



An Embodied Return to Adventure: Reflections on the Art of Running as a Creative Act of Rhythm, Ritual and Repetition

Stephanie Turner

This workshop invites an adventurous return to a foundational form of human movement as living, breathing enquiry.

Experimenting at the edges of your own body of knowledge (Sajnani, 2012) and experience, we'll consider what relationship, if any, exists between an ancient, repetitive, ritual act such as running and the therapeutic factors of our arts therapies practices.

Participants will consider experientially the intersections of arts therapies processes and (gentle) running as creative practice. How might our lived experience of repetition, space, time, breath, motion, flow and presence speak for both the runner and the artist/educator, meeting in a field of mobilised, interdisciplinary enactment?

The workshop will begin outdoors with a short run/walk journey on foot, where the call to adventure is the moment-to-moment attention to our living, embodied experience. Attending to ourselves in repetitive and rhythmic motion may involve encounters with struggle and the possibility of new experiences. This accessible, collective journey invites all abilities, moving into running for small periods, keeping our bodies in motion.

Running has been pursued as an art form from the ancient adventures of the Greeks, where truths were brought home in the form of messages, to the theatre research laboratories of Grotowski (Magnat, 2014); there is some acknowledgment here that repeated action and liminal experiences can offer a close encounter with ourselves (Lev, 2022).

Our hero's journey will continue in the indoor workshop space, and the breath we are left with will form the basis of an embodied monologue created in relationship to your moving



adventure. Placing the body centre stage (Whelan, 2012), we will work together to find expressive forms for those aspects of movement and presence that intersect with the therapeutic process.

Pace, space and time will be considered, as we breathe into a collective journey on foot; we will share where, as therapists and educators, the old practice of such repetitious movement may support our presence and aliveness, so we are not running on empty.

References

Lev, A (2022) **Running Through the in between: Distance Runners in a State of Liminality**, *Leisure Studies*, Volume 42 (1)

Magrat, V. (2014) *Grotowski's Women and Contemporary Performance: meetings with Remarkable Women*. Routledge

Sajnani, N. (2012) **Improvisation and art-based research**, *Journal of Applied Arts and Health*, Volume 3 (1), pp.79-86

Whelan, G (2012) **Running Through a Field**, *Performance Research*, Vol. 17 (2): 110-120

Stephanie Turner is a dramatherapist, dramatherapy educator and clinical supervisor, with a background in theatre practice in her native Australia. She led the creation and development of the MSc Dramatherapy at Queen Margaret University (Edinburgh). A considerable amount of her clinical experience is within high security forensic services, where she created and led a dramatherapy service in Scotland for ten years before beginning her current academic role. Her clinical experience as a dramatherapist and supervisor also includes work within the fields of general adult mental health, primary school settings, children's residential care and perinatal mental health/women's services.

Stephanie is very interested in the intersections between the training of actors and dramatherapists and what we can learn from a shared pedagogy of therapeutic and dramatic presence.

She is very happy to work alongside her two dramatherapy colleagues and many other arts therapies colleagues within the Division.

She also runs sometimes.



Recent conference presentations

Turner, S. (Upcoming) **In defence of the 'small and vulnerable': a rejection of NHS England's description of dramatherapy and our arts therapies colleagues, 2026:** Conference of the British Association of Dramatherapists (BADth), Chester, paper presentation

Turner, S. **Working through these times: reflections on online working during Covid-19, 2020:** Royal College of Psychiatrists in Scotland Psychotherapy conference

Turner, S. (2019). **Birth Trauma: Dramatherapy and Traumatic Birth Experiences, 2019:** conference of the British Association of Dramatherapists (BADth), Chester, paper presentation

Turner, S. (2014). **Creative Containment, a dramatherapy approach to exploring destructiveness in male offender-patients, 2014,** Journal Club presentation, The State Hospital, Carstairs