



Memoria Saltationis: The Memory of Dance - 5 June 2020

Mental imagery as a tool for learning and making dance

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The idea of applying science to dance is still relatively new. Dancers tend to view themselves as artists not athletes even though the highly trained physical skills and movement vocabulary through which they communicate their ideas in choreographic work share much in common with athletes. The priorities in training dancers at least within contemporary dance contexts, remain to explore the technique, aesthetics and meaning conveyed through dance rather than to prepare for its physical and psychological demands in any systematic way. Mental imagery is a recognized tool in sports to help rehabilitate injuries and enhance performance. Research into the use of mental imagery in dance evidences its use particularly among elites, however the extent to which it can help both technique and artistry among different dancing groups, remains under investigation.

In this presentation, I will speak from a dance practitioner's perspective, about the way in which mental imagery and somatic principles are applied in daily studio practice. I will briefly describe a recent 3-year study into mental imagery and creativity in dance and I will point to where current and emergent research interests lie within the growing field of dance. Lastly, I will mention the continuing debate and challenge when it comes to undertaking scientific research into the art form of dance.