

An invitation to engage in the creative process of performance, to expand public awareness and understanding of Dance Movement Psychotherapy. A retrospective reflection and public screening of Dance Movement Psychotherapy performance platform: 'Holding the Body in Mind'.

First Author: Kimberley Pena MA RDMP ADMPUK

Abstract

Responding to a need to expand public awareness of the modality of Dance Movement Psychotherapy (DMP), a public performance platform was created for registered Dance Movement Psychotherapists to share their embodiments of working within Mental Health settings. It was an invitation to explore our ambivalence about DMP in performance, by re-addressing our ability to engage in an embodied creative process. This was to further the understanding and awareness of our profession. The performance platform highlighted the effectiveness of dance as an art form, in communicating and generating understanding to our lived experiences of DMP. The trailer of the live DMP performance 'Holding the Body in Mind' is a visual insight into the performance platform. It invites the viewer to question their own response to vignettes of DMP moving into public consciousness through performance.

Objective

The performance platform 'Holding the Body in Mind' was created to raise awareness for mental health, from a DMP perspective. This was in collaboration with The Mental Health Foundation, during mental health awareness week in the UK. The performance platform was created with an aim to raise the profile of DMP, while simultaneously raising awareness of mental health in the UK. Aware that performance is a powerful vessel towards public recognition and in agreement with Allegranti (2011, P39), who states:

'The process of becoming public involves the performance of self as subject.'



Images from group rehearsal and creative process to bring individual embodiments together for performance platform.

METHODOLOGY

This qualitative research was strongly rooted in the phenomenological paradigm of understanding through the lived experience. The performance platform consisted of five registered dance movement psychotherapists sharing their embodied experiences of working with various client groups. This semi-improvised format allowed for a co-created performance. As a team, we agreed that an invitation for the audience to move with us felt essential in the communication and understanding of DMP. Moving away from the audience role and into the role of participant observer. Reminded by Payne and Gallagher's (2014, p75) views on embodied cognition, who state:

'Once we are in situations of joint attention and joint action, critical reasoning becomes a kind of shared contextualised interaction that allows for and builds upon understanding...'

2.1



2.1 and 2.2 – Live Performance Platform images

PARTICIPANT OBSERVER RESPONSES

'It was truly moving. The music fit the pieces so well. The stories and emotions depicted, though heavy, felt shared amongst us all. Q&A and open dance session at the end truly connected the feeling that we had just had a taste of a group session.'

'Found it hard to connect with the more choreographed pieces – they didn't resonate with my experience of DMP. Something gets lost in translating the experience in sessions and the performance. The use of words/narratives, helped me connect the two. Movement at the end brought it together.'

'Enjoyed the experience – some heavy content and the end piece, ending in joyous music and getting audience up dancing was so vital to our experiences – lightening the experience and almost giving the audience a taste of movement lightening heavy burdens (I might have left feeling sad had we not shook it off!) Q&A fascinating – so interesting to learn and reflect upon'

Conclusion

A moment from our experience can only ever be represented not repeated, and its aesthetic representation may resonate or jar, dependent on the body witnessing. Therefore 'Performance' is not to be feared, as a medium to communicate DMP to a wider audience, but worked with. Reminded that creativity finds its soul when it embraces its shadow (T, Moore 2012). Overall this narrative enquiry, demonstrated that performance based experientials of DMP, by engaging in the expressivity of dance as an art form, can provide a valuable method for communicating aspects of DMP. Furthermore performance platforms of DMP have the potential to open channels of understanding and engagement.

DMP is the marriage of both science and art. As we continue to provide robust scientific reasoning and research towards our validation, let us not deny our roots in the powerful medium of dance. It is dance and the creation of art which holds the capacity to communicate our immediate lived human experiences. Furthermore, the human experience of what is meant by participating in the DMP process. As we are aware, movement generates new ways of being in the world. DMP performance platforms have the potential to add to the recognition of our profession and so I encourage an engagement with our creative process to bring DMP into public consciousness.



Reference

- Allegranti, B. (2011) *Embodied Performances Sexuality, Gender, Bodies*. Palgrave Macmillan.
- Finlay, L. (2005) Reflexive embodied empathy: a phenomenology of participant- researcher intersubjectivity. *The Humanistic Psychologist* Issue 4
- Gallagher, S. & Payne, H. (2014). 'The role of embodiment and intersubjectivity in clinical reasoning', *Body Movement and Dance Psychotherapy*. Volume 10, Number 1 February 2015.
- Merleau-Ponty, M., (1945/1962) *Phenomenology of Perception*, London: Routledge Classics.
- Moore, M. (2012). *Care of the Soul* Piatkus Books.
- Winnicott, D.W. (1971). *Playing and Reality*. New York Basic Books.

Acknowledgement of Contributors

Performance contributors: Dickson, Emma. MA RDMP Joy Janiak, Sabio. de Meillon, Lana. Messenger, Theresa. MA RDMP. Schauble, Mira, MA RDMP.
 Photographer and Videographer: Evan, David Photographer.
 Sponsored by: The Mental Health Foundation UK