

**THE ATME JOURNAL**  
The Peer-Reviewed, Digital, Kinetic Journal  
Of the Association of Theatre Movement Educators

Authorized by the ATME Board  
June 28, 2007

Revised by the ATME Journal Editorial Board  
February 18, 2009

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**RATIONALE and PROPOSAL**

Historical Perspective

During the past thirty-five years, theatre movement specialists have defined and re-defined themselves: their identity, philosophical purpose, scope of activity and evaluative criteria. Beginning with the Voice and Movement Program of the American Theatre Association and continuing through The Society of Theater Movement Educators to the current Association of Theatre Movement Educators, much has been accomplished. As perhaps the most diverse of all theatre training specialists, movement specialists embrace a wide range of philosophies, modalities and skills. The diversity is, at once, one of our strengths and one of our challenges as we consider our professional presence in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

To envision a future in which our diverse approaches prove to be our collective strength, we must document our work to inform each other as well as the wider theatre community. The challenge is two-fold. On the one hand, we must be *verbally* articulate in defining our teaching, rehearsal and performance processes. On the other, we must learn how to use the technology which will allow us to document our original teaching, rehearsal

and performance processes through a *kinetic* medium. Digital technology will enable us to do both.

### Current Practice

In both professional and academic theatres, the primary means of documenting original creative processes, disseminating research and recording critical evaluation has been the printed word. There are many fine journals whose peer-review boards have provided standards of excellence for such written evaluation. For these traditional publications of pedagogy and performance research, the limitations of the static word persist. Even the most eloquent wordsmith encounters a real challenge to distil the kinetic essence of movement into the fixed word. A few theater movement specialists have published their original research/creativity, but most would much prefer to spend their time and talents in the studio, in rehearsal and in performance – to let their “movement do their talking.” Generally, this preference has served theatre movement specialists in neither their professional development nor in their professional recognition.

For critical evaluation of artistic work, newspapers, magazines and some on-line sources provide reviews relying on the printed word to convey their evaluation of the kinetic event. The same limitation of using verbal means to convey the essence of a movement event is inherent in these media. While the reputation and taste of the reviewer can enhance or diminish the critical weight of the review, at the very least a review could provide a written record if movement coaching were to be included. In current practice, however, movement coaching in performance often escapes mention altogether.

The omission of movement coaching in a review can be viewed as positive good production because the work has not called attention to itself. However, the omission leaves no written critical account of the work. When coaching also carries choreographic components (dance or fight) and/or style elements such as *commedia*, mask or clown technique, the work is more likely to be cited but is often credited as something other than movement coaching. No effective means of documenting the work for critical peer review is available. This lack of effective means to document and evaluate the work of theater movement specialists has wide-spread implications.

The majority of ATME members have some connection to a university or college as full or part-time faculty, guest master class teachers or as performing artists. In each instance, the initial hire as well as continued appointment is based on evaluation of the theatre movement specialist's work. Current and past ATME officers and board members are often called upon to provide external evaluation. To the extent that their schedules allow, most of them willingly provide this free service to universities and arts granting agencies.

In neither academic theatre nor arts agencies is provision for an on-site visit customary. In my experience, on-site review is offered less than 10% of the time. Evaluation is requested without any opportunity to view movement processes in class, rehearsal or performance. External evaluators are generally sent written materials and a DVD or VCR of the candidate's creative work along with a letter from an academic dean or a representative of a granting agency. Regardless of the source of the request, three basic questions are generally included. How is the creative/research work of the theatre movement specialist regarded nationally *by their peers* and the wider theatre community? What are the *criteria of evaluation* used within the theatre movement field? Based on past and current work, how would you rate their *future potential for significant contribution*? We have no peer evaluation mechanism to respond effectively. We have only single peer response which, although hopefully well-informed and qualified, is a bit like a performance review of a single critic. Academic deans and university promotion and tenure committees rely on external evaluations of scholarship/creative work by the candidate's peers in the field. Given the means, we have the potential to offer a much more effective response

### Implications

The allocation of theatre resources in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, whether in the academy, the commercial theatre or not-for-profit arena is based on two things: a documented body of work and evaluation of that work based on recognized criteria of excellence. Traditional printed text avenues have proved inadequate to record and then evaluate movement based work, yet they remain the major source of documentation. A kinetic medium is being evaluated solely by verbal, printed means.

Let's review the two-fold implications: As a profession, most theatre movement specialists have not yet acquired the technological skill necessary to document original work effectively. Nor have many successfully contextualized their work so that the value of an original contribution is understood by other movement specialists and by the wider theatre community. Both are necessary. Most VCR or DVD recordings submitted for evaluation are merely records of class and/or performance. Rarely is the theoretical, philosophical or practical foundation included. While the value of the original approach or concept may be obvious to the candidate, it is not immediately so to a chemist or a philosopher who may also be judging the content of the DVD.

### The Proposal

ATME has implemented a digital, kinetic, peer-reviewed journal to address the concerns outlined above. The journal will document original processes in the areas of theatre movement pedagogy, performance, history and theory. The aim is to provide a peer-reviewed format for theatre movement specialists' work which is best experienced/reflected through movement rather than in printed form. The journal will be a compilation of "kinetic (movement) articles" which will be delivered to subscribers through web streaming, hard copy download or DVD for purchase. See "Publication Information" for journal specifications.

This journal is an extension of the services offered to ATME members. "Article A" of the ATME By-Laws, assigns authority to establish such a journal to the Board of Directors, "The Board of Directors will publish the rights of membership and services included in membership dues. At any time the Board may establish fees for special services."

Over the years the Board of the Association of Theatre Movement Educators has offered services of leadership, professional development opportunities and mentoring to theatre movement specialists in a number of ways. Among them has been a commitment to mentor junior faculty in their artistic and pedagogic growth. Just as a faculty mentor may evaluate a lecture or offer comments on an article before it is submitted to a peer-reviewed journal, so ATME members/mentors, when asked, have attended rehearsals, performances, master classes and sessions at conferences to offer their perspective and evaluation. Depending on the request, this perspective has

sometimes been verbal and sometimes written. While this guidance may be helpful to an individual, it depends on the initiative of the junior faculty to make the request and may or may not be included in a professional dossier. Regardless of format, such perspective provides a single perspective and not the collective evaluation this is central to peer-review.

The kinetic journal offers a parallel service whereby theatre movement specialists are mentored through the process of articulating the importance of their original work, documenting their processes of the “Pre-Production Review” through submitting their “kinetic article” to the Editorial Board. If accepted, their unique contribution to the field of theatre movement will be published by ATME and disseminated to subscribers. This format allows, not only the subscriber to benefit from the original work in pedagogy or performance processes but can be shown in the classroom or rehearsal to a much wider audience. Important here is the visual, kinetic dimension which conveys the essence of movement in a way the printed word cannot.

A kinetic, digital, peer-reviewed journal offers the following benefits:

- Digital documentation records the essence of movement far more effectively than the printed word
- DVD and other electronic format allows subscribers as well as students, colleagues and other theatre professional easy access the original work
- Peer-review provides nationally recognized standards for evaluating the original work of theatre movement specialists
- Pre-Production Review provides the structure for mentoring and supporting the professional development of theatre movement specialists