

Every movement leaves a trace

Rosemarie Samaritter

She sat in the theatre space. In front of her, a large group of dancers was moving, walking, round after round. While watching, she felt inside a growing sensation. A sensation of familiar recognition, coming from this walking movement in front of her. This large cascading caravan of walking people, being on the move like a walking migration towards unknown horizons.

This observer was a child of parents who had fled adversities after a war and had found refuge in a strange country. The stream of moving people touched upon embodied experiences and the atmospheric presence of her parents, who carried the experience of refuge in their embodied encounters with their child.

Memory is often understood as an active narrative practice. However, every experience also leaves a trace in our embodied patterns of posture and moving and are communicated in interpersonal interactions through texture and subtle characteristics of the movements. Creating a choreographic scene, and dancing from the movement material related to life events, dancers can move from inside a memory, while being able to change the atmosphere or course of events according to the experience within the movement improvisation. The dancer can choreograph the situation according to their current capacities or needs. They are gaining the locus of control by composing spatial and temporal structures, building new memory from the aesthetic experience.

In dance movement therapy, clients are encouraged to move from bodily contained experiences, articulating inner landscapes in choreographic structures. Experiences in the therapeutic choreographic space support clients to situate and relocate malign experiences and identify safe places in these experiential landscapes, which may contribute to recovery and transformation of malign memories.

This presentation will offer an introduction to the DMT methods of Choreographic Space and Landscape Techniques and discuss their relevance for the work with trauma survivors.

Biography

Rosemarie Samaritter, PhD is a certified senior dance movement therapist and supervisor. She graduated in Dalcroze Rhythmics from Hochschule für Musik Rheinland, Wuppertal (D). She holds a degree in Integrative Movement Therapy from VU University Amsterdam (NL). Rosemarie obtained her doctorate from the University of Hertfordshire (UK) with a study on the effects of DMT on interpersonal attunement in young people with autism. She has been working as a senior dance therapist in private practice and mental health institutions for more than 30 years.

Rosemarie has been teaching and presenting DMT theory and methods at national and international conferences and DMT training programmes. As a researcher at Codarts Arts for Health Rotterdam (NL) and KenVaK Research Centre for the Arts Therapies (NL) Rosemarie is involved in intervention research and the development of innovative research projects with a specific focus on arts-informed research strategies and biometrical research tools.

Recent Publications

Samaritter, R. & Cantell, M. (2020). Wording the complexity of dance movement therapy. A scoping review on how dance movement therapists describe their clinical practice. In: Wengrower, H. & Chaiklin, S. (Eds). *Dance and Creativity within Dance Movement Therapy: An International Perspective*. NY, London: Routledge.

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Samaritter, R. (2018). The Aesthetic Turn in Mental Health: Reflections on an Explorative Study into Practices in the Arts Therapies. *Behavioral Sciences*, 8(4), 41. Open access: <http://www.mdpi.com/2076-328X/8/4/41>

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