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This is the author's version of a work that was submitted/accepted for publication in the following source:

[Roche, Jennifer](#) (2013) Review: "Body and Performance" edited by: Sandra Reeve, Triarchy Press (2013). *Journal of Dance and Somatic Practices*. (In Press)

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Body and Performance, Sandra Reeve (2013), Devon: Triarchy Press, 185 pp., ISBN: 978-1-909470-16-3, p/bk, £20.00

Reviewed by Jennifer Roche, Queensland University of Technology

Body and Performance is the second book in the Ways of Being a Body series by Sandra Reeve and published by Triarchy Press. The first, *Nine Ways of Seeing a Body* (2011), explored how various conceptual lenses drawn from conventional viewpoints produce different bodies and experiences of embodiment. This new interdisciplinary text offers accounts of performance making from twelve practitioner-scholars working in various fields, including theatre directors, choreographers, singers and musicians.

In the introduction, Reeve situates the *body as flux* at the centre with a focus away from an object-body to be enhanced or improved and towards explorations of the psychophysical body and its creative potential. This fluidity permeates each chapter as authors wind in and out of different writing registers, from the scholarly to the auto-ethnographic, drawing together a range of perspectives through the text. Each chapter incorporates these accounts of performance praxis through a different case study, which creates real-life contexts for the evocation of distinctive performative bodies. This book immerses the reader in these embodied locations, from the *Ontogenetic Body* to the *Cognitive Body* and with a multitude of variations in between.

Object Relations, Corporeal Feminism and Embodied Cognition underscore much of the book's theoretical framework and somatic practices such as Alexander Technique, Feldenkrais Method and Body–Mind Centring are discussed throughout for their value as

performance enhancing techniques. However, the focus is less on technical accomplishment and more on how various experiences of embodiment fuel performance praxis. This focus manifests on two levels, through ‘the world of fact’, which Reeve (7) describes as the ‘sensed and sensuous physicality of the body’ and ‘the world of dream’, which is ‘the symbolic or imaginal world’. Reeve draws these terms from *Joged Amerta*, a system developed by her long-time teacher, Javanese movement artist, Suprpto Suryodarmo and these themes permeate the book and intersect through the creative insights and accounts of somatic experience.

A key aspect of Reeve’s practice is the ecological body and this is reflected in the focus on relationship forming between self, other and environment. This unfolding of relationships, between self and object as described in the *Autobiographical Body*, self and site in the *Resonant Body* or self and environment in the *Dwelling Body*, outlines how relations emerge co-creatively and can be responded to through mindful attention to the present moment.

As a practitioner moving through the book, I was drawn to many new insights made available in detailed accounts of performance praxis previously unfamiliar to me. Indeed, a real strength of this book is its ability to balance a diverse range of approaches by establishing a common point of departure from which each artist’s story unfolds. It can be overwhelming at times to shift from one chapter to another, one world to the next, with their diverse terms of reference but mostly, this richness makes for a valuable journey through the various performers’ creative worlds. The transferrable knowledge uncovered between disciplines makes it a highly valuable resource for students,

practitioners and scholars alike. With its attractive design and fluid writing style, it is a wonderful follow-up to the first book.

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