

# SJOP

## Editorial

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### Unpicking the familiar: new reflective routes

The third issue of the *Scottish Journal of Performance* presents a diverse selection of papers on the theme of 'New Reflective Routes'. This issue presents contrasting journeys made by three scholars as they unpick familiar routes of creative, analytic and daily practice, each finding potential for exciting new critical directions.

Laura Bissell and David Overend reflect on their investigation into the creative and nomadic potentials in their daily commutes, Alistair MacDonald critically examines his work dislocating the clarsach from its traditional context, discovering its alternative musical potential to explore themes surrounding Scottish heritage and identity, and Rui Pedro De Oliveira Alves's historical survey of the trombone in visual art leads him to argue for a re-evaluation of research into musical iconography and the need for revived debate.

Samuel Beckett notes in his essay *Proust* that 'habit is a compromise effected between the individual and his environment, or between the individual and his own organic eccentricities, the guarantee of a dull inviolability, the lightning-conductor of his existence... Breathing is habit. Life is habit. Or rather life is a succession of habits.' All three articles present the creative and critical possibilities of disrupting the habitual and playing with the boundaries of well-worn subjects, as well as showcasing the

performativity of the reflective process itself.

In the first article, Alistair MacDonald reflects on his collaborative process working with harpist Catriona McKay, utilising the clarsach and placing it within unfamiliar musical environments in order to create dislocated pieces which investigate the history of traditional instruments and the boundaries of tradition through sonic experimentation in order to create something ‘consciously Scottish’. In doing so, MacDonald creatively deconstructs the invented nature of tradition, exploring the traditions associated with a certain location (in this case Scotland) through disrupting expectations. MacDonald and McKay embed the clarsach within live electronic performances as a means of ‘playing with scales of dislocation’ or placing the instrument along a continuum of direct and processed sounds in order to trouble people’s expected aural associations and assumptions of the ‘traditional’. In the article, MacDonald reflects on this creative partnership, interspersing personal and musical reflections with theoretical underpinnings.

In their keynote speech *Rhythmic routes: developing a nomadic physical practice for the daily commute*, replicated here verbatim, Laura Bissell and David Overend reflect on a joint project undertaken during 2014. The authors take the habitual routines of everyday life and re-imagine them as sources of creative potential. Investigating the rhythms and repetitions of their daily commutes, they begin to see them as potential sites of performance to search for what they call an ‘alternative space of becoming’. Through a multimodal reflection of their experiences in which they attempt their usual commute without the aid of transport—walking and even swimming parts of their journeys—their interaction and critical reflections are presented in a way that both highlights and transgresses the rhythms and repetitions of embodied modern life.

Iconography offers the possibility of valuable insights into historical performance practices, but as Rui Pedro De Oliveira Alves contends in his paper *The trombone as portrayed in Portuguese iconography during the sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries*, images from the past can exaggerate and misrepresent. A gallery of illustrations allows de Oliveira Alves to postulate a foundation of evidence for emerging musical practices while he also acknowledges the slipperiness of artistic licence. His sources provide evidence of instrument design, playing methods, and the role of musicians in Portuguese society, highlighting the value of iconographic research within archival studies.

Continuing our desire to publish recent symposium proceedings in order to recognise the wealth of exciting research currently being conducted in Scotland, we are pleased to include complete abstracts from a recent postgraduate symposium sponsored by the British Sociological Association, held at Glasgow Caledonian University on 13 June 2014. Organised by research students Victoria Palmer of Glasgow Caledonian University and Bethany Whiteside of the Royal Conservatoire of Scotland, under the title 'Pace, pirouette and penalty: the sociology of physical culture', the abstracts cover a fascinating and wide-ranging selection of current research and practitioner reports.

As part of this conference, Emmanuelle Tulle reports on narratives of ageing in the public lives of elite athletes; Ursula Burger analyses roller derby culture to critique gender identities in sports advertising discourses; James Bowness explores issues of ageing and gender identities in Masters athletes at the Highland Games; Conor Heffernan recounts the strongman phenomenon and the crisis of white masculinity in depression-era America; Laura Bissell and David Overend present their keynote speech reflecting on

their performative investigation into the daily commute; Vanessa Coffey presents an investigation into the use of physical theatre by mental health service-users; Lito Tsitsou uses Bourdieusian approaches to deconstruct the meaning of 'talent' in ballet and contemporary dance; Kirsty Kay compares folk dance movements from East and West Europe to explore ideas of embodied national identity; Sue Smith critically appraises the use of audio-description in dance performances and proposes the possibility of more multi-sensual creative practice; Lucy Amsden reflects on her time at an Ecole Philippe Gaulier clown workshop to explore physical notions of the 'ridiculous'; Hande Güzel looks at gender and able-bodiedness in physical education classes in Turkey; Andria Christofidou draws on data by dance historians to present an account of how ballet emerged as a female-concentrated dance form; and Josephine Leask gives a reflexive account of her participation in a Bollywood dance class in a multicultural area of London.

This issue also presents reviews of a number of recently published texts addressing performance from many disciplines, including music, theatre, film, acting and pedagogy. Neil Rhodes reviews *Singing Simpkin and other bawdy jigs: musical comedy on the Shakespearean stage—scripts, music and context*, by Roger Clegg and Lucy Skeaping; Anselm Heinrich reviews *The theatrical public sphere*, by Christopher B. Balme; Gareth K. Vile reviews *All work and no plays: blueprints for 9 theatre performances by Ontroerend Goed*; Mieko Kanno reviews *Embodied knowledge in ensemble performance*, by J. Murphy McCaleb; Harry A. Whalley reviews *Music and the making of modern science*, by Peter Pesic; Sam Beaton reviews *Rancière and film*, edited by Paul Bowman; Mark Stevenson reviews *The actor and the camera*, by Denis Lawson; and Laura Bissell reviews *The reflexive teaching artist: collected wisdom from the drama/theatre field*, edited by Kathryn Dawson and Daniel A. Kelin, II.

Lastly, we would like to thank the University of St Andrews, the Royal Conservatoire of Scotland, Anglia Ruskin University, the editorial team, advisory board, our peer reviewers, funders, and especially our authors.

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