

La Pauta de Improvisación como Práctica: el Pautar como Método

O padrão de Improvisação como uma Prática: Pautar como um Método

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\*Artículo de investigación: This articles documents scoring as a method for engaging with the emerging material biological entity called fascia within a practice-as-research (PaR) dance studio setting.

El presente artículo documenta la pauta de improvisación – scoring- en tanto método que permite interactuar con la entidad biológico-material emergente denominada como fascia.

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## Abstract

This articles documents scoring as a method for engaging with the emerging material biological entity called fascia within a practice-as-research (PaR) dance studio setting. Fascia or connective tissue is the viscous goop that connects, divides, and slides among muscles, organs, skin, and cells. It has been found to be active, intelligent, communicative, and a sensory organ—sometimes three, sometimes many and sometimes one, liquid, solid and mucus. Fascia research stretches among communities of biologists, somatic workers, cancer researchers, doctors, anatomists and pathologists, dancers, and Chinese medicine doctors, physiotherapists, and clinicians. Within PaR choreographers and other performers learn through iterative exploration with their bodies. Scores can be thought of as a loose set of instructions that guides a group of people to interact with each other. Scoring as method draws on a long lineage of art practitioners who work with scores in different ways. Dance scholar, Susan Leigh Foster, describes how artists working with improvisation methods throughout the 1960s, such as members of the Fluxus collective, and later dance makers in the Judson Dance Theatre have used scores to frame their events. Scoring is a method that takes ideas, images, and metaphors in relation to fascia and instead of figuring out what they mean, sets up exercises that examine the problem or concern, so people can collaboratively work with it, in motion, together. Scoring fascia allows for sustained and shared discussion and movement which often results in new avenues for thinking about embodiment. This research is part of a wider discussion about the interface between art and science and performance-based practice-as-research. It examines the connections, dialogues, and dissonances between research on emerging biologies and performance. Scoring as method engages with the body as process, unfinished and open-ended. This paper asks, how can scoring as method, within a dance studio setting, produce alternative modes of doing-enacting biological understanding of the body?

Keywords: scoring; practice as research; fascia.



### Resumen

El presente artículo documenta la pauta de improvisación – scoring - en tanto método que permite interactuar con la entidad biológico-material emergente denominada como fascia. Dicha interacción se generó en el contexto de un estudio de danza en tanto práctica-como-investigación (PI). La fascia – tejido conectivo – es una sustancia pegajosa que se conecta, divide y desliza entre los músculos, los órganos, la piel y las células del cuerpo humano. Se ha encontrado que este tejido es activo, inteligente y comunicativo. Es en últimas un órgano sensorial, que se subdivide y a la vez mantiene su unidad; puede llegar a parecer líquido, sólido y mucoso. La investigación de la fascia se realiza en centros de investigación por todo el mundo, e incluye a comunidades de biólogos, trabajadores somáticos, investigadores del cáncer, médicos, anatomistas y patólogos, bailarines, artistas del espectáculo y médicos de medicina china. En el contexto de la Práctica-como-Investigación, coreógrafos y artistas del performance aprenden con sus cuerpos a través de la exploración iterativa. El scoring es un método que toma ideas, imágenes y metáforas en relación a la fascia, y en vez de preguntarse por su significado, proporciona una serie de ejercicios que examinan el problema o la cuestión que llega a suscitar, de manera que colaborativamente se trabaja a través del movimiento. El pautar improvisadamente el movimiento de la fascia posibilita la generación de ciertas discusiones y prácticas compartidas de movimiento, las cuales producen frecuentemente nuevas formas de pensar los procesos corporales. Esta investigación forma parte de una discusión más amplia sobre la interrelación entre arte, ciencia y el performance de práctica-como-investigación. En esta se examinan las conexiones, los diálogos y las disonancias entre la investigación acerca de biologías emergentes y el performance. La pauta de improvisación como método se relaciona con el cuerpo en tanto material en proceso, inacabado y abierto. En últimas, este ensayo realiza la siguiente pregunta: en el contexto de un ensayo de performance, ¿cómo puede la pauta en tanto método, generar modos alternativos de en-actuar las comprensiones biológicas del cuerpo?

Palabras clave: pauta de improvisación; creación-investigación; fascia.

### Resumo

Este artigo documenta o padrão de improvisação – scoring - como um método que permite interagir com a entidade biológica - material emergente denominado fáscia. Essa interação foi gerada no contexto de um estudo de dança como prática-como-pesquisa (PI). Fáscia - tecido conjuntivo - é uma substância pegajosa que conecta, divide e desliza entre os músculos, órgãos, pele e células do corpo humano. Foi encontrado que este tecido é ativo, inteligente e comunicativo. Em última análise, é um órgão sensorial que subdivide e mantém sua unidade; pode parecer líquido, sólido e mucoso. A pesquisa de fáscia é realizada em centros de pesquisa em todo o mundo e inclui comunidades de biólogos, trabalhadores somáticos, pesquisadores de câncer, médicos, anatomistas e patologistas, dançarinos, animadores e médicos de medicina chinesa. No contexto da Prática-como-Pesquisa, coreógrafos e artistas performáticos aprendem com seus corpos através da exploração iterativa. A - scoring - é um método que leva ideias, imagens e metáforas em relação à fáscia, e em vez de pedir o seu significado, fornece uma série de exercícios que examinam o problema ou questão que vem a despertar para que o trabalho de colaboração através do movimento. O movimento improvisado da fascia possibilita gerar certas discussões e práticas compartilhadas de movimento, que frequentemente produzem novas formas de pensar sobre os processos corporais. Esta pesquisa é parte de uma discussão mais ampla sobre a inter-relação entre arte, ciência, e performance da prática-como-pesquisa. Esta seção examina as conexões, diálogos e dissonâncias entre a pesquisa sobre biologias emergentes e performance. O padrão de improvisação como método está relacionado ao corpo como material em processo, inacabado e aberto. Em última análise, este ensaio faz a seguinte pergunta: no contexto de um ensaio de performance, como a padrão, como método, pode gerar formas alternativas de se praticar os entendimentos biológicos do corpo?

Palavras-chave: padrão de improvisação; pesquisa-criação; fáscia.

### Sense-abilities Score

muscles bones organs veins nerves lymph brain tendons

- i. attend to each word, one at a time (1 minute)
- linger on one of the words, close your eyes and sense into the felt sense of the word in your body (3 minutes)
- iii. move, while foregrounding the chosen word in your body (for example move from your muscles) and name out loud all of the associated felt senses and the qualities of the movement associated with the word (5 minutes)
- iv. write down these qualities
- repeat with a few of the words v.
- vi. repeat with the word fascia

I want to draw your attention to the body of words to notice the felt sensations in relation to each word. For example, it may feel obvious for a muscle to be tired and tight. It also might be easy to move with particular words, for example tensing, or relaxing your muscles or resting on your bones. Through the above score, thought of as a set of instructions that guides a group of people or an individual to interact with each other with particular materials, we each enter into a lively carnality suffused with words, images, senses, desires, and powers. Each of us has unique training associated with how we understand, divide up, move with, tell stories and sense in relation to biological understanding of the body. For Pierre Bourdieu such histories are described as the habitus, "systems of durable, transposable, dispositions," which integrate past experiences through the very "matrix of perceptions, appreciations, and actions" (Bourdieu, 1972, 72).

I also want to use the clump of words to draw your attention to the space or gaps between the words. Foregrounding the space as a kind of wrapping of not only the words but each letter and each line and every dot. A wrapping at every scale. A.T. Still's an American physician and the founder of osteopathic medicine wrote the following, "In every view, we take of the fascia a wonder appears... As the student of anatomy explores the subject with his knife and microscope he easily finds this fascia going with and covering all muscles, tendons, and fibers, and separating them even to the least fiber" (Still 1902, 61). Fascia researchers describe how it wraps each organ and muscle and the wrapping itself becomes the tendon that connects the muscle to the bone. (Purslow, 2010)

I used the Sense-ability score as a way to introduce fascia during a movement research workshop in Berlin in 2017. The score highlighted how different dancers had already been trained or not to think and sense with this emerging biological-cultural material. Historian of medicine, Shigehisa Kuriyama, attends to differences in sensibilities and training in his comparison of the Greek and Chinese anatomical traditions. He writes, "Just as training is indispensable to wine-tasting and music appreciation, so the apprehension of the body also requires the cultivation of special sensibilities" (Kuyriyama, 2007, 607). Kuriyama describes how the unfolding of an anatomical understanding of the body in both Greece and China led to the development of radically new sensibilities. Scoring fascia became a way to document how different groups of dance artists cultivated new sensibilities through engaging with fascia. It allowed us to ask how does fascia sense and what can it do as it comes to in-form the body?

In 2015, I started a fascia research movement lab with Joe Dumit at UC Davis. We used a rehearsal studio and our own bodies as experimental laboratories to explore contemporary medical, biological, therapeutic, and movement research into "fascia" (Dumit & O'Connor, 2016). I subsequently taught fascia workshops around North America and Europe. My disciplinary emphasis, Practice-as-Research (PaR) within a Performance Studies graduate program, engages the production, reception, and documentation of rehearsals and performance as a research methodology. This research is part of a larger project that sits in relation to scholars studying practice, workshops and training methods within dance and performance as valid sites of research (Albright, 2003, Goldman, 2010, Hunter, 2016).

# Scoring as Body-Work

Scoring-as-method in our lab emerged between science studies and movement practices. Biological understanding of the body is often described as fact, universal and as predetermined matter (Wilson, 2015). Scores allowed us to engage with emerging biologies without pinning them to a notion of the body proper. In this kind of training that entangles bodies and biological data, scoring becomes a mode of body-work. Natasha Myers, in her examination of the proliferation of Dance Your Ph.D. contests around the world, highlights how dance can be read as a kind of 'body-

work' that helped scientists figure out how their molecules move and interact. The body-work simultaneously offered a medium through which the scientists can communicate the nuanced details of their findings among colleagues. She writes that such performative modalities, can "expand and extend what it is possible for scientific researchers to see, say, imagine and feel." (Myers, 2012, .156)

Echoing scoring as body-work, choreographer Jonathan Burrows states "For me, one pleasure of a score is to come back to the body with information which the body must figure out, in the process of which you momentarily break habitual patterns" (Van Den Brande et al., 2005). Scoring is a method that takes ideas and images and instead of figuring out what they mean, sets up exercises that examine the problem or concern. Thinking with scoring as the creation of propositions and source for what might emerge, we are interested in how scoring fascia might create an ecology where we as subjects were changing. Not only changing the subject's ability or capacity for movement, felt sense, imagination, and questions but also their forms of attention. Scoring can be read as a method for training.

# Scoring-as-Method

In this section, I describe how scores were crafted in relation to fascia. This differentiates the doing of scores already made from the making of new scores. It can be read as a score for crafting scores within the fascia lab.

1. Form a small group of around 5 people and choose one article or "theory" of fascia to work with.

The first thing we did was collect scientific articles, youtube videos, books, journals and shared somatic practices we had learned in relation to fascia. In doing so we came to realize that fascia is super fascinating in terms of its material properties and at the same super fraught even by those who love it. The following questions were posed to the lab participants by Joe Dumit (2015):

Examine how the reference to fascia you are working with offers a different insight into movement. Can you learn to move such as to bring out "this article's fascia" or "that article's typology of fascia"? This is a variation on the practice of "experiential anatomy" which we could call "experiential Anatomy" with a capital A to emphasize that it is keyed to a specific theory of anatomy (with a small a). And now understanding that every notion of anatomy is always a theory, Anatomy. Thus starting to notice the ways in which we have implicit Anatomies that we think we live in as anatomies. And then we can (if we want) start to investigate the history of how we came to have this Anatomy and not others. Thinking with this we ask what does the article's fascia enable for you, right now? Can it help you move differently? Can it help you as a bodyworker, or a trainer, or a dancer? What does it show and what does it hide? What are its methods for making fascia? What are its metaphors and how do they shape the theory and practice? How might they shape the score that emerges?

2. From the text you are working with highlight the words, images, elements that will help you craft your score. Attend to the concepts that emerge.

In Montreal, one group started by attending to some of the alternative models of the body Steven Levin (2006), an orthopedic surgeon, was developing in his study of the soft-tissue architecture of the body. He used the imaginary of raspberries, bicycle wheels, puffer fish, and foam or a clump of bubbles as models to think with. The group chose he bubble model. This model of the body worked differently than the mechanistic model, often found in scientific literature, where the body is described as a machine with muscles working as motors to pull on cable-like tendons which move lever-like bones across joints that function as cantilevers (Scar, 2014). Thinking with bubbles, the group added water into a large cleaning bucket filled with soap and created a mass of foam. Each person in the group took a handful of the bubbles (Figure 1). Collectively they made the following list.



Figure 13. Working with Bubbles as a Model. Photo: Kevin O'Connor. 2018.

#### Material properties of bubbles:

- bubbles share walls
- •create connection and disconnection or space between
- •bubbles hold their form, morph, and respond to the lightest touch or pressure from our hands
- each bubble is sensitive to the modification of the other ones around it
- •there is a constant listening and adjusting across the more than one but less than many clump of bubbles
- •the bubbles are omnidirectional (they don't break apart when turned upside down)
- •when you add different tones or pressure on one side of the clump of bubbles is does not affect every single bubble equally
- •each bubble, was a part because of its sensitivity to the other parts but still connected to the whole
- there is both parts and structural continuity
- •the structural continuity is between solid and liquid

This practice was a kind of training in how to read the stories, metaphors, and images implicit in the fascia texts. This work was influenced by Mabel Todd, a researcher in the 1930's at Columbia University whose posture laboratory used imagery to help humans change their form. She called this ideokinesis or in other words, how you think your body works changes how it works (Todd, 1975).

3. Experiment through movement, touch, talking, imagery, with the articles typology of fascia. What concepts might emerge from the practice?

The group did the same practice of examining the bubbles and inspired by the spatial arrangement of the bubbles, described as "close packing" (Levin, 2006), they decided to sit in a clump, where their backs of sides were touching or leaning into each other. As they continued to examine and articulate out loud what they noticed with the bubbles in their hands their bodies changed. They too were sharing walls with others and if they shifted their attentional scale they could imagine that their bodies too were clumps of bubbles. In doing so they became attentive to the multiple tones or pressures, pressing in on them from the contact with others in the group. They also noticed how in

becoming bubbles, affects, like changes in tone or pressure moved across bodies at different temporalities. One at a time they tried to articulate out loud what they were sensing as they played within the practice.

What became foregrounded as they tried to articulate what they were feeling was that the dancers themselves were at stake resulting in the ongoing transformation of their modes of embodiments inside the practice. In most cases, the ability to articulate was not possible for those trying. They were in "mid-embodiment" (Myers & Dumit, 2011), in a kind of betweenness where they were being undone in the very process of doing. As they were moved by the others, they would oscillate between narrating the properties of the clump of bubbles they had held in their hands from a third person perspective or trying to name what they were sensing within. Articulating what was happening from a third person perspective often caused them not to participate in being moved by others they were in relation to. On the other hand, in being moved and moving with the score, only partial words would come out, often in hushed tones that were barely audible. They are in the midst of acquiring a habitus, in partial, incomplete, embodied relations (Myers & Dumit, 2011). In this movement experiment, they were in the process of becoming (un)done, unable to articulate as a stable subject. Rather than capturing what fascia or a particular fascia model is, scoring fascia makes it clear that it is the dancer who is caught in being lured into thinking with the multiple concepts, models, scientific papers, bodies, and modes of attention that emerge in relation to fascia.

4. Write out a score. Bridge the concepts that come from the text with the concepts that come from the movement practice.

Touch Touching Touch score:

Working in groups of 3 or 4 or 5 choose one person as the mover

- i. the mover plays with a clump of bubbles in their hands noticing its properties (1 minute)
- ii. then the same person, the mover, starts by sitting, laying down or standing with their eyes closed, imagining becoming a clump of bubbles or foam (2 minutes)
- iii. another person chooses a tone or pressure and with their hand touches the arm of the mover with the palm of their hand (could be soft or hard or somewhere in between)
- iv. the mover senses the tone, meets the tone at the point of contact and then moves the point of contact away from them, the one touching lets themselves be moved away and releases their touch and touches somewhere else with a different tone

v. gradually more and more points of contact are added by the other 2-3 people (with up to six different points of contact and six potentially different tones initiated

vi. the dancer plays within this score with eyes closed (15 minutes)

From their initial working with bubbles, the group crafted the above score. They were thinking about the relationship between parts and wholes and how they could be trained to be moved and shaped by attending to changes in pressures or tones shaping them from the outside in. In the Montreal studio, Lou Terry, a dancer, noticed how as she "dropped into" the score it felt like her body was becoming a double. Initially, she could not attend to the differences in tones shaping her movement. She described it in the following way:

"After what seemed like a long time I could no longer call it "my" body, the one that was attending to the multiplicity of tones coming in, matching them, and moving with them. That "my" could not attend to all of the touches at once. There was too many of them. At first, I noticed I could not differentiate the different tones shaping me and would push back to quickly and with equal force even though the tones coming in were all different." (Terry, 2015)

Anticipation, in this case, made her reaction to what was different, the multiplicity of tones, the same.

Over time a different kind of attention emerged that allowed Lou to stay with the somatic complexity of the score. It was both a letting go of certain kind of attention/anticipation and waking up to a distributed attention that was able to articulate differences on another register. Imagining becoming bubbles allowed her to sense into responding simultaneously to different touches. One could play with different tones, touching different parts of the clump and the differences would play out differently across the whole.

The crafting of the score and the training with bubbles became a mode of becoming articulate (Latour, 2004). Lou was able to differentiate differences in tone. At the same time, she was able to notice new relations or pathways in her body. She noted how each outside tone instigated a leading point of movement, as she met and moved away the touch coming in from another person. As she met the touch and moved it away, other parts in her body were pulled along (the lag) in surprising ways. Within this play of lead and lag, new pathways of connections and disconnection came into form that moved differently than the muscle-tendon-bone relations she was trained to think with (Terry, 2015). Through the score, Lou became responsive to the relation of touches meeting touch within and across bodies.

5. Take the score on tour. Share the score with others in different locations and settings.

This is an important step. Tacking the score on tour tunes it, refining it further. In tuning it allows those who share the score to find out where it causes confusion or where more or less time is needed to allow those participating in it to notice their habits of attention and action. Simultaneously, those participating in the score also tune the score to other things. The score becomes a practice for making differences for those involved and can be akin to performance-based rehearsal processes. Within rehearsals one can be trained to be affected by one's own body as well as another's, including the data they are working with. It creates open situations for the activation of new questions and different enactments (Mol, 2002, Law, 2004) of fascia to emerge. Each enactment brings into the known certain possible aspects, questions, ways of being in relation while hiding others, all the while held by the expanse of the impossibility to explain it all (Law 2004). In taking the score as a kind of rehearsal on the road, an ecology is instigated that emphasizes the potential for the re-configuring of both the bodies present and a recomposing of questions and attentional practices in relation to fascia.

### **Conclusion**

Scoring fascia is a method that thinks with the performativity of science and dance practices and the ongoing materialization of bodies and meanings. Scoring as method creates scores that become tools for practice. They open up questions of affect, between and within bodies and between bodies and scientific biology inquiry. Scoring embraces the fact that each dancer brings to practice all their preconceptions, theoretical biases, personal experiences, spatiotemporal locatedness, and trainings even before accessing any of the 'raw' material. It creates a reflexivity in the practitioners' mode of attending that is akin to situated knowledge practices: ones that hinges on embodied knowledge, limited locations and partial positions (Haraway, 1988, Hunter, 2014).

Scoring-as-method and the doing of a score allows dancers to get caught up with what feminist science scholar Karen Barad (2012) describes as a lively "dance" between meaning and matter, subject, and objects, experiment and phenomena, always in the making. We use these fascia theories as a doorway to new experimental movement and attentional practices and the cultivation of new theoretical concepts. These insights and questions can also be brought back to fascia researchers as sources of further investigation.

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