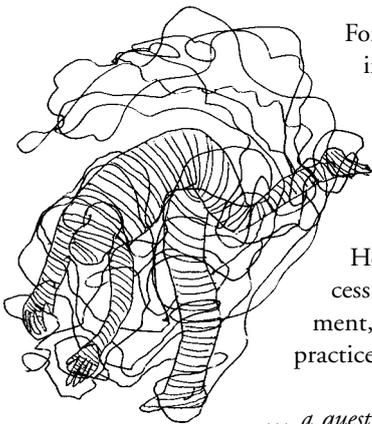


# Cycling Through Awareness Protocols

## Music Creation in heightened Body Perception

by Joe Tornabene, currently living in France

*Awareness protocols* nennt Joe Tornabene die gezielte Wahrnehmung von der Bewegung einzelner Teile des Körpers, die zu Erleichterung, zum Fließen und zur Schönheit von Bewegungen führen. Seine musikalische Praxis als Saxophonist bewegt ihn zur Zusammenarbeit mit verschiedenen Choreographen, Tänzern und Musikern in Workshops. In seiner improvisatorischen und pädagogischen Arbeit bringt er verschiedene Körperarbeits-Methoden zusammen, die er in diesem Text entfaltet. Prinzipien wie Aufmerksamkeit und Intention werden erläutert, eine Körperreise mithilfe der inneren Imaginierung von Landschaften wird beschrieben. Der Tänzer/Musiker wird zum Beobachter seiner selbst – Knochen, Muskeln, Organe, Atem bewegen sich und bilden ein Netz von beobachtbaren Beziehungen. Dabei werden diese auch symbolisch personalisiert: in Gruppen nehmen die Tänzer Personagen wie „der Schatten, der Gast, der Unterstützer“ ein und beobachten die Wirkung auf das gemeinsame und das persönliche Spiel. Natürlich behandelt Tornabene sein eigenes Instrument auf dieselbe Weise: musikalische Improvisation entsteht aus der Reise durch den eigenen Körper.



For over 30 years I have been developing a music creation practice based in a process I call *Cycling through awareness protocols*. I also apply this process in trainings for dance and theatre.

Here are some thoughts on the process and a brief history of my involvement, the influences, and ideas for daily practice.

... a question which emerged in dialogue with friend Valeska Schöne, an original member of the Amsterdam Working Group:

**Valeska:** *What is the beauty of the work in its potential?*

**Joe:** *How can one really write about in concrete ways or outcomes of a potential of a type of work which in essence proposes ways to get out of one's normal way of creating into uncharted territory? How can one talk about this potential in words other than simply 'potential' and by saying that the work could evolve into strikingly original pieces based in this open architecture for improvisation/interpretation within the body's ancient energy qualities and transformations? What do words like the Third Entity and Embodiment mean if one hasn't experienced them? Or, having experienced them, as is often the case with fine performers, without a deep awareness of the full potential. With awareness, can these experiential processes become fully guiding principles for creativity?*

*Deborah Hay, speaking of her dance "Lamb, Lamb, Lamb", wrote: (concerning a figure onstage throughout the performance for 41 performers): It was a woman whose movement direction was to witness and reflect, as simply as possible, whatever she saw in the large cast of dancers onstage. Few people mentioned the subtlety and innuendo evident in her dance. I find this fact to be a yardstick for the time it will take audience and performer to appreciate and explore shade above power from a brilliant sun.*

*So I say, I envision the potential shapin, as the work evolves, as individual performers, musical ensembles, dance companies, or theatre companies thoroughly experienced in awareness practice – fully able to access body energy qualities and transformations through experiential anatomy and body energy systems, deep relationship dynamics through embodiment explorations, witnessing, etc., and developing the ability to step outside one's normal way of creating, the Energetic Signature, into uncharted work.*

### Initial Influences

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*"This is the room where your music began" Tom Robbins*

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In 1983 I was composing and sound designing for the choreographer RoseAnne Spradlin in New York. One afternoon she began analyzing my music creation work from the perspective of the Body-Mind Centering® work which she was studying with the founder, Bonnie Cohen. RoseAnne would describe, for example, a particular musical texture I had created as coming from my organs or glands, or that it was bone-like, etc. – I was definitely intrigued. We then began actual body-level explorations in her apartment on 23<sup>rd</sup> street.

**Exploration:** Begin with a simple gesture – the raising of the right arm and the gentle moving of the arm in space.

1. Initiate the same gesture and movement with awareness of the bones in the upper and lower arm as well as the 27 bones in the hand. Become aware of them moving inside the flesh, feeling weight, structure, form, etc. Spend some minutes exploring. Then rest the arm.
2. Initiate the same right arm gesture and movement from the awareness of the muscles, lifting and moving the arm in space. Luxuriate in the muscle quality of the movement. Then rest the arm. What has transformed in the sensation?
3. Now lift and gently move the arm in space from the awareness of your right lung. How does this organ transform the energy quality of bone and muscle?

During this period, I was also working with Frances Kimmel who, beside her BMC studies, had recently completed her Laban Movement Analysis Certificate at the Laban Center in New York, so I was exposed to Rudolf Laban's Space Harmony and Effort theories.

Working with oppositions: they open tensile dynamics energetically – the "pull" in contrary directions – I feel more dynamic, and this engages my full being at deeper levels.

Over the years in my teaching and exploring, I have used a chart of Laban's Effort Qualities (which are divided into Flow, Weight, Time & Space) set out in oppositions. For example in Flow – Streaming out/Holding back; or in Time – Urgent/Expanding Time. It is not only this "pull" of the oppositions but the *quality* that is experienced between the two opposites which attracts me.

During this period, Laban and BMC became two streams of ideas which began to enter my way of sensing sound and music creation.

Through the 1980's, my journey inward was being influenced as well, on a very personal level, by exploratory forms such as Authentic Movement, applied adaptations of phenomenology through readings of Thomas Clifton's *Music as Heard* and Merleau-Ponty's *Phenomenology of Perception*, and biofeedback trainings. The writings of John Cage, Eugenio Barba, Ruth Zaporah, Deborah Hay, Jerzy Grotowski and David Bohm are also contributing to the forming process.

Thomas Clifton was my first introduction to Phenomenology. I really began to understand something which had been in front of me for years working with dancers: that our experience of music and sound is profoundly influenced by the fact that we are beings who move – we are movement on countless interconnecting levels. I created music in the dance studio experiencing Clifton's vocabulary – movement towards and away from, far/near, overlapping/expanding, acceleration/deceleration, interruption, insertions, extensions, etc. These perceptual links between

our experiential understanding of movement and our ability to unfold meaning in and develop relationships to music and sound were driving me.

Another crucial phenomenal discovery for me in the 1980's was the experience of the Third Entity which arises and is nurtured within relationship. My first clear experience of it in performance was in 1981 at the American Dance Festival where I attended a performance of the *Merce Cunningham Dance Company* with John Cage and his colleagues in the orchestral pit. In this première performance, the dancers heard Cage's music for the first time (score and choreography were created separately – the way in which Cage and Cunningham always worked together). The score was not composed to support the dance, and the dance was not choreographed to the music, but they were to occupy the same time and space during performance. Both, choreographer and composer, gave up the traditional relationship to attain something larger. I was completely astonished with what was happening on stage. I sensed this third energetic element arising between the dance and music which was immensely intriguing and immensely beautiful and which would become a very important part of my personal artistic vision. This Third Entity had a true independence. How to nurture this? How to develop training processes which would allow this to emerge?

In 1993 I organized a seven country teaching tour of Europe, bringing the personal explorations out into the public workshop dynamic. And longer-term faculty<sup>1</sup> positions became laboratories for the development of these processes.

## Holidays

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### Feb.19,1996 Amsterdam: Bone exploration

*– a thing of fine porcelain – internally...inside the middle of flesh – attracted towards the light, heavy today. How effects Space? Time? Weight?*

*I could 'see' and 'hear' with the bones.*

*3 dimensional surfaces. Energy travels around fingers, up hand, up arm, through all the bones...*

*Walked backwards with spine and ribs 'seeing' the way – lost idea of 'front' & 'back'.*

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The experiential anatomy explorations (initially from the Body-Mind Centering® work) began to profoundly influence the process in the 1990's. For nearly two years I ran a weekly exploration in Amsterdam (the Amsterdam Working Group) which explored the phase of the process I call Experiential Listening. These meetings were perceptual investigations examining the influences that the different energy qualities of the body systems could have upon our relationships to musical works. They were like warm holidays.

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<sup>1</sup> Department of Dance & Choreography, Virginia Commonwealth University, Richmond, VA, USA – 5 years; The International Theatre School of Holland, Amsterdam – School for New Dance Development – 1 Year; Advanced School of Dramatic Arts, APHX, Athens Greece – 5 Years

We worked with a very simple design. A piece of recorded music was played, and participants grabbed personal relationship dynamics from the piece – tonal qualities, rhythmic and harmonic aspects, phenomenological aspects such as fore, mid and background dynamics, and emotional images, etc.

Then, for over an hour, we would experience a body system, say the bone system, through touch, movement, images, the imagination to bring into awareness the qualities of this system on a personal level. Movement, for example from these body systems, causes the experience of how the body systems can lead us to access often radically different energy qualities, sensations of Weight, Time, Flow and Space.

The recorded piece of music that had been played before the bone exploration would then be reintroduced, and we would process the subtle, large, and often beautiful changes perceived in the piece. The body system, in this case the bones, had elicited quality changes in the way in which we perceived. We had entered a perceptual state initiated through that body system. Form, integration, dissonance, time, movement qualities, silences, etc. would take on wholly new dimensions. The music became something that had been lived through more completely.<sup>2</sup>

### imagine

The development of imagination in the workshops and in private practice is spirited, fluid, alive. What role does imagination play here? – It is an expansive experiential source for energy qualities and their transformations directly applied to the creation process.

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*“When you do something, if you fix your mind on the activity with some confidence, the quality of your state of mind is the activity itself.”* Shunryu Suzuki

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One of the imagination-based processes is ‘Landscapes’ – the visualization of imaginative landscapes which evoke and reveal quality, emotional and psychological states. These internally imagined atmospheres can dynamically effect improvisational or interpretive performance work in real-time because we are there, engaging in this sense of mystery and awe, becoming a source. ‘Landscapes’ contain micro climates, light qualities (such as radiance, temperature, splendor, shadow, etc.), spatial and sound resonance dynamics, memories and narrative. If worked with in the imagination with well-sustained attention and focus, they can become a space entered – a space alive in the imagination, a larger state of being.

Balancing the imagination-based processes in the act of cycling through awareness protocols demands vigilance towards inter-

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<sup>2</sup>Discussions of the investigations of the Amsterdam Working Group were published in the international journal *Contact Quarterly*, vol. 22 #2, USA, Summer/Fall 1997 in English (French translation, *Nouvelles de Danse*, Belgium, vol. 48/49 Automne/Hiver, November 2001; Greek translation, *Horos (Xopos)*, vol. 24, Athens, Greece, Oct. Nov. Dec. 1996).

nal patterns and qualities of energy and their transformations in time, and the complex external performance situation. This external situation includes attention to ones’ sound in space, relationships with other performers and spectators, theatrical values, etc. The balance arrives through being fully open to the internal and at the same time maintaining a strong external orientation.

Attention and Intention: The Imagination process is also driven by Intention – the energy gathering dynamic in consciousness which initiates the moment-to-moment cycle of movements and states. Attention places the Intention, and awareness is tuned and directed through this Attention/Intention relationship. Intention readies all of the complexities of the body (nervous system, muscles, blood flow, etc.) and Attention focuses it to the intended goal. If I intend to pick up an imaginary tea cup on stage, for example, my body becomes decided and fully readied to reach and lift the weighted, shaped object, while I then give Attention to the imagined cup, finishing the mimed action in space.

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*“Imagination is not a... superadded power of consciousness, it is the whole of consciousness as it realizes its freedom.”*  
Jean-Paul Sartre

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### The ‘observer’ in us

The *witness* plays an important role in this process. Merleau-Ponty describes the witness as *the nobody who sees*. The witness is the part of consciousness which objectively watches and tracks with a ‘watchfulness’ or ‘universal attention’ towards all of the performance parameters. Through a non-judgemental detachment (ideally) it is in ‘dialogue’ with the body system or energy movement and the energy quality’s forming potential. The ‘observer’ in us becomes an objective ‘audience’ for our real-time creation work.

### To embody

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*“Embodiment gives us a lot of awareness, attention and perceptual tasks to engage.”* Ruth Zaporah

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I have never been able to find a fully satisfactory definition of ‘embodiment’, and it always proves difficult for translators. The knowledge is experiential and thus challenging to define. However, I do try a definition in the context of my work, which is that the performer brings into themselves the energy qualities of the person or entity which is to be embodied. They become those qualities.

The Inter-Psychic Characters: In 1998, at *The Advanced School of Dramatic Arts, APHX*, Athens, Greece, I began developing an embodiment practice with my acting students which I call the inter-psycho characters. The training and subsequent process is focused towards the embodiment of energy quality and its transition to the stage. Over the years it has had a profound influence on my music creation process. The three principal inter-psycho characters are the Shadow, the Guest and the Bystander. The Main Character is the scripted stage character or its equivalent.

The first function of these explorations is to find the deeper physical/psychic core of the Main Character. It is a decoding of the invisible – the unconscious comes into view.

Briefly: The Shadow embodies, or brings into him or herself, the energy quality of the Main Character. The Shadow does not mime or mirror. It has its own time and space. The Shadow is at first the student of the 'master teacher', the Main Character, but eventually becomes the teacher. The Shadow is never playing to the audience. It becomes an intuitive aspect of the Main Character. The Shadow can express aspects which the Main Character desires to express but is unable to in the limitations of the role and complexity of the situation. The Shadow often brings out into space 'hidden' emotional and psychological aspects of the Main Character – thus becoming a subtext generator.

The Guest is the embodiment of the resultant energy quality sensed between the Shadow and Main Character – a mezzo, intermediary quality in between – combining the energy qualities of both characters. A study in the Third Entity.

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*"One does not work on the body or the voice, one works on energy."* Eugenio Barba

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The Bystander – creates a dynamic outside of the energy quality grid created by the other characters. It is outside of the action looking in – but strongly influences the inner action through its presence. It changes the weight value and tensile qualities of the stage space.

### The Shadow in Crete

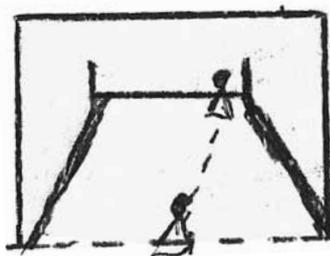
In Crete (24-25 October, 2015) I was co-teaching with Thalia Ditzia. We had 16 participants from various backgrounds, dance, theatre, professional, amateur, in a beautiful studio used primarily for tango classes.

The two-day workshop, 10 intensive hours, was about building an awareness sensibility, playing with attention and perception through perceptual aspects of touch, space, movement, voice, and about developing deepening partnering relationships. It was very important for them to develop a strong relationship with one partner so that the second day's work with the Shadow could be entered with open trust and freedom.

Merleau-Ponty wrote that *"...the first operation of attention is to create a field, either perceptual or mental which can be 'surveyed'."*

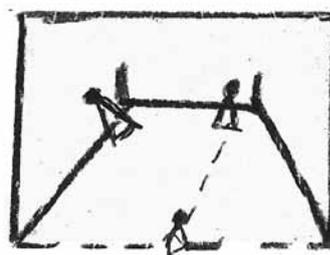
Literally, that's exactly what we did the first day with 'Landscapes'. I presented two possibilities for them to imagine.

Marianthi chooses Landscape I: It is night, there is a rectangular field of grass and at the far edge, at a distance, the beginning of a forest. At the threshold of the line of dark trees, is a single lit candle.



We ask Marianthi to perform her character, which is located in Landscape I. She begins upstage left and gently moves downstage to downstage center. She mimes a relationship with the candle. It is a simple, exquisite three or four minutes. We then ask Marianthi to describe her character's action. She mentions emotional states such as fear and loneliness and the comfort the candle gave her.

Marianthi has partnered with Anna for nearly two days now. They have grown together through the sensing work and are now ready to explore the Shadow.



We then ask Anna to Shadow Marianthi's character. Marianthi re-enters her starting position and Anna moves to an upstage right corner position motionless facing the wall. Marianthi begins her downstage movement and Anna remains completely alive yet motionless in her position. It is breathtaking, and I simply nod my head in recognition.

Anna's Shadow creates a new meaning spatially and energetically, a completely new feeling state – a new dynamic in Time. Something seemingly so simple has immediately and recognizably brought forth a precise quality which resonates in a thoroughly poetic way, and everyone there senses this.

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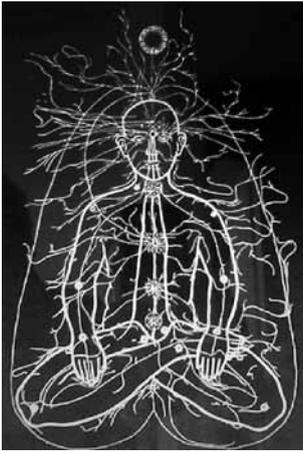
Yorgos is then asked to bring in the Guest. He is to embody both the energy quality of Marianthi and Anna's Shadow – to create the resultant energy quality between the two of them. He crosses Marianthi's path with a slight upstage arch as she moves downstage, and the appropriateness of this movement and his energy quality is immediately evident.

We have peopled the stage.

We have peopled the stage.

As I walk with Thalia after the workshop, I consider what has happened as something of beauty in the art of performance – but what actually happened?

In less than 10 hours, performers of various levels and backgrounds were able to perform something richly poetic without rehearsal or conscious planning. They amplified their attention through various awareness protocols and peopled the stage.



### *Vowel Man's Geography*

I have taught sound therapy workshops at Jenny Colebourne's Ilium Center in Athens, Greece for over 12 years. This work is based in techniques for placing the voice (primarily vowel harmonics) into the chakra centers to balance the energetic aspects of the body. This work has deeply influenced my music creation work through widening my relationship with the body's energy center geography.

Each of the seven major energy centers or chakras has its own atmosphere and quality, rich in archetypes and body spatial sensation. Each center is also a radiant synergetic aspect of the entire body and spirit. They are dynamic perceptual sources.

### **Personal Order**

Awareness protocols address our Energetic Signature – our personal order and quality, the recognizable way in which we are in the world – influenced by which body systems we naturally and historically express in; influenced by our culture and environmental history – and as artists this manifests in various 'styles' and 'patterns' which attract us and which we duplicate. Accessing differing energy qualities to our Energetic Signature has the potential of expanding our expressive range and evolving and transforming the way in which we are in the world.

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As Deborah Hay famously put it: *"My perception is my creativity"*

### **Current Practice**

As a baritone saxophonist, all of my daily practice (all technical work as well as open explorations) is processed in some form through an energetic modality. These includes the experiential anatomy work, chakra work, and embodiment explorations.

Imagine, in exploration, working with a single pitch, multiphonic color, chord, etc., ( a sound element with a distinct and independent existence) and to cycle through awareness of the different body systems, different energy centers, imaginative processes, oppositions....and simultaneously witnessing the subtle transformations of the sound element.

I take a multiphonic color on the baritone saxophone, sustain it through circular breathing, and enter the cycle.

I begin with placing my awareness into the lungs. I begin to feel a warm expansion, a transformation of my sense of Time, and Weight – a type of enlarging out into the surrounding space. The sound element, the mulitphonic, has subtly expanded in its midd-

le harmonic, changing the color and density. In my imagination process, I introduce a light quality, Reflection, and stay with this quality for some moments and witness any adjustments in the sound quality. I introduce an awareness of my third chakra, so that the focus is three-dimensionally placed into my solar plexus, and again witness transformation. The body system is then gently shifted to my lymph system and the multiphonic takes on a much more thoroughly edged and focused nature. I shift the light quality to Brilliance and the geographic location of an energy center to my fourth chakra area. The sound element has again subtly recolored and I witness the transformation. I then bring in an opposition – cool fields receding/hot fields advancing – and witness any sensual change in the character of the multiphonic.

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*"Sometimes the body leads the imagination, sometimes the imagination leads the body."* Evan Parker

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### **Postscript**

Karlheinz Stockhausen experimented in the 1960's with what he called *Intuitive Music*, his construct of music creation in real-time. In his view, these were not satisfactory experiments. He said *"it needs a different type of musician"* and *"intuitive music should have a chance.... How to prepare musicians for intuitive music creation? Trust ourselves... we are instruments ourselves."*

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**Joe Tornabene:** Baritone saxophonist, sound artist, stage and film actor, Joe Tornabene has been performing, composing, sound designing and exploring performance practice for music, dance and theatre for over 43 years. Joe has taught experiential workshops and long-term courses concerned with the relationships of perception, embodiment, movement, music, sound, and improvisation in major dance, theatre and music academies in 10 countries. He has begun writing a book documenting his teaching and performance practice. Joe Tornabene currently lives in France.  
<http://joetmusic.wix.com/joe-tornabene>