



Moving Matters with Kirstie Simson and Andrea Olsen

(automated transcript)

SPEAKERS

Andrea Olsen, Kirstie Simson and Heni Hale

(Introduction: Renée Bellamy speaking in 2021 over spare guitar chords)

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(2022 audio file begins)

Heni Hale

So, welcome I'm Heni from Independent Dance, and I'm delighted to be hosting this evening's talk with Andrea Olsen and Kirstie Simson, and I want to just say a few little biographical words about them which I'm going to be reading from notes. Andrea is a dance artist, author, educator as the professor of dance emeritus at Middlebury College. She's the author of three books, a triad of books some of you will have seen them. One is *Body Stories*: a guide to experiential anatomy, *Body and Earth*: an experiential guide and *The Place of Dance*: a somatic guide to dancing and dance making that she wrote with colleague Caryn McHose. And recent projects include continuing the *Body and Earth*: Seven web-based somatic excursions film project with Scotty Hardwig and Caryn McHose and performing *Awakening Grace* somatic tools. Kirstie I won't read everything but Kirstie - it's great to be welcoming Kirstie back because she had been a regular teacher Independent Dance for many years. And I think someone told me that I think when this building opened, around 2006, Kirstie's was the first workshop that was here, so it's been a long history of working Kirstie with dots and we're delighted to have her back this weekend also leading a workshop. She's been a continuous explosion in the contemporary dance scene bringing audiences into contact with the vitality of pure creation in moment after moment of virtuoso improvisation. She's currently living in Wales, where she returned from being in the US for many years. I don't know what else should I say? I'll let Kirstie speak for herself when she comes. But for now, I think that's probably enough said, I hope you enjoy the talk. Kirstie and Andrea will be entering the stage area in a moment.

Kirstie Simson

Hello Andrea. So, I would just like to begin to take this opportunity of thanking Independent Dance for giving us this opportunity to do this and to welcome you all, both live audience and online. Audience somewhere that is somewhere out there, probably all over the world. And just to give you a little bit of a sense of what we're going to do this evening, so, Andrea and I have met a few times online, and we've come up with a kind of score for the evening. And that will include verbal dialogue with questions and sharing stories, and also some movement dialogue, and that's what we wanted to we wanted to actually you know, feature movement as well. The other thing that I felt was about this was that I've been coming to Independent Dance for many years, and I cannot come here without thinking about a woman called Gill Clarke, who some of you will have known some of you have heard of and she was here for many years and held this space. She gave a tremendous amount to dance, to give her life to dance really. Andrea also knew her. So I wanted to start by also honoring Gill, thanking her for everything she gave to us.

Andrea Olsen

So I'm over here in Northampton, Massachusetts in the US in a snowstorm and this is my creative home, this particular town and place and it was also the home of Nancy Stark Smith who many of you know and have worked with. So I'm taking a moment, Kirstie and I are taking a moment to welcome Nancy, I think she would love this event. And also, if there's someone that you would like to have in the room or in your zoom or in your imagination that can't be with us today. Just take

a second and welcome them into our awareness, into this larger space. And as we do that, just stretching this right around the globe because who knows where people are joining from. So we'll take a moment with that. And Kirstie and I have decided that we'd start with moving because our work begins with movement and we'll be dancing with some music with Pete Kuzma. Thank you, Pete. And we'll see you in a little while. If you're on Zoom and would like to dance in your own space, feel free. If you're in the studio with Kirsty you get the feast of visual and we will be doing some moving later. So here we go.

Kirstie Simson

Well thank you. Thank you. So Andrea and I really never met each other before this. So we've only met virtually, we've never met in person and it all began when I can't remember if I talked to Heni, talked to me about doing an evening talk. And I had an idea I'd like to dialogue with somebody or I had the idea and I was reading your book, Andrea at the time. So after I suggested to you that maybe I could talk with Andrea and she was very excited, because I think they're using you know the students are using the book, the MA students are using your book.

Andrea Olsen

Oh, good. Which one?

Heni Hale

Body Stories and Body and Earth. It's been on the reading list for the last 10 years.

Kirstie Simson

Nice. So, so we have Yeah, we really don't know each other. We've gotten to know each other over a couple of zoom talks. So I really had this question from the beginning because I knew that Andrea did a lot of work within the environment. And so my first question to her was what drew her to work in the environment and also the importance of place, what the importance of place was to her so I posed that question to Andrea.

Andrea Olsen

Thanks, Kirstie. And I think we'll just let everyone in on we've set ourselves at 15 minute time limit to talk about it a topic but we also have an escape out. So we're being timed and we won't go on at night because this is a topic that is dear to both of our hearts. And so there's nothing to say and there's a lot to say because in a way it's so up so we are the environment. So anytime we're moving. There's no separation. But basically in my life. I was raised on a farm in Illinois, and my parents were both artists that they moved to the farm. And I also traveled 13 miles to take a ballet class, wonderful teacher, from age seven on six for tap, seven on for ballet, so there was never a separation between running in the fields and twirling and that Illinois horizon land where you can see 360 around you at every moment in the cornfields and beautiful trees. So there wasn't a separation from the beginning and because my parents were artists, my dad was a watercolor painter and my mother of violinist it just was one thing. So that's where I say it's, there's really nothing to say because it's so inherent. But it's there's a lot to say because there's so much destruction so caring deeply about natural and built landscapes and the impact of space and images and plants and all these components that will shape our lives. That's one of the pleasures of zoom because you get to go inside someone's landscape. And there's windows and I enjoy that. I think I've enjoyed that in our dance times with each other. So the one thing and then I'll pause and let Kirstie take over, but we also migrated my parents we went to Florida every winter so dad could paint came back to the farm and farmed in the summer. So the covid time was the first time I think in my life I was ever in one place for a full year without going anywhere. As dancers we tour and that's part of the joy and richness of being a dance artist is finding yourself in these global environments with with language, being the body in the words are secondary. So Kirstie also taught in my homeland for 13 or so years at the University of Illinois. So we share that we didn't know that. We share that deep history with place that I find so affects how you perceive where you feel comfortable. How you navigate place. So we'll go on with that in different ways. But you have anything you want to pick up on Kirstie?

Kirstie Simson (15 minutes)

Well, I mean that. So we also find out that, like I moved over time as a youngster, and I just kept moving as I matured. And for me the thing that sent me always is my body. You know and I'm an improvisation artist. So that seemed it was very, very well with traveling all the time. But fundamentally, I had it forced me to really ground myself in my body. And I think that was an interesting thing that we also actually found we shared. So your parents were farmers, right? And you travelled? That's interesting.

Andrea Olsen

Yeah, yeah, we farm in the summers, soybeans and corn small farm, 200 acres before you had to have a mega farm to survive in Illinois. Yeah, but the one thing segway is I think the first time I was really uncomfortable in a place was in Utah when I went to graduate school. And I felt very claustrophobic and I couldn't figure out why because I loved the programme and I loved the dancing. It took me a while but understand that being surrounded by mountains I couldn't be couldn't see the horizon line. So once I started climbing the mountains it let go that inner feeling of discomfort and I think it's so much more powerful than we would claim sometimes the impact of place on our movement and on our psyche.

Kirstie Simson

So that's interesting because I I was I went to Illinois I taught at the university there for 15 years, you know, I couldn't sleep there. Because I felt my bed was like raised up and there was just this flatness around me and I wanted hills you know, I wanted something that I can hide my body you know, just tuck into. So that's interesting that that was my response to being one of my responses to being in Illinois.

Andrea Olsen

I think the other one of the other aspects was in Florida, we lived on the Atlantic Ocean, and both as a farmer with in Illinois with tornadoes and the impact of weather. You're very secondary to the environmental world. You're totally dependent on the sun and the rain, winds and storms and in Florida you know oceans are beautiful, but they can kill you. And that feels so similar to art making so many people romanticise what it is to be an artist. But it too can kill you. Because you're placing yourself on the edge of that eco tone between what you know everything you know, and have experienced in your life and here we are right right there today. And what what you don't know and we live on that dynamic eco-tone create from that dynamic eco-tone to that I feel like I learned it at the beach. Where you know, almost drowning once you get it that that you're you're part of a much larger universe, bigger forces. It's not about controlling where you are. It's about understanding and feeling. And one other aspect about that was when I started authentic movement with Janet Adler in 1979, I kept doing this movement and I have this movement and all my dances and I've turned with it and I turned it upside but I realized at some point it's that Illinois landscape that horizontal horizontality that makes me feel at home. Last little story about that I went to Samsø Island to finish the stories for body on Earth, because that was my father's lineage. And I went through to bury his knife because he was dying. There's a whole story that goes along with that. But I was writing a postcard home and the adjectives I was using to describe Samsø Island were the same that critics had used to describe my dancing. I just thought it's so deep, those ancestral homelands way beyond your, way beyond Illinois, into other landscapes as well. So the reason to tell those stories is just to help us all remember our own journeys with place we travel a lot right now. Kind of have done, so it's an interesting reflection how it is to be in one place and watch the light every morning, which birds going to go in, to really be in a place not travelling, but moving.

Kirstie Simson

It's interesting because I think in my work, my focus has really been people actually as opposed to landscape. And while you were talking I was realising that actually it's only in the last few years that I've become aware of landscape and weathers that because of what's happening to our planet, that that awareness has come into my yeah. Which I think it has for all of us. Many of us most of us. But that's interesting because my focus was really on going into the what happens between people when we confront the unknown. The unknown with the improvisation, what pressure it puts on our egos and our psyches to actually face the unknown. So that's really where I that was the territory of the environment that I was really mining in my own work. So now I'm looking at how something is drawing me because of what's happening on our planet. Something is drawing me to really speak to this to the and I don't know at this point, I have no idea how to go there. Something is pulling me and I do trust. You know that that life pulls us, if we open life actually does show us the way that has always been my my journey all along like to show me where to go next. So right now with the pandemic and everything there's really been this kind of space opened up and I'm just not knowing I don't want to over you know, jump over anything too quickly. I want to just be there and bear being there and just seeing what, what, you know what, how I'm pulled forward. So one of the things I taught today, one of the things that's been really fantastic in the workshops is starting to talk about all this and then hearing. It's a collective, it's almost a collective thing that's happening, people are talking in the workshops and sharing their take on all of this. I feel it's not going to be just my work. It's going to be the collective that starts to respond. And that's very different to how I've ever thought before so it's fascinating, fascinating.

Andrea Olsen

There is there is always that moment to when you travel that I love when you arrive in a new place and your senses haven't organised yet. So you get to perceive freshly, and always so surprising to me that what I noticed the first day is so different than when I perceived the third day or the fourth day. And how really how perception works in relation to place. And what you're saying is Kirstie is you might focus on the people in the landscape where I would focus on the land. And we kind of assume we all perceive the same thing but it's such a joke that we think we do because everyone is at this moment is

perceiving a whole different experience, even in this moment whether you're attending to the words or Kirstie's hands, or the painting at the back of the room, place, which we are we're not separate. Feels like it's it's an invitation to understand perception. Yeah. Kirstie, would you just say the one thing that you say about the yes, we've had these conversations and I want to be sure we capture just a couple of things before the bell goes off. Performance how you feel like it's not it's not an ending that there's this continuity from? Yeah, we'll get there later also, but it feels relevant to this moment.

Kirstie Simson

So you know, I perform improvisation I always have I actually feel like I live on when I'm in performance. That's where I'm really, fully alive, fully alive. I love it. But I see all my performances have been one long performance and I think they will be until I die. So I don't separate and look at them as separate things. And each each time I perform I feel like you know what? Yeah, it's I think it might be to do with because it's performing, performing and dancing already always been so intrinsically linked with my life. It's really who I am. It's how I live and it is my life. So therefore, these these performances, they're part of my life to me, and that gives me a lot of space around the performances. I'm not so like worried if something doesn't work or the however I perceived it works or doesn't work for this so that the other I have a lot of space just to look at it and learn from it, instead of kind of worrying about it or anything like that. So I've really enjoyed that. Just a little bit like the Illinois landscape.

Andrea Olsen

I'm just going to pick up on your hands, because our next invitation is to notice for each of us what we're how our hands are, as we're listening, if you don't mind in the live audience or on the zoom just taking your attention for a moment to your hands and maybe not judging them. But then let's just bring, let's bring them together if you don't mind. You know, do whatever you want, but just for a minute and just give them a nice squeeze a little bit of a wrist circle, Qigong wrist circle. Because in this dialogue between the body's language and our spoken language, which we're so interested in, the hands are kind of the link. Let's give them a big stretch if you don't mind. Yeah, and then anything you feel like doing they they've been longing to have a voice no doubt we're going to shift into a three or four minute hand dance. Conversation Kirstie and I again, you're if you're on Zoom and you're welcome to join or if you're in the space, but it's also a visual invitation and we'll have a little sound. It's really beautiful watching the Zoom Windows thank you all. So I know you're having fun in live space too. Are you guys having fun, too Kirstie?

Kirstie Simson (30 minutes)

Yeah, I was very busy doing my thing and I looked out and thought Wow. I wish this was more performances this would be fantastic. Amazing. Lovely. I enjoyed that. Really.

Andrea Olsen

You know, it's we sit there and listen in our hands are like wanting to do. There's so wanting to participate. That is it. We had to sit on our hands in grade school so they didn't wait. Okay, let's see. We have another question.

Kirstie Simson

Before you go there, can I just respond. I had the urge before to just share the fact that when as I was growing up, I was I never trusted words. I never trusted words. And that was because as a young thing, I would hear a lot of grownups would say things, but I was sensing and feeling them. And I knew that what they were saying had nothing to do with what they were actually experiencing. And it gave me this real fear of words. You know, and it was not until I started moving so moving it was I realised was my first language that that was where everything was real. Everything. The body doesn't lie. That was my first language. And then from there, I learned how to talk. It was the body that taught me how to how to talk, which I think is quite interesting. You know, and I can see like these days the mess that we're in because people are just like saying anything - it is not connected to anything real. It's actually a terrifying world to live in, because you don't know where you're at. You have no idea where you're at and it's a very frightening thing, I think for young ones and all that must be like, anyway, sorry. I'm on a roll there but I just for some reason I wanted to tell you that, share that story.

Andrea Olsen

Well, I'm gonna go right off of what you just said when we've really been having fun getting to know each other through zoom, Kirstie and I, three, three times, right. And such a rich dialogue. It just kept getting more and more interesting. So not only are you an articulate speaker Kirstie, you're a beautiful writer, the email after flow has been really, really substantial. So I appreciate that. One of the conversations we had that I'm going to toss in here is about performance and what would happen when we all got together today. And one of the things Kirstie says, I just I don't change on stage. I don't trust people who change on Zoom or onstage and my story was when I was in Utah at graduate school. One of my favorite dancers was Karen Steele, just powerhouse dancer. I was a little still ballerina. And she walked up to me one day she had a performance

that night with repertory dance theater and she said I just want to perform like I'm eating a hamburger. And I thought, well that's a shift. I think I'm going to think about that. You know how to be as ordinary doing something extraordinary as you just really stay in that realm. So you want to say something about not shifting in performance if it leads into our question about alertness as joy.

Kirstie Simson

I'm a bit more like full of angst. So basically, my father was alcoholic, so I grew up with an alcoholic father, who was actually a lovely man, but he was I understood this somehow as a child that he was damaged from being in the war. So I understood that, but I hated his drinking. And that you know, he was somebody that was a lovely man and then he would change into a monster, absolute monster and he would never physically abuse us but verbally crazy, like screaming shouting, it doesn't matter where you were you were at restaurants anyway. So I grew up with that. And that was very traumatic to love somebody and then they changed into someone else. So then, you know, I discovered this form called contact improvisation where everybody was so lovely. Everyone was just so lovely. And so great. Let's perform you know oh, great. Great. Great. So then, so then you have a rehearsal. Everybody's lovely, lovely, lovely. You get on stage. Holy shit, you know, really. It's a circus. People change. People change on stage where the ego was under the spotlight. And it was like, my father was like, being with my father. You know, and I, interestingly, I never put me off. I knew that I had to do what I was doing. So I had to find a way how could I make my practice so that I would never change? So that I would never freak anybody else out in this way. What do I have to do in my practice, but I will never be like that? And that's, you know, and that's a lot of the things that I've developed in my work and all that has to do with this particular story. So it's interesting. So again, that was the body responding, actually. Thank God for the body.

Andrea Olsen

Well, the question that we're holding this second question is again, a comment that Kirstie made that I loved which was, we were talking about in these times which are so challenging, not that other times haven't been, how alertness that comes with dancing is a kind of joy. And are we allowed to feel joy? Of course, that's a question too. But I had wanted Kirstie to talk a little bit more in her practice. About alertness as joy. Do you have anything further you'd like to...

Kirstie Simson

Yeah, I again, I can just share a story. I mean, so. So the story for me was that when I first encountered improvising, so when I first encountered moving that where it was not being dictated to me on how I should do it, or what I should do, when I was given freedom to express what interesting came up was tremendous joy was just this joy came bubbling up. And I again I went, wow this is fantastic. This joy is not coming because you know, I don't know I just fell in that hole because I won the lottery or anything like that. This joy is coming from the depth of myself, and then I realised that's me. I am that joy, and then I realise everybody else is that joy. And I'm starting to sound 'new age -y', but I don't really care... I realised that that was the most important thing more important than my career, how famous or whether how I wanted to do was following the follow your bliss, if at all that very new-agey, but really, really, so for me, that's when I gave my life to that belief, which, and interestingly, Andrea, interestingly, that has never changed. So, I've been doing this for over 40 years, when I start moving that comes. And that's very interesting. It's something that's just innate. You know, it's never gotten old. And I find that very fascinating and very life affirming, so deeply life affirming very deeply. That was my so actually in the works I talked about that simple enjoyment, simple enjoyment and how rich that is difficult for us, difficult, because there will be issues. You know.

Andrea Olsen

I must say when I first came from the Midwest to the East Coast, you were really not allowed to smile. If you were a dancer. Let's get clear. Joy was the last thing that we were serious, you know, from the Graham world, you know, on and just the difference between the Midwest where everybody's ugly and things are okay. And yeah, you know, so cultivating a sense of joy without it feeling superficial. Yeah. As well as in words, because the whole thing and another component of that, to me is this dialogue between time and timelessness. Like even in these little 15-minute blocks. We know we have a time but which we're headed toward timeless, those experiences that we have that that transcend the clock time and I think that's why we called our talk that didn't we, 'Moments of Magic' ? You have to do what you said but that that comes with that alertness like yeah just enter a different time zone and then you come back and you finish on time.

Kirstie Simson

Your comment on the on the faces, you know, so the bodies are doing the most extraordinary thing and the face is just blank, blank thing I think it's a politically horrifying death is kind of like blanked out the faces are blanked out. The only thing I can say like if there was some alien that came down and watched a dance class, they would be like what the hell is this? Because the bodies are doing amazing things and the face is just there's a disconnect between what's happening in the

body and what's happening, what's shown on the face is extreme. You know what I mean? And I just I have fun with this idea. These like little aliens coming down and just super perplexed.

Andrea Olsen (45 minutes)

The thread that that took me to is I've been working with the last 10 years on a book on communication embodied communication, because I'm not very particularly good at it in terms of chatting with people or talking with people with comfortably, fully embodied voice. So I got through, I think, like 30 chapters and realised that nothing about the face. I thought oh, really? I mean it is kind of a component of communication. So it was a it was a very interesting dialogue to go back in and try to, you know, understand it from anatomy from psychology from all the different dimensions. And it actually came because I had surgery on my nose from you know, skin cancer things. And I had to wear this long beak, this white beak while it healed. And so the this is before masks, but I had a mask and watching how people interacted when I didn't when I had a different face was very helpful for writing the chapter. So there's a lot there's a lot there that like the hands. Bonnie Cohen says the face is periphery, like your hands and feet. It's a communicator, it's an articulator, it's not the core. So, that was a very interesting thought to me to just give it a break you know, let it be an indicator or communicator without it having to look a particular way.

Kirstie Simson

Do you find because I find a lot when I when I move, expression comes into my face. It just happens. You know what I mean? So I don't know if that's, if you have that if you experienced that?

Andrea Olsen

I tell you what Kirstie when I was growing up in Illinois, my mother had been a homecoming queen and across the Atlantic princess. So I was entered in a lot of beauty contests. And so I know all the way up to miss Indiana pageant things. I have a lot of unlearning about the face. I would not say you've got a spontaneous breathing getting back to neutral, and the Qigong is helpful because there's so many face practices where you're really like combing through the muscle. So no, it's not unnatural for me. There's a lot of patterns that are pretty far back. Yeah. I think it's time to move.

Kirstie Simson

Yes, so we're gonna do another little score. And this is this is a score that a friend of mine called Simon Whitehead designed the score and it's he calls it the blanket score for two people. So we've kind of tweaked it for this particular thing. And basically what happens is one person moves and the other person watches the moving and describes their environment, but also can describe the environment that the witnesses is in also. So would you like to move first Andrea?

Andrea Olsen

Yes please

Kirstie Simson

Okay so I will be the witness and I will describe your what I'm seeing in your screen. And what I'm seeing in our space. The light is changing this relationship between the window the mirror of the glass of the painting and then the door so there's a lot of reflection, the reflection also on the table, maybe the vase. I'm curious what's outside that window? I know that snow but I can see the snow the lighter the snow. There's the vase of flowers ah space has a kind of hum.

Andrea Olsen

I can see these panels, light, there's an exit sign, always good to have an exit. I feel myself leaning forward into the screen to see better not such a good idea. Shoes, big heavy boots. The choice of a grey floor, good for lighting, gravity, release back to floor fingertips, chords, chair, shirt, long spine think I'll try it. Computer buttons on the screen. Black haircut, down with the feet up with the skull. Full deep breath, knees bowing, just give it a little force so. Where's that edge? Where is it?

Kirstie Simson

I just had an urge to throw this thing [chair] through the window.

Andrea Olsen

Well there's certain urges you don't always follow, maybe in the 60s

Kirstie Simson

Sometimes you see people doing these things that you would never do. Like people like people throwing things through windows and things and you just somehow you wonder like you'll never do it but you wonder. I actually what I do is I wonder

what it feels like to do that like is it empowering? Well, maybe any working out your frustration of course. Anger is probably reasons. I'm babbling.

Andrea Olsen

Come over here and babble with me.

Kirstie Simson

Oh that was nice though! Okay.

Andrea Olsen

Yeah, and I'm looking at the backgrounds in my screens. I see a lot of books and painting. Walls and light.

Kirstie Simson

Yeah, I really enjoyed the things you said. Very nice.

Andrea Olsen

I think this is my turn to ask a question. Moments of Revelation. Movement as transformative medium. Moments of Revelation. Yeah. Do you want to tell us about a few?

Kirstie Simson

I have my big one. I talked about it in class, but my big one was when I met Steve Paxton, study contact improvisation and I had just left college I was very freaked out about whether I was going to make it whether I was good enough whether I was going to make it and he did some very simple exercises. I mean, I was already exploding just coming into this improvisation zone. He had us lean against each other or something like that. And I had this epiphany where this voice came from my body and said to me, everything you will ever need to know is already inherently present within you. And that that voice that I can't remember how it came but it was a kind of voice that spoke to me and I recognized in that moment that that my life had changed. And that voice spoke to me my life changed from being afraid of like, feeling like I need to prove something feeling like I had to become somebody to suddenly understanding - holy mackerel life is about discovering who you are as an as a unique expression of the whole. And from that moment on, I don't care. I'm an improviser. This is what I do. And I just, I just I do remember it was I remember reading you're running in the fields, tears streaming down my face. I mean, it was a huge, really shifted, like really shifted and I never looked back from that moment. So but, you know, in retrospect, the fact that that came from my body was not something I read in a book, or I studied years, you know, spiritual tradition or anything like that. It actually emerged out of my body. I went Wow. Again, the body is a powerful, powerful thing and then I also start to put together why we always try and control our bodies which you know, culture controls the body, you either playing sport and trying to beat people or in the dance world, you know, desperately trying to attain these feats that are really challenging and, you know, so the actual thing that we have the moving bodies very powerful, very powerful. There you go. Yeah, I think yeah, that was it. That was transformative moment experience, really.

Andrea Olsen (1 hour)

And we made we had a little dialogue about the difference between conscious experiences like that and, and transmission where it just happens. And you figure out later that something happened. And I think that's what just to go back to that Miss Indiana pageant from me, since I brought it in here. It was Miss Indiana University pageant, not the whole state. But the reason I participated in it was because if you did the talent, you got to dance on this gorgeous stage. So I was willing. So I made a really corny solo, you know, with my own painting projected on a huge stage in my hand reaching up my parents made the music in my living room. I was just I'm sure it was horrendous. I didn't win. Fine. But what the what was fun was I was an usher in that theater also just didn't make money. And the very next weekend on that same huge stage, the Graham Company was there. And Martha Graham was performing and that was transmission. I never went back. I mean, that was just that was the shift. I had no idea why. So we all have those moments, but they're kind of fun to reflect on. Like, oh, when did you feel that shift? You didn't really have any control over it. It was just like, okay. Different experience and another one was, these are young, but they're the ones that really kind of set you on a path was in a masterclass in Illinois and a gymnasium because back then the United States had an amazing touring program where they paid artists to go to local communities. And I just his presence standing next to me while I was doing some exercise. I had no idea what it was. It was the amount of concentration never never left me. So those that's a moment to sometimes when I'm teaching a class I know they do better when I leave the room. Because there's something about too much consciousness around dancing, especially in a technique class. So you know, everyone's doing fine, doing fine, doing fine if I go away, it usually gets better and that's always been a really interesting is that the sort of the opposite of transmission is like releasing the conscious, the forebrain in the room to just do the thing. That's not really on topic but came into my mind.

Kirstie Simson

Interestingly in terms of transmission because I know that when when, you know when I had that experience, I know that Steve Paxton is, this is from my perspective, he might not agree. I felt like he was channeling something. It was right after the 60s/70s something in consciousness that opened and he was channeling, something was being channelled. It wasn't just me that was having these kinds of experiences. People were having these amazing breakthrough experiences. And so something breaks through consciousness and I was just talking to Charlotte who's here about how that what's happening right now something is something that has broken through and consciousness like with the pandemic, with so much going on for everybody. So much people dying people, all kinds of all kinds of stuff. Some tragic, a lot of tragedy, of course, but something I feel it I sense it something in consciousness is being ripped open and actually, it's a frightening time, but it's also it's also there's something about it that is amazing to be here for. And I feel that there's some responsibility to be here for what's happening right now. And I don't know again, as I said before, what's being called for the fact that we're all here, right? Now there's something that's really and I really feel that, and again, like I said before, I think it's a collective thing has been so no longer than the hero or the heroine when I'm doing the thing. It's actually all of us to support each other. To be here for what's happening. I don't know. As you're doing that, I just I had the impulse maybe it would be fun for us to all do it. Just take a minute and look to look up whatever looking up means to you and then shifting look to whatever you think you're right is maybe take a look to the left. Whatever you consider left, just to kind of broaden the space and then behind what's behind what's in front, what's out there, you know some cultures feel like the past is in front of you because you can see it in the futures behind you. That's what's in front of you. We're just going to take a one minute breathing pause not just to we are going to take one minute. Little encouragement to breathe with all of your skin whole being expanding and condensing as well as our spaces together. No part left out, back of the neck, behind the ears, pelvic floor, toes, armpits yes so we're going to we're winding into that last 10 minutes. It's in our timeless time, timed timelessness. We're going to have a conversation about emerging meaning and connection serving the future but we thought maybe we should tromp around the room first. Well tromping if anyone feels like tromping. I'm going to tromp around the room you're welcome to or not. Ah nice to see who's there, hi everybody.

Andrea Olsen

Just so you all know what we're experiencing now is Kirstie and my resistance to ending which we both have, a resistance to ending.

Kirstie Simson

I never know how to end things. Never Never, never, never never. Because they always feel again, they always feel kind of fake to me, the endings like I never know how to

Andrea Olsen

I kind of have the opposite. Because I always find that the moment after ending is so resonant. Uh huh. Almost like you close something and then all of this something opens like even in that little walk just that little stroll around. I was like, you know, Kirstie, one of the reasons I love dancing with you is that your face is just natural with your body. That's why we have buddies so you know, we're not all doing it with the same.

Kirstie Simson

I was never a beauty queen, there you go!

Andrea Olsen

It's not a great it's not a great start. Okay, Kirstie. Resistance to ending

Kirstie Simson

Yeah, do you know I think well, I actually do think sometimes. Sometimes I don't know how to deal with endings. I think it might be because sometimes, sometimes like you're saying that can be quite profound. Resonance at the end. I mean, and I sometimes if, if I if I'm, if I've facilitated something that is there, I don't quite know how to deal with it. To be honest with you. And that's why sometimes they I just want to hide in my learning, I think is how to just be, how to accept.

Andrea Olsen

I think in, in the discipline of authentic movement or in in my practice of authentic movement all these years. You know, when you end with a bell or you call the movement to an end, there's that resonance of actually bringing to consciousness some of what has been embodied that might not have risen at the conscious level. And then there's the choice of moving from the body to speaking or not. And my preference often is to have someone have the group make a little container and if

anyone wants to do that, with me, this is not the ending. It's a conversation about how one holds what the experience was. Rather than dissipates the energy right away. So how do we and without dismissing? How do we contain? So we can actually be moved by what we do without having to just do more and more and more and more and more, sort of like the end of a good meal? How do we practice containing? Yeah, so that's, that's one practice that I've appreciated because I'll just go on with this for a second. It feels to me like whether you like something or not like if you're at a performance or workshop, whether you like it or not, is the least important thing. You never know what's going to touch you for a moment because it's touching the unconscious. And a lot of times I know I've taught so many students through the years and their fantastic creative work and I never know what to say right after I see some I have to sleep on it. See which images stay with me what emerges in the dream world. And often then something does surface but it's sort of a joke. It's always been a joke to me the difference between what I think I like and what touches me. I don't know. Do you have that at all, Kirstie or is it yours more direct? It's like, oh, you get it in the moment.

Kirstie Simson

I'm not sure but but it sounds. To say this - it sounds like words of wisdom. What you're saying which is very beautiful. Yeah. I think with me, it's often there's often a very direct it's quite direct, I think. I think it's quite direct but, but I'm very much enjoying listening to you

Andrea Olsen

Well, I like the gesture and I'm realising if I'm accurate we have three minutes in our timelessness. Okay. So I get to end and we're going to do one of my favorite current ending for anyone that would like to so here's what we do.

Kirstie Simson (1 hour 15 minutes)

Can I interrupt? Just to explain to everybody that we decided that we didn't want to do question and answer. Yeah, that we wanted to actually just ended and have people take from it, whatever, whatever they you know, maybe there are questions and maybe so that's just how we felt we would like to end. Continue.

Andrea Olsen

So, you have a stone of your choice and your hand and you need to take a moment to feel its weight. Like how big and it's temperature. You can look at it if you want just its heft and that connection to gravity. It's stone that we have, and they all say what we're going to do with it, and then we'll do it. So we're going to toss it and catch it three times. And then we're going to toss it in a stream in our imaginary stream, and the real task with that as you hang on to your stone for a minute, is it splashes and then there's a release in to the flow of the stream. The hardest part is the release, letting gravity actually I do this every day. In my practice in Maine via stream, very hard to match the splash. So let's try it together and you can stand or sit or whatever you want. I'm going to stand up so we have three choices. Here we go. Here's one and two, three, and then find your stream you're going to give it a toss into the stream splashes when it splashes and it releases when it releases and it goes into the flow. Stream keeps moving and we just flow right and each other's worlds yeah ocean does connect us all. Kirstie, does this mean I don't get to zoom with you anymore?

Kirstie Simson

Oh, well, we can still do it.

Andrea Olsen

That'd be a sad ending. But now since you don't really end things I know I'll still see you Okay. All right, here we go. I think we pass it back to Independent Dance when we're ready.

Heni Hale

That's brilliant. Thank you very much, Kirstie. And thank you so much, Andrea.

(Outro: Renée Bellamy speaking in 2021)

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