
# *Hiking the Horizontal: Field Notes from a Choreographer*. By Liz Lerman. Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Press (dist. Lebanon, NH: UPNE), 2011; pp. xx + 307, 47 illustrations. \$29.95 cloth, \$23.99 e-book.

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Theatre Survey / Volume 54 / Issue 03 / September 2013, pp 460 - 462
DOI: 10.1017/S0040557413000380, Published online: 29 August 2013

**Link to this article:** http://journals.cambridge.org/abstract_S0040557413000380

**How to cite this article:**
Ariel Nereson (2013). Theatre Survey, 54, pp 460-462 doi:10.1017/S0040557413000380

Phenomenon," and "The Changing Demographic of Performance" (Chapters 2, 3, 4, and 7, respectively).

*Twentieth-Century British Theatre* offers a goldmine of data on the social, economic, and political traits of British theatre. The range of Cochrane's research among published sources is impressive; her handling of most topics is reliable and appropriate. Also, as she explains, she makes careful use of documentary information available on Internet Web sites, including those of the Theatre Archive Project, the Victoria and Albert Theatre Collections, and the U.K. government. Of course, as Cochrane acknowledges, no single book can do full justice to all of the topics in this book—separate books could be written on each one, from the history of the policies of the Arts Council, to the place of amateur theatre and the Little Theatre movement in various towns and cities. Cochrane well understands that this ambitious book is radically different from her two previous studies, *Shakespeare and the Birmingham Repertory Theatre 1913–1929* (Society for Theatre Research, 1993) and *The Birmingham Rep: A City's Theatre 1962–2002* (Sir Barry Jackson Trust, 2003). Nonetheless, her accomplishment in *Twentieth-Century British Theatre* is quite admirable. This book offers a necessary foundation for all future studies of twentieth-century British theatre.

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Reviewed by Ariel Nereson, University of Pittsburgh

The success of Twyla Tharp's *The Creative Habit* (Simon & Schuster, 2003) in both academic and general settings demonstrates a renewed interest in the "how" of being creative, and in the ways in which dance artists and choreographers specifically might reveal new insights into the creative process. Nationally renowned choreographer Liz Lerman's *Hiking the Horizontal: Field Notes from a Choreographer* is an inspiring addition to this body of texts. Lerman's previous books delineate specific strategies Lerman uses in the making of work for her company, the Dance Exchange. This recent volume adds two worthy elements: Lerman's musings on the challenges of creativity, specifically as it relates to community collaborations and site-specific work, and her recollections of her life. Scholars of Lerman's work will also appreciate the effort she undertakes in *Hiking the Horizontal* to archive her choreography and the Dance Exchange's performances.

The book is divided loosely into broad chapters, each of which is subdivided into small, thematically related sections. As Lerman states in the Prologue, "sequencing is a provocative activity for a choreographer," and she has purposefully crafted a book that invites both reading straight through and skipping around (xix). This structure pays off largely because of Lerman's strong concepts that

repeat throughout sections—concepts such as "transdomain practices" (203–40), or "bulky love" (265–80), for example—which thus make it possible for readers to move nonlinearly through the text without losing its threads.

Lerman's first chapter, "Questions as a Way of Life," proposes that artists mine discomfort and turn it into inquiry. She demonstrates how she has used this approach throughout her career by discussing her earliest work, *New York City Winter* (1974), and her latest at the time of writing, *The Matter of Origins* (2010), arguing that the questions formed by the company function as the company's repertory as much as the choreography itself.

Each of Lerman's next three chapters takes up, and is titled with, one of the central questions permeating the Dance Exchange's work: "Who Gets to Dance?"; "What Is the Dancing About?"; and "Where Is the Dance Happening?" (The fourth question—"Why does it matter?"—is answered throughout the text rather than receiving a chapter-length treatment.) Chapter 2, "Who Gets to Dance?," begins with Lerman's manifesto, as formulated in an ad appearing in the *Village Voice* in 1999. The manifesto foregrounds, as fundamental to the Dance Exchange's identity, community collaboration, the notion of change and transition, and inquiry as a creative methodology. Lerman then turns to discussion of her work at the Roosevelt Senior Center in Washington, D.C., and to the radical questioning, triggered by her work with the elderly, of her own ability to train dancers. The Dance Exchange has since become known for its incorporation as company members of those who would, in many other contexts, be considered too old for dance careers, a contemporary practice grounded in Lerman's previous work at the Roosevelt.

In addition to her work with older dancers, Lerman is also known for her site-specific, community-oriented commitment to creating dance. One of the most famous of these pieces, *The Portsmouth Naval Shipyard Project* (1994–6), explored the proposed closing of the Portsmouth Naval Shipyard in Kittery, just outside Portsmouth, New Hampshire. The shipyard is "a place that some local families ha[ve] worked for twelve generations," and which is "a central part of the town and its history" (49); its proposed closure had those directing Portsmouth's Music Hall "wonder[ing] what a community-wide artistic project might do to address the potential impact of shutting down the shipyard" (49). In Lerman's discussion of this work's making (a term she prefers to "creating"), she posits "spontaneous gesture" as one of the core choreographic tools used by the company when working with community members. Defined as "watching for choreographic ideas in the natural movement" of the participants (51), this tactic demonstrates the company's overarching openness to changing its collective mind about a piece—to finding inspiration and following it without holding to a pattern or a preconceived structure for a work. In the question-motivated chapters that follow ("What Is the Dancing About?" and "Where Is the Dance Happening?"), Lerman counters notions of dance as a universal language through her examinations of the collaborative, community work in which she has participated, deftly refuting the assumption that dance can speak without context.

Invaluable for Lerman scholars and for those interested in site-specific work are the portfolios in the text that offer photographs and brief analyses of Lerman's vast repertory. These add greatly to her detailed and stimulating discussion of

space as a choreographic tool, as well as to her insightful discussions of the stage and street as performance spaces. Her fifth chapter, "Structures and Underpinnings," takes on the challenge of defining what a residency might be through the structure of a "Q and A," an unusual yet effective authorial choice. This chapter also deals with two common concerns about community collaborations: that they might be confused with therapy, or that they will be considered a less prestigious practice than that of choreographing virtuosic dancers. Lerman argues that "a double standard that allows one level of rigor for performance and a lesser one for teaching or community engagement or worship is not acceptable" (224).

Perhaps one of the most useful sections of Lerman's book is her chapter "Transdomain Practices." The information and methods Lerman deploys in her own transdomain practice are infinitely applicable to the interdisciplinary work of making theatre. For those involved in practice-as-research, Lerman's claim to envisioning research as rehearsal will excite. Lerman is also invested in the question of "how navigating the personal, rather than avoiding it, could lead to interesting research methods" (212). For Lerman, the promise in conceptualizing creative work as transdomain "is that of multiple outcomes emerging from the same research" (217).

A helpful resource for Lerman scholars and anyone interested in docudance, *Hiking the Horizontal* is perhaps most notable for its commitment to uniting research and practice as a creative methodology, a view that may inspire scholars in their academic as well as practical work.

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***Wild and Dangerous Performances: Animals, Emotions, Circus.*** By Peta Tait. New York and Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012; pp. x + 230, 21 illustrations. $85 cloth, $85 e-book.
doi:10.1017/S0040557413000392

Reviewed by Catherine Young, City University of New York

Peta Tait is a leading Australian scholar whose work has addressed feminism, culturally situated viewing practices, and the performance of emotions in Chekhov. Her previous book, on aerial performance, provided an important point of reference for those working in the fields of popular entertainment, cultural identity, and body theory. *Wild and Dangerous Performances: Animals, Emotions, Circus* is Tait's first book to focus on animals.

Though Tait uses the historical shift from menagerie-style display to dynamic circus performances in the late nineteenth century as her starting point and ends with an Internet lion meme, this is not a straightforward social history. Tait draws on archives in Australia, England, and the United States, as well as memoirs, ethnology studies, and the thinking of contemporary animal studies theorists, to integrate the historical facts of several big cat and elephant trainers' careers with philosophical considerations of how emotional exchanges (between