**Vital Signs: poetry, movement and the writing body**

This collaborative enquiry between dancer Sarie Mairs Slee and poet Scott Thurston, explores three key research questions: (1) How can collaboration between dancers and poets investigate both the embodied aspects of language and the power of the body to make meaning? (2) In performance, how might the written word and the act of writing become animated in a movement context? How might movement performances enable poetry spoken aloud to signify poetically, rather than dramatically, and to be integrated with movement? (3) Can an understanding of the *vitality dynamics* of time, space, movement, direction and force (Stern, 2010) help to facilitate interdisciplinary collaboration and to create new forms of transdisciplinary artistic practice?

During the course of our research we developed three key areas of technique: improvised movement and verbalization responding to pre-composed fragments of poetic text; experimentation with textual mark-making as a movement performance using co-composed poetic material; generating choreographed movement phrases within memorized and verbalized co-composed poetic text in performance.

The first key finding from the research was to recognise the utility of Stern’s vitality dynamics in achieving the aesthetic effect of words and movement amounting to more than the sum of their parts – the moment in which movement and text entered into a relationship of equivalence and ‘translatability’ by simultaneously communicating the same underlying vitality dynamics (for example tensing, releasing unfolding and turning). The second key was to recognise the utility of the term syntax as a way of talking about the relationship between movement and text and also between performers, and aligning it with dramaturgical practice. Allowing each set of vitality dynamics to interact and be shaped syntactically and dramaturgically towards meaning has led to a more refined level of decision-making in our practice.

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