

## Words of Movement: *Currents* meets *Contredanse*

Report from BMCA Conference in Ghent, Belgium, May 30, 2015

### Workshop Description

Kate Tarlow Morgan, editor of BMCA's *Currents* Journal, and Baptiste Andrien and Florence Corin, editors of *Contredanse*, discussed the ways in which language engages the body through printed and online media. *Currents* Journal, begun as a newsletter in 1985, now supports body-based authors and their writing process. *Contredanse*, founded in 1984, provides the resources for dancers to connect their studio work with analysis and history of their discipline. Together, all three editors are inviting participants to "push" the boundaries of this field with fresh responses for writing and moving ideas.



**"Inside the body is a thing as vast and as difficult to experience as the universe. But it has this advantage, that it is inside. It can be experienced directly."**

~ Charles Olson, (in unpublished text, written in 1955)

**"Speak into the room as you would put your hand on someone's knee - layers - you [choose] how far to penetrate: pants, skin, [muscle], bone."**

~ Bonnie Bainbridge Cohen (SBMC, Amherst, MA 6/24/86)

### *What is Somatic Writing?*

"Somatic" is a term coined in 1976 by Thomas R. Hanna, who defined the Greek root-word as *body experienced from within*. But how to capture this event - the body experience, the within-ness? There are many ways to express *somatic*: through movement, touch, and through language. By 2007, it became very apparent to our *Currents* team that the writing coming to us was unique and challenging. It wasn't just good writing, it was new writing, emerging from the evolved experience of the Body-Mind Centering study, as well as other deep-sourcing somatic practices. In 2014, our editorial board re-wrote our mission statement:

*With Body-Mind Centering at its center, Currents Journal has featured bold writers who are not only expanding somatic study, but also claiming a "language of experience."*

But wait a minute, this stuff - this "language of experience" - is not new! It has been evolving for over a century, interweaving with discoveries in psychology, embryology, physiology, and brain research, as well as rising up from the ranks of the artists, the experimenters, the experiencers, and the "feelers" of each era. For our somatic community, it is time to write! And this is what was discussed at the panel presentation in Ghent.

## *What is Translation?*

During the course of the Panel discussion, the question was posed as to how the "language of experience" is expressed in our mother tongues, making this somatic writing process two-fold - of the body and the word. This expanding development, as the BMC work has spread beyond Amherst, MA, turned the conversation from "What is somatic writing?" to "What is translation?" How, indeed, do we communicate the universality of our explorations across syllable and diphthong? And where does this information reside - books, journals, documents, videos, audiotapes, etc, - and how can we stay *in touch*?

I refer to the Greek roots of the word "translate" as

1. "latus" - which literally means "to carry," and
2. "trans" - which conjures the directionality of "across."

And so! Somatic writing requires that bodily experience, *which is experienced directly* (see Olson quote above), be carried over through the *language of experience* to the writing. THIS is what Poet Olson would tell us is "composition by field" - a term that we embraced for our Panel, which suggests that to translate your somatic meaningfulness, you have to MOVE across a field to GET IT. Olson has also said of this kind of writing: "It's the kinetics of the thing."

We left the discussion with these thoughts that may, in time, become tenets for our future work together-

- We believe that *language(s) of experience* exist, and as these languages emerge they create new terrains of consciousness.
- It is important to move back and forth from *soma* to text and encourage the "rehearsal" of many drafts before final version. The editing process is important and fruitful.
- Take the time to understand the *field* out of which each *composition* emerges.
- The concept of *composition by field* allows the author to move across the experience without being limited by the "style of composition."
- If the act of translation is successful, then we come to know that the text, too, has a body.

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- *Contredanse* is an organization founded in 1984 by Belgian choreographer and dancer Patricia Kuypers to support the choreographic process. Kuypers wanted to offer tools and resources to artists to enable them to connect their studio work with an analysis of the movement process, the composition and the history of the discipline. *Contredanse's* activities were, and still are, mainly oriented towards information, publishing and training. It also develops writing and video partnerships with single artists as well as supporting round tables, conferences, and discussion workshops.
- *Currents* Journal of the Body-Mind Centering Association grew out of the association's newsletter (1985) presenting its first saddle-stitch publication bound for BMCA's membership in 1998. There have been many fine hands that have crafted this project since then, and too, the unbridled development of its contributors. As *Currents* editor for the past 10 years, I have watched this publication grow in both content and design, so much so, that in 2013, our Editorial Board voted to have *Currents* be available to anyone who wanted to buy it - by public subscription. The Body-Mind Centering work has traversed the globe and is influencing many fields of study and practice, therefore we want *Currents* to be available to these multi-arenas and to be in the hands of somatic thinkers both within and beyond our sustaining membership circle.

*Gracious thanks to our panelists Baptiste Adrien and Florence Corin, to our actively participating audience, to Noya Nachmany, Eva Maes, and Kristina Neiryneck as spearheads of the Ghent BMCA Conference, to BMCA and to our Currents Journal Editorial Board (Pat Ethridge, Martha Eddy, and Wendy Sager-Evanson) without whom these ideas would not have translated!*

Respectfully submitted,

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photos by Dennis van Lith