

## Introduction to The Other “D”: A Forum on Dance Studies in Canada

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It is hard to believe that it has been less than a year since “The Other ‘D’: Locating Dance in Drama, Theatre and Performance Studies in Canada” symposium was held 22–23 January 2016, hosted by the Centre for Drama, Theatre, and Performance Studies at the University of Toronto. The interest in the event, the turnout, the integrity of the work presented and the genuine positive collegiality shared between presenters and guests from Victoria to Montreal, the United States, and Malaysia was, quite possibly, a surprise to some—though not at all to others. It was apparent from the time of opening remarks that the convergence of scholars, artists, activists, and lovers of dance and dance studies was a sign that many were ready to have a conversation about dance’s location within the academy in Canada. A follow-up to the event happened in the form of a roundtable at the Canadian Association for Theatre Research / L’association canadienne de la recherche théâtrale conference in Calgary in May 2016, which focused on looking back at histories of dance studies in Canada as a means to inform how we move forward.

Both the symposium and the roundtable ignited conversations about the importance of dance-friendly academic spaces in Canada. With an understanding of dance in its broadest sense as the movement of bodies through space and time, the symposium exploded with a riot of rich presentations and dialogue, all driven by and culminating in evidence that dance matters—as corporeal and consequential. The symposium was so compelling that the Centre for Dance Studies was established as a research unit within the Centre for Drama, Theatre and Performance Studies at the University of Toronto. The success of these combined events has also led to a partnership with *Performance Matters* that will work toward providing an ongoing space for dance-based research—to our knowledge, the first peer-reviewed site for publishing dance studies research in Canada. To see more about the symposium and the roundtable, including the participants and their contributions to the events, see “The Other ‘D’” website, [www.theotherd.ca](http://www.theotherd.ca). In addition to the original call for papers, schedule, and presenter bios, you will find curated artist/scholar/writer statements about the themes of the symposium, as well as an interview with Rebecca Schneider. Details of subsequent events are also listed on the website.

It is important to note, as we document the past year, that the particularity of the discussion was of dance *within the academy*, as opposed to the dance profession within the performing arts. There is a prolific and ongoing network of people and organizations across the country that works tirelessly on behalf of dance professionals and dance workers and to fail to mention them would create an illusion that “The Other ‘D’” is an isolated initiative. In fact, “The Other ‘D’” was in many ways inspired by the work of the Canadian Dance Assembly, the Canadian Alliance of Dance Artists, Dance Collection Danse, and the Canadian Society for Dance Studies, as well as other cognate

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organizations and institutions. “The Other ‘D’” is an addition to these conversations and advocacies. Hopefully, it is also the beginning of creating new bridges between them.

This first dance-focused Forum of *Performance Matters* comprises materials generated for and in response to the symposium and roundtable. We felt it important to publish selected works that directly addressed questions posed at these events to create a record of the scholarly engagement and to document the concerns of the moment. Moving forward, a call for papers will be circulated to solicit articles for a stand-alone issue of *Performance Matters* devoted to dance studies in Canada. We are working toward a guest-editor model to create an infrastructure that provides dances scholars with career-building opportunities. To that end, the writing in this special Forum section is comprised of the two keynote addresses given by Allana Lindgren and Susan Manning at the January symposium, six articles based on work presented at the symposium and roundtable, and a reflection from two organizers of “The Other ‘D,’” Seika Boye and Emma Doran.

Lindgren’s keynote, “Disciplinary and the Future of Dance in Canadian Universities,” locates dance in the Canadian academy historically and provides a projection of the possible futures for dance studies in Canada. Lindgren’s call to engage across disciplines and to internationalize dance studies is reflected in the work of Evadne Kelly and Gdalit Neuman, respectively. Kelly’s article, “In the Space of Interdisciplinary Dialogue: Generating Ethnographic Research on Dance/Movement in Canada,” explores the various relationships in the Canadian academic landscape between dance studies and what she calls dance ethno\*, work that is inclusive of ethnographic and anthropology studies related to dance. Neuman’s historical research looks at the body as a site of change in “Dancing Between Old Worlds and New: Max Nordau’s New Jew Idea and its Manifestation in Pre-State Israeli Folk Dance.”

Henry Daniel and Megan Andrews both map out a certain history of dance studies in Canada, though engaging this choreographic topology through different understandings of dance’s and dance studies’ embodied histories. Daniel, in “Performing Ideas . . . Expertly,” positions dance as under threat in the university, its binary-confounding transdisciplinarity offering dance both its unique ability to move between fields and discourses and its particular vulnerability to be subsumed within them as well. Andrews’s “Midwifing Transitions: The Labour of Publishing in the History of Dance and Dance Studies in Canada” provides a performative history of not only the literature that comprises the nascent canon of dance studies in this country, but also those journals, collections, and virtual sites that have established a necessary though still precarious space for dance scholarship. Andrews’s is a feminist methodology—both in the article itself and in the accompanying interactive map that structurally replays the fluidity of a timeline both teleological and abstract—and the metaphor of maternal labour speaks through what Andrews theorizes as the “material engagement between bodies and technologies” on which dance studies is predicated.

MJ Thompson’s “revised formations, post-disciplinary dance” is a strong complement to Daniel’s article, taking transdisciplinarity one step further toward transnationality and extranationality as Thompson asks how dance studies might imagine and implement an infrastructure that not only supports the work within the field in general, but particularly that of marginalized or vulnerable peoples. For Thompson, such a project not only defines a space within the institution for dance and dance studies that is at once specific and pluralistic but also serves as a productive example of such an intervention into the twenty-first-century neoliberal university.

In “States of Insurrection in *Native Girl Syndrome*,” Stefanie Miller questions how audiences encounter performances of states of being that they cannot know through lived experience. She proposes that there is an opportunity to allow for new ways of feeling alongside performed representations of marginalized and dispossessed peoples. Here, Miller offers an answer on how to work toward Thompson’s call to indigenize dance studies in Canada.

Like Lindgren, Susan Manning, in her keynote “How We Got Here: A View from the US Academy,” speaks to her experiences of completing doctoral training in drama and theatre programs as a way to study dance before being employed in an English department while continuing to research and publish in dance. Manning also speaks from her experience as Principal Investigator for the Mellon-funded initiative “Dance Studies in/and the Humanities”—an initiative designed to accelerate the momentum of dance studies as an (inter)discipline and to pose possibilities for the future locations of dance studies in relationship to theatre and performance studies in the academy.

Seika Boye and Emma Doran’s article draws together multiple threads from a year of mostly formal conversations about dance studies in the Canadian academy, reflecting on surprises, sources of energy, and the importance of unlearning as a way of decolonizing the academy; in so doing, the article also considers ways that, as the academy unlearns, it can also make space for new ideas. While the article refers to writers featured in this Forum, it also indexes work published on “The Other ‘D’” website, as well as papers and posters presented at the events hosted in 2016.

It has been an incredibly exciting, busy, and inspiring time making connections and becoming (re)connected to new and familiar faces through not only a love of dance and dance studies, but through a belief in the profundity of what we have to learn about ourselves and others through the lens of dance. As organizers of “The Other ‘D’” symposium, and as editors of this special Forum section, we would like to extend our thanks to our funders and sponsors: the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada; Dance Collection Danse; and the University of Toronto Faculty of Music. We would also like to acknowledge that “The Other ‘D’” was given a space due to the generous support of the Centre for Drama, Theatre and Performance Studies at the University of Toronto, with special thanks to Stephen Johnson for his belief that dance matters, reveals, and transforms, and for his willingness to advocate for dance and dance studies through ongoing encouragement and action. Sincere thanks as well to all of the presenters and attendees at each of the events over the past year. Finally, thank you to Peter Dickinson and *Performance Matters* for providing the space to share this important work, and for the opportunity to extend the discussions included here well into the future.