



Landscape of the Now: A Topography of Movement Improvisation

By Kent De Spain

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In *Landscape of the Now*, author Kent De Spain takes readers on a deep journey into the underlying processes and structures of postmodern movement improvisation. Based on a series of interviews with master teachers who have developed unique approaches that are taught around the world - Steve Paxton, Simone Forti, Lisa Nelson, Deborah Hay, Nancy Stark Smith, Barbara Dilley, Anna Halprin, and Ruth Zaporah - this book offers the rare opportunity to find some clarity in what is often a complex and confusing experience. After more than 20 years of research, De Spain has created an extensive list of questions that explore issues that arise for the improviser in practice and performance as well as resources that influence movements and choices. Answers to these questions are placed side by side to create dialog and depth of understanding, and to see the range of possible approaches experienced improvisers might explore.

In its nineteen chapters, *Landscape of the Now* delves into issues like the influence of an audience on an improviser's choices or how performers "track" and use their experience of the moment. The book also looks at the role of cognitive skills, memory, space, emotion, and the senses. One chapter offers a rare opportunity for an honest discussion of the role of various forms of spirituality in what is seen as a secular dance form. Whether read from cover to cover or pulled apart and explored a subject at a time, *Landscape of the Now* offers the reader a kind of map into the mysterious realm of human creativity, and the wisdom and experience of artists who have spent a lifetime exploring it.

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Editorial Review

Review

"De Spain is a master storyteller. More than that, he is a philosopher who uses his exceptional analytical skills to get to the heart of what defines postmodern improvisation as improvisation. This quest - a personal passion for De Spain - energizes the book." --David Gere, co-editor, *Taken By Surprise: A Dance Improvisation Reader*

"Improvisation is the alchemy of giving form to the present moment. Contained within are essentially master classes in addressing some of the varied mysteries and issues that can emerge from the practice of improvisation. De Spain's book shines a bright light on how these eight groundbreaking artists wrap words around their processes of inquiry and their experiences of the embodied mind in motion." --Eric Handman, Assistant Professor of Dance, University of Utah

"I began to read and realized I had started my next dance. De Spain's invitation to your own practice is waiting. De Spain, with his curiosity and engagement, has brought eight master artists to our studio doors." - Bebe Miller, Artistic Director, Bebe Miller Company

About the Author

Kent De Spain is a movement and multimedia artist who has taught master classes and workshops in the United States, Europe, Asia, and Latin America and is the recipient of several major grants including a Pew Fellowship in the Arts for Choreography. He is internationally recognized for his writing, documentation, and teaching in movement improvisation, including his essay in the book "Taken by Surprise," his feature-length documentary film, *A Moving Presence: Ruth Zaporah and Action Theater*, and essays in *Contact Quarterly*, *Choreographic Practices*, and other journals.

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