



## Editorial

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### WITH C-A-R-E

#### C for Context

This special issue of the *Scottish Journal of Performance, Art of Care* presents a diverse selection of papers that have materialised as a result of *The Art of Care-full Practice* symposium which took place on 5 March 2017 at the University of Glasgow. This event was a collaboration between The Royal Conservatoire of Scotland, The Glasgow School of Art and the University of Glasgow and was part of the inaugural *Take Me Somewhere* festival of contemporary performance that took place in various locations in Glasgow. The initial context that led to the live event and an account of the actual day is discussed by Laura Bissell, Laura González, Deirdre Heddon, and Simon Murray in their afterword *Acts of care*. Perhaps reading that text first will help to understand why *Art of Care* is structured in a manner that emulates the symposium itself. We have composed the structure of the written pieces chronologically, unfolding in the same order as the symposium, with several works in the journal presented at the live event itself, and here expanded in written and visual form.

We begin the journal with contributions from a few speakers from the 'Caring Thinking' part of the symposium, perhaps the most overtly, symposium-like. We gathered practices born out of genuine and unconditional care (Stephen

Greer's reflection on the work of the artist known as 'the vacuum cleaner'), and practices which engage with people and with places. You will find, for example, discussions of some of the opportunities and challenges of caring for oneself when caring for others in the work of Rosana Cade; the transformative potential of care in performances located within a social-care organisation in Will Stringer's writing; caring for the spaces in which we perform as discussed by Ben Harrison; as well as caring to nurture safe spaces for Inês Bento-Coelho's collaborative practice, and the empowering effects of care for participants as outlined by Lois Weaver. Bento-Coelho was a volunteer and participant in the symposium; Weaver was unable to attend at the last moment, and though neither presented at *The Art of Care-full Practice*, their indirect contributions to the day and their thinking about care and listening, then and afterwards, were examples of what we hoped to achieve by opening up dialogue around the issue of care in performance practice. We are particularly honoured that Weaver has written for the journal, offering us a chronology of the *Long Table* practice, the first of its kind and which marks the 'mid-point' of this special issue; her *Care Café* concept also inspired the communal lunch which participants shared on the day.

Another feature of the symposium reflected in the journal are the contributions from the 'listeners', Peter McMaster and Ben Harrison, whose role it was to practise care through the simple act of listening, and who shared their responses at the end of the symposium. Within his contribution for this issue, Harrison expands his notion of the *hos(t)pital* in the form of a play script about site-specific performance between the guest (artist) and the host (owner / manager) of the site. McMaster's contribution to *Art of Care* presents the findings of his listening practice in a poetic and reflective performative report that directly retells the order of events through his own positioning, illustrating his responses—be it contemplations, feelings, or personal memories. His contribution is openly intimate with

the reader, allowing his own autobiography to surface.

As well as offering accounts of discourse presented at *The Art of Care-full Practice*, there are collaborations here that have arisen post-event. John Hammersley's dialogical reflection with Rachel Davies and Daniel Saul, who presented Quarantine's film *Winter* at the symposium, is a good example of the chance encounters and thoughtful, deep conversations that occurred in March 2017. We are especially grateful that this aspect of what we lived is not lost. *Care and reciprocity: a conversation between Rhiannon Armstrong and Mel Evans*, is the result of Armstrong and Evans meeting for the first time, and the conversations that followed regarding their care-full practices. Mel was also our third listener at the event. This work, with its creative articulation and its considerate quality, is something we aspire to when we think of artists caring for each other. Steven Fraser's comic *What I wish I had said* is also a contribution developed in response to the symposium and reflects on his experience as a neurodiverse emerging artist within the neurotypical-normative symposium environment.

For our beginning (after Laura Bissell's dedication to Adrian Howells, who is present in all of the texts as an absent mentor), we had to include Rosana Cade's letter, which set the tone of the day and made all of us, through recognition of the words she read, nod in agreement. With her contribution, we knew we were not alone in experiencing the need for care. It was her that told us to breathe. Breathe. The perfect, life giving word. We hope you will breathe with us.

## A for Aims

As you can see, the conversations initiated at the symposium did carry on in this journal, and we hope that you, our

reader, will continue this dialogue beyond these pages. We aim to make it as far reaching and inclusive as possible, covering the many forms and facets of practices that are care-full. Importantly, *Art of Care* opens the conversations which began in March 2017 to a wider audience. The decisions we made about the symposium event prioritised a small and intimate number of attendees, and while this was appropriate for the event we curated, we were keen to disseminate the thoughts that were shared beyond the event itself. By publishing *Art of Care*, we hope that the day itself is captured and documented, but also that the dialogue is kept open; we hope that the themes of care that were so central to the event can find a new form and new voices, readers, and listeners. While the 'liveness' of the day cannot fully be captured in the written form, we hope that *Art of Care* will provide access to the ideas shared in Glasgow during the inaugural *Take Me Somewhere* festival to audiences all over Scotland, and, with the primary platform for the journal being digital, readers beyond the UK and across the world. To take these ideas and conversations *somewhere else* was always the intention of the wider festival context. In publishing *Art of Care* we are attempting to transcend the time-limits of one day; transpose the ideas into another form; and translate the themes, conversations, listenings and shared moments of *The Art of Care-full Practice* into print and digital form to capture, curate and continue them. In this, we hope we are being true to the ethos of the *Take Me Somewhere* festival.

## **R for Rationale**

Our rationale for creating *Art of Care* was closely aligned to our reasons and intentions for the symposium itself. We were keen to explore and disseminate some of the enquiries which permeated the late Adrian Howells' work (as discussed in the dedication to Adrian) and to explicitly—and *critically*—examine what ideas of care mean within artistic contexts, processes and practices. Some of the contributions

to this journal are closely aligned with what was presented on the day. However, we hope *Art of Care* offers more than a document of the day itself, in addition developing and nurturing the seeds of conversations which were planted at the event.

## **And E for Ethos**

In the preparation of *Art of Care*, as we did with the symposium itself in 2017, we have practised our intentions and attempted to edit a care-full special issue. We know that the field of academic publishing can be regarded as un-caring. For us as editors, the inclusion of artists' voices was an essential part of the process; in these pages you will find the writing of authors who have not shown their work in a journal before, but for whom care is at the core of what they do. We cared for our ways of working in our discussions and in the communications with authors, reviewers, editors, proofreaders and typesetters. In this process, we realised how important tone is (in addition to, but distinct from, voice) and how one should pay attention to the ways in which communication affects others. Editing *Art of Care* has made us appreciate the work that a large number of artists, academics and researchers do for free. Well, not for free, for the love of the subject (which is more impressive), and for the care of others: you, who are reading this.

As editors, we have worked together with one another, our authors and reviewers, to bring together an issue which covers a topic which is as important as it is subtle. It is the subtlety and nuanced nature of care which makes it elusive. In this, we want to acknowledge the difficulty of the task presented to the authors: discussing care-full practice is challenging, but it is also as vital as care-full practice itself. Writing about care-full practice is an art; it requires skill, a flair for capturing the intangible and eliciting conversation, and not least, a great amount of care. We want to thank all the artists who have taken risks and contributed to their art

of care-full writing about care-full practice. Without them, you would not be reading this and continuing the critical discussion on care. The tone we perceived in our discussions, apart from nurturing, supportive and helpful, became grateful.

For tone to be effective, it has to be listened to attentively, and this is also something we put in practice when editing. We listened to reviewers (who were supportive and thorough, with beautifully written reports to our authors, giving feedback solely aimed at helping to publish good writing), and we also brought the listeners we had at the symposium into the journal, to continue their work. Listening is at the heart of any care-full practice.

This special issue, as the symposium did a year ago, has helped us realise that another way is possible within academia. To be care-full does not mean to avoid either treading on eggshells or critiquing what needs to be discussed, or to be risk averse. A care-full institution gives flexible space, which one would hope is safe for the person entering it, allowing for risks to be taken and supported, but where there are no threats (personal or to one's work). Thus, a care-full way offers time to think and create, with consideration, honesty, integrity and listening. Steven Fraser's comic titled *What I wish I had said*, is a perfect example of what we wanted to do within the pages of this special issue. Not feeling he could articulate what he wanted to at the symposium or through what might be considered an academic paper, he submitted a comic book to us, saying what he wanted to say at the symposium. The obvious was made manifest to us: why are there not more essays articulated through the medium of comics? It is accessible, humorous, contemporary, and captures an experience that many readers will feel is familiar and which is worth opening research doors to. We are aware that despite our aspirations to include diverse voices from varied

backgrounds, we are far from achieving this goal, which is precisely why we hope that *Art of Care*, like the symposium before it, will reach where we could not, and inspire more voices to join in the conversation. We are hopeful that this issue will start conversations about care and kindness in academic and creative practices, as well as in our daily practice of life. This is becoming increasingly important, particularly now, as we are facing the devastating and long-lasting consequences of social, geopolitical and ecological change; *Art of Care* is a call to care and kindness which, we feel, is as timely now as it will ever be.

Academia can feel exclusive, and there may be a perception that journals are read by people who keep speaking the same language, often in a vacuum, while they ignore other people outside it who might speak another dialect. This is not communication, it is a soliloquy; at best an echo chamber. We chose the *Scottish Journal of Performance* to continue our conversation on care because of their ethos, their open access, their inclusive range of writers and their willingness to engage in alternative modes of editing and publishing for this, their first special issue. They listened to us, and allowed us to give practice the weight we believe it deserves in a published research context. What you have in front of you is rigorous, considered, discussed, questioning and ethical. It is cared for, for you.