

Editorial

Rose Martin (Guest editor)

University of Auckland

Karen Barbour (Editor)

University of Waikato

Welcome to the fourth volume of *Dance Research Aotearoa*. We are excited to share with you this unique collection of articles that explore topics connected to community dance, social justice and social transformation. The papers published within this volume are drawn from distinctive dance events held in Aotearoa in 2015—the Dance and Social Justice Symposia held in Hamilton on 3 October (hosted by The University of Waikato), and in Auckland on 5 November (hosted by the University of Auckland), along with The Moving Communities International Conference on Community Dance held in Dunedin in November 2015 (hosted by The University of Otago). Alison East provides an overview of the Moving Communities conference in her introductory comments in this volume, entitled *Dance in/for/with/as/Community: Re-defining community dance in 2015-16*. East begins with a significant question about how dance can play a meaningful role in fostering healthy communities. This question is explored in the articles in this volume.

During these recent dance events, esteemed Emeritus Professor Sherry Shapiro from Meredith College, North Carolina, United States of America, presented her work as part of her 2015 Fulbright Visiting Scholar role at The University of Waikato and The University of Auckland. Following the two connected symposia, Sherry also contributed to the Moving Communities conference. Shapiro's papers are shared within this volume, entitled 'Dance as Activism; The Power to Envision, Move and Change', and illustrate how dance is an integral part of social change. Shapiro passionately argues that dance has the potential to raise critical consciousness, build community and motivate individuals to promote social change (2015, 2002, 1999, 1998). Within her article in this volume, Shapiro highlights how innovative pedagogies can be a catalyst to engage dance community members to take action around social issues, consequently allowing people to

develop agency to interrupt and alter oppressive systemic patterns or individual behaviours.

The symposium at The University of Waikato offered students, community members and dance researchers an opportunity to hear Shapiro speak about her experiences of doing feminist pedagogy, followed by practical workshops or focused discussion around related issues and how these issues might prompt collaborative research. During The University of Auckland symposium, Shapiro presented on dance as aesthetic activism. Guest researcher Eeva Anttila from The University of the Arts, Helsinki, Finland (Anttila, 2008) and graduate students also gave a range of short presentations on their current research, generating further discussion about collaborative research, feminist pedagogy and activism through the arts. The potential for dancers and dance performances to contribute to positive change in our communities, and to social movements nationally and internationally, was a valuable prompt that Shapiro offered throughout these distinctive dance events.

We editors observe that as the world becomes more and more globalised, and social issues reside at the forefront of governments' agendas, there is a need to explore diverse ways in which change and action might occur. As troublesome political events in Europe and America unfold, the ricochet effect of these on policies, practices and pedagogies associated with dance is inevitable. Such events will have a lasting impact on the future of dance and inevitably challenge those who seek to broaden meanings of socially, culturally, economically and politically inclusive dance in a range of communities. The articles included in this volume add to the conversations and seek to sustain dialogue that shares a diversity of perspectives and the ongoing critical questioning of the role dance might play in relation to community, social justice and social transformation.

References

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