

# Editor Note

## DANCING ALL OVER THE PLACE

**B**y the time we finished working on this issue, even the period at the end of the sentence seemed like a place to me. A tiny planet on the page—mysterious and possibly inhabitable.

I find my place to write this ed note by driving twenty minutes out of town, taking each successive turn further off the main road and pulling over into a dirt turnoff. A five-minute walk through the woods deposits me at the top of an open meadow, an overlook. My eyes and soul are suddenly treated to a large, quiet, early spring expanse of rolling hills and distant mountains. Birds to the left (*eee dooo, eee dooo*), sun on my back, view to the front, and a thickening silence all around.

heart beat  
bird song  
deep breath  
ahhhhh

For the last few years, as an experiment in extending our dance and awareness practice beyond the frame of my three-week January workshop, I've been proposing a "6 p.m. rendezvous" to the group. The instructions: For three weeks following the workshop, at 6 p.m. local time, every day, whatever you're doing—*arrive energetically* (bring your attention into the present moment), *arrive physically* (notice your physical sensations), *telescope your awareness* (zoom into the body and out into the environment), *notice the composition of the moment* (sensations, forms, sounds, timings, relationships), *harvest* your impression, then *share* it via email with the others.

This year, the 6 p.m. rendezvous took off—five-minute reports came in from a Bordeaux teahouse sitting on red cushions drinking deep-red tea; a cold bike ride in northern Germany; telescoping awareness on Broadway and 92nd St. in NYC; and others. I started to see how the practice blurs the line between dancing and living, between the studio/theater and wherever one might be. Composition is everywhere, improvisation inevitable, the body a

lucky ground, the senses a miraculous natural composer.

As the shadow of a large pine tree begins to overtake my sunny spot at the overlook, I consider relocating. When I finally get up and drag jacket, shirt, coffee, and bag ten feet over to the next sunny patch, a loud burst of bird chirps erupts from the nearby woods, acknowledging my change of place or rather my inadvertent encroachment on theirs. Within a minute, I'm lying back writing again, to the tune of a buzzing fly, a distant plane, a passing breeze. I like this place.

Next morning, 8 a.m., county courthouse, jury pool room. The TV is on. This morning I'm a citizen doing my civic duty. We are a pretty good cross-section of the population in western Mass.—old and young, mostly white. All chairs face the TV, though half of us are reading parenting magazines, newspapers, books, knitting, writing in spiral notebooks (me).

What might dance mean to this group of people? I fantasize going up and turning off the tube and... Just as I think this, the jury officer gets to it first and begins his daily performance. "Good Morning!" he starts cheerfully. We learn that the most important things to remember about serving on a jury are: Be Open Minded, Apply the Law, and Participate. Sounds like instructions for an improvisation....

Two hours later, I'm standing at the counter stretching and writing when the jury officer returns and tells us there will indeed be a trial—a criminal case of a young woman accused of assault and battery in a bar. As the thirty-five potential jurors file into the courtroom, I feel the quick penetrating gaze of the two lawyers, the judge, and the defendant sizing up each of us as we pass by.

In the five minutes between when they call me to sit in one of the six seats



reserved for the jury and when they dismiss me (because I'm a dancer? have long hair? am wearing orange socks?)—the phrase "decide her fate" comes to mind. I feel the impact that one person's decision can have on another person's life. I hold this next to all the decisions I make in my life and work. This gives me pause.

heart beat  
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This Place issue, created from Andrea's vision and her gracious collaboration with Melinda, Heidi, Lila, and me, takes us on a journey from presence into the dancing world.

Whether it's our desire to take dancing with us wherever we go or a creative solution to the fact of diminishing resources for dance, we do seem to be dancing all over the place these days. We're spreading out, digging in, looking for and finding more places in ourselves and in the world to dance. In this issue alone, we're dancing in tutus on tennis courts and in trees; in pristine studios in the snowy woods on smooth heated wooden floors; on concrete floors in an Estonian art gallery; down country lanes; on the internet; in front of cameras in the wilderness; under desks at the CQ office; in living rooms on tatami mats outside of Barcelona; under tents in the hot open desert of Nevada; and last, but not least, in our minds.

For me, dancing itself is a place—a portable country I carry with me, ready to be entered at any time, wherever I am, as often as possible.

Nancy Stark Smith

Field Hockey Training from the Tutu Project (2004). photo © Ben Brouwer

# Editor Note



## Excursion (CQ office)

This issue of *CQ* focuses on place—both the place of dance in culture and the effects of place on our dancing bodies. In my last investigative writing, I looked seriously at the science that underlies our perception of body and place and concluded that the body is Earth: our bones, blood, and breath are the minerals, water, and air around us—not separate but same. Place has everything to do with our dancing. And we don't create movement, we participate in an already-moving universe.

Now, on the other side of that ten-year writing adventure, what's this issue of *CQ* about? First, it's a collaboration with cohorts Nancy, Heidi, Melinda, and Lila—extending my views. A year ago last January, Nancy asked, "Are you still interested in being a guest editor?" What does that mean, I wondered? As we ramped up our enthusiasm over dinner, our partners—Steve and Mike—shook their heads and settled down in their seats. They know what collaboration really means: lots of time, energy, and determination to make something new.

"You jump," says Nancy. She is talking about my mind. We are sitting on tall stools around the *CQ* table, and I am getting lost in details; leap instead from idea to idea. I think: I know where I am going, I just don't know where I am. And Nancy knows where she is and likes to trace each nuance along the path. In fact (we laugh), both of us can vision projects and attend to detail; we

just have different styles. And this collision between "what I expect and what the other expects is the definition of dynamic," as Hubert says in "Phenomenological Space" in this issue. It's what makes a product lively.

I know my process with writing and dancing: I write to learn, I move to know. So it is in my early morning studio time that I find Bonnie's embryological breathing inside my dancing, stand up with presence at Janet's invitation, and climb my feet up the wall in Sara and Patrik's off-balance handstand. In other words, the material begins "tuning" me, as Otto describes in his essay on dance, place, and video. Along the way, shorter essays fall into categories of the elements: Gabrielle dancing in water, Martin with the winds, Simon through the woods, Otto on the soil, Brendan inside a metal ship, and Richard into ether—on the web. We're missing fire just as Bebe's "hot" journal notes arrive. Throughout, there are emails flying to and from Alaska, France, Denmark, Germany, Finland, and around the U.S., enlivening the issue's "placeness." Many choices are to be made, as Theodore demonstrates in his essay on layers of mind.

As Nancy and I continue our dance, she puts words back in a text that I've just edited out, while I insist on adding her history of contact to an already-full issue. After five hours of talking, I'm rolling on the physioball and grabbing for corn chips; but by hour fourteen of that same day, we're both in the groove of an ever-expanding relationship with the material. I have a strong capacity for focus, but when Nancy says that the origins of contact were "very disciplined," that you

learned to "pay attention for long periods of time," that it's a "kind of mindfulness practice," it's true. Her contact history clearly underpins operations at *CQ*, evidenced by thirty-one years of sustained productive output and lots of partnered dances.

Although obvious in retrospect, basic guidelines for a *CQ* guest editor became clearer as we worked: each issue draws material from its readership; the focus is on articles written from the body, not about the body; there is an intention to preserve the thought process of each writer; and there is an underlying attention to dance as an art form. I learned much about the moving mind, the engagement of community, and the artistry embedded in contact and the magazine. There is integrity in the fabric of this "vehicle for moving ideas," woven through years of editorial choice-making. Creativity remains at the core—in all its various guises.

This Place issue offers one trek through a vast terrain of movement practices that bring consciousness in this challenging time. It's a collaborative effort involving many artists, including you, the reader. We are each involved, finding shards on our journeys and reporting back to community. So enjoy this issue, write and dance, consider guest editing, send funding, or curate articles by dancers you want to hear from. And yes, Steve and Mike were right to slump and sigh. It takes tremendous commitment to sustain this dance journal, which nourishes community. And now it's April, the red-winged blackbirds have returned to New England, and it's time for a long walk.

Andrea Olsen, Guest Editor