

## Wellbeing Writing with Laura Colombar



One Dance UK member, Laura Colombar, is a Registered Somatic Movement Educator on our Healthcare Practitioners Directory. She has devoted more than 10 years to designing and facilitating opportunities for community engagement through movement, performance, and expressive arts. Laura has also developed a performative research process based on the body as a manifestation of sound, grounded on the work of Anna and Lawrence Halprin. As a part of Laura's work, she offers a bespoke movement-based expressive arts programme centred on creativity for stress management, emotional balance and integrative wellbeing. We recently had the pleasure of chatting to Laura about her work with dancers, and a vision of dance for health.

### **PERHAPS YOU COULD START BY TELLING US ABOUT YOUR MOST MEMORABLE WORKING EXPERIENCE?**

*Assisting and working with Anna Halprin in Mountain Home studio has been the most memorable experience.*

I was enchanted by how she was still curious and still deeply engaged with the students after 70 years of teaching and sharing her practice. She was still experimenting with what kind of words, music, or images she could use to facilitate somatic processes. I learned a lot whilst assisting and she has definitely taught me how to be a facilitator.

Lately, I also had the pleasure of leading morning classes at Independent Dance (ID), leading explorations informed by my research on somatic practices and sound. I learned a lot from the people that came to class.

## HOW DOES YOUR PRACTICE AS A REGISTERED SOMATIC MOVEMENT THERAPIST (RSMT) INFLUENCE YOUR APPROACHES TO DANCE?

The practice as an RSMT informs my life and art on an everyday basis. It colours the way I connect to people, the way I process information, and the way I dance. Thanks to the somatic approach, I could come closer to a dance which feels structured as well as open enough to the present moment. It helps with embedding challenges and inquiries of everyday life. My performance practice as research is process-based, and greatly informed by the emotional, physical and mental levels. Everything is interconnected. *My life informs my art and vice versa.*

## WHAT IS MOVEMENT-BASED EXPRESSIVE ARTS THERAPY AND HOW COULD IT BE VALUABLE FOR DANCERS?

Movement-based expressive arts therapy is a way to access the history of your body, the traumas and memories recorded on your muscles and tissues. It also offers time and space to listen to the wise voice of the body, to intuitions and new material which can support the creative and personal life.

*Movement-based expressive arts therapy can be of great support for dancers, to unleash movement patterns which are no longer useful for us, and release tensions and miscommunication between body parts.*

We work both on physical re-patterning and movement efficacy, introducing breathing and somatic awareness. There is a substantial shift that happens in the movement when we are present and connected on various levels.

## COULD YOU TELL US MORE ABOUT YOUR TRAINING IN SOUND AND VOICE THERAPY, AND HOW IT INFORMS YOUR PRACTICE AS AN RSMT, AND AS A DANCE TEACHER?

I have been interested in voice as a way to heal myself from a period of amenorrhea.

As a part of my training at [Tamalpa](#), I noticed that when I used my voice freely and with a deep and sustained tone, my period would come back. Hence, I started to inquire more about the power of breathing and vocalisation and found a training ([Atem Tonus Ton](#)) that was created by Ilse Middendorf in 1920, based on breathing patterns and creating space of resonance for the breath inside the body.

Being my own case study, I cannot say that using voice can support hormonal problems. Nevertheless, it may support the nervous system and heightened sense of stress and anxiety.

*I started to introduce more voice and breath work into my training with dancers, which, supported them to find new choreographic materials and insights.*

## HOW DO YOU HOPE TO USE YOUR WORK TO PROMOTE DANCE IN SOCIAL AND COMMUNITY HEALTH SETTINGS?

Nowadays I am working on designing and creating a program to bring Dance, Voice and Breathing to Hospital wards. That's my next stepping stone, and I do really hope to find Hospitals interested in collaborating and funding to make it happen.

Previously, in 2012 I also founded what is now called [HealthArts.co.uk](http://HealthArts.co.uk). This is a non-profit organisation that disseminates the role of dance, somatic practices, and movement in educational and institutional settings, collaborating with schools, museums and universities.

I have also received funding to develop "[Sing, Play and Jump into English](#)" – a second-language-learning dance programme that reached over 80 schools in the district of Venice.

Further, I have collaborated as a freelancer with [Museum Punta della Dogana](#) (Venice), and co-designed the evening programme "[In&Out](#)" during Bruce Nauman's exhibition, connecting the general audience through performance-based activities.

I have worked with marginalised communities as part of [Luna Dance Institute](#) in Berkley, USA, specifically in their programme [MPACT – Moving Parents and Children Together](#). This was a parent-child dance program delivered to families and through child welfare systems.

As part of the Board of Trustees for the Dance Education and Community (DES) in Italy, I co-created content to promote the dissemination of dance research in the pedagogical, educational and community-building.

## CAN YOU TELL US MORE ABOUT YOUR PODCAST – DANCE OUTSIDE DANCE?

In 2019, myself, Julia Pond, and Michaela Gerussi created the podcast [DanceOutsideDance – interdisciplinary conversations](#).

We consider it an open research forum; a bridging space where we embrace the unresolved. Our investigations engage with diverse modalities and include discussions about technology and digital media, performance-making, relational practice, neuroscience, anthropology and somatics.

It has now received two grants and an ongoing partnership with Kingston University of Arts in London, which is allowing us to continue to invite guests such as Dohee Lee, Robert Kocik, Charlotte Spencer, Alessandro Sciarroni, and Anne Bourne.

I hope to connect with other partners and institutions to continue to show how dance and somatics are continuously informing different spheres of our lives.

Please do reach out if you wish to co-curate an episode with us! <https://podcasts.apple.com/gb/podcast/danceoutsidedance/id1562162746>

