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Movement, Mobility, Reciprocity

2023 Conference Symposia

May 12 (Salvador, Brazil) • September 8 (London, UK) • October 26 (Ilorin, Nigeria)

Second symposium

New mobilities “on the turn”?

Friday, 8 September 2023

Host: The Place (London, UK) & Society for Dance Research

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The phrase “on the turn” is defined by Oxford Languages via Google as:

‘at a turning point; in a state of change’
"the tide was on the turn"

‘(of certain foods or liquids) going off’
"the smell of meat on the turn"

Something has gone sour around the notion of mobility. A quarter of a century ago we witnessed a ‘mobile turn’ in anthropology, cultural studies, geography, migration studies and sociology; a notable interest in movement and mobility. This one-day symposium sets out to explore the limitations of the turn to mobility in the current historical moment and to question how dance studies might speak to the various mobilisations of movement as it encounters pandemics, wars, migration, and border controls. The phrase ‘...on the turn’ speaks both to mobility as a paradigm across the humanities being in a state of change, and to the notion of mobility and its promises turning sour, giving way to critiques and leaning into mobility’s limitations.

In the immediate context of this symposium in London, this question manifests itself in response to the impact of COVID-19 lockdowns, the full implementation of Brexit, and increasing unease with the environmental impacts of travel. On the other hand, the UK policy landscape in arts and education has shifted firmly towards increasing access, for example around disability, and social mobility. These contrary shifts are mirrored globally in the retrenchment of the Far Right and recent Leftist wins in the Americas. The symposium seeks to bring together voices from Europe and beyond through in-person and digital conversations and performance interventions by scholars, artists, practitioners working in and beyond dance and performance’s disciplinary boundaries.

Dominant political uses of the question of mobility, whether social, political, economic or digital, are most often posed in relation to an increase in motion, a speeding up of connectivity, a freedom from restrictions, a challenge to class identification (‘Levelling Up’ in Britain). Underpinning the neo-colonial calculations of these vectors are normative notions of independent bodily agency, discounting contingent and collective articulations of movement in and through spaces in favour of escape velocities. Mimi Sheller (2018) articulates the counter discourses for mobility justice as staging “a relation between personal bodily vulnerabilities, the struggle for urban public space and shelter, the splintering of infrastructural systems, the management of unequal citizenship regimes and borders, and the uneven impacts of planetary environmental risk” (p. 21).

In this context, proposal submissions may consider some of the following questions:

I. Rethinking movement and mobility in artistic practices, discourses and education

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- What can dance and performance studies contribute to the turns within mobility discourses, and the wider contexts of movement ‘on the turn’?
- How do contemporary artistic practices and dance/performance studies work with the resources of mobility justice to interrogate and challenge assumptions that underpin the field?
- How can we respond to the impact of changed experiences of mobility in the performing arts and education?
- How has the previous valorisation of speed and increased movement versus staying in place been radically challenged by lockdowns, the closing and policing of borders, and a general exhaustion with the demands to be online and everywhere simultaneously?
- Has the desire for movement gone off? Franco Bifo Berardi’s blog during the early days of the COVID-19 lockdowns expressed hope that there would be a turning away from the prescribed productivity of connection towards what he has named conjunction; ‘a concatenation of bodies and machines that can generate meaning without following a pre-ordained design, nor obeying any inner law or finality’ (2014, p18). Similar thoughts are discussed in André Lepecki’s (2005) introduction to *Exhausting Dance*. How might we rethink the question of (disciplined) movement today?
- Are there modes of new choreographic thinking that understand mobility as entangled, situated, multidirectional and collective, rather than singular leaps that conquer time and space? Relevant here is Arabella Stanger’s (2021) call for a ‘critical negativity’ when approaching the Euro-American dance canon, where ‘spatial operations of imperial, colonial, and racial subjection’ are at work.

II. Access and technology

- How has the movement of information and images via the internet, especially via mobile technology, impacted how we view and interact with dance, performance and education?
- What is the impact of arts and/or education policies to increase or decrease access and social mobility? How are dance, performance and choreography expanding or limiting the expansion into social and political spheres today?
- What has been the impact of general changed experiences of mobility in the arts on people with disabilities?
- How can producing and touring models support changed experiences of mobility?

III. Environment, migration, citizenship

- How do we make sense of changed attitudes to travel, transportation and commuting during a climate emergency?
- How are dance and performance affected by transnational migration and mobile labour forces in Europe’s colonial legacy in terms of the movement of people and goods? How are cosmopolitan privilege and exclusion prevalent in arts production? What are the consequences of the hierarchy of mobilities between different kinds of bodies from the Global North and Global South, e.g., black, queer or disabled bodies?
- What reflections are emerging on changed notions of citizenship and freedom of movement post-Brexit?
- How do dance and performance help shape the future of the cities and urban infrastructures, through finding new ways of dwelling, travelling, and socializing?

Proposal Submissions

Accepted sessions will be expected to present virtually. Onsite events will include livestreamed plenaries, performances, and workshops for a primarily local audience. Proposed presentations may take the form of papers, panels, roundtable discussions, lecture-demonstrations, movement workshops, dance works using indoor or outdoor sites, and screendances. Papers that are pre-grouped into panels are encouraged and have higher likelihood of acceptance. Individual papers will be grouped into panels by the program committee.

Submission portal will be open April 4, 2023, through May 25, 2023.