

Meeting Places : Further Thoughts from Filipa Pereira-Stubbs, Cai Tomos and Miranda Tufnell

These three days are an opportunity to explore how we build bridges between dance artists, patients, medical staff and healthcare managers. We will reflect on how we go forwards in an increasingly resource-depleted world of healthcare and bridge a gap between a high-pressured emphasis on fixing, battling and curing, and the subjective world of healing and convalescence, giving attention to the individual to build an ongoing life-enhancing relationship with their body.

Feeling sick or well doesn't stop in the hospital, in the GP surgery. Illness and poor health impacts the lives of family, friends and community. There is the ongoing adaptation to unfamiliar circumstances, a different world, pieced together from the old, pre-diagnosis world that no longer applies. Finding health deep within requires reshaping, rebuilding, to recover a coherent sense of self. Our word 'health' comes from the word 'whole': (Old English *hælp* "wholeness, a being whole, sound or well) Like Ulysses we find ourselves trying to get home to ourselves to make sense of what is happening.

Dancers and artists in the field of healthcare have much to offer in listening for the 'underground' connections and sometimes forgotten parts that can restore a sense of human connectedness. In the play and exploration of movement we drop below the surface of everyday awareness to discover deeper currents of being, of movement and becoming - what John O' Donohue calls 'the under-earth of our visible life'. We learn and employ the wisdom modelled by nature. Awareness of what Suzanne Simard calls the *below ground world* - trees & mycelium being our teachers in the reinforcing, resilient, and regenerative networks and systems of care and communication they create. Their collaboration mirrors how our own social systems work best to keep us alive and healthy, productive and happy. Each tree is only as strong as the forest that surrounds it.

We explore how to resource and look after ourselves; taking time to listen and sense the subtle shaping forces of movement within ourselves which informs everything of how we sense and listen with another. Details, resonances appear that enrich and bring us more fully into connection with what is both within and around us. Often medicine does not have time to delve into what makes life significant for us yet sustenance of the soul is vital to health, wholeness.

We bring these different but not unrelated threads together to make sense of the growing and increasingly recognised status of dance and health work, as we continue to devise and deliver practices to improve patient care and the wellbeing of those caring for patients.

*I would describe myself
like a landscape I've studied
at length, in detail:
like a word I'm coming to understand;
like a pitcher I pour from at mealtime;
like my mother's face;
like a ship that carried me
when the waters raged.
Rilke*