

Dance, Movement & Spiritualities  
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## EDITORIAL PRELUDE

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# ... voicing as loving as living as writing as moving: overflowing knowledge *through* a sacred rite of passage ...

eyes and ears open prepared ready  
attentive to allow ripples and waves to pass through self  
to let    to let the will of all be done  
to let thy will be done.

Standing in a small room. Preparing to dance, to move, to allow self to act. To follow. To learn. To relate. All words appearing in the room are either spoken aloud by the teacher of the class or emerging from within self through the moving body, as a response to what is experienced in the room. All words emerging give impulses, inspiration and new directions for movement, which begin *through* a sense of *conscious control* AND, at the very same time, a *letting go* of the body, *allowing* for continuous breathing and expansion. Academic

### KEYWORDS

voicing movement  
diffractive praxis  
moving *through*  
letting go  
allowing  
sacred/performative  
acts

1. See Gaga (2018) at <https://www.gagapeople.com/en/>. Accessed 27 January 2025.

writing has entangled with a diffractive praxis of voicing and psycho-physical moving (Laasonen Belgrano 2020; Laasonen Belgrano et al. forthcoming 2025). Writing and expressing have merged with living, thus becoming equal to a ritual of moving as a sacred and performative act. Performing artistic practice-led research has become a spiritual act of caring, observing, witnessing, receiving, giving, searching, meditating ... always as continuous never ending moving ....

The primary aim of this Special Issue is to allow participants to begin with and *stay close* to their closest engagements with their specific *vocal–movement–writing–praxis*. Everyone has been encouraged to catch the invisible and the uncertain *within* self, to make mindful connections of any sort while articulating, expressing and making visible to others both the smooth and beautiful, as well as the sometimes ‘raw’ and uncomfortable aspects of moving vocally and somatically.

After a year of studying biblical Hebrew and rabbinic exegetical traditions, I was longing to engage with other researchers experimenting with ways of caring for words as part of everyday living; re-searching words – coming through performative praxis – as if sacred in their essence. The opportunity of guest-editing this Special Issue offered an academic space allowing writers to explore their texts not only as standard academic chapters *explaining* its content in a restricted form but also to become consciously aware of *how* words may develop into significant sensuous knowledge of praxical processing. I wanted to encourage writers to move deeper into their first drafts, into the raw, untouched and unpolished meanings potentially hiding unknown openings. I encouraged everyone to keep as much as possible of their first drafts in order to methodically unfold the untouched *sacred* articulations through sidenotes – as a way of collecting and archiving scattered and fresh thoughts. Thinking, which might lead to new directions of moving, without losing the often poetic and spiritual writing which emerges from a first close reading of one’s own inner rhythm and movement.

The opening of this introduction derives from my research into dancer and choreographer Ohad Naharin’s Gaga-language.<sup>1</sup> This language is performed as part of a teacher’s instructions while movement emerges in class, thus allowing individual participants’ bodies to interpret and transform words and movements into their own performative praxis based on each individual’s understanding. The Gaga-language suggests a paradoxical mind-set in which *falling* (more or less) always accompanies a sense of *extending* and *expanding*, where plasticity is both about *letting go* and *becoming clearly aware* and *in control*. Guest-editing this Special Issue granted me the graceful gift of appropriating the Gaga-movement language in relation to my co-authors, a means for exploring academic writing as a spiritual praxis.

The process of creating this Special Issue has not only been to write *about* vocal praxis as spiritual movement but to actually write academically *through* moving, to experience growth and movement *through* intra-action with peer reviewers, allowing for something to literally grow out of *nothing* (Laasonen Belgrano and Price 2025b). Here I am also referring to *nothing* as a paradox that may be perceived as synonymous with love, with God, with divine presence, with philosophical concepts and not least with a sense of a spiritual *in-between* (Barad 2012, 2017; Belgrano 2011: 213–14, 2016; Calcagno 2003; Hanaoka 2008; Heisig 2013; Irigaray 2002; Keller 2008; Ward 2022: 260–86).

Training to sing vocal baroque music made me aware of the importance of allowing for words and vocal sounding to merge into common conscious

meaning. A musical ornament should be performed with a sense of *grace*, always serving the meaning of a word, aiming to touch the listener's soul through its sonic expression. This ornamental practice could be done by holding onto a note in order to create a momentum, extending a note into the next measure to create a sounding bridge which could lift specific meaning, letting a tone slowly and softly *die* at the end of a phrase and disappearing without a final concluding harmony, but rather open-endedly leading into a sensation of being left in a void, and so forth. In the process of mastering the *art of embellishing* (or ornamenting), a seventeenth-century musical phrase incessantly calls a performer into deeper awareness *through* words and *through* somatic mattering.

In 1602, Florentine composer and singer Giulio Caccini wrote about *grazia* ('grace') as a way of performing conscious musical and psycho-physical awareness. Caccini's words about grace have created a beautiful connection in me where *grace* – as a spiritual and theological term – relates to overflowing divine love. As a singer and a priest, *grace* becomes both the spirit that enters my bodily self, as much as it is expressed *through* a meaning-making over-vocalizing expiration.

Around 1630–40, when opera became a public event in Europe, creative and explorative laboratories emerged within intellectual and artistic circles in the form of academies and salons. In many of these bustling think tanks, words and bodies restlessly searched for new ways of acting and communicating through grace, new ways of forming languages, and expressing musical and relational understanding through scores and texts. In the midst of these events, there were female voices assuming the form of symbols for all kinds of mad and unexpected relations onstage. These voices were often described as full of grace and even equal to the voice of God.

Artistic performers and biblical prophets could be placed together as guides with a common quest for teaching humanity about close and intimate spiritual relations, just as much as endless, borderless and open ones. In this Special Issue, eight such prophetic performers are *writing* the readers into new dimensions: opening with Zoe Katsilerou leading us in-between narrow tonal intervals in order to cultivate presence; moving into Andrea Rushton's tonal presence as mournful grief and tender lamentation; continuing – guided by the *Sounding Sensation* duo, Franziska Böhm and Serena Ruth – into experiential knowing of in-between as a sounding–sensing and praxical score; allowing the reader to fall into Misha Penton's universe of multi-layered poetical contemplations of a vocal artist as a disciple of the Muse; opening another door for the ontological art of Speakingdance as developed by Marie Hay; taking us into the space-time of Xueting Luo and her words *on* and *through* tradition and modernity in-between spiritual Chinese poetry and Kunqu dance; making ready the reader's ear for the Voice of God as spiritual *Ruach* performed by Cia Sautter as singing and dancing; then finally and collectively gathering all what has been learned so far into Ilona Krawczyk's voice performing as a vessel, filling it with new shapes and waves of performative, psycho-physical and spiritual aspects ... allowing all to overflow into yet unknown forms and contents. These stories may all be perceived as fragments and embellishing ornaments, *as part of* an imaginary musical manuscript, and thus create a much-needed structure for this rich and extravagant collection of sensuous knowing.

Returning to my Gaga online class – where all is relation, a desire is growing for continuous and generous openness towards the other and to be touched by what moves around in the room. What I read and write is movement, persisting

as dancing through the narratives and stories told. Not simply because stories tell of something but because stories are collections of words and meanings, all dependent on receivers and listeners. Even a single note can cause a sense of wonder in someone who is open to the unknown and aware of what there is.

The aim of this Special Issue is to share imaginative expression and consciously controlled modes of living(s) and breathing(s), making visible and heard that there is no end to movement and voice. It is about letting you, dear reader, become aware of even something as seemingly simple as your back, your spine or even a collarbone, in order to let these parts tell you of new sounds within your body; to make you aware that there is no end to vocal movement, but rather a surging fountain of longing for more. And since voice has no end, it will continue to flow, also here: <https://www.researchcatalogue.net/view/3287736/3287737>.

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## FURTHER READING

Can be found in the online Research Catalogue exposition: <https://www.researchcatalogue.net/view/3287736/3287737>. Accessed 18 February 2025.

## CONTRIBUTOR DETAILS

Elisabeth Laasonen Belgrano is a voice artist, performance philosopher, existential counsellor and priest in the Church of Sweden. Her research is dedicated to the art of vocal ornamentation, ecotheology and nothingness. She has been awarded a Ph.D. in performance (2011) for her practice-led voice research of nothingness through early modern operatic mad scenes and lamentations, and an MA in systematic theology (2024) with a thesis on 'Doing theology *through* diffractive methodology'.

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