

Letter from the Editor

By Cara Hagan

When I set out to write my book, *Screendance from Film to Festival: Celebration and Curatorial Practice* (McFarland, 2022), my goal was to share the particular work we do as screendance festival directors, programmers, and curators from a personal perspective. I wanted to share my journey to discovering my interests and concerns in the realm of the festival, and how, over the course of a little more than a decade, I worked to address them. In preparation for that work, not only did I mine the archival material of Movies by Movers, the festival I started as a solo director/curator back in 2010,¹ I interviewed many other people in the screendance festival community in hopes of illuminating the connections and lineages between various festivals and the people that run them. I also hoped to situate screendance festivals on the continuum of screendance history and cinema history more broadly, demonstrating their importance to the cinematic ecosystem. To an extent, I did that. However, I realized that telling the story of the entire circuit, much less a few festivals, would be bigger work than I could take on myself. Upon publishing the book, I told myself that I needed to return to the subject of screendance festivals, but next time, alongside many voices.

Overall, there has been little written about the inner workings of screendance festivals, their histories, and the shape of their activities from an infrastructural perspective, in comparison to writings about the films and artists they support. One could argue that this is true of other artistic genres, where the various forms of scaffolding that support the art often get left out of conversations where the artists and products themselves take precedence. Artists and artistic products are important, of course, but it bears mentioning that the labor and the resultant platforms that provide visibility, community, learning, and opportunity, are intertwined; they do not exist without each other. And while screendance festivals are not the only places where dance films may be screened, they have historically acted as sites where the form is defined and reified such that over time, people have come to have an understanding of the genre as one worthy of recognition.

In convening this special issue of the International Journal of Screendance, festival histories, descriptions of specific programs and special curatorial endeavors, and the stories of what inspired members of the screendance community to start or become involved with festivals, mingle. They help to paint a nuanced picture of the screendance festival landscape. Pivotal moments, such as the shift from analog to digital media, COVID-19, and the inception, growth, and termination of festivals over their lifespans offer insight into how people do the work and what effect their efforts have made on the field. Many of the essays possess a reflective tone indicative of the personal nature of starting or maintaining a screendance festival, often alone or with a small group of people. Those pieces that take a more objective route present important historical material that helps to enrich our understanding of screendance as a practice with a long and distinct history whose stories are still being excavated.

¹ Movies by Movers began as a graduate school practicum in 2010. It came under the auspices of the American Dance Festival in 2016, where Doug Rosenberg had been holding the Dancing for the Camera: International Festival of Film and Video Dance since 1996.



This collection is important in that *not* telling our stories, we risk losing them forever. This is poignantly demonstrated in several of the essays in this issue. My ultimate hope with this collection is that it inspires more people in the field to tell and preserve stories about screendance festivals and the crucial moments that inevitably change the trajectory of the art form. Screendance – its practitioners, its advocates, and its audiences – deserve access to screendance’s layered existence through its stories, and a chance to acknowledge their roles within those stories.