Metadata Body-Biography Interview

Hilary Cartwright

Dancer, Ballet and Yoga Narada® Teacher, Choreographer (*1943 Leamington Spa, UK)

Interview Date: October 13, 2022 and April 20, 2023

Location: Bern

Interviewer: Elizabeth Waterhouse

Language: English

Duration: 3 hours 35 minutes

Interview on April 20, 2023 © 2024, Uni Bern/Stiftung SAPA

Screenshot by E. Waterhouse.

Copyright © 2024, Universität Bern/Stiftung SAPA, Schweizer Archiv der Darstellenden Künste

1. Interview Context

1.1. Project Series

SNF-Forschungsprojekt "Auto_Bio_Grafie als Performance. Ein tanzhistoriografisches Innovationsfeld"
Institut für Theaterwissenschaft der Universität Bern, in Partnerschaft mit der Stiftung SAPA
Laufzeit: 01.09.2020 - 31.08.2024

Das durch den SNF geförderte Projekt untersucht aus tanzgeschichtlicher Perspektive autobiografische ‚Erzeugnisse' von Tänzer_innen und Choreograf_innen (19. bis 21. Jahrhundert). Als Wissens- und Erfahrungsspeicher bieten diese einen einzigartigen Fundus an oftmals alternativ perspektivierten Informationen für die Tanzgeschichtsschreibung, wobei ihr spezifischer Quellenstatus berücksichtigt und stets mit reflektiert werden muss.

Ziel ist eine tanzwissenschaftlich fundierte Bearbeitung des Themas. Das Projekt basiert auf interdisziplinärer Forschung zu Autobiografik, nimmt dabei aber disziplinär ein eigenes, weites Korpus zusammenhängend in den Blick, macht dieses fachspezifisch produktiv und wiederum fachübergreifend anschlussfähig. Als konsequente Weiterverfolgung und innovative Erweiterung der bisherigen historiografischen und diskursanalytischen Forschung zielt das Projekt (bestehend aus drei Teilprojekten) auf eine Revision der Tanzgeschichte bzw. der Tanzgeschichtsschreibung, indem es den Fokus sowohl auf schriftliche 'Selbstzeugnisse' von Tänzer_innen richtet (d.s. in Buchform publizierte oder als Manuskripte greifbare Autobiografien), aber auch auf mündliche (Interview-Gespräche mit Zeitzeug_innen) und auf aufgeführte (Stücke, Choreografien, Performances) – stets unter Beachtung ihrer jeweiligen Verfahrensweisen und ihres epistemologischen Potentials.

Projektteam: Prof. Dr. Christina Thurner, Dr. Elizabeth Waterhouse, Dr. Julia Wehren, MA Nadja Rothenburger, BA Claudio Richard, BA David Castillo.

Weitere Informationen:
https://www.theaterwissenschaft.unibe.ch/forschung/projekte/laufende_projekte/auto_bio_grafie_als_performance/index_ger.html

1.2. Subproject "Body-Biographies: Our Life Stories in Dance" Dr. Elizabeth Waterhouse

The subproject "Body-Biographies: Our Life Stories in Dance" explores dancer biography from a body-reflexive and practice-informed perspective. Through developing a series of case studies with four protagonists, the research aims both to innovate and critically reflect on methodologies of interviewing dancers and publishing body-reflexive life histories, as well as to exemplify and articulate analytic frameworks for interpreting the performative and embodied aspects of dancers' life story narration. Waterhouse chose four significant yet lesser-known English-speaking dance artists as interview partners for this project: Hilary Cartwright, Christine Kono, Chris Lechner, and Marcus Schulkind (born between 1943 and1963 in England, America, and Myanmar). These artists offer unique and transnational perspectives on ballet, modern, *Tanztheater*, and contemporary dance practices since the 1950s. Yet even more importantly, as Waterhouse's dance teachers and artistic collaborators, the author's relationships with her research subjects offered deep rapport and shared embodied knowledge, facilitating mutual life review. Bringing the researcher's body and life stories self-reflexively into the research design, *Body-Biographies: Our Life Stories in Dance* (2026) is the monograph resulting from this study.

Waterhouse, Elizabeth. *Body-Biographies: Our Life Stories in Dance. Hilary Cartwright, Christine Kono, Chris Lechner, and Marcus Schulkind.* Bielefeld: transcript, 2026.

1.3. Oral History Program Stiftung SAPA

Das Oral History-Programm von SAPA umfasst Gespräche mit Choreograf:innen, Tänzer:innen, Pädagog:innen und Tanzjournalist:innen der Darstellenden Künste der Schweiz. Seit 2012 leistet die Stiftung SAPA mit der Durchführung von Interviews einen bedeutenden Beitrag zur Dokumentation der Darstellenden Künste der Schweiz. Angesichts der flüchtigen, oftmals nur in der Erinnerung festgehaltenen Aufführungskunst und der zudem kaum systematisch gesammelten Dokumentation der Darstellenden Künste bildet die mündliche Gesprächsform mit Zeitzeug:innen eine wichtige Quelle. Sie ermöglicht den Zugang zu Erinnerungen, Erfahrungen, Einschätzungen und Wissensbeständen, die sonst verloren gehen würden, und erweitert zudem den existierenden Bestand an schriftlichen und audiovisuellen Dokumenten um eine persönlich Perspektive. Die Interviews werden audiovisuell aufgezeichnet, transkribiert und mit Metadaten versehen sowie von SAPA langzeitarchiviert. Sie stehen einer interessierten Öffentlichkeit als Rohdaten zur Verfügung und bilden die Basis für vielfältige Vermittlungsformate von SAPA wie Filme, Ausstellungen, Publikationen, digitale Formate. Die Stiftung SAPA bildet mit diesem sowohl projektbasierten wie kontinuierlich vorangetriebenen Programm ein Kompetenzzentrum für Oral History.

Oral History-Team: Angelika Ächter, Katrin Oettli, Julia Wehren; Susanne Hofer (Flimmern)

Weitere Informationen: https://sapa.swiss/oral-history/

2. Interview Methodology

Methodology: Waterhouse's methodology of body-biography is articulated in the second chapter of her monograph, *Body-Biographies: Our Life Stories in Dance* (2026). The author develops this approach with regard to methods and debates in oral history, sensory ethnography, narrative interviews, and life story research. Key features of the methodology are its embodied, participatory, and ethical components: contextually situating interviews in contexts of dance practice, inviting the interviewee to contribute practice-informed formats, extending interviews into a series to heighten reflexivity and explore life story coherence, and involving the interviewer as a relational and embodied partner in the co-construction of narrative.

Recording Data: The interviews with each protagonist for this project produced an archival trace of three to six hours of recorded conversation. The interview audio recording was made using two RØDE Wireless GO II microphones: one for the interviewee and the other for the interviewer. The resulting data is spatialized and saved as a single WAV file for each interview.

Transcript Data: The interviews were transcribed verbatim, preserving the oral character of the conversations and edited only minimally (e.g., without correcting stuttering, incomplete sentences, or filler words such as "um" or "uh"). Peculiarities in speech or body language are noted in round brackets. Clarifying insertions, such as complete titles or dates of artworks, appear in square brackets. The transcripts were not corrected for factual errors. The header includes the protagonist's biographical, family, and migration histories. The transcripts have been reviewed and authenticated by the interviewees; the content of what was said is their property. If changes have been made due to personal rights or removal of sensitive material, this is noted.

3. Legal Notice

Any use is regulated by the SAPA Foundation and the SNSF research project “Auto_Bio_Graphy as Performance. A Field of Dance Historiographic Innovation” at the University of Bern. The materials are made available to interested parties and for research purposes on request. Unless otherwise stated, the rights of publication and further use are reserved by the SAPA Foundation and the SNSF research project. For quotations and reprints, permission must be obtained from the SAPA Foundation.

Contact: Stiftung SAPA | Postfach, 3001 Bern | 043 205 29 02 (Zürich), www.sapa.swiss

4. Recommended Citation

Cartwright, Hilary. “Body-Biography Interview with Hilary Cartwright.” Interviews by Elizabeth Waterhouse, October 13, 2022, and April 20, 2023, Bern. Swiss Archive of the Performing Arts.

5. Biographies

Interviewee:

Hilary Cartwright was born in Leamington Spa in the United Kingdom in 1943. She attended Elmhurst Ballet School and the Royal Ballet School before joining the Royal Ballet in 1962. After a serious back injury several years into her career, she transitioned into teaching—a process described in her autobiography *Dancing for a Living* (1974). In her thirties, Cartwright taught ballet internationally, as well as holding leadership positions in dance companies and ballet schools; between 1978 and 1983 she moved between London, Winnipeg, The Hague, Geneva, Rio de Janeiro, Montreal, and New York. While searching for movement practices and healing work that would help care for her back and educate dancers holistically, Cartwright discovered the movement practice of Juliu Horvath, leading to their extended collaboration. In 1984, Cartwright co-founded the White Cloud Studio with Horvath in New York City. She managed the studio and staff for twelve years, training new teachers and developing movement methods in synergy with Horvath’s innovations in movement equipment, today known as the GYROTONIC® expansion system. In parallel, Cartwright continued to work as a ballet teacher, choreographer, and to set ballets as part of the Frederick Ashton Foundation. For the last twenty-five years, Cartwright has additionally focused on refining her Yoga Narada® practice, offered initially in New York City as well as through international workshops and retreats. Cartwright currently offers lessons in presence and through Zoom. She resides in Alpatró, Vall de Gallinera, in the province of Alicante, Spain.

Interviewer:

Elizabeth Waterhouse (*born 1979 in Albany, NY, USA) is a Professor of Ballet at the Frankfurt University of Music and Performing Arts and an associate researcher at the University of Bern, Institute of Theatre Studies (ITW). She earned her doctorate in Tanzwissenschaft (Dance Studies) at the University of Bern and is the author of *Processing Choreography: Thinking with William Forsythe’s* Duo (2022) and *Body-Biographies: Our Life Stories in Dance. Hilary Cartwright, Christine Kono, Chris Lechner, and Marcus Schulkind* (2026). From 2020 to 2024, she was a postdoctoral researcher at the ITW in the SNSF project “Auto_Bio_Graphy as Performance: A Field of Dance Historiographic Innovation.”