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/ KALEKOWANIE SZTUK PERFORMATYWNYCH

Gestural Choreographies: Moving Between Bodies

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Abstract: Choreography grounded in gesture by learning disabled dancers transmits learning disability cultures and experiences. Performers transform concepts and practices of mainstream dance and work towards an expanded aesthetics. This article considers the work of Welsh group Cyrff Ystwyth, a company of people with various capacities who follow the lead of choreographers with learning disability. My methodology relies on a heuristic approach defined by Clark Moustakas: 'In heuristics, an unshakeable connection exists between what is out there, in its appearance and reality, and what is within me in reflective thought, feeling and awareness' (1990, p. 12).

Keywords: gesture; action; force; knowledge; transmission; performance; intellectual disability

In this article I argue for a specific dance practice: dance created and performed by learning disabled artists. Encouraged by Licia Carlson's view that 'it is not enough to simply call for inclusion' (2010, p. 206), I examine how relationship and shared kinaesthetic action open possibilities in learning disability dance that realises practice beyond inclusion. Carlson calls for an expansion of the philosophical field asking what that might require, and to

‘emancipate “subjugated knowledges”’ (ibid.). Her work as a philosopher is focused on a belief that the discipline ‘has something to contribute with regard to intellectual disability’ and that ‘intellectual disability can inform, challenge, and recast our deepest ethical, epistemological, political and existential questions’ (p. 23). I intend my contribution as a response to Carlson and as a meaningful act for my research participants who know I write about them and their work. This research is dependent on the generosity and commitment of David Bartholomew-Biggs, Jen-Jo Bartholomew-Biggs, Andrew Evans, Sam Evans, Arlene James, Adrian Jones, Agnieszka Michalik, Virginia Lowe, Karen Rush, Anna ap Robert, Meleri Williams, Eddie Wadsworth, and the many others who have participated over decades.

Cyrff Ystwyth is a long-standing group of untrained dancers, learning disabled, non-disabled, and physically disabled. The group are convened by me as an academic researcher, but the creative work is driven by learning disabled artists. Cyrff Ystwyth has no funding but is supported by the Department of Theatre, Film, and Television at Aberystwyth University. The institution offers a room to work in and technical support as the group are formally recognised as research participants. Membership is voluntary and each person takes part in a process of informed consent to research. Permission for me to undertake this practice-based research is granted by the University Research Ethics Panel. We are seen as a community dance group local to the area of North Ceredigion. Audiences comprise families, friends, support workers, and every now and then, scholars and academics from the University. We meet once a week for 90 minutes every Wednesday evening. We work from October to June around the University teaching semesters. Each July we convene a meeting and I ask if there is a learning disabled colleague with an idea they would like to develop towards a

performance. This person then takes the lead in theme and choreography. Our method foregrounds movement as the person leading offers their embodied responses to the theme they have chosen, and the ensemble of performers follows them closely. As already mentioned, I convene the meetings and rehearsals and I also act as the dramaturg. I lead the start of a rehearsal with warm-up before handing over to whoever is leading. However, colleagues who lead require my support to tease out action and sometimes image. For example, our new project with Eddie Wadsworth is about his childhood memories. He came to the first rehearsal but did not know where to start. I asked him to remember a scene from his childhood and then to move. Immediately he engaged with his eyes shut, moving his arms and hands as if juggling. He developed this action to movement across the space. At first, this was a solo and everyone watched closely, some gently moving so as to incorporate Eddie's posture and gestures. This tiny start is now a five-minute section which I will incorporate into the longer composition. Eddie is able to discuss this with me, whereas other colleagues are not and so the dramaturgical cohesion of a work is my responsibility.

My privileged position within the group, as its convenor and dramaturg, since its inception in the late 1980s means that I am emboldened to analyse yet must own my own part in its formation. As a researcher who is deeply involved in the creation of new works by my learning disabled colleagues, with performers of many abilities and disabilities I acknowledge partiality. Clark Moustakas asserts that the researcher is challenged to apprehend meanings and to acknowledge personal experience and relation with the world we move through. I am not learning disabled, nor disabled. I move through the world as a normate.[1] However, some of my most intense and formative experiences have been made possible by my colleagues in Cyrff Ystwyth and I write, to attempt to convey the vibrant knowledge that

emerges with embodied creative practice driven by an aesthetics of disability. Thinking about this work as embodied knowledge drives my desire to write and to theorise what I experience in order to disseminate it and to contribute to the developing discourse around disability, access, inclusion, and aesthetics. I am drawn to Rosi Braidotti's term 'the missing people' (2019a, p. 51) to think about artists whose circumstances do not facilitate access to funding, and who do not yet find ways to express their own creative concerns, and those whose support needs are complex and are often not integrated into existing groups might, by extension, be seen somewhere in this writing. As Braidotti explains, these missing people 'are real-life subjects whose knowledge never made it into any of the official cartographies' (ibid.). Licia Carlson argues that historically and contemporaneously, categories of learning disability have remained static and persistent. Study *of* people with learning disabilities, rather than *with* people with learning disabilities perpetuates the notion of 'us and them.' However, as Cluley et al. explain, 'Many people with learning disabilities, particularly those with the highest support needs, are not cognitively able to make sense of their learning disability' (2020, p. 242). My colleagues are fully aware that I write about them and want me to do this. In conversation with Eddie Wadsworth, he explained his view about this: 'So you can have a better understanding, it's for us then to make sure whatever your write about we're happy with' (Wadsworth, 18 November 2023). In August 2023, I outlined this article, reading sections to the group. I asked if people agreed. The non-verbal gestural responses were nodding heads and thumbs up and positive vocalisations.[2]

Non-disabled dancers in the group, following the themes and choreographies created by colleagues with learning disability, perform the movements as

precisely as possible and learn them as set choreography. The movements are never formed from trainings. They are sometimes tiny, or wild, awkward and do not conform to a smooth line and trajectory. Usually gestural they are movements that perform multiple functions and appear in different creative responses, as will be exemplified later. The postures and gestures may feel uncomfortable or are barely legible. They may be counterintuitive in terms of kinesthetic chains of movement that allow a mover to progress through space with ease. Rhythm is broken, unpredictable, stutters and collapses. Direction might be unclear (or very clear), trajectory is often lost. The movements are those that indicate a certain failure within normative discourses. Non-disabled dancers must find their own ways of coming to terms with each moment. On the other hand, new challenges, new technical demands that require nimble changes in time and space, new embodiments and relations between each dancer are available. While each dancer adapts the work to their own physiognomy, it is the ensemble of bodyminds that is most powerful, assembling and connecting each with the other. The ambiguous nature of kinesis is tied to individual preferences and necessitities that determine each bodymind's approach to time and space. The meanings are inexact yet redolent with affect.

We began work with our colleague Arlene James in the spring of 2021. The piece is called *Mam*. As I explain in a forthcoming article, the theme of the work is about how our colleague Arlene feels about the death of her mother. She has used the group as a means to find expression of a deeply complex set of emotions that rise to the surface, exploding out and dropping away as if they never existed. Her grief is expressed through hysterical laughter, persistent repetition of short phrases, questions about where her mother is now, ('ble mae mam?'; 'where is mum?'), wild, aggressive, joyous jumping, and unstable balances held for split seconds. The personal physical and

emotional effort in all of this is considerable, exhausting the other five performers. Four of the dancers are people with moderate and serious learning disability, one also has a profound physical disability, and two are non-disabled[3].

Disabled choreographers tend towards highly personal movements that are repeated and re-shaped over time, be that in an hour of rehearsal or ten years of practice. For example: Arlene has created a section that is a literal re-enactment of committal to burial. The performers create a shape like a grave, with pale pink fake flowers. They gather around and perform a gesture that Arlene has absorbed from another colleague's work. Adrian Jones first created the gesture of cupped hands, one circling over the palm of the other, for his piece *Work* (2010). 'Moneys gone' he explained as he examined life on his family's farm. In 2019 in his eulogy for his brother John, the same move became 'Books gone!' and he extended the action to throw his arms behind him in a gesture of throwing. Recently, in 2023, Arlene adapted the same gesture and asks where her mother is. The gesture becomes a loose fling of the hands, a scattering move and then later, an offering passing the gesture between people. In the end, it becomes a literal enactment of passing cups of tea around the group and finally, she washes the hands and forearms of her colleagues, a closing scene redolent with religious imagery and also so much a part of farming life and care work. As already suggested in the introduction, the single idea of the gesture is shifted, becoming multiple in intention and function across time.

As Michelle Duffy et al. propose, in publicising performances by disabled dancers, the imaginary figures of what disability might be and mean precede the performance itself as a type of paratext. To refer to disabled dance groups or disabled dancers is already to conflate a wide variety of

performers and performances into a general category based on a simple negation – to not be an able-bodied dancer (Duffy et al., 2019, p. 149). These authors are focussed specifically on physically disabled dancers. Nevertheless, the notion of the paratext of disability holds good within the terms of the work I am discussing as not only might learning disability produce visible effects on bodies but the label itself produces its own specific set of assumptions that establish a border between competency and incompetence.

Given the paratext of disability and its hypervisibility on stage, Duffy et al. ask why disabled dancers perform and what the functions of their bodies are? (2019, p. 149). They also point out that the non-disabled performer does not raise questions about the validity of the work, whereas the disabled dancer might pre-empt questions about 'movement that is grounded in a fixed body that could be replaced by a non-physically disabled dancer' (p. 150). Duffy et al. draw attention to a constant problem that steers the making and reception of dance. Disability overdetermines what might be understood by the audience as it is always the pre-condition of both the action and its reception. The action must adhere to specific requirements for bodies, their shapes, their perceived elegance and eloquence. Mark Franko offers a historical lineage for this, stating that Renaissance dance ushered in a 'body of motion,' a 'body of meaning,' a theorisation rather than an instructional manual of dance as language, 'a signifying practice demanding interpretation' (2022, p. xi). This body is one of manners, precise execution of postures and gestures that indicate a fluency akin to that of language. The persuasive speaker was skilled in rhetoric but would also demonstrate equal powers in movement. Susan Leigh Foster argues that choreography is a means by which we can observe, learn, and comment on social codes of behaviour (2023, p. 129). Texts about dance, choreography, kinaesthesia,

gesture, and the profound meanings of dance often suggest an implicit image of 'the dancer.' This dancer is not intellectually, cognitively, or physically disabled. Impairment is not explicitly ruled out, yet the unexpressed assumption of a standard (if not virtuosic) bodymind[4] is in the background.

The methodology that we use in Cyrff Ystwyth reverses the paradoxical image of the disabled and therefore, fixed dancing body. Rather than replacing learning disabled colleagues or modelling dance for learning disabled dancers, non-disabled performers perform the work of colleagues with learning disabilities, thus demonstrating gestural connections, assembling patterns in gestures between and with all the bodyminds in collaboration. For instance, a direct point of the finger on an outstretched arm creates a spatial pathway, to be followed visually, and resonates with multiple meanings such as accusation, instruction, or excitement. When shared among the dancers, the gesture carries many meanings and many nuances in its physical performance. My colleagues reveal to me that we share a similar cultural context, but that our relationships with that context differ. In a bi-lingual culture, current non-disabled colleagues do not speak Welsh, both use English and one also speaks Polish. Learning disabled colleagues understand English and Welsh and use Makaton and BSL. In a reverse of normative social contexts, it is sometimes those of us who are non-disabled who are linguistically lagging in our group sessions.

'Special' virtuosity, as Duffy et.al mention is much enjoyed by audiences. Virtuosity is, as they state, a feature of how the dancer's body traverses the given performing area. The dancer defies space, gravity, and standard physiognomic capacity. But the learning disabled untrained dancer or the dancer without capacity for lift, spatial extension, speed, lightness, and

corporeal control gives pause for thought: how can such bodyminds be called dancers? Disability aesthetics properly sets its own standards. However, the reception of performances by learning disabled performer is not straightforward. Matthew Reason considers an audience's experience of learning disability performance as 'the disturbed act of watching' (2018, p. 164). He comments that 'discussions with audiences, actors, and practitioners, even attempting to broach the question as to whether we watch or judge learning disability performance by the same or different criteria as any other performance can produce vitriolic responses' (p. 165). Reason sets out five 'aesthetics of watching.' His final category of the postdramatic form of theatre that re-frames representation and performers who 'bring aspects of their real world identity into the theatre' resonates with our work (p. 174). In learning disability dance-theatre, this seems both inevitable and crucial. Non-learning disabled audiences, watching real world identities performed through choreographic action, that is to say, not character-based and without a dramatic plot, might be perturbed. The risk is that appearing before others reveals lack, or deficiency, or the mark of disability and lack of intellectual capacity. Audiences might well bring a normative expectation to dance, rather than a more curious, aesthetically-informed engagement. Licia Carlson explains: 'Many experts have defined intellectual disability as an object of knowledge, philosophers among them; yet less philosophical attention has been paid to persons with intellectual disabilities as knowing subjects in their own right' (2010, p. 15). The challenge that Carlson sets up crips the politics of learning disability dance. I am interested in what my learning disabled colleagues do, what depths of experience and knowledge that is hardly ever accessed or shared might become available via theatre and dance, and how that knowledge might begin to open new choreographic possibilities?

Cyrff Ystwyth's work is not overt in its advocacy, there are no statements about learning disability, no clear comments about social issues, and no clear political positioning. My colleagues make work that is poetic, that opens up personal and often intimate glimpses into daily life and relationships. Rosi Braidotti's posthumanist ontology challenges us, 'the point is not to know who we are, but rather what, at last, we want to become, how to represent mutations, changes and transformations rather than Being in its classical modes' (2002, p. 2). Braidotti's understanding of Being in its classical modes is the profound problem people with learning disabilities are faced with as Braidotti challenges the Cartesian split between body and mind and the constant obsession with our species as 'Man' as opposed to person. She critiques our assumption that the human is a 'normative category' (2019a, p. 35).

Following Matt Hargrave (2015), I suggest that the specific poetics of learning disabled theatre and dance may be producing new knowledge in the field of live performance and that this new knowledge challenges the cultural and political assumptions about the social subject in a political climate of hostility to those who are not perceived as contributing to society. Theatre and dance, even if unfunded and made by volunteers in located community contexts, are ways that people with learning disabilities contribute to society as creative thinkers who produce new insights and understandings of the world. Authenticity might not be an individual matter but one of 'becomings,' which is sourced, Braidotti suggests, through undoing dualisms and 'arousing an affirmative passion for the transformative flows that destabilize all identities' (2011, p. 41). From tentative gesture to performed works, we move towards becomings rather than definitive completion; single gestures and postures performed remain unpredictable and cohesion balances with fragmentation. This work evidences common

bonds and a means of sustaining creativity. Making dance and theatre performance is one way people with learning disabilities evidence their capacity to be knowing subjects, yet the problem of agency is not solved by assuming the ability to grasp it. Cluley et al. recommend understanding learning disability as assemblage that transforms and destabilizes unified identities: 'the general logic of assemblage includes all who are involved, regardless of ability' (2019, p. 253). They discuss policy but I use this to think of creative, collaborative processes between people with learning disabilities and those without as assemblages of skills and capacities in league, co-creating towards a shared goal. In the passing of gestures between differently abled performers, disability moves amongst us as communication, not deficiency, and suggests a new optimism. Such an optimism turns away from appearance and diagnosis towards the potentials of Braidotti's 'becoming worlds' and I am energised to move with my colleagues in gratitude. For example, during the first session of our new project, we followed our colleague Adrian, with wild and sudden postural shifts. Then, we were on the floor wriggling on our bellies, while covering heads with hands, and then, we stood up and jumped before running and suddenly stopping and yelling 'come on boys!.' This was Adrian's response to Eddie's earlier improvisation on a scene from his life, passed onwards but later recuperated in a new configuration.

Christoph Menke develops the theme of aesthetics as a force that, in its essence, is one of feeling and expression. Aesthetics is a force that has an effect on a body. It is relational, as the effect is produced by one body and causes an affect/effect in another. Menke explains Herder's propositions about what constitutes aesthetics as a force and argues that a specific understanding of imagination is key. Every act of imagination, or the generation of an image, is an act of formation of unity because it is a

continuous transformation of one image into another; images are created not from impressions but from images. This metamorphic and transformative process of imagination is the key to an understanding of the aesthetic force: the generation of an image is the operation of a force, and every image is thus the expression of a force (Menke, 2012, p. 43). In this formulation, aesthetics as a force is a continual process of generation, as each expression dissolves to produce a new one. Developing the analysis of aesthetics as a force, Menke turns to Nietzsche and finds that 'The vitality of human doing, discerned in the aesthetic perspective, defies the model of purposeful action: human doing, as living doing, is not the realization of a purpose but the expression of a force' (p. 90). Key to this is the ability to invent, to take risks, and to invite accidents. Inventing, as he states, is not a purposeful act but it requires a readiness to jump into the unknown and play. Menke's reading of Nietzsche, who realised that artists need to be willing to be unable to face what they do not know, 'in order to make something out of the intoxicated unchaining of their force' (p. 92), is the challenge for the non-disabled colleague to face. The non-disabled colleague faces what they do not know about disability and experiences a shift in social hierarchy. The disabled colleague is affirmed in their capacity to create new work. The disabled colleague is the person who determines the work despite the disability apparent in everyday life; in Cyrff Ystwyth the disabled colleague has authority. In being able to accept and practice inability and unknowing, Menke states that we find the joy of play and discovery. This formulation of aesthetics bypasses expectations for intellectual capacity and establishes new pre-requisites for artistry and the creation of an aesthetic object or event. Menke argues that the force of aesthetics is the foundation of being human and this implies an equity between humans. Aside from trainings and remarkable refinements in the human skills of different art forms, the basics

of a force that is unconscious, that manifests in imagination in action, and that is continually re-generative, are open to us all. It is the basis for self-creation and, following Nietzsche, Menke finds that it is also the basis for changing our ethical and moral practices beyond art into everyday life. In the creation of gestural responses, learning disabled colleagues deliver imagination embodied and each movement passes between everyone, changing deliveries of the move according to the bodyminds that share them. For example, again from the first session on our new project, a new member, Sam takes up Eddie's improvisation and turns juggling movements into a sharp upward movement of one finger over his bared teeth. We take this move and each bodymind alters it slightly, repeating and adding to the original mimetic gesture of juggling.

Rehearsing and performing choreography by artists with learning disabilities can facilitate new embodied understanding and aesthetics via kinaesthetic awareness and experience. In the work of disability rights, justice, and the place of disability aesthetics, the non-disabled performer must open to new ways of moving and experiencing movement. Menke states that art comes from nowhere, it emerges as an experiment and starts from nothing (2020, p. 23). That the performers I discuss here have, by and large, little connection with theatre arts does not preclude them from forming a practice of dance theatre performance. Our practice is both a form of choreography that draws on gesture and a practice of commitment to relationships and of being together once a week for decades. This, I suggest, is an example of Menke's force: that which a person carries with them, and it is through force that a person can take action in the world.

Stanton Garner writes that 'gesture manifests intention through the body's kinetic operations, and its meanings are shared through a kinesthetic

embodying of the movements observed' (2018, p. 189). Despite evidence that gesture is connected to verbal language as the basis of its communicative function, this is not its exclusive function. Dance takes us out of the linguistic framework that is often so problematic for people with learning disability. Garner foregrounds the kinetic operation here as does Carrie Noland. Whilst language involves kinetic activity in muscle and breath, dance affords non-functional movement. Garner considers 'the kinetic translation of inner experience into movement and the kinesthetic receptivity that allows another to reembody this meta-kinetic movement across cultural boundaries' (2018, p. 150). This of course is problematic for its universalising tendencies. However, how interesting then, that often we are taught to dance by mimicking the styles and techniques of those dancers we admire. What if we take up the gestural choreographies of learning disabled dancers, dancers who do not lead the aesthetic mainstream?

Karen Cerulo et al. argue that culture is acquired and shared via neurological processes and that the discovery of a class of neurons, named mirror neurons, in the mid-1990s will

> have implications for social interaction as they imply the potenial for 'a shared neural state realized in two different bodies that nevertheless obey the same functional rules' (Gallese, 2007, p. 3). The findings also add another explanatory level to sociological accounts of the bodily and affective entrainment that arises when people come together, and how coming together affects cognition and action. (2021, p. 65)

Cerulo et al. comment that 'cognition is an intricate melding of neural

systems residing in socially situated, inter-acting bodies located in structured social space' (p. 77). In our practice to perfect the choreographies crafted by learning disabled colleagues, we might approach this melding of neural systems in our specifically structured social space where we also blend our distinct cultural contexts of learning and physical disability cultures, and non-disabled cultures. Garner explains that there is possible danger in taking up movements from others: 'for myriad reasons we feel the need to protect ourselves from our motor and emotional identifications with others' (2018, p. 155). Here lies the rub. For few people seem willing to take up the offer of motor identification in making and performing learning disabled gestural choreography. As Garner explains, 'the action we observe could actually hurt us or the internalization of certain actions might put our own identity boundaries at risk' (ibid.).

Over the years, I have seen some non-disabled participants struggle with the role they are asked to take. Many mistakenly believe they are there to support learning disabled participants. It is in taking the risk of following disabled colleagues who lead that a cripping of the dance form takes place.[5] The non-learning disabled members of the group must commit to this risk, just as in Menke's terms, experiment begins with commitment, risk-taking, and the unknown. The ethical issues at stake will always asert themselves for each individual. In the first encounters, colleagues may experience the process as support and care, and this does not separate disabled from non-disabled group members. Arlene dropped her own process of working with Eddie's new material in order to support a new person who was trying out the work as a potential new member. As she encouraged him, he became more reluctant to try out the choreography and preferred instead to sit by me, watching the work rather than trying it out himself. David repeated my earlier attempts at trying to both model the work for him, and actively

moving this potential new member. But rather then engage, he pulled away to return to a seat by me. David was frustrated and also worried about the potential for damage, not to a person, but to Eddie's choreography and clarity of dramaturgy. The outcome was that the new potential colleague did not complete the process and after meeting with him and the family, they all decided that he would not return. There will be many reasons for this decision but I offer this brief description as an example of the intial process of informed consent and one that immediately establishes the potency of working without normative instruction but instead, with movements that are otherwise seen as symptomatic of disability. Here, such movements are activated in terms of disability aesthetics that Tobin Siebers establishes as 'a significant value in itself' (2006, p. 64).

Turning to renewed interest and current work in neurosciences, we can see how understanding mirror neurons might be a useful way to consider what is at work. I am not qualified to talk from a scientific point of view and so I come to this as a lay person reading other's work. Barbara Stafford's work about the materiality of cognition and the relevance of neuroscience to art practices comments that the word aesthetics comes 'from aesthesis, meaning "sensory knowing"' (2007, p. 178). Performance art is her example for a demonstration of 'distributed awareness' (p. 93). Discussing artist Yoko Tawada's work that reflects on languages and the strangeness that occurs between different languages, their concepts, sounds, and significations, Stafford finds that 'action is material communication [that] reveals the propensity of mind and world to interpenetrate' (ibid.). She suggests that the consequential neural developments 'transform the cultural domain' (ibid.).

Applying Stafford's ideas to the work of Cyrff Ystwyth, I wonder about how those of us non-disabled colleagues are transforming our cultural domains.

In her terms, internalized practices such as breathing or daily tasks such as shopping can become group patterns, established through external stimuli that the self performs whilst simultaneously responding to the environment (p. 181). In this understanding, non-disabled performers are bound with the impaired cognition of the disabled dancer and vice versa. This might be seen as threatening to the non-disabled self but also as an equality in the aesthetics of force. We crip dance by breaking with the tradition of learning disabled performers working normative movements drawn from established values of non-disabled movement. We engage with the work of those of us who are excluded from social, cultural, and political frames of reference that presuppose ways of dancing and ways of making performance within popular culture and that presuppose the benefit of training and learning theatre and dance skills. Such trainings and skills are important and I celebrate that it is possible for people with disabilities to take courses in all kinds of creative techniques. However, these are already powerful contexts of how to do things within the normative paradigm.

Cripping dance theatre might mean non-disabled people taking up the embodiments of disabled people and, ‘it can be the means by which a fuller, embodied understanding of “what it means to be human” can be achieved through the practice of a critical empathy that asserts the fluidity of identity and the right of any person to engage in a process of compassionate representation’ (Prentki, 2023, p. 390-391). In our neo-liberal contexts in the West, questionable competence damages a person. The individual subject is expected to manage themselves, independently. Learning disability sometimes excludes a person from that dubious luxury of independence. Dance theatre performances present the possibility of a change in social order for the moment of their happening, not as utopias, but an hour or so of possibility; challenging notions of rational normality, and embracing

otherness; understanding a mode of perception and action that refuses logic and linearity. People have things to comment on and people use theatre as a means to communicate even when verbal language and physical skills are limited. An understanding of skill might need to be re-imagined in learning disability terms.

Carrie Noland analyses Bill Viola's video work *Four Hands* (2001) and the gestures filmed in slow motion detail (2009, p. 82). She asks if we can move affect to one side. It is through affect that we come into relationship with the abstraction of bodies in movement not aligned with the mimetic qualities inherited from Braidotti's classical notion of Being. But Noland thinks about the gestures in Viola's work in movement analytical terms. She finds that the video installation is about transmission, examining the transmission of gesture as a form of apprenticeship rather than being innately understood. She refers to the 'teaching and learning of expressive means' (p. 83). *The Four Hands* relate in this way to the Mudras of classical Asian theatre techniques. These tightly proscribed gestures produce exact meaning and must be learnt by rote as movements taught by learned experts who learnt them in the same way – often the senior performer holding the body and literally moving the apprentice. Noland suggests that in the *Four Hands* we have 'an intersubjective milieu,' 'the tension between legibility and the ambiguous qualities of kinesies' (ibid.). With individual variations, kinetic dynamics engage vitality and produce affect as a by-product.

In Cyrff Ystwyth, perhaps the apprenticeship is more akin to a practice of becoming in collective solidarity and an investigation into adjustments as each person shifts the quality of gesture with timing and weight, posture and spatial reach. Consistency is not available but what an audience sees is an agreement about the movements, performed in a continually adapting

realisation of them. Precise shapes can be seen fleetingly as they morph via tics and forgettings, and are orchestrated by the variety of bodyminds in neurological symphonic developments of variations; polyphony and dissonance – that is composed. Non-disabled colleagues are apprenticed to learning disabled colleagues, practising dance and theatre as methods 'for the actualization of the many missing people, whose "minor" or nomadic knowledge is the breeding ground for possible futures' (Braidotti, 2019, p. 1192). Arlene's gesture of scattering and profound question is shared amongst all performers, whose personalised responses to open palms and throwing outwards may be tiny or exaggerated, gentle or percussive, precisely similar to her movements or distinctly different but they evidence shared understanding.

Dance performance actualizes the reality of human movement in its great range of expressions and qualities, according to Randy Martin. Through coming together to dance and to watch dance, people participate in an event that creates territory, community, and identity, and this is a political quality of dance performance, opening identities, creating new and perhaps unprecedented relationships. As Mark Franko states, it is about the relationship between performers and audience and that 'observation was already about participation and the reverse' (2016, p. 34). Franko proposes that Martin's 'Mobilization is setting things and people into relational movement both by virtue of what they do and what they see each other doing' (p. 5). According to Martin, 'The capacity to move an idea in a particular direction through the acquired prowess of bodies in action, is what is meant by social kinesthetic' (Martin, 2004, p. 48 qtd. in Franko, 2016, p. 37). Gerald Siegmund synthesizes Martin's mobilization in dance as social force with Menke's aesthetic force via energy. Siegmund states that aesthetic force necessitates imagination and play, and facilitates capacities.

But for Siegmund this is not about specific individual capacities. His term ‘in-difference’ is not about individual differences but a pre-political pre-social state available to us all through energetic force. He quotes Menke who states that aesthetic force is prior to the state of subjectivity that is indicated by the social skills of our milieu. With this force we can be:

> active without self-consciousness, inventive without goal. […] Equality, as equality of force, is nothing given. Force, in which we are equal, is a presupposition, because it is there for us, we experience and know of it only by performing acts in which it unfolds. Such acts are aesthetic; acts of play, of imagination. (Menke, 2011, p. 14-15 qtd. in Siegmund, 2019, p. 93).

If people are mobilised to come together and watch bodyminds of all varieties dancing, and others are mobilised to give the dance performance, then there is a gesture towards both individual and collective realisation of social identity. What dancing means in the work of Cyrff Ystwyth pushes at the edges of conventions about body, sign, and gesture. I understand this practice as an example of aesthetic force that reveals itself through potential. Each moment of rehearsal and of performance potential is made evident. It is in this sense that I argue for differing capacities that travel between bodies and in so doing disrupt the continuities of normativity and ablism, suggesting instead worlds to come, social futures to be re-choreographed and multiple in their forms, languages, and imaginations.

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Footnotes

1. This word was coined by Rosemarie Garland-Thomson, ‘The term normate usefully designates the social figure through which people can represent themselves as definitive human beings’ (1997, p. 8). The normate is ‘outlined by an array of deviant others’ (ibid).
2. Most of my learning disabled colleagues do not use much verbal language and consent is evidenced by consistent attendance and creativity as well as performing for the public.
3. I am using terms from the UK’s National Institute for Health Care and Excellence (NICE). NICE uses the ICD-11 classification of which there are five levels of severity. I do not feel it is useful for my colleagues nor for this article to go into further detail about the level descriptors. Rather, I am attempting to offer an idea of what is meant by learning disability in this context, and the specific aesthetics that emerge from our work. It is vital to note that learning disability is not a stable object or state. Capacities shift, vanish, and re-emerge at different times and moments.
4. I use this term as it is used in critical disability studies. The term indicates both a rejection of a Cartesian body/mind duality and a positive acknowledgment that body and mind are not separate parts of a living human but integrated and we experience the world as a bodymind. Sami Schalk offers a thorough definition: ‘The term bodymind insists on the inextricability of mind and body and highlights how processes within our being impact one another in such a way that the notion of a physical versus mental process is difficult, if not impossible to clearly discern in most cases’ (Schalk, 2018, p. 5).
5. In the UK, crip theory is not a mainstream approach to disability arts. I use it here with specific reference to Sami Schalk’s explanation of the term that refers to cultural forms of crip culture first developed in the USA, most notably by Robert McRuer. Schalk explains that the term and practices are similar to queer theory approaches that seek ‘to destabilize and contest, but not entirely dismantle, disability identity’ (2018, p. 9).

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