The Flow of Lifelong Inquiry

An Interview with Russell Maliphant

By Tristan Koepke, Certified Rolfer® and Russell Maliphant, PhD

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ABSTRACT *Tristan Koepke spoke with Russell Maliphant, acclaimed dancer, choreographer, and former Rolfer to explore the connections between the different and related inquiries – aesthetic, spatial, and physiological – that have informed his work across three decades. While Maliphant no longer practices as a Rolfer, his bodywork training and ongoing studies offer a deep basis for analysis and inspiration, and recently led to the award of a PhD achieved through performance and analysis.*

Tristan Koepke: Thank you, Russell, for interrupting your study day for this conversation. I also have a background in dance, so I hope we can dig into some meaty choreographic inquiry! What are you studying?

Russell Maliphant: I'm studying with David Grey, of David Grey Rehab. He's really into digging better movement mechanics. And Gary Ward, who wrote the 2014 book, *What the Foot?* There's also another physio, Dave O'Sullivan, who thinks along similar lines, very much looking at the whole body and how everything affects everything. For example, the neck and the foot connection through the pelvis, through the ribs, all of those connected elements, which I think anyone who has looked at Rolfing® Structural Integration (SI) can confirm is how the body really works.

One of the things I like about Gary Ward's work is that he has a great explanation of *flow*, something that I think about a lot regarding movement and dance. Flow, for me, is when all of the joints of the body are working in coordination and not restricted. Ward says that flow is the natural order of the whole body's movement patterns. It is achieved when there is zero restriction to joint motion anywhere in the body. Improved flow occurs when the number of restrictions to the body's movement patterns are reduced. Which I think really says something about the movement that we see in dance and the movement that we

Russell Maliphant working in studio.

would want to see when we give someone a Rolfing SI session and try to get their movement patterns to work better.

TK: I'm thrilled to have this conversation with you because I've admired your work. I'm in graduate school right now and my mentor, Dr. Maura Keefe, was a scholar in residence at the Joyce [Theater Foundation] when you were there. It is also great just to talk with another Rolfer/dancer who is contemplating these questions. What is flow? What is integration? What is this word, grace, that gets thrown around? How can we quantify and qualify it tangibly, especially through movement? I'm interested to understand how the fields of Rolfing SI and dance have cross-pollinated in your practice. For example, in what ways has your knowledge of Rolfing SI directly or indirectly affected your choreographic considerations?

RM: I think that idea of flow – that idea of ease, efficiency, grace, articulation – those are kind of choreographic concerns, and they are also concerns about patterns of movement that you would see in Rolfing SI. You would want to see someone with more ease, with more efficiency, with more grace, and with more flow, really. And particularly if you are thinking that flow is a state when there is zero restriction to joint motion. Then, as a choreographer you're able to work with whatever your aesthetic is. Do you like sharp geometric lines? Do you like something that is sequential and kind of moves in a more liquid way through the body? Do you work with break-dancing? Do you work with popping or contemporary dance? Do you work with Kathak [Indian classical dance]? In a way, you still want a foundation of ease, efficiency, and flow in the body, even if you're going to break down that flow and disrupt that ease. That is an aesthetic concern that you can layer on top of a foundation. But if someone can only move in one way, then you have probably employed them for a single project or a particular character role.

TK: Right. I was looking at some of the dancers that you hire. Many of them already have such beautiful long careers. So, I can see that you have a sensibility for efficiency and sustainability within the dancers that you choose to work with, that there is a basis of ease, and that you can work with a bound quality here and there so long as they can sustain the health of their body throughout your work.

RM: Yes, especially given that a project is usually a relatively short time period within someone's movement lifetime and the patterns that they've learned. A creation might last for six, eight, ten, or twelve weeks. But even twelve weeks is a relatively short amount of time to be building new patterns of movement, at speed, given that the dancers might be twenty-five, thirty-five, or forty-five years old, and may get tired and sometimes exhausted from performances and touring. I like to get people who are as close to the kind of aesthetics that I would want to locate in the body right at the beginning of a project. And mostly that is about grace, ease, efficiency, and flow, those things that we've discussed, and sometimes it's not. Sometimes it's actually . . . this dancer has so much *spirit*. When they're dancing, they just light up the room. Yes, they may have an anteriorly stuck kind of pelvis, but something else is magic when they just dance and engage with movement. So what is that? If I decide that I want to have them in the project, we might work with a bit along the way, and it might take months or even years of focus on that. And this may open

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up some more options [for a dancer] to be more structurally integrated. We are probably not going to [affect that] shift all the way within the time of a project because we have got other things to think about, but there is a little bit of time every day that we can use to slowly educate and shift some awareness and sensitivity.

TK: But if you are coming in for a residency with a company and you have two weeks to build the work, that's not going to be your priority.

RM: No, absolutely not. It's not even in the expectations. At that point in time we're working with what people have. And that's okay, but I wouldn't want that to be my only way of working. That is partly why I have a company, because having a company affords me the opportunity to choose the dancers and teach them every day if I want to get certain things across, but also leaves them time to do their own thing. We can find a balance. Whereas if I go into a company where they practice a particular technique every day, e.g., ballet, and if they're interested in exploring another style, I'm going to be working with what they have (which will be a lot) and what interpretations their body can create during the creative process.

TK: I want to back up for a moment to ask you about how Rolfing SI comes into play. I believe it was the early 1990s when you became certified?

RM: Yes, I did [the Basic Rolfing Training] in 1992 to 1993, and got my qualification in 1994. I think in 1992 I did my Foundations of Bodywork [an earlier interation of Phase I]. and then I did the rest across the next two years. I studied in Boulder, in Colorado. And then I went to Berkeley in California, where I did the last part led by Michael Salveson.

TK: And what drew you to that work, moving from performance into Rolfing SI?

RM: I had an experience at the Royal Ballet School. I was in my third year, my graduate year of training, and I was doing well. I was top of the class. I was learning the lead in the school performance, which was *La Fille Mal Gardée*. And I went for Rolfing SI sessions: had the first session, had the second session. And the third session was at something like one o'clock in the afternoon, and I had a rehearsal at three o'clock, something like that. So, I went to my 'Third Hour' Rolfing session, all the work around the ribs and intercostals, and when I came out I felt amazing. It felt like someone had taken my rib cage off and I could breathe unimpeded for the first time ever. And I was just, whoa, this is fantastic . . . Then I went to the rehearsal.

I don't know if you know the ballet *La Fille Mal Gardée*, but at the end of one of the main *pas de deux* it's got a one-handed bum lift where you put your hand underneath the woman's sitting bones, and you lift her above your head and balance her there – it's the big finish. I was seventeen or eighteen years old, and could barely do this. It was very challenging trying to stand on one leg and hold the woman aloft. I constricted a nerve in the process. It started to hurt in the evening, and eventually I realized that I couldn't really move my arm; I'd really hurt it. I went to the hospital where they put it in a sling. And the long and the short of it is that I lost the use of my shoulder. The nerve constriction resulted in the nerves dying. And after that, if I went to put both my arms in fifth [position] (arms elevated), I didn't have any movement of my right shoulder. It came back, but only to a certain extent, over the next nine months to a year.

So my fifth position was limited from that point onwards to about 85% to 90% range of motion, and I thought, "well, this is really a shame, but what can I do? That's life!" It stayed like that for seven years until I left the ballet company. I started to do yoga and the range of motion that I had lost in the shoulder started to come back with all those closed-chain stretches and back-bending push-ups. So I always had a relationship to Rolfing SI that was both "Wow, it made me feel absolutely fantastic," but also "What the heck just happened? That was a nightmare." It really changed my life. And I wanted to understand more about that. At the same time, I thought: *there is the shadow side I don't understand fully*. But having left the security of the Royal Ballet to become a freelance dancer, doing contact improvisation and improvisational performances, I then only wanted to do things that really excited me and challenged me.

I didn't want to take a job just because I needed the money. So I quickly understood that I needed another string to my bow. I had carpentry skills, painting and decorating experience, and I was doing some of that on the side to earn money. It was all going very well and started to take off a bit as a business. But I thought, well, I'm spending months of my year doing something that has got nothing to do with my passion; I don't really want to do that with my life. I want to do something that I can achieve with extra study, something that has to do with the body, and something I can do quickly. So I took a massage training, which in the United Kingdom you can do quite quickly, in six or nine weeks. You can imagine that you are learning things every day, but not in great depth. By the end of that, I was able to massage. I was able to work with people that way and get some income. It was very flexible. But I thought "it's not

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enough information for me," I wanted to know more and decided to look at the Foundations of Bodywork course in Boulder, Colorado, and see what it was about. When I went, I had a really good time; I thought the training was really well put together. The information was very enlightening, thought-provoking, and stimulating, so I decided then to go on with the training.

Only then did I understand that my mistake had been to go to a rehearsal immediately after a session where you have just had a big opening and to make these strong, powerful movements that I wasn't really geared towards. Maybe that injury would have happened anyway, but who knows? I decided that it was my fate in that moment to experience that.

TK: I had a very similar track to you in that way of just being drawn to the information I had read – Ida P. Rolf, PhD, of course, and Tom Myers whose work I'd read years before I did the trainings.

RM: Tom Myers was actually teaching in my Phase I Foundations of Bodywork. He hadn't developed *Anatomy Trains* at that point, but the information that he played with was still great. Did you come across *Anatomy Trains* in your dance training (Myers 2001)?

TK: Yes. *Anatomy Trains* was cited when I was an undergraduate at the University of Minnesota. We had Alexander [technique], and then we had some other release technique teachers who would bring in different modules or lessons inspired by SI, usually via Tom Myers. I was also studying yoga back in 2008 to 2009 so it came in through that. I also studied with Shonach Mirk Robles. She was a dancer at Béjart [Ballet Lausanne] for a long time, in the 1970s and 1980s. She teaches Spiraldynamik®. It isn't something that is really taught in the United States unless she happens to fly in, usually to teach at the Bates Dance Festival in Lewiston, Maine. But it felt as though I was drawn to Rolf, Myers, and learning Spiraldynamik via Shonach, who came out of dancing and dance injury, and was learning all these sorts of ways to integrate more health into movement. Similar to you, it almost felt like fate. I don't know that I chose. I really don't remember choosing to go to Boulder. I knew it was happening. I left the company I was dancing for and just knew I was headed to Boulder.

RM: It's a great place to be.

TK: I mean, I knew I was going for the training. I just don't know that I *decided*. It just *happened*.

Now, I'd like to know a little bit more about what came next for you after qualifying in 1994. Were you practicing? Were you seeing clients, or were you more mostly

Sylvie Guillem and Russell Maliphant in *Push*. Photo by Johan Person, used with permission.

back in the dance studio, integrating the knowledge into movement and practice?

RM: I started to take on clients. I'd guess I saw up to fifteen a week; that was probably my busiest. And trying to balance something like Rolfing SI with teaching and performing . . . I'd say it takes a few years to balance that, because if you are doing a lot of sessions a day and you're getting some stiffness, tightness through your shoulders, or compression through the shoulders, the fingers, and then you want the fingers to look fluid and nice. I don't want to be caught up, I had to navigate that balance. And I was also thinking about how I could use this information creatively in the studio, and use it in teaching.

I formed my dance company two years later in 1996. Why did I do that? I really wanted to explore some of the elements that were intriguing me in choreography and in movement with a team that I could put together myself. To have those discussions that you can have if it is just you and another dancer, and a lighting designer that I was really friendly with, all quite intimate; you're all kind of living something together. It allowed me to get into a terrain that wasn't necessarily choreographic, or Rolfing SI, or any one of these things: it was just everything together. It was all about good movement, choreographic issues, and lighting.

TK: What really excites me about watching your work is that I can see an integration of all of these elements. Having read your background and seen various works, I see a fusion of these ideas. And we have already discussed how Rolfing inquiry lends itself really well to a dancer's somatic enquiry or movement training. How have you been able to locate Rolfing SI, or at least your history studying Rolfing SI and anatomy, among your choreographic concerns or within the formal composition, the composition of forms within your dance-making, within the stage space?

RM: I think it was 2010 when I did a piece called *Afterlight*, which was really using *Anatomy Trains* a lot (Myers 2001). I was thinking about the different lines: the spiral line, or side line, front line, back line, whatever. But doing that through a task and going, okay, we are moving from this line, or where do we feel that? Do you feel it all the way down to the toes? And then as the movement shifts, what is it pulling, or pushing, or transitioning into? Where is the next line that you pull, so that a whole phrase could be kind of moving from one to another? And that gave a certain foundation of organic movement that went through fully connected moments. It was transitioning from one line to another. And then thinking, what does this phrase need dynamically? Dynamically, it needs to leave the floor; it needs to jump further, or it needs to reach or drop, or something else. So from that first layer foundation, we could add things in and see what that gave.

TK: That's very interesting to think about with Rolfing SI: how to support the structures, with ease, efficiency, and sustainability through these spirals, or through these lines of flow, or in the joints. And then theatrically, even in abstract dancing, there is maybe a little more

Daniel Proietto in *Afterlight*. Lighting designer Miachael Hulls, with lighting animations by Jan Urbanowski. Used with permission.

Russell Maliphant Dance Company performing *Silent Lines*, featuring Folu Odimayo, Grace Jabarri, Alethia Antonio, Ed Arnold, and Will Thompson. Lighting designer Panagiotis Tomaras. Used with permission.

attention on a tension and these small moments of chaos or intervention that interrupt this graceful flow for a moment.

RM: Yes. Sometimes it feels that we need variation; a certain variety to keep engaged. As an audience becomes aware of the rate of change in a piece, it either becomes meditative, or it becomes boring, so as soon as you put something else in there, it's like, a shift, maybe slap in the face; what just happened?! There is a dynamic relationship to the audience: what you are presenting them with, what journey are you taking them on, and how are you keeping them engaged with that? There is just a requirement for that question to be present.

TK: And those requirements shift depending on what the audience will be, the company you might be working with, and who their audience generally is.

RM: Yes. And a lighting change might shift the dynamic; a musical change might shift the dynamic; a second person coming on might change the dynamic. Or if it is a solo and if everything else is staying the same, then it's the performer that might have to shift those things along.

TK: I noticed that in a lot of your work there is this really deep respect for the power of the context of lighting, of spatial shifts, of spatial anchors. I'm recalling these geometric shapes of light that sometimes obscure parts of the body so that we can highlight the fluidity of a limb for a moment so that is almost disconnected from the rest of the body, or you make these grand shifts, specifically with light as well as with sound. Was that an authentic development for you, or was it a choice or a response?

RM: There was a time that I did a couple of workshops with Dana Wrights and Jennifer Tipton. Dana Wrights is a release technique dancer, and she worked a lot with Jennifer Tipton, who is a world-class lighting designer. They worked closely together and developed some fantastic work. And having worked with them, I wanted to go deeper into lighting. I knew a lighting designer named Michael Hulls who had worked with them as well, and we started to collaborate in about 1990. I worked with him for the next twenty-five years. And as things developed, I felt that choreography is . . . well, it's not movement, it's not lighting, it's not music, it's not costume: it's where all of those things meet. When we see a piece on the stage, we're seeing lighting, listening to music, seeing costume, but also not everything necessarily all the time to the same degree. I mean, you might have the lights on along, and then add movement. It might be in silence.

The person directing/choreographing is working where all of those elements come together. If you create detailed movement in the studio that you love, and then light it from above, maybe you don't see half the detail of it from below the pelvis, but it's really highlighted up here above the waist. And you think, "wow, I never noticed this about it before – it's changed and maybe I'm missing half of what was interesting me, so where do we go with that? I've choreographed the movement. I was happy with it. Now, lighting designer: you've taken it away; give it back! I need you to light it differently." But maybe they've also revealed something new – I think that's when everyone's voice starts coming into those collaborations, bringing something that is potentially more than the sum of the parts, and that is what's interesting and fascinating to me.

TK: That's the beauty of collaboration.

RM: Yes. Collaboration, where those things come together. But we need to have agreement at some point that when we're looking at something together, we can all see it. Of course, not everyone is going to love the same things, but often you can get to a point where things work, and 90% of that room of people will agree that this is working. But 10% will still be saying, "It doesn't really do it for me." We all have our likes and dislikes! Design is like that. But it's also like looking at a cathedral and finding that it's hard to say, "No, it doesn't really work; these high vaulted ceilings, I find them a bit dull."

My strength, in the way I perceived it at the time, was with more grounded, less stylized patterns; more about human movement in the outside world, as opposed to a traditional movement palette like classical ballet.

TK: It might not be to everyone's taste; not everyone may choose to go to the cathedral every week. But there is still composition in support of the whole; each element is in support of the whole. When I see your work, I see these parallels, or at least a history of Rolfing SI in your body, and in your inquiries, in your endeavors. I see a respect for space, a respect for relationship. There might be times where you zoom in and think, what is the relationship between the toe hinge and the psoas, or the wrist and the jaw? These are tangible relationships that we can highlight. It is similar to the lighting designer asking: what if we just look at this part right now? And what if we open it up and really look at the whole?

RM: Yes. And in any of those inquiries you are going to get things that are more successful and things that didn't quite get everything that I wanted to get out of it. And that inquiry, every creation in a way, doesn't go away at the end of a piece. There is still a physical inquiry or an aesthetic inquiry that continues into another piece, and another piece, and another piece. There is this point of view in art where people want one piece to be very different to the piece before. And critics can say, "Oh, it's [just] working with light again." Whereas I think: "That is my inquiry." I couldn't take it out and say, "Oh, that's not an element of my ongoing inquiry," just as I wouldn't take out the physical inquiry of relationships and connections and tensions. That's an inquiry that will be with me for the duration really.

TK: I would love to hear about your PhD research. I had read that your *Triptych*, this series of three works, is maybe the first time ever that a doctoral thesis has been completely presented as performance rather than written or written/published. It's 'performed-published'. Could you speak to that process, how that came about and why that was important?

RM: I had taken on a job as artistic researcher in dance at Canterbury University. When I was there, they said they would support a PhD by publication, where the works were the publication, combined with a 10,000-word written aspect. I had not given it much thought before that. I thought it could be interesting to analyze, delve into, and pick apart a little bit more because I think you are always analyzing when you're creating something. Maybe not as specifically as you would when you get it down on the page. And you think, "Oh, no, I didn't quite mean that. I meant this or that." Or someone asks you questions about it, and asks, "Are you saying this?" And you're like, "Well, yes, but . . . " You realize you've got to fill in more.

I found the process of reading and writing challenging to make it clear enough. I found it challenging to contain the PhD whereas initially I had thought it would be 'only' 10,000 words to write. But actually, I could have written much more, ten times as much as that, and gone into more detail. So to contain it and make sure that everything got the point across, within that limited writing length, was the challenge to me. It was an interesting process to link the words to hyperlinks because the process wasn't just *written*. I mean, it was digital, written on computer, and with hyperlinks added that allowed me to say, "well, here's what I'm trying to say and here's an example." And you could have a two-minute video or a one-minute video. And it's movement. I could have put photos in there as well, but it was the hyperlinks to movement videos that you could not have easily had in a purely written text.

TK: So you were looking at three works that you'd already created: *Two*, *Push*, and *Silent Lines*? When I was watching *Push*, in particular, I was struck that it was presenting this really exciting relationship between yourself and Sylvie Guillem. And you had mentioned in your notes her extensive classical ballet training and also the sort of body you have in your pursuit of groundedness. It was exciting to watch that tension. I found myself thinking a lot about Jeffrey Maitland's writing in his book *Spacious Body* (1995). I was seeing your spacious bodies and also the spacious stage morph and shift in relation to you. I was also reading about *Silent Lines* and the research into connective tissue and how you utilize that with projections as almost a representation of physiological research within the stage space. Could you talk about how these pieces interact with all of these ideas?

RM: Yes. The challenge of *Push*, for me, was about physicality and age. I had retired from dancing, I was forty-three, or something like that. And I had spent years trying to undo classical patterns. And to dance with one of the world's greatest ballerinas who embodied a lot of those classical patterns with ease, and for me to do only half of what she was doing, I felt like, "Oh, I'll be like the ugly duckling in this context; how are we going to navigate that and make it look interesting?" That could be hard. And my strength, in the way I perceived it at the time, was with more grounded, less stylized patterns; more about human movement in the outside world, as opposed to a traditional movement palette like classical ballet. So how would we make those two things sit together in an aesthetic that works for both of us, and makes us stronger together, the aesthetic of, is what we present stronger together than if we are separate?

TK: Can you talk a little bit about what you just said, a desire to undo or unlearn some of these classical trainings in your body? How did that desire come about specifically, and what were the ways you went about that?

RM: I think the desire came from observing some of the patterns that were in my body in different contexts. In a classical ballet company, it holds a lot of currency to have ears way up high over the shoulders, elevated ribs, and turned-out legs. When I started to work with physical theater, such as in DV8 Physical Theater, you had to look pretty normal, like someone in a pub. Then turned-out legs and an elegant neck with pulled-up posture doesn't really serve you so well. You stand out and look different. You look like you've come in from a ballet company. And so if you can, you would turn that off and just go, here I am having a pint in the pub. But it's not

necessarily so easy, physically. I found it not so easy at that time. I couldn't let go of the embodiment or even the breathing pattern. How could I get to do that?

I participated in a project called *Dead Dreams of Monochrome Men* with DV8 Physical Theater that was about the serial killer Dennis Nilsen. He would pick up gay people at a bar and he murdered at least twelve. It seemed to me that the classical ballet body was not really any part of that story in any way, shape, or form. And the other performers were very great natural movers. So I started to look for ways that I could work in a more release-type way. I'd started to come across some dancers that were working with Susan Klein's technique.

TK: Those epic roll-downs! I just performed in a project with artist Cally Spooner. And we had to practice a twenty-minute spine roll, pretty much with extended knees, ten minutes down and ten minutes up. It took a while to train that length of time into that sequence.

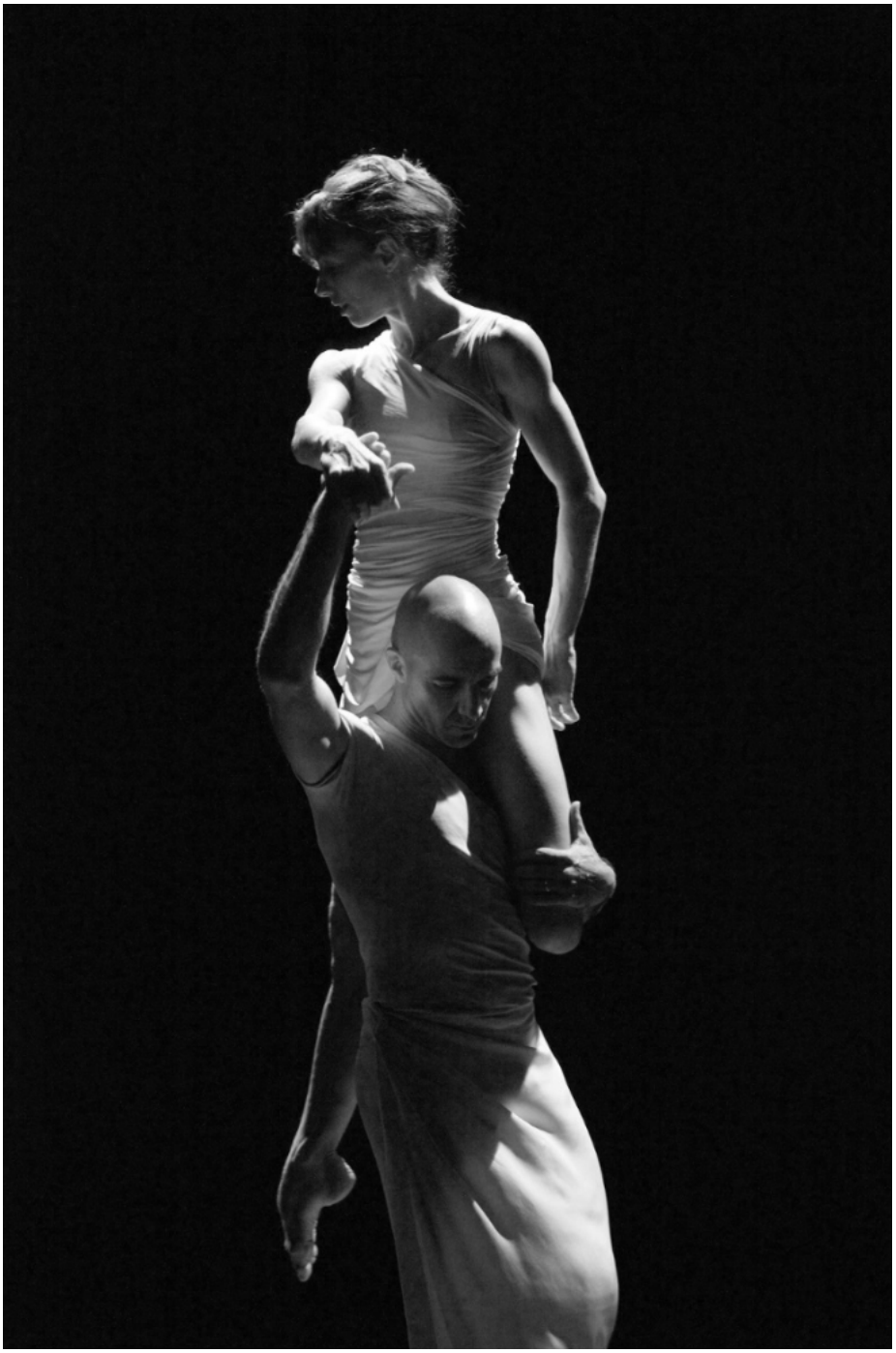
RM: Those things killed me, really killed me at the beginning. I believed I had pretty good body control, but I realized that, whilst by one set of considerations that may be true, but by another set I don't at all. So I went more into the considerations that I didn't so much understand, and for me, that was release technique. That was sensory work, blindfold work and somatic practices.

TK: I read something about diasporic forms, or Africanist diasporas, or capoeira?

RM: I studied capoeira. One of the things that's interesting about capoeira is that there's a great flow. When they play in the *hoda* (circle), there's a continuous flow around each other. There are also particularities in terms of how the head is articulated. In dance, you are often sensing out into space or thinking of a line with your spine out through the head, or something like this. In capoeira, you are looking at your partner, your opponent, and it does not matter if you're going down to a handstand, or a headstand, you are still looking; you've got your eyes on your opponent all the time. You don't look and go "Where's the floor?" So the orientation is through a different system and it has different principles. Where, as a dancer, I might be going down to the floor and be looking to see the floor; with capoeira it would be about looking at your partner, even looking from under your arms or between your legs if you were folded over and going backwards or towards them. And that way, turning away from them would give things a really different orientation. It was fascinating to start with new methods, and understand new principles and concepts.

TK: It is beautiful to watch your adaptability in performance of these forms, especially in *Push*, in that movement conversation between you and Sylvie, to see that circularity in the way that you tumble, and fall, and allow gravity to sort of spill from side to side and up to down.

RM: Well, obviously, Sylvie has a huge amount of facility, and she is also very adventurous and courageous in the way that she approaches new things. She was really game to say, "Okay, let's try it. Let's do it." We could play off each other and learn with each other. So the process was very good.



Sylvie Guillen and Russell Maliphant in *Push*. Photo by Johan Person, used with permission.

TK: Could you speak a little bit to *Silent Lines* and your research with the projections and the media that went into this as well?

RM: With *Silent Lines*, I wanted to explore a side of my choreographic process, in terms of what is going on in an ongoing physical practice that leads to a creation, which is generally behind the scenes. Many pieces I have made might have themes, e.g., *Afterlight* was inspired by Nijinsky, and *The Spirit of Diaghilev*. *The Rodin Project* is inspired by Rodin, his sculptures and watercolors. There is often a lot of physical inquiry going on in the process as well, but the audience probably knows little, if anything, about it; nothing is written about it. It's simply a personal inquiry I have had for many years and I explore to some extent in my work with my company. Nobody in the audience would need to know that there is an ongoing physical inquiry going on. With *Silent Lines*, I thought I would like to make a piece that is different to that, where the inquiry is actually a part of what is presented. My inquiry at that point was still a lot with Tom Myers' *Anatomy Trains* (2001). I also had a fascial inquiry inspired by gross anatomy studies with Gil Hedley, PhD; and [the work of] Jean-Claude Guimberteau's, MD, *Strolling Under the Skin* (2014); tensegrity; and biotensegrity. How could I get this out there in a work? I'd create a lot of notes. But anytime I tried to integrate those, e.g., into a soundtrack or anything like that, it just seemed as though, well, this could be a good lecture or demonstration, but it's not *art*. Art wants to . . . Well, what does art do to us? It takes us away from thought in a way; thought might come and go, and art might have a relationship to it, but somehow, we are reacting to art on many, many more levels than just thought. There's a feeling, a responsiveness. The question came up, what about the aesthetic of this work? Are we going to have a 'words on a blackboard' kind of aesthetic, or are we going to have projected diagrams and pictures so that someone can understand what fascia is, or what the fibers might look like? But that simply seemed an intellectual demonstration that wouldn't quite satisfy my artistic agenda. So, I went a little bit left field and started to work with an animator who could project the fascial patterns I'd been looking at. We would see how these patterns were affected by people moving within them and how they informed the aesthetic of the movement that was revealed or concealed. It was not to demonstrate anything. Then it was a question of creating an aesthetic out of these elements. We would explore the scale and the speed of the animations. We would play with where they came from, the angles that they reached with the figures. And so we would still have the physical inquiry through the choreography, through the movement vocabulary, through the patterns of movement that we were practicing over time and through the tasks that were used in the creation. But the aesthetic would be about where these elements come together visually as we find them.

TK: Just so lovely, this idea of taking something that is often presented in such a dry and physiological way for an audience who might not connect with that information on an intellectual level. You're finding a way to present it as a thing of wonder for a visceral encounter, an artistic encounter.

RM: Yes, that was the hope. I had to let go of that idea of trying to educate in an artwork. I'm not trying to educate people so that they go, "Ah, so that's what fascia is and that is how it connects everything through the body." But it was one of the elements that informed everything.

What does art do to us? It takes us away from thought in a way; thought might come and go, and art might have a relationship to it, but somehow, we are reacting to art on many, many more levels than just thought. There's a feeling, a responsiveness.

TK: It plants seeds of interest.

RM: Yes. And there could be dialogue around it with interviews or activities related to the performance. So, okay, you've got to do a magazine article, and we could talk about some of the discussions, and people might look into these things, but it's not an intellectual performance in that respect.

TK: I think a lot about how dancers encounter bodywork, movement forms, and Rolfing SI, and I find it a really exciting way in to learning more. I want to encourage more Rolfers to encounter more dance, because even if it's not intended, as you say, to be an educational experience, it is still a very related path of inquiry and response. So with that in mind, do you have any recommendations for Rolfers who want to know more? And how can our Rolfing SI audience encounter more of your work?

RM: Well, there's nothing live at the moment. It is an ongoing question as to when live performances will be happening again. We have made sense as a sustainable business chiefly by earning what we can earn through international touring. And at the moment, both with Brexit and the pandemic, it's all been taken away. I don't know when that will be viable again. We are trying to book a tour through the venues that we had previously booked during the last eighteen months that we missed. But the question of when we can go into France, Germany, Hong Kong, Singapore, Australia, Italy, Spain, Canada, and the United States? It's like, well, we don't know about this year, maybe autumn 2022. And before you know it, that's another eighteen months, and that's three years of waiting. So we are not on the road. But having said that, there are things on the Russell Maliphant Dance Company digital archive that is accessible on YouTube or our website. And Marquee TV has taken on *Silent Lines*, so that's accessible too.

TK: Do you have any last things that you want to say? I think we've covered a lot of ground!

RM: As we were talking, I was thinking that I want to see what Jeffrey Maitland is doing. I hadn't thought of Jeff Maitland for a while, but what you were saying reminded me. When I was doing my Rolfing Basic Training, we didn't have Instagram, Twitter, and Facebook, and those ways we now have to connect and keep abreast of what people are looking into. It was books and articles. So I'll go and have a look at

Spiraldynamik®, Shonach Mirk Robles, and Jeffrey Maitland. Now a question for you! How are you navigating choreography and Rolfing SI?

TK: I'm newer to Rolfing SI and newer to choreography. I trained mostly in contemporary dance, experimental dance theater, and I've been performing for about a dozen years. And I go through periods where some weeks I'm mostly seeing clients, and in the studio maybe only ten hours a week, then other weeks, of course, where I'm touring or performing with different projects. I freelance now and then. I'm also pursuing a Masters of Fine Arts at a full-time program at the University of Maryland in College Park. So in some ways, through the pandemic, I've been very lucky. Although my second year of graduate school shifted to all online and Zoom, 'living-room dance' and composition classes, working out of a basement studio. That was not ideal, but at the same time, I have a teaching fellowship so at least I am employed and have had some consistency and steadiness to my art practice during the last fifteen months, which has been really refreshing. We are supposed to be starting again in-person shortly. We'll see how this all goes.

RM: If you've had choreographic tasks on Zoom that you've had to do at home, does that mean you get very good at working within a space two-meters square?

TK: Yes, I've had to. And teaching contemporary dance within that little box of space, because we were told never to assume that our students had more than a yoga mat amount of space. Those students who had access to studio space sometimes had a whole dance studio to themselves, while other students were in their living room with five young siblings running around. We just had to adapt quite a bit. And the way that we trained and considered taking and teaching classes shifted and adapted. But I'm looking forward to feeling safe enough in a studio to be able to really fly across the room again. Feeling the wind across the skin is one of the reasons I dance. That doesn't happen at home on Zoom so much.

RM: Absolutely. I have a studio. I have a stage area that is twelve meters square, and I could be in there teaching when I'm teaching online, but with the odd exception the majority of everyone else is in the amount of space that we are in now. As you say, it doesn't have that joy of the air on the skin as you traverse space and momentum.

I want to encourage more Rolfers to encounter more dance, because even if it's not intended, as you say, to be an educational experience, it is still a very related path of inquiry and response.

That's been a loss. And although it is cool to make the adaptations to what you can do and how you can break things down in a small space, it is sad to not have the other part. I can't wait to get that back either.

TK: Exactly. We can lean into what we can do well, and then there are some things that have just almost been set aside for a little bit. But we'll get them back.

RM: Yes, let's hope.

Russell Maliphant trained at The Royal Ballet School and graduated into Sadler's Wells Royal Ballet before leaving to pursue a career in independent dance. Between 1991 to 1994, Maliphant studied at the then Rolf Institute® of Structural Integration (RISI), now the Dr. Ida Rolf Institute® (DIRI). Russell practiced as a Certified Rolfer until 2010. He formed Russell Maliphant Dance Company in 1996 and has received numerous awards. Russell Maliphant became an Associate Artist of Sadler's Wells in 2005. Also in 2005, Sylvie Guillem invited Maliphant to create an evening of work for them both, culminating in the duet Push*. In 2009 Maliphant created part one of* Afterlight *for* In the Spirit of Diaghilev*, Sadler's Wells' celebration of* Les Ballets Russes*. This received the Critics' Circle National Dance award for best modern choreography in 2010 and was also nominated for an Olivier award. Parts two and three of* Afterlight *followed and toured as a full evening together with part one. In 2011, Maliphant was awarded an honorary doctorate of arts from Plymouth University. In 2021 he earned a PhD from Canterbury Christ Church University, becoming the first choreographer to gain a PhD by publication as choreography. Maliphant's dance company website is https://www.russellmaliphantdancecompany.com*

Tristan Koepke is a dancer, educator, and Rolfer based in Minneapolis, Minnesota and College Park, Maryland. He has been a Rolfer since 2016, and now serves as Chair of DIRI's Committee for Diversity and Anti-Racism. He is currently the Associate Director of the Young Dancers Workshop at the Bates Dance Festival, is pursuing a Master's in Fine Arts in Dance at the University of Maryland, College Park, and is a co-instigator of Liberation Somatics. He is also the Diversity and Inclusion Editor of this Journal.

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Resources

You can view videos of Maliphant's choreography on The Russell Maliphant Dance Company website and YouTube channel: https://www.russellmaliphantdancecompany.com/works

https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCMcSIDtt1khomAROlNkoV_Q