

University of Chichester

The Body and Being in Performance

Deepening awareness to enrich a dance practice

By Detta Howe

A Dissertation submitted in partial fulfilment of

MA Performance: Dance

July 2013

With Thanks

This has been a long, eventful and life changing journey and I need to express my thanks primarily for the support and patience of my family. I would like to thank Matthias Sperling who shared time and space at the beginning of this research in 2010 and to all of the Somatic and Feldenkrais practitioners who have engaged, inspired and enhanced my learning. I would like to thank Deborah Hay for the experience of dancing with her and offering a new approach to my dancing and dance making and the University of Chichester for financial support which allowed some of this learning to take place, as well as providing space in kind for my on-going practice. My thanks also go to Jane Bacon for her sensitive guidance through the latter stages of this process and Ann Nugent and her late husband Tony for their continuous support of my work. Additional thanks to Cai Tomos for his listening, laughing, being and dancing.

Contents

Opening

Pages 5-8



Chapter 1 - Embark

Pages 9-24



Chapter 2 - Patience

Pages 25-30



Chapter 3 - Sustain

Pages 31-36



Chapter 4 - Alight

Pages 37-43



Closing Thoughts

Pages 44-48



Bibliography

Pages 49-51

Appendices

Pages 52-58

Blinkers narrow

Shutters closed

Keep going

Same direction

Not noticing

Walls built

Getting thicker

Breathing....just

Holding on

Cracks appearing

Questions asked

Breath held

Head full

Body empty

Nothing left

.....

It may be when we no longer know what to do,
We have come to our real work,
And that when we no longer know which way to go,
We have begun our real journey.

Wendell Berry

(Kabat-Zinn, 2005: 1)



Opening

This thesis aims to discuss a deeper understanding of the body and being in relation to a dance practice, culminating in the performance of a new solo created originally from a written score devised by Deborah Hay. The research grows out of my curiosity in the potential of awareness in motion, with the intention to invigorate a choreographic practice and enhance what it is to perform.

This study began with research into phenomenology, developing a stronger understanding of the value and importance of first person experience. After reading a variety of early 20th century writers, including Husserl, Heidegger and Merleau-Ponty, I was drawn closer to the concepts of consciousness and self-awareness (Husserl), the non-dualistic human being (Heidegger) and the primacy of perception. (Merleau-Ponty)

For Merleau-Ponty perception was a ‘...performative act in which ‘I’ perceive through relevant organs’ (Reynolds, 2001) which provide us with ‘... a surface in contact with the world, a permanent rootedness in it.’ (Ponty, 2002: 240) In his book, *Phenomenology of Perception* (2002), Merleau-Ponty engages with the notion of living and being within the body suggesting that ‘I am not in front of my body, I am in it or rather I am it...’ and importantly, enriches the concept of allowing the body ‘... to both think and perceive.’ (Reynolds, 2001)

My curiosity was further ignited when introduced to Drew Leder’s notion of *The Absent Body* (1990). Leder’s work seemed to dissect and cut to my core, flooding into and rattling around an exposed empty shell. Recognising in his words, ‘a general trend towards a decorporealized existence’ (Leder, 1990: 3) and a ‘disembodied style of life.’ (Ibid: 3) Instantly aware that I had become separate from my body and unsettled by the distance forming between my absence and presence, I began to question whether a part of me had

always been absent, or whether I had more recently lost touch. Although filling a present with my surface, a void had now become a conscious entity that required further investigation.

With exposure to the mentioned theorists, unexpected and at times unwanted questions interrupted my dance and life practice: - why am I more absent than present? How do I find 'being' in the body? How does an awareness of the perceptual field root us within the world? Recognising a previously undiagnosed disconnection with my dance body, my awareness was drawn to vacant spaces that were at once both disturbing and intriguing. It became clear that I had lost sight and sense of the immediate self, as if living and dancing in the third person, consumed by commitments to the future, outside the body; even the hard wearing surface was beginning to lose its shine.

In tandem with this awakening, I became interested in a variety of Buddhist writing, reading amongst others *The Power of Now* by Eckhart Tolle. (2001) His work emphasises the importance of the Now, explaining that 'It is your only point of access into the timeless and formless realm of Being.' (Tolle, 2001: 41)

Timeless and formless realm of Being, now here was a concept that called for further exploration.

Antonio Damasio's, *The Feeling of What Happens*, (2000) also encouraged the questions: - what does feeling feel like? What do I feel, what do I not feel? Deeper analysis was required to understand the concepts of perception, consciousness and awareness, inspiring further physical investigation to find answers in the body.

With the questions of absence, presence, being and feeling racing through my veins I revisited my movement exploration with personal studio time and classes that would begin to quench a thirst that had, all at once become overwhelming. This learning was catapulted at speed as a result of being introduced to and then immersed in the practice of the Feldenkrais method. I was drawn to this method because of its emphasis on awareness through movement, hoping that this would help to unwrap some of the mystery held in my questions.

The research was propelled further by the experience of the choreographic practice of Deborah Hay (1941), whose philosophy encourages dancers not to be seduced by what they know and what is already held in the body but to attend to the perception of motion as it happens. The focus on awareness in motion, fundamental to both the Feldenkrais method and Hay's practice will become evident through the telling of my experience, drawing discussion from the notions of how the Feldenkrais method can disrupt and re-organise the body, reawakening a tired and forgotten system, together with Hay's perception of the cellular body. This writing will explore how both can manifest in refreshing a dance body, encouraging an exploration of the new, rather than hanging on to what is known.

An underlying question uncovered within the practice of this research was introduced as a result of reading *Coming to our Senses* (2005) by mindfulness practitioner Jon Kabat-Zinn. In this work he highlights the philosophy of the Buddhist practice, stating the importance of '... non-doing, for stillness...being aware, resting in being, in cognizance itself, beyond thought, in being the knowing and the not knowing.' (Kabat-Zinn, 2005: 447) Is it possible to develop the ability to know knowing, to live in knowing and not knowing and, importantly, can the answer to these questions be experienced in a dance practice?

With this research project I hope to clarify both in practice through the Feldenkrais method and the choreographic practice of Hay, and in theory, supported by the writing of Merleau-Ponty, Damasio and Kabat-Zinn, a first person experience of the learning, effects and feeling of 'being' in the dance body and in particular noticing whether this is achievable in a performance context. I will reflect on and analyse what it means and what it takes to be aware, offering a moment, sharing an instant, without grasping, clinging or hanging on, but addressing, articulating and acknowledging the change that has occurred. A change that has evolved through intense directed and personal practice, thrusting my thinking and dancing into unexplored territory that continues to excite, frustrate, confuse and inspire me.

I will describe three distinct moments of change within the research process that together have resulted in an overwhelming sense of freedom and permission; permission to explore, play, experience and enjoy being within dance. Chapters one, two and three will each highlight one moment from the score written by Deborah Hay for the 2012 Solo Commissioning Dance Project. This is an intensive ten day programme that has occurred annually since 1993, based in Findhorn, Scotland. I will explain how each moment has evolved, been reconsidered and reshaped as a result of the process undertaken. The final chapter will draw upon the impact of the research on my own practice discussing the adaptation and performance of a new solo. The outcome of the performance practice will be shared, addressing whether attention and immersion in these areas has enhanced a deeper understanding of the body and being and in particular, what this can give to the experience of performance.

This research hopes to convey the transformation from a once conditioned, formed but slowly fragmenting self, towards a more receptive, formless whole, drawing together and gathering the findings whilst attempting to maintain the gateway to the freedom experienced from loosening the grasp on what once was me.

Chapter 1

Embark



Caught in the form of limitation
Between un-being and being.

(T.S. Elliot, Burnt Norton, V, 1943)

I will begin by providing a brief history of my dance pathway to date to offer some background and a reference point that can be used as a comparison in the latter stages of the thesis.

My dance training followed the fairly conventional route of three years on a Bachelor of Arts (Honours) degree course at a vocational school in London, followed by a fourth year of intensive training specifically for a post graduate performance company. The daily practice involved one or two classes, in ballet and/or contemporary dance followed by classes specialising in choreography, history and the sociology of dance, among others. The fourth year focussed primarily on performance involving intense training and rehearsals for a touring programme. In general the format of learning for the practical classes required the student to watch a teacher demonstrate movement material based on a particular codified technique, including Graham, Limon, Cunningham or sometimes more release based work, which they would then try to achieve. This is still very much along the lines of many dance classes today, on the whole continuing the basic package of education experienced up to that point; information given, to be received and remembered. This was how I learnt how to learn and at the time was unchallenged. On reflection, however, I can see that this introduction to learning about movement leaned more towards function and execution rather than experience. This provided the needed exposure to the fundamental principles of strength and articulation, giving weight and finding release, contraction and extension and bound movement as opposed to flowing; essential ingredients to develop an all-round sense of the body and how to use it with dexterity, versatility and safety within a dance context. Improvisation did take place in some of the choreography sessions and as part of the making process for new work but only as a tool to create material which in time, became set, structured and crafted in the dance space.

As an independent artist, my early work followed a logical structure often driven, shaped and led by a sound score. Music evoked an idea that then formed a theme for a work, or inspired the complexity of its structure, creating levels of challenge and difficulty to layer the

movement. My working methods were also generally organised and linear, starting at the beginning and working through to the end of an idea, attending to gesture, space, pattern and time with the focus for the work to be performed for an audience within the conventional proscenium, black box stage. Also, as a young dancer, both in training and in the early years within the profession, the underlying and often tangible sense of competition was also apparent; in classes, in auditions and then later in the battle to receive funding to support the continuation of work outside of the vocational institution. With this information alone, it is possible to see the beginnings of how patterns of learning can be formed, habits of movement conditioned, a particular way of life experienced, a dance pathway etching its way towards the future.

Twenty years on, as teacher, choreographer and performer, both as a freelance artist and latterly as a full time lecturer at the University of Chichester, this journey carried me to 2010. Functioning, working and attending to what I was doing but with little time devoted to how. At various points along the later stages of this route, I began to season my dancing by taking classes with practitioners that are more somatically based, including, Malcolm Manning, G. Hoffman Soto, Nicole Peisl and Andrea Buckley. Here I began to experience a new kind of learning and was introduced to the notion of listening to, sensing and noticing how the body moves as an active process, beginning to acknowledge 'the living body in its wholeness.' (Hanna, 1993: 6) Untried flavours were added to my formed body and movement palate initially through participation in workshops led by Manning¹ in London and Vienna. Here began my courtship with the notion of perception and perceiving choices; encouraging the development of a new relationship and dialogue with my body, alongside welcoming the idea of 'unlearning and unfixing' (Manning, 2011) in order to experience the self in motion. These

¹ Originally interested in physical theatre, in 1991 Manning discovered the Feldenkrais Method and contact improvisation which have informed his work since. He qualified as a Feldenkrais teacher in 2005 and has developed his own class called Awareness Perception Presence. (APP) (Independent Dance, 2013)

ideas will reappear later in this chapter in relation to the practice of mindfulness and the Feldenkrais method. Hoffman², who has been teaching in the field of Somatics and Movement Awareness since 1969, writes:

When we begin to have a relationship/dialogue with our Kinesthetic selves we open to the possibility of a new way of seeing, perceiving, thinking, moving and ultimately, being. (Hoffman, 2013)

In a short weekend workshop, Hoffman introduced the notion of doing nothing; to direct and locate attention through intention. In one memorable exercise we explored the idea of 'form,' with a martial arts movement sequence and 'formlessness,' improvising and moving freely around the form. It was interesting to experience how one fed the other, the form being inspired by the focus and attention, with the perceptual field constantly changing, and for the improviser to see the sequence and shapes from inside the material, choosing whether or not to use them to initiate their movement. It was the concept of form and formlessness that intrigued and inspired my learning, highlighting two very distinct ways of approaching movement, the first, an understood entity, the second, a journey that I was yet to experience in its fullest sense. Engaging with the work of Nicole Peisl³ at Impuls Dans, in Vienna, July 2011, began to deepen the notion of working with the living organism, enhancing the use of perception through touch and sound and in particular, the use of sight, exploring awareness of the visual foreground and background, the front space and backspace.

In his essay *Eye and Mind* (1964), Merleau-Ponty explores

² As well as somatics and movement awareness, Hoffman has trained in Ideokinesis, CranioSacral Therapy, Polarity Therapy and Swedish Massage. (Sotomotion, 2013)

³ A dancer, performer, choreographer and teacher, Nicole has also trained in Visionary Cranial Work and Somatic Experiencing developed by Peter A. Levine. Since 2009 she has researched and worked creatively with author and philosopher Alva Noe. (Impuls Tanz, 2013)

how a painter must offer her body (through her eyes and hands) into and through the world in order to manifest it most truly in art' describing 'this vision as a movement that both extends the body through the act of looking and opens the body to the world through this extension. The body sees and is seen.

(Wilson, 2003)

An example of the beginning of a dance class taught by Buckley⁴ attends to this vision by Merleau-Ponty and also compliments the ideas of Peisl, introducing how the imprint of what is seen can inform the practice that follows. We were asked to face any direction and take in the whole visual field without moving the head. Remembering this, we then turned 180 degrees to take in a whole new vista allowing the back of the body to open up and engage with the space the eyes had just seen. With this idea in play the body was instantly inflated with a sense of three dimensionality; responding to the space with every part of the whole, front and back but also engaging with the sides, above and below when taking the changing perspective of motion into the space. All at once the back of the body can see and sense and is informed by a consciousness of the back space. The tingling sensation of the world behind informing the volume of the whole, noticing, sensing and engaging with the back surface of the body, so often forgotten, unexplored, unfelt. These practices exposed the potential to wake up to the perception of the senses and by this awakening offered the option of choice within the experience. Through engagement and active play with intention and awareness, the body can become finely tuned and receptive to noticing sight, sound or touch at any one point, together or independently and allow the information, felt, heard or seen to extend the range and depth of exploration in the moving body.

My curiosity teased and inspired, I began intense research time alone in a studio, initially experiencing what it is to walk without any other goal or incentive, 'Just giving attention to the action itself.' (Tolle, 2001: 57) Kabat-Zinn writes with regard to walking meditations;

⁴Andrea Buckley is an Independent dance artist whose 'primary research draws upon improvisation and contact to develop an awareness of the moving body.' (Independent Dance, 2013)

you are not going anywhere...you are being with each step, fully here, where you actually are. There is no arriving, other than continually arriving in the present moment.

(2005: 268)

A monumental moment took place in that for the first time, with the added ingredient of being aware, I sensed myself moving, mind and body as one. With my attention focussed, I experienced what Damasio describes as, 'the unfolding of consciousness,' (2000: 18) it was as if a light had been turned on, a window opened. But what had changed, what was different, how had my experience of walking become so new? Rather than working separately from the body, thinking other thoughts whilst the motion took place, my mind had become both absorbed in and aware of the motion. Sensations that were once invisible or unfelt, became tangible, sensational and nourished my experience of walking. Rather than a 'she' over there, I came within touching distance of the 'I' in here, substantiating my understanding of Merleau-Ponty's, 'I am it.' (Reynolds, 2001) The distant third person that had once entered the studio was soon to share and own the space with me. As a consequence, my listening, seeing and overall sensing became magnified. Each step contained breath, touch, motion, air, articulation and ease. With each moment a new door unlocked, opening a realm of new sensations to be played with; the studio came alive through my seeing and motion. Walking home that day, my experience of the world outside and I had changed, my feet felt wider, the contact with the ground softer, my whole self grew out from the earth. I noticed the air surrounding, protecting and sustaining me. I had in the shortest space of time danced with Merleau-Ponty's notion of 'rootedness' in the world by waking up the surface, exposing the senses, becoming conscious through the body.

Released from a life of innocent and circumstantial coexistence, mind and body began a new dialogue, informing, nourishing and learning from each other. The beginnings of a reciprocal relationship had formed in which I became at once, whole

again, a thinking body, an embodied mind; so simple yet so difficult to accomplish and importantly, maintain. It became frighteningly clear just how much time had been spent outside the body and in the future, rather than savouring moments as they happen and truly knowing what it is to experience them. Kabat-Zinn explains that 'such insensitivity, such out of touchness, isolates us from our own possibilities.' (2005: 3/4) and describes the 'fog-enshrouded, slippery slope' (1994: pxvi) that most experience; the dulled sensations of a life unlived. Buddhists would call this 'ignorance' or 'mindlessness' but being in touch with this not knowing becomes 'mindfulness...the systematic cultivation of wakefulness, of present-moment awareness.' (Kabat-Zinn, 1994: pxi) Francisco Varela (1993) explains the development of mindfulness as

the letting go of habits of mindlessness... an unlearning rather than a learning. When the mindfulness meditator finally begins to let go rather than struggle to achieve some particular state of activity, then body and mind are found to be naturally coordinated and embodied.

(Varela, 1993: 29)

This quote reiterates Manning's suggestion, that to learn I needed to unlearn, to break down walls of habit and conditioning to enable my body to come back to life, to knowingly take part in its functioning in the world and in particular within my dance practice. Exploring potential without effort or strain, allowing the mind to be here in the body, not ahead, outside, in the past or future...not judging, comparing or competing but resting attentively in the moments experienced as they happen. Could it be that this was the beginning of understanding and experiencing Kabat-Zinn's notion of 'cognizance itself, beyond thought, in being the knowing and the not knowing?' (2005: 447) Had these first steps of studio practice begun to address and facilitate the possibility of knowing that I am knowing?

My continued study of mindfulness led me to consider connections with the methods of Deborah Hay and Moshe Feldenkrais (1904-1984) supported by Kabat-Zinn's comment that, 'mindfulness means paying attention in a particular way: on purpose, in the present moment, and non-judgementally,' (1994: 4) which provides a worthy description of both.

I was initially intrigued by Hay's choreographic philosophy, gathering information from dance practitioners who had worked with her as well as reading her book, *my body the buddhist* (2000). Susan Leigh Foster tells us that, for Hay, 'choreography emerges from her ongoing reflections about bodiliness,' and explains how the book documents the 'play between corporeality and consciousness and between the dance of everyday life and dance as a theatrical practice.' (Hay, 2000: xi) Reference to this quotation will be returned to within the discussion of my own choreographic practice in chapter four.

Hay began to experiment with her work in the 1960s as part of the Judson Church movement in New York. In Foster's words this was a time and place where

choreographers all pushed at the boundaries of acceptable dance movement and introduced alternative vocabularies and strategies for dance performance.

(Hay, 2000: x)

Hay's work explores the nature of experience, perception and attention in dance, as a soloist and working with large groups, elaborating

a theatricality that appears pedestrian, intimate and casual one minute while filled with wonderment, alterity and sumptuousness the next....continuously upheaving our assumptions about dance and the body.

(Hay, 2000: x)

For Hay, language plays a vital part in her creative process, writing scores for herself and her dancers to follow and learn from in the practice of the performance. Over the past ten years Hay has been commissioned by Independent Dance, London, to work with a small group of dancers, guiding them through a choreographic experience, enhancing her philosophy and helping them to create a solo from a score written specifically for that year. Two thousand and twelve was to be the last Solo Commissioning Dance Project (SCDP) and I was fortunate to participate. Hay devised a score for a solo called '*Dynamic*,' some of which will be referred to in this thesis, the whole piece is presented in the appendix on page 54. The process of creating the work began each day with practicing a section of the score, exploring, responding and dancing as Hay read the words aloud. She would also offer questions/suggestions at various intervals throughout a practice that could last from forty five minutes to three hours. The questions were to encourage a deeper exploration, to allow for more learning in the body and, to 'acknowledge the constant changing of body in consciousness.' (Hay, 2000: xiii) Questions offered in the 2012 project included

What if my whole body is my teacher?

What if the question 'what if where I am is what I need?' is not about what I need but an opportunity to inhabit the question' What if where I am is what I need?'

What if dance is how I practice relationship with my whole body at once in relationship to each passing moment in relationship to my audience? What if the depth of this question is on the surface?

What if my choice to surrender the pattern, and it is just a pattern, of facing a single direction or fixing on a singularly coherent idea, feeling, or object when I am dancing is a way to notice where I am not?

What if how I see while I am dancing, including what I imagine, invent, project, can and cannot see in a prescribed area near, mid-range and far, at any given moment, is a means by which movement arises without my looking for it?

Whilst practicing, Hay would repeat a question or perhaps just a section of the question, or might repeat moments from the score. With either one of these thoughts echoing through the space, the active, distractive, thinking mind was often overwhelmed, confused, fatigued, and on occasion, almost numbed. It became clear that the application of an unbalanced dualistic approach to the work, where thinking outweighed the doing, was ill equipped to deal with the questions. The problem solving needed to take place in the body, waiting for responses rather than trying to make answers happen. This realisation was also made by John Slatin, a professor of English at the University of Texas in Austin who, on reflection of his experience of working with Hay, wrote

I think for the first time I understood that the questions/practices reside in the body, not the head; or rather that the practice is in moving the question from the head into the body; and the discipline is in schooling the body to be the questioner (or the question).

(Slatin, SCDP score 2012)

With time and practice the meditative repetition seemed to dissolve logical linear patterning and prevent the natural draw towards habitual behaviour, permitting new sensations to arise as a result. However, conditioned ways of learning and habit

formation tend to lead the way and take more than just a moment to readjust. The beginning of this process however had struck the first blow to knock down the walls of conditioning and learning that had been built over the years, realising just how strong and fixed the structures were. Each question suggested by Hay from day one of the project, chipped away at the brick work that had encased my body, with each crack allowing more light to seep in.

This image can be related to the opening up and discovery of new learning pathways which is a fundamental principle of the Feldenkrais method. Unblocking dams of habit and conditioned behaviour with simple exercises to release the flow of living and experiencing back into the pool of our lives. I chose to pursue the practice of Feldenkrais in 2011 to explore in motion the concepts of being and awareness of the lived body, adding substance to my developing interest in awareness in motion.

Foremost a scientist and engineer, Feldenkrais trained in the art of Judo where he developed his understanding of the mechanics of movement, determining an ease and simplicity of motion with reference to his understanding of science and structure.

In his book *Higher Judo* (2010) Feldenkrais states

The essential aim of judo is to teach, help and forward adult maturity, which is an ideal state rarely reached, where a person is capable of dealing with the immediate present task before him without being hindered by earlier formed habits of thought or attitude.

(2010: 5)

This statement could just as well introduce the reader to the underlying principles of the Feldenkrais method; a two part system of learning, Awareness through Movement (ATM) and Functional Intergration (FI). An ATM lesson involves participation in a group class with a practitioner talking through the lesson, whereas an FI is an individual lesson taught on a one to one basis, where learning is

encouraged through touch. In both practices, the intention is to offer questions, suggestions and alternatives to movement that we might normally choose; presenting other ways to think and apply awareness to a particular part of the body and/or sequence of motion. Either by touch or voice and use of language the practitioner engages with the thinking, perceptive body of the student offering ideas to integrate and challenge their known internal landscape. The emphasis is on the body unlearning conditioned habits of motion with the aim to increase ease, pleasure and awareness of movement. Carl Ginsburg, in his introduction to *Mindful Spontaneity* (1996) explained that Feldenkrais

worked with improving movement, but his goal was awareness, the ability to know what one is doing and use effective action in one's life.

(Alon, 1996: xxi)

With this practice I was being asked to question and re-think how I move, re-organising and challenging my body to support and enable change. I was set off on a track of self-discovery, in terms of learning to trust sensation to lead to more functional movement and to listen and respond by way of experiencing that movement within its simplicity. I was encouraged to be curious, importantly learning to find internal satisfaction rather than to be guided by an external reference to success. A far cry from the competitive beginnings of a young dancer, who in the early stages of their training, often rely on feedback from an outside source to inform success.

On reflection, I can see that my early experiences of Feldenkrais were of trying to achieve the lessons being taught. Suggestions were offered, questions asked and my instant reaction was to find the answer or reach the end of a movement, not realising that in my eagerness to arrive, I had missed so much along the way. Rather

than searching for an answer, the opportunity is offered through the exploration, to open up more questions or unwrap a choice that may not have been available before. Within the practice, I began to recognise my need to work hard and apply effort, my past training keeping its hold on me. It did not take long however, to notice the possibility of sensing more from doing less. Turning down the volume and reducing power gave the body time and space to notice subtleties of sound and movement, the opportunity to become more in tune with a natural setting, a felt connection and collaboration between mind, body and environment. With mindful application, my body was transforming from an externally functioning machine to a more organic sensitive being, responsive, receptive and open to experiences, sensations and feelings that had become unfelt or unseen.

After ten days of working with Hay, the dancers involved were contractually obliged to practice daily for nine months before being given the freedom and permission to adapt and perform the work. Hay believed that it took this length of time to truly understand her movement ideology and to develop a deep awareness within the practice. Initially I was unsure how I could logistically make this happen and also questioned whether that length of time was really necessary. How much more learning could take place? Surely what I had already experienced was change enough. The reality of daily practice was every bit as hard as it sounded; making time and making good use of the time rarely coincided. My practice mostly took place at 5.30 in the morning or during a lunch break, neither of which seemed to facilitate the ideal moment. However, I soon learned to make the most of the practice and very quickly realised how much learning could take place the less I tried to think, the less I tried to prepare, the less I did. Of course, not every day involved learning; many involved frustration, confusion, questions and fatigue, but not once did I consider

stopping. Something kept me moving on this voyage of learning, intrigued by the good days and the bad.

The following writing is the first of three examples to illustrate the development of awareness within my dance practice from summer 2012 to spring 2013. Incorporating the learning experienced as a result of my daily practice of Hay's score alongside my continuing Feldenkrais training, chosen moments from the 2012 SCDP will track the journey from a mindless to a mindful body.

You cross the stage following a path that contains a perfect circle...A practice of weaving is how the circumference of the circle is made... At the same time, you are making choreographic choices that help maintain a finer interest in the performance of your dynamically subtle, impeccably timed and succinctly unpredictable dance. (SCDP score, 2012)

In my early practice of this section of the score, I remember trying to apply my understanding of weaving to the body, attempting to recreate the motion or the rhythm, an idea I had seen or experienced. I found myself representing the idea as I moved through the space, with my mind very much outside my body, engaging with shape, pattern and design, thinking about a known, previously experienced notion of weaving.

Don't do weaving...wherever I am weaving is. Learn from the body what weaving is?

(Hay, Findhorn, 2012)

With continued practice of working with Hay's questions and a developing understanding of awareness and mindfulness, the essence of weaving became more embedded within my consciousness, occurring as an experience rather than a thought or an idea. I was more able to respond to the sensation of the word rather than the meaning; a difficult to describe felt sense, a response from the muscles and

bones, from an unknown place. The meditative repetition of the questions helped to maintain and embed the connection of the mind and body with the score, deepening the experience by engaging with and maintaining perceptive attention in the process. As a result, the practice of weaving began to take my awareness to space, time and being in the moment of motion, sensing, challenging and noticing. My body was beginning to participate in a new dialogue with the internal and external environment; blending, informing and inspiring, awake, mindful and conscious, slowly sifting and shifting through the pages of history written within, through practice, play and exploration. Mindfulness in motion, helped habitual patterning and behaviour to fade, providing the space for fresh colours and sensations to arrive. An absent, mindless body was beginning to refuel by participating in function and perception and as a result beginning to experience as Kabat-Zinn explains, 'that awareness gives us back to ourselves.....discovered, recovered, embraced, settled into. (2005: 91/92)

Thinking mind

Moving body

My body moves in a way that my body knows

Questioning

Doing

Listening

My head understands

My body thinks it does

Knowing still knowing

Unsettled

Undone

Tears fall

Keep falling

Unknown sense of the body....

Doing, still doing....

But

Beginning to notice more (of me)

Changing

Chapter Two

Patience



...awareness is the cure for conditioning and for being caught in a repeating cycle of reinstating whole situations from the past. We do not have to continue to behave in a machine-like fashion.

Carl Ginsburg

(Feldenkrais, 2005: xxiv)

Moving rapidly, without struggle, lift your body mass away from the floor as you turn without turning, navigating a teardrop path....The area contained within the teardrop is entered and filled to capacity as you practice the performance of intimacy.....Not an announcement, but speaking clearly with a fake accent, you realize aloud, ‘the very thing I thought I’d lost I hadn’t lost.’ Heard, you resume practicing intimacy.

(SCDP score 2012)

This moment from the score highlights the on- going depth of exploration in the work, a subtle continuous immersion to sustain and broaden the experience of the process, recognising through practice, as Kabat-Zinn (2005: 2) highlights, the importance of the journey rather than the destination, a philosophy advocated by both Hay and Feldenkrais.

It marks the time within the research where I found myself ‘going inside,’ (Kabat-Zinn, 1994; 96) exploring unknown territory with both excitement and trepidation, curious as to what might be found.

Skin seeing

Bones listening

Eyes feeling

Less thinking

Noticing

Habits falling

Walls crumbling

Head lighter

Unknown territory

Still unknown

More undoing

Floor feels softer...or is it me?

More questions

Less need for answers

The word intimacy, taken from the score, can hold many meanings and conjure up a variety of responses. In my initial attempts to listen to the body, I found it difficult to resist representing the personal implications and life stories within. I recognised as with weaving, an initial dry, bracketed understanding and application of the word to movement. However, with mindful and perceptual listening, an evolving understanding of the intimacy of a moment and the depth of learning that can be absorbed from that one moment began to take place.

Remove doing...you can then notice if you are served, seeing, happening and learning from the body

(Hay, Findhorn, 2012)

The tear drop shape captured and surrounded the practice of the performance of 'intimacy' building to the summit of the sentence 'the very thing I thought I'd lost I hadn't lost.' For many practices these words had little meaning, they were simply said as the score dictated they should be. As the practice continued however, their arrival within the dance and my process as a whole was unnerving, as if they were written for me, discovering my directionless journey and with patience, waiting, ready to support the moment of change as it happened.

Fill the tear drop with intimacy, the more exact, the more interesting

(Hay, Findorn, 2012)

The formless was beginning to outshine the form as I continued to improvise with the questions, challenging the known and by doing so coming to recognise the freedom of the unknown, fresh and exciting, challenging and raw. Without preparation, the words arrived at a moment of realisation, a new place found, something experienced,

felt and seen. Each time said, hearing them for the first time and noticing where I am in space, body, process, experience and time; the overwhelming effect of the sentence reminding me of where I was and where I am now, of what I had lost and what I have found.

With Hay's work I discovered a new depth of listening, learning to surrender to the here and now acknowledging her 'use of the metaphor of cellular life.' (Foster, 1986: 49/52)

My attention to explore this way of working brought an acute awareness of the feedback that can arise, which until that point had remained unnoticed. In *my body the buddhist*, Hay explains

Every cell in my body has the potential to perceive Now Is Here. Now is personal. Now is past, present and future acknowledged together as it unfolds each moment.

(Hay, 2000: 13)

With the practice of intimacy I imagined and explored my cells interacting; I was intrigued by how this thinking could transpire into movement. Eyes, ears, skin and bones in dialogue with the score, with the questions, with consciousness and awareness of the now of every moment, consequently moving in ways not previously considered; enriching the experience of the conscious self dancing.

What if intimacy is everywhere?

(Hay, Findhorn, 2012)

As a consequence of my continued exploration I became increasingly aware of noticing and seeing, at times sensing my eyes feeling too big for my head, an explosion of sensations, colours, shapes and space, suddenly flooding in now the shutters had been opened. Seeing, with awareness in motion can then soak into and

inform the whole body, allowing the skin, muscles, bones and cells the freedom of sight, expanding the vastness of what can be seen and felt through the whole body at once, sensing.

The practice of intimacy was also informed by the Feldenkrais practice in which I took a similar journey into the body, shifting layers of held muscular tension and habit, to get to fresh new layers of sensation and learning. I thought of myself as an archaeologist, digging, dusting, scraping, brushing; gradually shifting chunks of history to expose life in the honesty of the bones. I realised more and more how much of life's story is held in the muscles which tend to shape who we are and how we move and how this can change with learning to work with the structure of the skeleton. This method of working was challenging all that my body knew, gently disrupting and quietly confrontational, renegotiating and re-organising to discover new pathways.

By reducing all stimuli to the bare minimum...we thus increase our sensitivity to its maximum and can therefore distinguish the finer details that escaped before...we become aware of what we are doing and not what we say or think we are doing.

(Feldenkrais, 2010: 72)

An ATM lesson usually begins by lying on the floor with time given to scan the whole body in preparation for the class to be taught. The following is an example of how I might begin a lesson -

Take a moment to notice how the body is lying on the floor. Are there places that feel heavy, are there places that feel light? Notice how you are breathing.... Have any places become heavier, have any places become lighter? ...Which part of you feels closest to the ceiling? ... Notice the space between the sternum and the upper back and with the next few breaths, see if you can make this space bigger, wider, rounder or softer.... Notice the space between the right side and the left side of the rib cage. With the next few breaths, see if the space between can also become bigger, wider, rounder, softer... What happens if you try to make the space smaller? ... Notice the

pelvis. With the breath directed here, what do you notice? Is it heavier than when you first lay down...are the sides of the pelvis lying symmetrically on the floor or does your sensation tell you that one side lays more flat than the other?... Bring your attention to the legs. How are they lying? Do they feel open and turned out or do the feet have a tendency to turn in. Are they different? Do they feel the same length?

How is the head lying? Does the head feel heavy? Allow the head to roll very slowly to one side and then the other. Come back to a still place and notice how you're breathing.

With time spent engaging with how the body is simply lying on the floor, perception is illuminated, sensation brought to life, the body, which might arrive in pieces, or absent, can become whole and present, empty spaces refuelled with living and being in the now of the body.

With informed guidance towards the deepest structures of the body, attention becomes intimately engaged with the simplicity, clarity and beauty of the skeleton as well as for some people, confronting an unexpected and overwhelming depth of emotional undoing. Sensations of feeling both full and empty, open and closed, all released through experiencing awareness in its most frightening and exhilarating form. With this, the practice of intimacy transformed from a paper drawing to a delicately designed sand sculpture, intricately detailed, with both depth and light, full of texture and constantly changing with exposure to environmental surges.

With both Hay and Feldenkrais informing the practice of intimacy, movement evolved from an unknown, unnamed place, embracing Merleau-Ponty's notion of the bodies potential to both 'think' and 'perceive,' and noticing how this was changing my experience of moving. I was learning to 'replace judgement with curiosity,' (Feldenkrais, video footage, London training, 2012) to find more by letting go and, most importantly, to trust the experience.

Chapter 3

Sustain



Be strong then, and enter into your own body;
there you have a solid place for your feet.
Think about it carefully! Don't go off somewhere else...
And stand firm in that which you are.

Kabir

(Kabat-Zinn, 2005: 60)

Deeper undoing
Layers shedding

Tears (still) falling

Doing body finding rest

Unheld

B

e

l

n

g

Freedom

Permission

Unknown is safe

Listening

Responding

Experiencing

Growing

Changed

Still changing

To support the composition of your exit, apply the question, ‘What if my will is my destiny?’ (SDCP score 2012)

When I notice myself trying too hard to find the right answers, to say or do the right thing, my thinking mind takes over and the body gets lost. It is when the mind and body are as one, the moment becomes effortless and what is done is done, whether it makes sense or not, judgement dissolves and learning continues.

At this point in my practice and for the first time I was truly experiencing movement in motion or as Feldenkrais describes ‘...being conscious and knowing something about it.’ (Feldenkrais, 2010: 80)

According to Damasio, consciousness is ‘good for extending the mind’s reach,’ (Damasio, 2000: 303) allowing the self to ‘participate in the process of knowing,’ (Ibid: 191) to transform into ‘a knower who knows.’ (Ibid: 192) Something inside had changed, what was once a hive of intense, focussed activity, almost closed to sensation and perception, had now become expansive and playful, open and aware, ready to receive, invite and experience the many challenges still within the score and the process ahead.

Already stretched beyond expectation, this final moment in the score presented another blocked pathway. Although my current learning had made me realise that I didn’t need to search for answers, for some time, I was unable to get past the question, What if my will is my destiny. The realisation that this question was offering a truth, that I was the driver needing to take the next turn, at first, made movement almost impossible. I needed to bypass my head and allow my body the freedom to explore the question, again trusting in learning without thinking. For many weeks the responsibility implicit in the question seemed to instil fear, blocking the creative

pathway; responses felt fake, unembodied. It was as if the beginnings of my directionless journey had met a full circle, not knowing which way to go at the start and still struggling to know which way to go towards the end of the score and the end of the process with Hay. Although there is a sense of openness and freedom in the question, for some reason that freedom eluded my practice. The linear learning pathway etched into my body clinging on but desperate to be set free. The resolve was to move and hope that with awareness I would find choices and unexpected outcomes to the many questions self-imposed at the beginning of this research...where now, which way, why, who for? Trying to shed layers with every step, unblocking pathways, and opening doors, sometimes to negotiate another that is closed, sometimes invited in.

The Feldenkrais practice had helped me to realise that in trying to make things happen, I was missing subtle nuances of suggestions and motion, not noticing the richness of being in new sensations that could tell a different story and explore a new path. Carrying this philosophy into the practice of 'my will is my destiny,' not only did I experience new sensations of movement but also a flexibility in the development of my thinking, inviting the possibility of choice; to do a little or a lot, to have attention focussed and detailed or broad and scanning, to learn from the signals the body was offering now that it was beginning to breathe again. Gradually my interaction with this section in the score became less fearful and more playful, with the recognition of the experience, the noticing of me, here and now, what I have carried, emptied, picked up, dropped, drawn and rubbed out. With this freedom, I had loosened the hold on the sense of finality; it took time to realise that it wasn't an end it was just a moment in time on a journey and in actual fact, signposting a beginning.

As Scott Clark⁵ suggested ‘...the end of the lesson is the beginning of the learning’ (Feldenkrais training, 2013) and for me, the end of this process/score/research has sparked a beginning, of trusting that the body is where the real learning takes place.

By removing the burden of expectation from ‘my will is my destiny’ my sense of ease and excitement in motion returned, an openness to the unknown, a gentle, calm, more inquisitive approach to the practice and to my dancing body. With acceptance and permission together, creating the capacity for fresh experiences, crisp, sharp, focussed and intense.

Below are a few diary moments from my daily practice with accompanying video footage provided in the appendix.

Day 19 – 5.30am Dance Studio, Waterloo Leisure Centre 27/9/12

‘The very thing I thought I’d lost, I hadn’t lost.’ Today when I spoke this moment from the score for the first time I made a direct connection with my research journey. A part of me or the whole of me I thought I’d lost, I was now beginning to find through this daily, almost meditative practice. Maybe I wasn’t lost, just misplaced. (50 minutes)

Day 37 – 12pm Dance Studio 2, University of Chichester

(Appendix - clip 1, 23/10/12)

Quiet, cold...questions...thinking, slow progress. As my body warmed up so did my perception of the space around, remembering and supported by... **What if** how I see while I am dancing, including what I imagine, invent, project, can and cannot see in a prescribed area near, mid-range and far, at any given moment, is a means by which movement arises without my looking for it? Particularly engaging attention with the back surface and the back space, remembering Buckley’s class and time spent with Peisl. Had more fun with, ‘my will is my destiny?’ (1 hour)

⁵ Scott Clark began his movement training in dance, becoming a teacher and performer. He was a founder member of the Siobhan Davies Company before enrolling onto the first UK Feldenkrais training in 1987. He is currently the course director of Feldenkrais training in London, as well as continuing his own practice. (Feldenkrais London, 2013)

Day 78 – 12pm Dance Studio 2, University of Chichester

(Appendix – clip 2, 19/12/12)

Today was a struggle, difficult to get into my body and out of my head. Tried to learn from ... **What if** my whole body is my teacher? Staying still until it told me what to do and where to go. The more I did this, the more I became conscious of and conscious in the body. Focussing on ease of motion with attention to the bones, heavy and light, small and detailed, broad and global. (40 minutes)

Day 148 – 10am The Chapel, University of Chichester

(Appendix – clips 3,4,5, 27.3.13)

Coloured glass, high ceiling, sun warming the floor, chairs arranged, an invisible audience waits. Just begin. Seeing and being seen, outside and into the distance, internal and allowing the bones the freedom of sight. At times hardly moving, doing less, so much else is said and heard. Experienced freedom in the space and in the body – volume, ease, vibrancy... less questions ... moving without thinking ... less doors, more pathways. (1 hour)

Day 165 – 5.30am Dance studio, Waterlooville Leisure Centre 19.4.13

Entered the space... practiced...left, had fun. (40 minutes)

Chapter 4

Alight



At the still point of the turning world. Neither flesh nor fleshless;
Neither from nor towards; at the still point, there the dance is,
But neither arrest nor movement. And do not call it fixity,
Where past and future are gathered. Neither movement from nor towards,
Neither ascent nor decline. Except for the point, the still point,
There would be no dance, and there is only the dance.
I can only say, *there* we have been: but I cannot say where.

(T.S. Elliot, 2001)

Adaptation

With eight months of daily practice absorbed into my body, I was ready to explore a version of the work that engaged with my choreographic voice, interested to see whether this has altered or been affected by the research learning.

Working in silence daily enhanced my attention to mindful practice and allowed the body to explore its own musical voice. In the adaptation however, I was clear that I wanted to have moments of music and, without thinking, the beginning and the practice of intimacy called for this. The body's response to the feedback with added sound generates more questions and uncovers new stories as my dancing behaviour matures with the deepening practice of awareness. In terms of creativity, I had no desire to make material that would be set, shaped, crafted and patterned within the work. Uninterested in logical progression and completely absorbed by the learning experienced in the unknown, I was determined to continue working with this open book, flicking haphazardly through the pages and potential of improvisation. The idea of formlessness had overtaken that of form, discovering new possibilities of expression and a freedom of creativity unrivalled in any prior making/practice period.

The overall design of the work altered slightly in that small sections were cut, but generally the structure of the score was kept. The story seemed to be tracking the evolution of my process and dance journey as a whole, supporting my questioning and learning and allowing the experience of new feedback with every telling.

Theatrically, I chose to open the work with silly string to remind myself and the audience not to take ourselves too seriously, a philosophy advocated by Hay, and also to use bubbles in the practice of intimacy. These were to illustrate encapsulated moments, each representing *this is now*, also evidenced by the use of a minimal circular spot light to give the impression of dancing in a bubble. The metaphor here,

highlighting a moment of looking back and forward, through the experience of now in the body, the learning, the newness, the freedom in motion, the questions of where from and where to, echoing within the bubble, illuminating the struggle experienced along the journey. The bubbles were also used to give attention and lightness to the air, a reference to play, the sensation of touch on the skin and also to offer the audience their own bubbles of thought.

When reflecting on the choreographic adaptation of the solo, I am reminded of Foster's quote referring to Hay's writing being a '...play between corporeality and consciousness and between the dance of everyday life and dance as a theatrical practice.' (Hay, 2000: xi) This quotation perfectly combines all that I have explored in *this is now*; the exchange between body and awareness, movement and theatre; the performer, the person, present and presence.

Performance – *this is now*

(Appendix – clip 6, 30/4/13)

When you become conscious of Being, what is really happening is that Being becomes conscious of itself. When Being becomes conscious of itself – that's presence.'

(Tolle, 2001: 81)

Today ... Ready ... Now is here
Fear, Expectation, Here and gone
Experience, Learn, don't hesitate
No time to consider

This dance, at this moment, never to occur again

(Hay, Findhorn, 2012)

Breath, knees, tips of ears, skin on belly, jaw, nose

Back of head, listen, smile, breathe again, soft toes

Ribs open, sternum long, pelvis heavy, heart beats

Wide arms move the air, little fingers, eyes meet

I raised my arm, walked towards the audience, and stood looking.

See me, sense me

Seen

Seeing

Cells

Bones

Changing

Mover

Moving

Moved

With the above moment I was transported back to the beginnings of my practice of walking and seeing, alone in the studio, realising how the fullness of this simple action now engulfed my body and momentarily left me empty. The sensations of perceiving and the echoing silence allowed new voices to be heard.

Recognising how the presence of an audience can alter the adrenalin charge within the body and somehow ignite another way of being, I was unsure whether it would be possible to maintain a sense of presence and being in performance. Will the draw to present, provide, entertain and satisfy expectation overcome the connection with the internal dialogue of learning to live and be in the moment that has been at the heart of this practice? On 30 April 2013 time, form and achieving an end had no place. A fruitful presence sustained and flourished in the performance, new flavours were tasted through my engagement with the audience, sharing my journey with them, experiencing sensation, space, time and the whole body and mind in motion.

...when you do fall into presence, you know it instantly, feel at home instantly. And being home, you can let loose, let go, rest in your being, rest in awareness, in presence itself, in your own good company.

(Kabat-Zinn, 2005: 82)

An unexpected comfort and ease filled this new home, a place to breathe again, with permission and freedom, experiencing a new self, one that recognises and respects the living body, enjoying the moment of being in each movement. The exquisite richness of *this is now*.

Learning in the presence of an audience was a strange and overwhelming sensation. Recognising that together we were entering into an unknown, both carrying questions, thoughts, history and knowledge, but for a moment leaving them behind, to share and experience new and unexplored territory. With the addition of being seen, the feedback received from the body escalated beyond measure; the pleasure, the pain, the comfort, the ease and dis-ease, experiencing a cacophony of sensations, which took time to absorb and fully understand or appreciate. The depth of the movement penetrated to previously unfound places and as a consequence

resonated in a way that hadn't been experienced before: piercing; prising; questioning; hurting! Is this what feeling feels like? Has this been available all along, untapped and unlived due to a lack of consciousness in doing? This was a new performance phenomenon, which left me both sapped and saturated at same time, experiencing in practice, Damasio's metaphor of 'Stepping into the Light,' embodying the 'transition from innocence and ignorance to knowingness and selfness.'

(Damasio, 2000: 3/4) Without question, the processes of working with Hay and the Feldenkrais method, with continued attention to broadening the potential to perceive, listen to and learn from the body both internally and in dialogue with the outside world, the experience of moving in general had vastly expanded, deepened and escorted the performance experience to another level altogether. To have found complete presence, utter being and freedom on stage and to share this with an audience, brought my current research journey to a new edge, balancing for a moment with both the excitement and fear of falling, diving, gliding, floating. In the presence of utter nowness, time has no meaning, form and structure dissolve, the moment is almost impossible to describe, but with access to my own perceptual, living breathing organism, I can now begin to unpick and understand, Tolle's notion of the 'timeless and formless realm of Being' (2001: 41)

Seeing

Being seen

Whole body at once

Notice

Notice

Live

Learn

Listen

See

Intimate, Intimately, Intimacy

Breaking

Breathing

Fill

Empty

Gather

Leave

Closing Thoughts



The intention of this thesis was not to prove or disprove the writing of Leder, Merleau-Ponty or Damasio, there was no particular argument to offer in which to challenge their work. The intention was to use their words to facilitate and enable the development of the first person experience. The practical research undertaken as a result of my reading, intrigue and loss of self-awareness has put into perspective the depth of work required to even begin to entertain some of the concepts offered in the theories mentioned. I do believe however that I have engaged with and understand what it is to be a present opposed to an absent body, experiencing what it is to 'inhabit ...and feel the body from within.' (Tolle, 2001: 92) The conscious relationship and dialogue with this new found awareness is enhancing a daily existence as well as nourishing a creative and somatic dance pathway.

In the words of transcendentalist, Henry David Thoreau

Most men....are so occupied with the factitious cares and superfluously course labours of life that ifs finer fruits cannot be plucked by them. Their fingers, from excessive toil are too clumsy and tremble too much for that.....he has no time to be anything, but a machine

(1995: 3)

Recognising the machine that was developing in me forced the need for change; my dancing body had lost its way, its reason, and its purpose. Rather than living in and experiencing the body in motion, I was purely renting the accommodation and making use of the facilities. I had become a frame, an outline, an expected outcome and lost sight of what it is to live in being and dancing. It would seem my training and beginnings as a choreographer had taken place without a conscious presence. They had followed a format that had the intention of reaching an end, achieving a goal, creating an end product. The idea of undergoing a process with consciousness and interest in how, rather than what, was one I had not considered. I hadn't realised how much awareness could inform learning, how attending to

the beginning rather than aiming for an end and trusting the unknown could change a whole life and dance practice.

Although it might be necessary at the beginning of a dance career to be introduced to the moving body through the history of codified techniques, it could be said that such an approach offered answers rather than questions, a closed book rather than an open one. Of course learning and development did take place but for a long time the tendency was to approach my dance practice with a sense of 'Ready, Aim, Fire,' (Hay, 2012) steady, ordered and logical. Through this research process, however, I have integrated the idea of 'Ready, Fire, Aim,' (Ibid, 2012) preventing the thinker from obstructing or constructing and allowing the immediacy of the body to inform the learning process.

Through the experience of working with Hay and the Feldenkrais method of movement awareness I have found two vehicles that have helped to encourage direction and length to the road that I had begun to explore, enhancing my research practice in a way that has exposed endless possibilities for learning and change. The Feldenkrais method opened up and supported the immersion into Hay's practice through the sensitivity and invitation to notice the self in motion, reawakening a tired and forgotten system and encouraging the development of a flexible mind. Confronted by movement puzzles and experiences within the method, together accelerated the attention to the perception of motion as it happens, as opposed to being seduced by what is familiar and held in the body.

My current movement practice is being drawn further into the Feldenkrais method, continuing to develop the notion of mindfulness in the body and awareness of the body in motion. My basket of attention is broadening with every experience in the practice, informing and increasing the potential to find ease, pleasure and simplicity of motion. With continued application of the idea of learning without thinking, it will be interesting to notice how this informs and colours my choreographic and dance practice, giving unforced time for my dancing body to percolate, simmer and respond when ready. I am continuing to pursue Hay's

'Ready Fire Aim' principle as a way to charge, stimulate and engage with improvisation, relishing in the unknown, ready and eager to receive, embody, discover and notice that which may not have been noticed before. In this practice, recognising the daily evolution in my learning, the shift from thinking of the body as giver, to the body as receiver; listening to the body as the teacher rather than an outside voice telling it what to do; no time for looking or judging, now is the time for seeing and doing.

Beginning this journey with the simplicity of walking, and returning to this idea when separation and distance reoccur, the mind and body establish connections that routed the germination of this research. Maintaining the dialogue with seeing and being continues to give colours and textures to those seeds that took hold and reminds me in my daily practice how this journey began and where it has taken me. As I contemplate the change that has occurred I am reminded of a talk given by Elizabeth Beringer⁶, the lead educator on the London Feldenkrais training, in relation to the notion of change. She said that we '...don't need to change but to become who we are.' (Beringer, London, 2013) This supports that what we are, or what we need is within, and if given the opportunity will rise to the surface. I am reminded again of the statement 'The very thing I thought I'd lost, I hadn't lost.' (Hay, 2012) With time allowed to step back into the body, to notice, to live and be conscious of how '...the realization I am, that is prior to I am this or I am that,' (Tolle, 2001: 11) will maintain being and presence, here and now, encouraging the invisible to become visible, the unfelt felt, the unnoticed noticed, the unseen seen.

⁶ After studying directly with Dr Moshe Feldenkrais, between 1976 and 1983, Beringer has become one of the foremost Feldenkrais teachers and trainers of the method. She is currently the Educational Director of The London, Feldenkrais Professional Training Programme. (Feldenkrais Resources Training Institute, 2009)

Italo Calvino expresses a similar sentiment in *Invisible Cities* (1974),

Arriving at each new city, the traveller finds again a past of his that he did not know he had: the foreignness of what you no longer are or no longer possess lies in wait for you in foreign, unpossessed places.

(Calvino, 1974: 25)

This research has provided opportunities to experience the boundaries of the living body, described by David Abram, as 'open and indeterminate; more like membranes than barriers' defining 'a surface of metamorphosis and exchange.' (1996: 46) I have discovered and been exposed to the reciprocity of sensation between my newly renovated internal landscape and the external world, through awareness and participation, realising Merleau-Ponty's notion of the 'active interplay.....between the perceiving body and that which it perceives'. (Ibid: 57)

Eyes receiving

Skin open

Listen...hear

Be,

See here

Notice here

Explore

Free,

Known beginning

Unknown end

Loosen grip

Still safe,

Rivers run

Fresh tears fall

Another layer



Me

The lights fade after the audience is given time to contemplate the stage (with or) without you. (SCDP score 2012)

Bibliography



Books

- Abram, D. *The Spell Of The Sensuous*, Vintage Books, New York, 1996
- Alon, R. *Mindful Sponteneity*, North Atlantic Books, 2nd Edition, 1996
- Calvino, I. *Invisible Cities*, Pan Books Ltd, 1979
- Damasio, A. *The Feeling of What Happens*, Vintage Books, London, 2000
- Elliot, T.S. *Burnt Norton*, Faber and Faber, 2001
- Feldenkrais, M. *Awareness through Movement*, HarperCollins Publishers, 1990
- Feldenkrais, M. *Body and Mature Behaviour*, North Atlantic Books, 2005
- Feldenkrais, M. *Embodied Wisdom*, (ed) Beringer, E. North Atlantic Books, 2010
- Feldenkrais, M. *Higher Judo, Ground Work*, Frederick Warne & Co Ltd, London and New York, 2010
- Feldenkrais, M. *The Master Moves*, Meta Publications, 1984
- Feldenkrais, M. *The Potent Image*, Harper, San Francisco, 1992
- Foster, S.L. *Reading Dancing*, University of California Press, 1986
- Hay, D. *my body the buddhist*, Wesleyan University Press, 2000
- Hayward, J.W & Varela, F.J,(ed) *Gentle Bridges: Conversations with the Dalai lama on the Sciences of the Mind*, Shambhala Publications Inc, new Edition, 2005
- Hanna, T, *The Body of Life*, Healing Arts Press, 1980
- Kabat-Zinn, J. *Mindfulness for Beginners*, Sounds True, 2012
- Kabat-Zinn, J. *Coming to Our Senses*, Hyperion, New York, 2005
- Kabat-Zinn, J. *Wherever You Go There You Are*, Hyperion, New York, 1994
- Leder, D. *The Absent Body*, University of Chicago Press, 1990
- Loori, J.D. *The Zen of Creativity*, Ballantine Books, 2004
- Merleau-Ponty, M. *Phenomenology of Perception*, Routledge Classics, 2002

Thoreau, H.D. *Walden; or, Life in the Woods*, Dover Publications, 1995

Tolle, E, *The Power of Now*, Hodder and Stoughton, 2001

Varela, F.J. *The Embodied Mind*, MIT Press, Massachusetts, 1993

Shear, J & Varela, F.J, (ed) *The View from Within: First Person Approaches to the study of Consciousness*, Imprint Academic, 1999

Online references

Beringer, E. <http://frtiberkeley.com> (Accessed 10.7.13)

Buckley, A and Manning, M <http://www.independentdance.co.uk> (Accessed 11.7.13)

Clark, S <http://www.feldlondon.com>

Ginsburg, C <http://awareinginc.net> 2011 (Accessed 12.7.13)

Hoffman, G.Soto www.sotomotion.com Accessed 24.6.2013

Piesl, N <http://www.impulstanz.com> (Accessed 11.7.13)

Reynolds, J (2001) Maurice Merleau Ponty [Online] Available at <http://www.iep.edu>
Accessed 26.6.2013

Wilson, L Merleau-Ponty, 'Eye and Mind,' annotation by Leila Wilson
<http://csmt.uchicago.edu/annotations/merleaupontyeye.htm> Accessed 5.7.2013

Practice

Impuls Tanz, Vienna, 2011, Malcolm Manning, Nicole Piesl

Independent Dance, London, 2011/12, Andrea Buckley, G.Soto Hoffman, Malcolm Manning

Feldenkrais Training, London, 2011

Lead trainers: Scott Clark, Elizabeth Beringer, Larry Goldfarb, Arlyn Zones, Gareth Newell

Assistant trainers: Barbara Haberstock, Shelagh O'Neill, Martin Mosimann, Goran Morkeberg

Deborah Hay Solo Commissioning Dance Project, Findhorn, Scotland, Independent Dance, August 2012

Images

www.phong.com

www.outdoorphotogear.com Metamorphosis

www.awakeinthenow.com/aitn/2009/01/mindfulness-and-abundance

Appendices

- Appendix 1 Chronology of research
- Appendix 2 Score of Solo Commissioning Dance Project 2012
- Appendix 3 DVD: Practice – Dance studio two and The Chapel, University of Chichester. Performance – 30 April 2013, Dance Studio Theatre, University of Chichester

Appendix 1

Chronology of research journey

Spring 2011

Classes at Independent Dance with somatic practitioners – Malcolm Manning, G. Hoffman Soto, Andrea Buckley

Summer 2011

Impuls Dance, Vienna – classes and workshops with Malcolm Manning and Nicole Piesl

Autumn 2011

Feldenkrais Training, London – Beginning of a four year training programme. Eight weeks a year split into three segments, autumn, spring and summer.

Classes at Independent Dance

Spring 2012

Feldenkrais Training

Summer 2012

Solo Commissioning Dance Project (SCDP) with Deborah Hay in Findhorn, Scotland. An intensive ten day project from 9am-6pm each day.

Feldenkrais Training

Autumn 2012

Beginning of eight months of daily practice with the SCDP score

Feldenkrais training

Spring 2013

Daily practice

Feldenkrais training

April 30 – First performance of *this is now*, adaptation of the solo devised by Hay for the SCDP.

Summer 2013

Feldenkrais training and continued personal studio time and further research with independent artist, Cai Tomos; working together to combine and expand our research practices.

Appendix 2

Solo Commissioning Dance Project, 2012

In order to get the most from this work, you will want to notice and redirect your reliance on your physical body and what it can do. Redirecting this dependence requires an unselfish regard for your whole body at once as a cogent medium for indefinable specificity. You are thus positioned to learn without thinking. (Hay, 2012)

“Dynamic” (2012)

In memory of Gill Clarke 9/12/1954 – 15/11/2011

choreography, text, and direction: Deborah Hay

(For the sake of simplicity, ***Dynamic***'s score is written for a proscenium stage, although the dance can be practiced anywhere and in any audience/performer spatial relationship you choose or that chooses you).

Preset: Before you enter, put a piece of food into your mouth that you can chew and swallow by the time you begin the dance. You enter, something like a duck. We can tell you feel silly, and we can see you laughing at yourself. Travelling only forward, you are looking around for a place to roost, settling near the edge of the space.

Upon choosing a place to begin the dance, you find comic movements without acting funny. Getting to the floor, you assume a minimally composed shape.

How you see, from the assumed position, is inclusive of everything you can and cannot see, imagine, invent, project, create. Whatever you fleetingly notice is free of identification. *A figure a sea* is a useful perspective on your assumed position in the surrounding space.

You sing this sea, this stage, this moment, and you hear the spontaneous melody, as does the audience. The song has intermittent pauses that, combined with the song, eventually gain substance in your body as well as in those of the audience. This takes time. The body remains still while the head is moving.

With its interludes of silence and phrasing, the song establishes its hold. Outside of the song's influence, no more than twice, a single movement of one or two limbs may be tagged onto your floor position. This is performed in a direct yet offhand manner, free of association. There is interplay between the seeming casualness of your gestures, the fullness of the song, the held pauses, and the constancy of your attention to time, space, and dynamic.

From the floor, you rise, zigzagging without illustrating or representing zigzag. What if you call wherever you are zigzagging? The song continues to guide the dance.

You cross the stage following a path that contains a perfect circle. The clearer the circle is in your experience, the freer you are from illustrating it—which is your challenge. To arrive at and depart from the circle, a single traveling movement is repeated like a *little stitch*.

A practice of the performance of *weaving* is how the circumference of the circle is made, yet no one in the audience would necessarily identify your actions as such. Remembering to call your movement *weaving* is constant. At the same time, you are making choreographic choices that help maintain a finer interest in the performance of your dynamically subtle, impeccably timed, and succinctly unpredictable dance.

Short phrases of at least two notes from your song continue to come and go, just enough to keep the presence of the song in your dance.

At the end of the path, not the end of anything else, your song plus a single movement repeat and combine rhythmically, the two elements illustrating each other. You and the audience alike realize a sustained visual and aural effect from those parallel actions.

“**Ca**” is performed in less than a fraction of a second. No one sees it.

With the memory of the rhythmic song and movement intact, *everything changes*, although this is not obvious. Therefore *everything changes* needs enough time for everyone to recognize that everything has changed. Phrases from the song, now quieter, are performed as if time collapsed.

“**De**” is performed in less than a fraction of a second, and no one sees it.

Moving rapidly, without struggle, lift your body mass away from the floor as you turn without turning, navigating a teardrop path covering at least half the stage. Use or don't use your arms, more or less. The work is to remain as simple as possible in relation to the movement while becoming as sophisticated as possible in terms of your perception of time, space, and dynamic. You want to give the impression that this activity is habitual, but it is not. The teardrop path is then repeated, is reversed, and does not have to be completed. We hear whispered and limited phrases from your song.

The area contained within the teardrop is entered and filled to capacity as you practice the performance of *intimacy*. *Intimacy* within a teardrop is poetically useful to your whole body at once as your teacher. To avoid falling into the trap of illustrating or doing *intimacy*, these questions need recycling again and again:

What if how I see while I am dancing, including what I imagine, invent, project, can and cannot see, in a prescribed area near, mid-range, and far, at any given moment, is a means by which movement arises without looking for it?

What if wherever I am *intimacy* is?

What if my whole body at once is my teacher?

Quietly confidential phrases can be heard.

“**Ca**” is performed in less than a fraction of a second without anyone seeing it. Not an announcement, but speaking clearly with a fake accent, you realize aloud, “The very thing I thought I lost I hadn’t lost.” Heard, you resume practicing *intimacy*.

Without pretense or finality, you march offstage, lightly repeating the word phrase, “dumb dumb da-dumb dumb.” Without pause, you sing a beautiful new song in a choreographed voice. The song gives volume to the stage, *a sea*.

While singing, and in direct relation to your song and its pauses, you perform three movements without facing a single direction. By choosing to surrender any frontality, you erase a destination.

- 1) To return to stage, step into the song you have sung. Place your weight on your forward stepping leg before your other foot lifts lightly behind you, bending at the knee. The arms play a supporting role.
- 2) In place, with both knees together, bend and straighten your legs repeatedly.
- 3) With both hands parallel in the air above your head, flutter them diagonally downward so that they cause a vibrato in the last note or notes you are singing.

You click “**ca**,” followed by a delayed bodily response. “**De**” succeeds, with another delayed response, and “**ca**” follows, with a final delayed response. One of them is brief.

The phrase “The very thing...” is spoken with or without a foreign accent and directed to the audience. If there is a spontaneous conclusion to the phrase, at that moment, you finish the sentence aloud. If not, the clicking and delayed response combination repeats until the phrase “The very thing...” is completed.

To support the composition of your exit, apply the question, “What if my will is my destiny?”

“And I think for the first time I understood that the questions/practices reside in the body, not the head; or rather that the practice is in moving the question from the head into the body; and the discipline is in schooling the body to be the questioner (or the question).”

John Slatin, a dear friend who was blind and a professor of English at the University of Texas in Austin

The lights fade after the audience is given time to contemplate the stage without you.