

THE DANCE OF SOMATIC MOVEMENT

Part I: A BRIEF HISTORY of SOMATIC PRACTICES and DANCE

Part II: The CULTURAL AND SOCIO-POLITICAL LEGACY of SOMATIC MOVEMENT DISCIPLINES

Abstract: This is a pair of articles with two aims: firstly, to outline the historical emergence of somatic movement practices especially as they relate to dance and dancers, and secondly to assess the potency and placement of “somatic dance” in a global schema. The latter section emerged out of a series of discussions between the authors around the field of somatic movement education and therapy, its cultural roots and influences, and the unique and often understated contributions of dancers to the field. One of the emergent themes of both the literature review and original interviews that inform these articles was that the somatic process is not only a journey of awareness, change and/or self acceptance, but also that the somatic process can lead to cultural or societal change. A question arises as to what acknowledgement of cultural roots is fitting within the pedagogical process. Another theme is that the voice of dance professionals, especially women, brings out activism. Finally, it is posited that the voices of women who have founded somatic movement disciplines bring to the somatic education field a further facet of holism – an integration of personal emotional expression with all of the above.

Part I: A BRIEF HISTORY of SOMATIC PRACTICES and DANCE

Abstract: This article outlines the historical development of somatic movement practices especially as they relate to dance, dancers, and educational organisations. It begins with historical events, cultural trends, and individual occurrences that led up to the emergence of the “classic” somatic methods at the turn of the twentieth century. It then discusses the naming of “somatic movement education and therapy,” and the growth of ensuing generations of somatic movement training programmes. It reveals how the second generation included a large proportion of dancers and speaks to how the “bodymind thinking” of dance professionals continues to shape training in somatic education, and in this way impacts the entire field. It refers briefly to dance scholars who have become involved in “dance somatics.” Finally it raises the question of marginality of both dance and somatic education and points to possibilities for how awareness of the shared characteristics dance and somatic practices may be to combine forces to alter this location in western culture.

Keywords: somatic dance history culture creativity founding education programmes

PART ONE:

A BRIEF HISTORY of SOMATIC PRACTICES and DANCE ***Historical Development of the Field of Somatic Education and its Relationship to Dance***¹

Preface: This article is based on three methods of inquiry – lived experience in the overlapping fields of dance and somatic education since 1976, personal communiqués (live, by telecommunications, and by email) using a structured interview (see appendix), and supplemental literature review. Wherever possible the founder of a somatic discipline or seminal figure in the academic promotion of “dance somatics” was spoken with. In several cases the director of a school or a close relative or colleague was the participant if someone was deceased or indisposed.

Introduction: The field of “somatics” is barely a field. If necessarily seen as one, I liken it to a field of wildflowers with unique species randomly popping up across wide expanses. How did individual experiences of and with the living body become a field? Illnesses, physical limitations, and exposure to unfamiliar physical and/or spiritual practices through travel and transigrations, led numerous men and women, separately but in a common period of time, to discover the potency of listening deeply to the body. Pain and new views of the world combined with a love of movement and curiosity about the physical experience to create the independent formation of various systems of bodily inquiry in Europe, the United States and Australia. The positive outcomes of these investigations gave credence to the process of finding answers to bodily needs and communicative desires through internal bodily awareness. By being engaged in attentive dialogue with oneself somatic pioneers discovered that as humans we can learn newly, become pain free, move more easily, do our life work more efficiently, and perform with greater vitality and expressiveness.

The historical time period moving out of the nineteenth and into the twentieth century was ripe for a quantum change in our relationships with our bodies. There was a need to break free of Victorian strictures and also to embody the optimism it offered. Soon came the possibility of experiencing the body newly with such diverse movements as “free love” and “gymnastik.” Within the 20th century as rationalism was influenced by

¹ This article draws on structured interviews, personal educational experiences, and review of literature in published and unpublished manuscripts, as well as on the internet.

existentialism and phenomenology, a gradual shift towards theoretical support for experiential learning and sensory research occurred in parts of the academic and scholarly culture. These shifts were supported by the theories of Dewey, Merleau-Ponty, and Whitehead.

Somatic inquiry was buoyed by this growth of existentialism and phenomenology as well as through dance and expressionism. These developments were moved into diverse frontiers by the groundbreaking work of Freud, Jung and Reich in psychology, Delsartes, Laban and Dalcroze in cultural studies (art, architecture, crystallography, dance and music), Heinrich Jacoby and John Dewey in education, and Edmond Jacobson in medical research. From the unique experiences of exploratory individuals across the globe fresh approaches to bodily care and education emerged, however it took the outside view of scholars some fifty years later to name this phenomena as the single field of *somatic education*. Thomas Hanna, supported by Don Hanlon Johnson (2004) and Seymour Kleinman (2004), saw the common features in the “methods” of Gerda and FM Alexander, Feldenkrais, Gindler, Laban, Mensendieck, Middendorf, Miezeres, Rolf, Todd, and Trager (and their protégés Bartenieff, Rosen, Selver, Speads, and Sweigard). Each person and their newly formed “discipline” had people take time to breath, feel and “listen to the body,” often by beginning by relaxing on the floor or lying down on a table. From this state each person was guided to experience from within and move slowly and gently in order to gain awareness of self. Students were often directed to find ease, support, and pleasure while moving and paying attention to proprioceptive signals. They were also invited to experience new movement from the stimuli provided by the somatic educator or therapist.

The transmigration of people and ideas from the East to the Western globe also shaped the development of somatic practices, by fostering exposure to the philosophies and practices of martial arts and yoga. For instance, during this time period Joseph Pilates developed a system of exercise with focus on the coordination of breath that was derived from yoga (India), and George Gurdjieff developed movement activities for greater spiritual development grounded in Eastern philosophy. Among the somatic pioneers, Ida Rolf cites Yoga as an influence, Irmgard Bartenieff studied Chi Kung, and Moshe Feldenkrais was a black belt in Judo.

In what seems like the “hundredth monkey” parable, individuals and institutions in distant places began to recognize this work as an important and effective area of inquiry. What emerged from these profoundly creative and investigative somatic pioneers, especially as they taught their practices

to psychologists (e.g. Fromm, Perls, Watts), educators (Dewey), and scholars (Fraleigh, Hanna, Johnson) became a canon inclusive of exercises, philosophies, methods, and inquiry. By delving into personal bodily experiences new meanings about being human and potentialities for health and life were codified into educational programmes in diverse parts of the world. As an exchange deepened across disciplines somatic inquiry also found entry into some research methodologies such as action research, ethnographic study, frequency counts in movement observation, phenomenology, pilot studies for quantitative research, and qualitative case study.

Defining the Field:

Coining ‘Somatics’ and ‘Somatic Movement Education & Therapy’

In the 1970s Hanna coined the term “somatics” to describe and unify these processes under one rubric. Philosophers and scholars in the late 20th century helped to forge the new field of Somatic Education. Mangione (1993) describes how the global communication explosion and the cultural shifts of the 1970’s then spurred a veritable boom in “somatics.” I identified (2001) that there are now three branches of the somatic world – somatic psychology, somatic bodywork, and somatic movement. More specifically, Somatic **Movement** Education & Therapy involves listening to the body and responding to sensations with different movement habits and “body attitudes.”

Professional practitioners of somatic movement disciplines use a variety of skills and tools including different qualities of touch and verbal discussion to address different life experiences; especially subtle and complex movement experiences. This process helps a person discover the natural movement or flow of life activity within the body. If a student or client is uncomfortable with any of these modalities the practitioner will adjust the tools being used; it is a creative interplay. The goal of the somatic movement professional is to enhance both sensory and motor awareness. Motor awareness includes the subtler movements of the breath, the voice, the face, and the postural muscles as well as any large movement task or movement expression. By beginning with the bodily experience, somatic lessons often include the use of touch as a way to amplify the body experience and therefore more quickly awaken awareness. Touch is a primary tool that is used to bring support to both the awareness and activation processes inherent in SME&T however it is not the only tool and is it not always used in a session.

While many of the individual somatic movement disciplines, most notably the ones that have been in existence for at least fifty years have their own standards and scope of practice, one professional association, The International Somatic Movement Education and Therapy Association (ISMETA) worked to shape the commonalities of somatic movement disciplines into a “scope of practice” for the field of SME&T. providing a definition of the type and range of work that is engaged in by a professional. The first scope of practice for somatic movement educators and therapists as defined by the International Somatic Movement Education and Therapy Association (ISMETA, 1998) stated,

The professional field of somatic movement education and therapy spans holistic education and complementary and alternative medicine. The field contains distinct disciplines each with its own educational and/or therapeutic emphases, principles, methods, and techniques.

Practices of somatic movement education and therapy encompass postural and movement evaluation, communication and guidance through touch and words, experiential anatomy and imagery, and the patterning of new movement choices - also referred to as “movement patterning,” “movement re-education” or movement re-patterning.” These practices are applied to everyday and specialized activities for persons in all stages of health and development. Continued practice of specific movements at home or work, with conscious awareness, is also often suggested.

The purpose of somatic movement education and therapy is to enhance human processes of psychophysical awareness and functioning through movement learning. Practices provide the learning conditions to:

- Focus on the body both as an objective physical process and as a subjective process of lived consciousness;

- Refine perceptual, kinesthetic, proprioceptive, and interoceptive² sensitivity that supports homeostasis and self regulation;
 - Recognize habitual patterns of perceptual, postural and movement interaction with one's environment;
 - Improve movement coordination that supports structural, functional and expressive integration;
 - Experience an embodied sense of vitality and extended capacities for living.
- ([http://www. ISMETA.org](http://www.ISMETA.org)).

ISMETA has also developed a more detailed Operational Definition of movement patterning – the use of touch to enhance movement performance, that is a keystone of somatic work. The operational definition is as follows:

A movement educator or therapist will place his/her hands on specific areas of the student's/client's body in order to enhance movement performance. By applying focus through the hands, and combining still and moving touch, the educator/therapist defines the part/s of that area, articulates the connection of those parts, and guides the person's body movement through an efficient or more expressive pathway. With hands-on movement re-patterning the educator or therapist can:

- **guide** the student/client in initiating and practicing improved movement coordination.
- **activate and direct** the attention of the student/client throughout the entire learning process;
- **identify and define** the student/client's habitual patterns of perceptual, postural and movement interaction;

This learning process helps the student/client:

- **refine and focus** proprioceptive and kinesthetic attention;
- **recognize** his/her habitual patterns of perceptual, postural and movement interaction with his/her environment;
- **develop** improved movement coordination and perceptual movement integration

Dance educators and choreographers may have stumbled upon these types of interventions in the process of teaching movement. Martha Myers (2004) was seminal in cross-fertilizing somatics within dance by sponsoring body therapy workshops at the American Dance Festival once it was at Duke University. She was pioneering as well, inviting doctors to get on the floor and learn as dancers about their bodies. Her work fueled the liveliness of somatic education within the dance science community as well as in the professional dance community. (ADF Archives.)

This paper focuses on the development and interplay of the “*somatic movement*” with the field of dance. Mangione in her treatise on “Somatics,” also sees the historical connection between the birth of modern dance and the development of somatic theories and practices.

“Modern dance was a revolution in the field of dance. Beginning around the turn of the century, this new exploration of expressive and earthy dance was a response to the airy, stylized ballet that was dance at the time. Somatics and the modern dance movement are linked. Both movements were born of the same time and possibly for many of the same reasons. They are both body-based forms that value the whole human being. The two fields also share some of the same personalities, pioneers of the modern dance movement such as those in the following listing have contributed to the field of somatics. While not all of these individual may not strictly be considered somatics pioneers, their influence is significant.”

(Mangione, 1993) p. 27

She lists: Francois Delsarte (1811 – 1871), Emile Jacques-Dalcroze (1865 – 1950), Rudolf Laban (1879 - 1958), Isadora Duncan (1878 – 1927), Mary Wigman (1886 – 1973). These artists helped to set the stage for the emergence of somatic movement as a vital force in our current world. They were shaping the culture in which the primary somatic pioneers were working. As dancers they were breaking rules; as people they were reintroducing non-Cartesian models. I will make a case later in this paper for how dance and “somatics” remain on the fringes of academic inquiry, perhaps precisely because they are of the body, and included elements that are ineffable.

Considered the father of European modern dance, Rudolf von Laban (1879 – 1954) was born in what is today Bratislava, Slovakia. He developed a system of movement exploration that epitomized freedom of expression through the human body. Even though Laban did not experience a bodily injury or physical limitation, he did feel confined by the pressures of his father to enter the military, and in his adulthood by the constraints of

working under the rules of Hitler and the exigencies of the world war. Laban spent many of his late adolescent years in Eastern Europe where he was exposed to Eastern forms of movement – those of Europe as well as those that originated in Asia. Laban went on to study dance, and to create dances and schools of dance that valued personal expression. He also developed a system of movement notation called Labanotation. Under house arrest in Berlin, where he had been working for (check accurate title) the Third Reich's State Opera, he defected to Paris during the International Dance Competition and lived there until he moved to England with the help of some of his former students. In England he established the Art of Movement Center. During World War II he was called upon to analyze movement in industry. The components of movement that he defined became the basis for Laban Movement Analysis and numerous other forms of movement analysis.³ This work has since been applied to physical education as well as to health improvement.

Laban was teacher to Mary Wigman and Kurt Joos, a peer of Emile Jaques-Dalcroze (Bachmann, 1993). While he lived in Paris he was influenced by the teachings of the already deceased Delsartes (Hodgson, 2001). He was also aware of Isadora Duncan, another great founder of expressive movement and modern dance. Duncan bridged from America to Europe while Martha Graham stayed purely American. However Graham did come to perform at Dartington Hall while Laban lived in England. The early 1900s proved a rich time for artistic breakthroughs. The somatic pioneers highlighted a key facet – paying attention to the body in all sorts of movement endeavors – acting, martial arts, health, exercise, physical education. It is this history of diversity across numerous bodily, creative and scientific professions that engenders the continuing interdisciplinary nature of somatic education. What is notable is that the movement experts were often artists/performers as well as also being trained as scientists.

Life Stories of the Somatic Pioneers: A brief history

Frederick Matthias Alexander (1869 – 1955) began to question deeply the cause of his vocal problems and wondered if they might have something to do with how he was using his vocal apparatus and his body. Through intensive periods of personal exploration he found a method for "changing and controlling reaction" which he then taught in Melbourne and in Sydney. He also returned to performing. Alexander continued to perform and teach in

³ Movement Pattern Analysis; Movement Signature Analysis; Action Profiling; Kestenberg Movement Profile

Australia and New Zealand. He then moved to London, and finally to the United States. While not much is written about how F. M. Alexander may have been influenced by his childhood in Tasmania, or his experiences in New Zealand, these were influences replete with exposure to non-Western values and concepts. Learning through global travel or study was notable amongst other somatic movement leaders as well. One can speculate that being an outsider in a new place might intensify one's powers of observation and self-reflection.

Moshe Feldenkrais, Ph.D. (1904 – 1984) also traveled through and lived in different countries and continents, studied in France, and was pushed to reaching new levels of awareness during World War II. He was born in Russia and emigrated to Palestine at the age of thirteen, traveling by caravan with his family. Feldenkrais studied engineering and earned his doctorate in physics at the Sorbonne. It was in Paris that he excelled in the martial art of jujitsu, later becoming one of the first Westerner to earn a black belt in Judo; he subsequently become a teacher of Judo. First injured playing soccer, he had a knee re-injury, while working with anti-submarine research in England during the war. His knee could not be healed, even with the help of surgery.

Feldenkrais was motivated to explore his own body to find out what the troublesome issues were. This inward road of exploring the body grew, in part, out of his interest in auto-suggestion, self-image and the workings of the unconscious mind. During the process of self-exploration he developed the two aspects of the Feldenkrais method (Awareness through Movement and Functional Integrations) incorporating principles from physics, Judo and human development. He studied with Professor Kano, the originator of Judo, and earned his Black Belt in 1936. He developed his method by working with all kinds of people with a wide range of learning needs, from infants with Cerebral Palsy to leading theatrical and musical performers.

Like Alexander and Feldenkrais, Mabel Todd author of *The Thinking Body* (1937) and *The Hidden You* was also interested in improving had to contend with bodily limitations. She had a paralyzing accident and was told she would not walk again. Unwilling to give up, Todd used thinking processes to heal herself, learning to walk again by developing imagery about the anatomically balanced use of the body. She speculated that vocal problems were often due to bad posture and that a psychophysical or psychophysiological approach might be of help.^[1] With this hypothesis Todd began to study the mechanics of the skeletal structure, and she applied her discoveries in her studios of “Natural Posture” in New York and Boston.

Her imagery resulted in a walk that was an improvement over her pre-accident gait.

Born in Germany, in the same year as Feldenkrais, Gerda Alexander (1904 – 1994) also founded a somatic discipline – Eutony (Eutonie), now referred to as Gerda Alexander Eutony (GAE). Unlike the other somatic educators cited above, G. Alexander’s protégés take a Eurocentric stance: They make the following explicit statement about her work and its influences. “*The method developed completely from the western culture area.*” Her work reveals a strong European lineage. She studied with Jacques Dalcroze⁴ and integrated her interest in the creative self-discovery of each person body-mind tonus into a holistic approach used in diverse educational settings. Eutony teaches deep internal awareness that also helps one sense the outer environment fully. It is interesting to note that GAE was the first somatic discipline to be accepted by the World Health Organization (in 1987) as a type of alternative health care (now referred to as Complementary and Alternative Medicine - CAM). (Chrisman, Frey n.d., ASEGA, 2003). In GAE, students are invited to sense their muscles, skin, or bones -- literally any part of the body and to connect it to their feelings.

Charlotte Selver helped shape the work of her teacher, Elsa Gindler (1885 – 1961). Charlotte Selver, (1901-2003) was the person, together with her husband Charles Brooks, who named “Sensory Awareness.” Selver cites Elsa as her primary teacher; she also refers to the importance of learning from other great teachers. She had the opportunity to learn in person from various great thinkers from East and West, Suzuki Roshi (Zen master), Suzuki Daishetz (scholar), Korzybski (General Semantics) and Ram Dass. (yogi). (Laeng-Gilliatt (n.d.))

The underlying theory and practices for Sensory Awareness originated with Elsa Gindler (1885 – 1961) and Heinrich Jacoby Gimmler in Germany around 1910. Gindler's own experience of recovering from tuberculosis – cultivating such an awareness of her breathing that she could actually rest her diseased lung and allow it to heal -- led her to develop the somatic work she called Arbeit am Menschen, or "Work on the Whole Person." Her training was in Gymnastik (Jahn’s work), yet she addressed the physical exercises in a new way, with an emphasis on mental concentration while breath, relaxation and tension were explored. Among her students were Carola Speads and Charlotte Selver, who both escaped Germany and brought the work to the United States. Selver brought the work to the U.S. in 1938, where she eventually called it Sensory Awareness. She influenced

⁴ Suzanne Perrotet, dance partner and mother of three with Rudolf Laban, was also a teacher of Dalcroze Eurhythmics.

Ilse Middendorf and Marion Rosen through her teachings as well (Haag 2002).

Bess Mensendieck, M.D. (1864-1957) influences combined medicine, art and an understanding of Gymnastik. Her art form was sculpture so it had both tactile and visual elements. With this integration she developed a system of over 200 exercises for executing movement (often in front of a mirror with minimal clothing) in a correct manner to improve habits and functioning. Her work is found in physiotherapy, occupational therapy, dance, and osteopathy, especially in Europe. (Johnson, 1994)

Ilse Middendorf's primary teacher as a young woman was Dora Menzler however Middendorf was a student of Gindler's. She became a teacher of the Mastanang Method and was mentored by Cornelius Veening who was connected to Heier and thereby to Jung. The methods of Kallmayer and Mensendieck were in her world so she was aware of their practices. She developed work with natural breath "The Experience of Breath," to make room for the essence of a person to unfold and develop.

Ida Rolf (1896 – 1979) was born in New York City in the Bronx. The inspiration for her work springs from exposure to eastern thinking, and to great thinkers (Pierre Bernard, Fritz Perls, Sam Fulkerson & Korzybski) as well as the serendipity of being able to work as a woman at Rockefeller Institute due to WW2. She also had the intent to heal not just the symptoms but the causes (she saw causes as multiple and related to "the circular process that do not act in the body but are the body." Johnson, P 174). Her work grew out of the sciences and alternative approaches to healing. She obtained her Ph.D. in biological chemistry. As a scientist investigating the body and health she was exposed to osteopathy and homeopathy, and she developed an interest in yoga, the Alexander technique and osteopathy in pursuit of healing for her own body. She learned from the Hindu philosophy that "when morals are built from the body's behavior you get a moral structure and behavior which respect the rights and privileges of other individuals."

What emerged from these profoundly creative and investigative somatic pioneers became a "somatic canon" inclusive of theories, methods (explorations and exercises), philosophies, and a process of inquiry. By delving into personal bodily experiences new meanings about being human and potentialities for health and life were codified into educational programmes in diverse parts of the world.

And there were others. There are over 37 different somatic movement programmes today. Françoise Mezieres, Milton Trager and Marion Rosen are three other important early pioneers. The combination of being active

movers and students of the human body who were exposed to physical traumas motivated each to explore how to work with touch and movement to heal. Trager and Rosen also developed movement systems – Trager Mentastics and Rosen Movement. While some dancers have trained to do Mezieres, Trager and Rosen’s work they have had strong impact in dance curricula as of yet. More of their stories will be told in the future no doubt, in large part because of protégés such as Therese Bertherat, Martha Partridge, and Linda Chrisman.

New Generations of Somatic Leaders: Dancers Motivated by Dance, Global Exchange and their Students

Dance excites people to explore movement expression, deepen creative skills, and investigate the body kinesthetically. More than a dozen more somatic disciplines were born from the exploration of dance and somatic education; numerous somatic founders began their professional lives as dancers. Discovery through internalized and conscious exploration of a physical or emotional challenge, supported at times by exposure to cultures or thinking that value “diving inward,” is a theme that repeats itself through the generations.

Following in the footsteps of her teacher, Rudolf Laban, Irmgard Bartenieff (1900 – 1981) was a dancer who helped to pioneer several new fields – dance therapy, dance anthropology, Laban Movement Analysis, and her own Somatic system called Bartenieff Fundamentals of Movement. She was born in Berlin, studied dance and movement analysis with Laban, and performed dance with her husband Igor Bartenieff. While in Germany, Bartenieff studied Bindewebegung Massage, known in the United States as Connective Tissue Therapy. Bartenieff experienced an abrupt dislocation from her home in 1936 when she and her family caught one of the last boats out of Nazi Germany as her husband Igor was Jewish. Upon arrival in the United States, they did not feel welcome in the dance community, which was then dominated by Martha Graham.⁵ The lack of work in dance, of necessity, opened another door. Both Igor and Irmgard Bartenieff studied to become physical therapists. In time Irmgard found her way back into the world of dance in New York by teaching dancers, as well as other professionals, the Effort/Shape concepts of Laban Movement Analysis (LMA) at the Dance Notation Bureau. She also taught classes in “correctives” that evolved into the Bartenieff Fundamentals of Movement.

⁵ Agnes de Mille would later make a point of stating that Graham was not influenced by Laban in her explorations into self-expression through new approaches to dance. (Graham Co Programme notes 1998)

Although the term “corrective” reflected an intent to find correct posture and movement efficiency Irmgard always taught through improvisational exploration and somatic inquiry emphasizing attention to breath and developmental processes. Like her somatic peers, Bartenieff remained inquisitive throughout her life and continued to study diverse movement forms. She discovered a Chi Kung teacher while in her seventies, and found in this Chinese discipline a key to her own graceful aging; Chi Kung aligned with her Laban-based philosophy of integrating the functional and the expressive in movement, and her principle of finding gradated rotation in movement. (Bartenieff, 1980: 19). Bartenieff’s innovations were embraced within her programme training Certified Movement Analysts. It was her students within the CMA programme that encouraged her to name her own work Bartenieff Fundamentals and created the Bartenieff Instructor Training.

Bartenieff’s story demonstrates how experience as a dancer can support somatic investigation and become instantly applicable in dance classes. This was also true of Elaine Summers a student of Selver and Speads. Bonnie Bainbridge Cohen, as well as the dancers Emilie Conrad, Sondra Fraleigh, Anna Halprin, Joan Skinner, and the late Nancy Topf have all played pivotal roles as leaders who bridged the field of somatics and dance. On their own and with their students, each has taken bodily inquiry to new levels of human potential amongst expressive physical performers and as fully engaged human beings.

Elaine Summers developed Kinetic Awareness when osteoarthritis began to limit her dancing. She sought the help of Charlotte Selver and Carola Speads, who taught her a somatic approach. Prompted by her great drive and by a dancers natural inclination to creatively explore motion she delved into kinesthetic investigation through movement and different positions in space and discovered principles and techniques that helped her continue to dance. Most of her techniques use small balls as props and as a key to slowing down comfortably on the floor and releasing each part of the body into gravity more fully.

Bonnie Bainbridge Cohen, occupational therapist, Certified Laban Movement Analyst, and dancer founded the system of Body-Mind Centering® (BMC®), in part to be able to understand and explain what it is she did intuitively with her occupational therapy patients. She felt that she understood the mental-emotional aspect of her holistic work, but at the same time she wanted to give voice to the particular way in which she touched clients. Like other somatic leaders she has spent a good deal of her professional life exploring how best to transfer this knowledge to her

students. While her training in Laban Movement Analysis (LMA) helps to organize and to confirm some of her discoveries Bainbridge Cohen cites over forty people in the “Lineage of BMC – Homage to my teachers” -- an appendix in her book *Sensing Feeling and Action*. This lineage includes professionals from the United States, Asia and Europe. Bainbridge Cohen studied yoga in New York, and practiced Aikido and Katsengen-Undo in the USA and in Japan, and Sondra Fraleigh studied and practiced Butoh in Japan. She also studied with and taught for Erick Hawkins and has collaborated over the years with key players in the Contact Improvisation community (Lisa Nelson, Steve Paxton, Nancy Stark Smith). Indeed as editors of Contact Quarterly Nelson and Stark Smith were first to publish descriptions of Cohen’s work (Republished with Bainbridge Cohen as author).

Sondra Horton Fraleigh was born in Utah into a Mormon culture. As an adult she found new beliefs through the exploration of Zen Buddhism, Butoh, and the work of Feldenkrais. A renowned scholar and author in the field of phenomenology, especially as experienced through dance she developed Shin Somatics as part of her EastWest Somatics as an integration of these many strong forces. She cites Mary Wigman, Rosen’s use of breath to access emotions, Ann Rodiger’s Alexander lessons, and Maxine Sheets as other influences. She values effective communication, and integrative bodywork and meditation as well (..., 2003).

While many somatic leaders were influenced by Asian practices, Emile Conrad, founder of Continuum, was exposed to new paths of expression through her Afro-Caribbean experiences. Conrad’s travels to the Caribbean (..., 2002) were a primary source in the development of the work. As a dancer studying with Katherine Dunham, then through living in Haiti, she (like Cohen), experienced and developed inroads to cellular awareness through movement. Her own experience of oppression within her family fueled her motivation to “break free” by means of dance and movement.

Anna Halprin, choreographer, performer, healer, and affirmer of other people’s self-healing potential not only used somatic focus as the basis of her art-making but, together with her daughter Daria Halprin, developed a model of health-supporting exploration that places their work, too, in the domain of somatic movement education and therapy. Their work is also part of the field called Expressive Arts Therapy or Creative Arts Therapy. A key influence in choosing to work with emotional expression was her work with Fritz Perls. However it was her dance training with Margaret D’Houbler, whom Halprin likes to call “the mother of somatics,” that first supported Halprin’s philosophy of holism. D’Houbler asked her always to look for the

meaning and expression of movement. Influenced by the Halprin model, several other somatic movement programmes choose to integrate expressive arts therapy processes into their training programmes such as those of Daniel Levin, Alice Rudkowski, and Kay Miller.

Joan Skinner founded Skinner Releasing while serving as Chair of the Dance Department at the University of Washington. Her work with imagination and visualization builds on elements of Mabel Todd work to which she was exposed through her first dance teacher during childhood. As a Graham and Cunningham trained dancer she was drawn to work on her own to find an antidote to “pulling up,” “holding on,” and “gripping.” She also had an injury in 1954 that spawned an even deeper self-investigation and led her to study the Alexander Technique and apply her experience to ballet barre. As she went on to teach her discoveries she would use imagery, and the images became so powerful a change agent that she developed them to the point that imagery then became the signature of her method. .

Nancy Topf (1942 -1998) also trained with Joan Skinner, along with Marsha Paludan as Joan’s assistant, and Mary Fulkerson, Pamela Matt, and John Rolland as classmates. When Skinner left the University of Illinois to go to The University of Washington in Seattle, Topf went on to study with Barbara Clark, who was schooled in the work of Mabel Todd and like Skinner lived in Urbana. While Todd’s approach was deeply founded in anatomical imagery, Topf became known for honing in on the importance of the center of the body and the work of the psoas in efficient human expression. Since Topf’s untimely death in a Swiss Air flight in 1998 graduates of her programme have joined forces to continue, formalize, and promote the Topf Technique. It became an official member of ISMETA in 1995. This information was gathered through personal communications with her sister, dance educator, Peggy Schwartz.

Others can be included in this roster of somatic leaders with a history in dance. Judith Aston reaches out primarily to the health and fitness community but she too, began dancing as a child, and to continued to study dance into her college years. At UCLA Aston studied with Rudolf Laban’s daughter, Juana De Laban, and with Valerie Hunt, both schooled in Laban Movement Analysis. She also worked with dance therapist Mary Stack Whitehouse. Each of these mentors encouraged finding her own answers rather than studying their systems. After incurring spinal injuries due to a car accident she studied with Ida Rolf. Aston helped expand upon the Mensendieck based movement programme that Dr. Rolf was offering. Aston’s work together with some contributions from Dorothy Nolte helped

to shape what is now called Rolf Movement but began as “Movement Analysis.” Judith Aston said:

Many people took the Movement Analysis course: Bob Prichard, Don Hanlon Johnson, Mark Reese, Tom Myers... in fact everyone who trained from 1971 to 1977 was required to take that course. Bill Williams, Roger Pierce, Joseph Heller, Annie McCombs Duggan, Heather Wing, Louis Schultz, and many others took my Movement Certification training and in fact took classes for years. I think we were called “the dancers.” I was offended then – *now* I realize my highest goal is to continue dancing through this life and beyond. (Pare, 2001:7- 8)

Since that time (1977) Aston has integrated her love of dance, fitness and somatic awareness into her own work called Aston Patterning. Similarly Dorothy Nolte, Ph.D. has gone on to develop Structural Awareness: Nolte System of Movement Education.

From Mensendieck to Rolf to Aston and Nolte is a sample of how somatic movement systems have evolved over the generations. The work of Feldenkrais is reframed by the teaching of dancer Anat Baniel. Ilana Rubinfeld combined Alexander, Feldenkrais and Gestalt principles to devise Rubinfeld Synergy. Key ideas are reshaped and added to new ones. The end of the twentieth century saw the burgeoning of dozens of new somatic movement systems. Just from Bonnie Bainbridge Cohen alone five new systems in four different countries have been born – my own, Dynamic Embodiment Somatic Movement Therapy Training, Jacques van Eijden’s Somatic Coaching, Suzanne Rivers Global Somatics, Linda Hartley’s Institute of Integrative Bodywork and Movement Therapy, Horst Viral’s Somatic Movement-Art Training, and Mark Taylor and Katy Dymoke’s BodyMind Movement Certification programmes. So, each programme blends influences from other studies and experiences in the founders’ lives. Dynamic Embodiment uses BMC and LMA/BF as key tools. Jacques van Eijden formerly on the faculty in the dance department of the Amsterdam Theatre school teaches principles that can be used across disciplines. Linda Hartley has forged a path that includes deep understanding of psychotherapy while Suzanne Rivers brings her own Native American and intuitive knowledge into her training process. Eric Franklin’ and Susan Klein cite BodyMind Centering as among their influences. Both studied Bartenieff work as well, Klein in more depth. Indeed one of Franklin’s book uses a primary Bartenieff concept – Dynamic Alignment - as its title. Franklin’s programme is not a Somatic Movement Therapy or Education certification but rather combines Bartenieff, BMC techniques and Ideokinesis to

strengthen the dance experience. BodyMind Dancing© is another case in point of using dance to teach somatic concepts that can be used during any part of the day and also training dancers to be more somatically aware while dancing.

Perhaps the most striking feature of the historical emergence of each of these somatic movement disciplines is that they defined and now share a theme that there are many possibilities, no one truth, and always the option to make choices. Whether this discovery came primarily from the major historical shifts apparent during this time period, or from the discoveries in response to personal injury or illness that the medical profession had no answer for, or from having been educated to accept a non-Cartesian point of view, or a combination of these factors all these progenitors spent long periods, mostly alone, engaged in somatic research. These journeys of somatic exploration may not be uncommon but these leaders chose to go on to articulate “the process” and often worked with their students to codify a method, or a series of movement explorations, or a philosophy of how to be in the world with the physical body.

Dance programmemes and somatic psychology degrees have spawned the growth of masters theses and doctoral dissertations. A sampling of these programmemes include: dance science (University of Oregon; University of Maryland), dance/choreography (State University of New York-Brockport, The Ohio State University), dance education (Temple University, University of Central at Lancashire, University of North Carolina-Greensboro), somatic psychology (Naropa, California Institute of Integral Studies, and Santa Barbara Graduate Institute), interdisciplinary and liberal studies (International University of Professional Studies, SUNY-Empire State College).

Dance settings have been especially potent for the teaching of “somatics” inclusive of somatic research methods. These classrooms value experiential learning – learning by doing, being of the body. Since the advent of modern dance there is a precedent to spend time on the floor, to release and relax with the support of the ground and to build upward from there. Somatic education has been equally potent for dance by helping performers to heal from injuries and enhancing performance. The exchange between somatic education and dance education is particularly important. Within the Limon company itself Ann Vachon (ideokinesis), Jennifer Scanlon (Alexander Technique) both integrated somatic studies into their teaching. Eva Karzcag, when in the Trisha Brown company, was another seminal teacher of choreography and dance using Alexander principles. Trisha Brown credits long-term study of Alexander Technique and Kinetic

Awareness with Elaine Summers for alternatives to how to hone her body for dancing (Griffin,2002:30). For periods, Trisha Brown's company members studied the Klein Technique, a dance method that was devised in large part from interaction with Collette Barry, client of Irmgard Bartenieff and from Klein's direct Laban/Bartenieff studies. Contemporary dance is marked by Bartenieff's "Big X floor work" even though many teachers are unaware of its beginnings. Susan Klein and Barbara Mahler studio and the teaching of Laura Glenn and JoAnna Mendl Shaw at Julliard are among the early Bartenieff protégés. Janet Kaylo's arrival at the Laban Centre brought Bartenieff's work there. Glenna Batson, Irene Dowd and Pamela Matt are dance scholars who have taught the Ideokinesis work extensively within the context of dance. Feldenkrais has influenced dance pedagogy around the world. This is a small sampling of the intersections between dance performers and teachers and somatic practices.

It is no wonder that dance departments have become academic homes for somatic work. Somatic psychology departments have also been important but dance programmes are much stronger advocates of whole body kinesthetic learning, providing courses that allow enough time for somatic exploration. Both types of departments provide classes, and also support publishing, journals themes, and conferences. Key conferences and journals that cross-fertilize dance and somatic education have been sponsored by the Congress on Research in Dance, National Dance Association in the United States, CENIDI DANZA, the National Center for Fine Arts (INBA) and the National School of Dance in Mexico City, Palatine Higher Education Academy, Taipei National University of the Arts, the University of Quebec/Montreal, and Victoria University of Technology in Melbourne, among others. The international visibility of the work is further witnessed through programmes at the University of Haifa, the Paris Conservatory, the Laban Centre, The TheatreSchool in Amsterdam, Western Front in Vancouver, TanzFabrik in Berlin, Moving Arts in Koln, and Universidad Javeriana and Academia Superior de Artes de Bogota, Colombia. The State University of New York has been pivotal in providing academic support for dancers who also want to gain somatic certification while studying at the university level. The Laban/Bartenieff training, East/West Somatics and Dynamic Embodiment SMTT somatic movement education and therapy training programmes all have links to graduate level degrees. The DE-SMTT is now linked to doctoral studies as well.

What remains disturbing to me is how marginalized both somatic education and dance still are. One question is whether an affiliation with "somatics" strengthens the position of dance in the academy or vice versa.

Certainly dance's position is growing stronger through its visibility on the front page of art sections of daily and weekly papers, the existence of doctoral programmes in dance, the presence of dance scholars in interdisciplinary plenary and conferences.

Oddly, the research on creativity does not adequately balance the notable meagerness of kinesthetic experience in education within other fields including those focusing on human expression or movement – from kinesiology to cultural studies to psychology. Most remain unaware of somatic education. The dance community has heavily cited the work of Howard Gardner for studying the genius of Martha Graham and bringing awareness to “kinesthetic intelligence. (Gardner, 1993).” However, Csikszentmihalyi's research has not included studies of dancers for their creativity as much as for the ability to enter into “the flow.” The creativity research includes interviews with musicians and visual artists along with scientists, writers, and inventors (1996). Two statements in his early treatises may point to why. He strongly contrasts creativity with “sex, sports, music and religious ecstasy,” pointing out that they are similar in that both give us the feeling of living life to its fullest but different because they are only fleeting. (Csikszentmihalyi, 1996:2). Perhaps related to this, he does share his awareness that creativity research has had little to say about the more difficult aspects of human experience. “So we are in the paradoxical situation that novelty is more obvious in domains that are often relatively trivial but easy to measure; whereas in domains that are more essential novelty is very difficult to determine. There can be agreement on whether a new computer game, rock song, or economic formula is actually novel, and therefore creative, [it's] less easy to agree on the novelty of an act of compassion or of an insight into human nature.” (Csikszentmihalyi, 1996.29). Given that somatic education is perhaps even more elusive than dance it is no wonder that it too has not had a great deal of research attention. However perhaps his collaboration with Isabela ...will shift that.

However, there is a developing rigor in the disciplines of dance and somatic education. Judith Lynne Hanna (2008) makes an exhaustive case for the role of dance in education based on research and practice. The tautology that the discipline of dance strengthens the body and soul is an informal acknowledgement of the capacity of dance to train rigorously, developing one's ability to do more. Most dancers have carried two jobs, two educational majors, two simultaneous projects, and/or two roles within their organization (performer and fundraiser). Biographies provides accounts of dance increasing discipline as well as health and vitality (Nagrin). The somatic paradigm supports a hypothesis that fortifying the bodily expands

the mind beckons somatic dance professionals to become strong of body and mind as well. Within the contexts of the academy more somatic research can be shaped with this fortitude.

Both the movement practice itself and marginalization within society has taught the dancer to work hard, to survive. Dance as a profession can be debilitating. If dance is experienced through classes or performances in an authoritarian and demeaning manner it can be injurious and life-diminishing. Since the 1970's more and more dance professionals are discovering the usefulness of somatic education in softening these deleterious challenges.

The marriage of dance education and somatic education has seen numerous benefits – tips for longevity and the honing of our living instrument, inroads to creative process (Calamoneri, 2006, Fraleigh, 2003; Shapiro 1997), empowerment through self-authority (Green,), and increasing communication (Fraleigh, 2003; Halprin, 2003, Summers 2003). The world of somatic education has secrets to living life more fully – keys to finding and knowing when we are “in the flow.” Somatic awareness could be used for a step-by-step manual to document that entry into the flow. Hence, this potent tool for living may well become of increasing interest to academic inquiry, especially as its impact on modern culture becomes more known.

Hopefully these stories about men and women of the world of somatic movement education and therapy who have broadened our view of health to include bridges between the medical and the intuitive - the scientific and body wisdom - will invigorate those of you on this quest. It is striking to me how unique each of them was or is, and that the time was ripe for so many individuals to immerse themselves, independently, in such similar pursuits. This to me is creativity in action. The dawning of the field of somatic education seems to fit well within the parameters of being “Creative:” the burgeoning of a novel idea or phenomenon by a person (or persons), in interaction with a culture that also has a field of experts that recognizes, challenges and promotes it. That field of experts is only just now standing fully; the culture was ripe 100 years ago and the creative individuals are continuing to be born. The dancer of the 21st century is well poised to be creative, support the development of a creative culture, and contribute generously to somatic scholarship.

Since somatic inquiry and dance share ineffable qualities our challenge is to add to the canon of research methods that can speak to these more elusive domains. How brilliant and prescient Feldenkrais was when he entitled his last book *The Elusive Obvious* (1989). Human nature, the body, the sensation of living, are so obvious and yet so elusive. Dance and Somatic Education share the gauntlet: how to study and canonize the

‘elusive obvious,’ and bring forth the depth of knowledge that emerges from each field, separately and together, out of the ranks of “fleeting moments” and into the ranks of ‘the Creative,’ with a capital ‘C.’ Journals that print this research will play a critical role.

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Appendix:

Interview Instrument:

Thank you for reviewing these questions.

1. What is your history relative to the work you do? What experiences were key in setting you on a path of developing a system of working with movement that you could share with others?
2. Have you had any important mentors?
3. Do you consider your work a somatic movement program? ? Do you consider it a part of somatic education? Somatic movement therapy? Another term?
4. What are some distinguishing features of your work and your training program? (Feel free to attach materials.)
5. How has your experience in dance informed the development of your work and your training program (if at all)? What were your dance influences? How did your experiences as a dancer (as a child and/or adult) influence your choice to become involved in somatic work?
6. How do you perceive the role of dance in SME&T? Is your pedagogical style /approach related to your dance background?
7. Is there a particular way that you choose to use language that impacts upon your work?
8. Who comes to your programs? From where? What type of people do your graduates work with? Is there a special role for dancers?
9. Tell us anything else that strikes you about the development of your work. What excites you most about it now? What is frustrating if anything?
10. What are/were some supports for getting your training program off the ground and flying? Are there any limiting factors you would like to share? Is there any way that an affiliation with dance or being a dancer has inhibited or enhanced the development of your work? (Did knowledge of or experiences in and with dance ever get in the way of developing your system?)
11. What do you feel are important next steps for the field of somatic movement education and therapy?
12. Do you have any comments on how this work impacts the international scene and how international perspectives affect your work?

13. Are there any socio-political concerns regarding this work that you would like to address?
(e.g., How is somatic work useful to the culture at large today (American, Western European, global society) today? What gets in its way? How does somatic work interface with the culture in your perspective? Does it have a relationship with violence, war, peace? Is there a social change component of your work? Do you have concerns about multi-cultural relationships? Do you present new models of relating?)
14. Please feel free to add any additional ideas, experiences, comments that you would like to share.