 30 years. Known for working in a variety of contexts and media, she has created large-scale site-specific works with cross-generational casts, solos for herself and other performers, installations and films. She holds an honorary doctorate from the University of Roehampton. This seminar is part of a residency she is undertaking at Roehampton this autumn, during which she will work with students.

'Whatever-ing'

Cyril Baldy and Tilman O'Donnell

18 April 2016, 6pm, Michaelis Theatre, University of Roehampton

At the end of a five-day residency workshop, Baldy and Tilman, both formerly of The Forsythe Company, will offer a presentation on 'whatever-ing':

Consider this:

1. Knowledge is a common agreement of what is repeatable and transmittable.
 2. Practise 'whatever-ing' to invert this logic.
 3. 'Whatever-ing' entails dancing through the world while affirming 'it certainly totally could also be that!'
 4. Do this before definitely totally indefatigably saying 'no way ever, no no, that cannot be, uh, can't be'.
 5. Use knowledge as the material to do so.
- NB: (Mine, yours, everyone's...)
6. Keep repeating and transmitting and repeating and transmitting ad infinitum (and see what happens).

Consider this too:

1. 'Yes, and ...!'

Dance Interactions

Dance and Philosophy

Professor Julie Van Camp, Professor Emerita of Philosophy at California State University, Long Beach, in conversation with **Dr Anna Pakes**, Roehampton
22 September 2015, 1pm-1.55pm

Inaugurating a new lunchtime event for the Centre for Dance Research, Professor Julie Van Camp reflects on her work in philosophy of dance and discusses with Dr Pakes recent developments in the wider field. Philosophy of dance is a burgeoning field of research within philosophical aesthetics. This represents a significant shift in relation to earlier decades, which were dominated by the perception that philosophical discussion of dance lagged behind work on the other arts. Professor Van Camp wrote one of the first PhDs on the philosophical aesthetics of dance in 1981 and has been involved with the field ever since, publishing work on such topics as dance identity, meaning and metaphor, and the philosophical implications of copyright law in relation to choreography. The conversation will especially focus on the importance of dialogue in philosophical aesthetics as dialogue has become possible only relatively recently now that more people are interested in these issues and working on these problems.

Julie Van Camp is Professor Emerita of Philosophy at California State University, Long Beach, and is currently Secretary-Treasurer/Executive Director of the American Society for Aesthetics. She received her BA in Philosophy from Mount Holyoke College, PhD in Philosophy from Temple University, where Monroe C. Beardsley was her dissertation advisor, and her JD from Georgetown University, specialising in art law.