

<b>Institution:</b> University of Huddersfield		
<b>Unit of Assessment:</b> 33 Drama		
<b>Title of case study:</b> Transforming Practices in Arts, Heritage and Mental Health Fields Across the Globe through a New Theory of Embodied Knowledge		
<b>Period when the underpinning research was undertaken:</b> 2014 – 2020		
<b>Details of staff conducting the underpinning research from the submitting unit:</b>		
<b>Name(s):</b>	<b>Role(s) (e.g. job title):</b>	<b>Period(s) employed by submitting HEI:</b>
Dr Ben Spatz	Senior Lecturer	1 Jan 2014 – present
Nazlıhan Eda Erçin	Research Assistant	1 May 2017 – 31 Oct 2017
Agnieszka Mendel	Research Assistant	1 May 2017 – 31 Oct 2017
<b>Period when the claimed impact occurred:</b> January 2015 – December 2020		
<b>Is this case study continued from a case study submitted in 2014? No</b>		
<p><b>1. Summary of the impact</b></p> <p>Embodied knowledge and expertise are of growing importance in many contemporary artistic, cultural, and therapeutic practices. While academic fields like performance studies address such knowledge from a theoretical perspective, they have not historically offered practical tools with which practitioners can articulate and analyse their practices. Research led by Dr Ben Spatz at the University of Huddersfield has developed a comprehensive theoretical approach to embodied knowledge, along with a set of practical tools based on this. These concepts and tools are now used by teachers, artists, and other specialist practitioners in over 25 countries across five continents, in contexts and sectors ranging from arts and culture to martial arts and sports, health and well-being. The demonstrable impacts of this research include: enhancing music, dance, and theatre pedagogy and performance in the UK, USA, Canada, Europe and Singapore; enabling the creation and expansion of registered charity organizations in the UK and USA, which together engage over 1,400 people each year; improving heritage practice and museum pedagogy in Switzerland; and expanding the use of video in mental health staff support at an NHS Mental Health Trust in Northwest England.</p>		
<p><b>2. Underpinning research</b></p> <p>Since joining the University of Huddersfield in 2014, Spatz has generated a distinctive body of work in two related strands: first, a new theory of embodied knowledge; and then, building upon that, a set of rigorous audiovisual methods for analysing and sharing such knowledge. The idea of embodied knowledge is well-known in theatre, dance, and performance studies. However, Spatz's 2015 book <i>What a Body Can Do</i> [3.1] is the first to offer a rigorous and comprehensive theory of embodied knowledge that allows artists, teachers, and other embodied practitioners to describe and define their own specific contributions to knowledge. Synthesizing prior work in theatre and performance studies, dance studies, science studies, cognitive studies, and feminist theory, Spatz's theory of embodied technique enables practitioners to name and analyse what they do with greater accuracy and depth. <i>What a Body Can Do</i> [3.1] reworks prior theories of practical knowledge to draw a crucial distinction between historically and geographically specific practices and the transmissible knowledge that structures them: technique. This distinction is then explored through a series of case studies including modern postural yoga, twentieth century actor training, the everyday performance of gender, and practice-as-research in the university, providing readers with a conceptual toolkit. A series of eight peer-reviewed articles and five book chapters further advanced Spatz's concept of embodied research through additional engagements with actor training, musical theatre, choreography, philosophy, sexuality, the politics of identity. These were authored between 2014 and 2020 and are collected in Spatz's second monograph [3.2].</p> <p>Beginning in 2016 and crystallized during the AHRC-funded (£183,174 with Spatz as PI and research fellows Nazlıhan Eda Erçin and Agnieszka Mendel) Judaica Project, Spatz extended this new theoretical paradigm into the development of practical methods for conducting embodied research using audiovisual recording technologies. These methods can be compared with visual anthropology and video art as well as conventional performance documentation, but are innovative in their rigorous focus on the emergence of knowledge through the interaction of techniques and individuals in experimental embodied practice. Among the innovations proposed in the new research method are: the foregrounding of key embodied relations that structure most forms of</p>		

embodied practice but usually go unnamed; the integration of videography within, rather than external to, the time and space of practice; a structured approach to video editing that emphasizes the first-person authority of the practitioner; and a new form of video essay juxtaposing audiovisual and textual layers. The Judaica project resulted in an online catalogue of 308 selected and title video clips (2017) [3.3]; a series of peer-reviewed and artistically curated video essays, including “Diaspora (An Illuminated Video Essay)” (2018) [3.4]; and an article in a major journal describing the project’s methodology and objectives (2019) [3.5]. The complete research method is now available for wider use in the small, open access book *Making a Laboratory* (2020) [3.6]. Each of these outputs shares, with a different audience, new techniques for using video to reveal the complexity of emergent knowledge in embodied practice and research.

### 3. References to the research

Evidence of the quality of the research: All of the following, except for [3.3], have been rigorously peer-reviewed. [3.1] serves as a key reference point for further research beyond the original institution, as evidenced in recent monographs by Frank Camilleri, University of Malta (Methuen 2019), and D. Soyini Madison, Northwestern University (Routledge 2018). It was favourably reviewed in *The Drama Review* and *Australasian Drama Studies* (2016).

- [3.1] *What a Body Can Do: Technique as Knowledge, Practice as Research* (2015). Ben Spatz. Routledge (London and New York). <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315722344> [can be supplied on request]
- [3.2] *Blue Sky Body: Thresholds for Embodied Research* (2020). Ben Spatz. Routledge (London and New York). <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780429466489> [can be supplied on request]
- [3.3] The Songwork Catalogue (2017). Online video gallery by Nazlıhan Eda Erçin, Agnieszka Mendel and Ben Spatz. <http://urbanresearchtheater.com/songwork/>.
- [3.4] “Diaspora: An Illuminated Video Essay” (2018). Ben Spatz with Nazlıhan Eda Erçin, Agnieszka Mendel, and Elaine Spatz-Rabinowitz. *Global Performance Studies* 2.1: 30 minutes. <https://doi.org/10.33303/gpsv2n1a1>
- [3.5] “Molecular Identities: Digital Archives and Decolonial Judaism in a Laboratory of Song” (2019). Ben Spatz. *Performance Research* 24.2: “On Song.” <https://doi.org/10.1080/13528165.2019.1593724>
- [3.6] *Making a Laboratory: Dynamic Configurations with Transversal Video* (2020). Ben Spatz. Punctum Books (New York). <https://doi.org/10.21983/P3.0295.1.00>

### 4. Details of the impact

Performing artists, teachers, and other specialized practitioners routinely express an urgent need for better ways to name and share their embodied knowledge and expertise, including through digital media. Lacking models for how to articulate the knowledge content of what they do, practitioners often feel torn between the need to locate themselves within existing contexts of practice and the economic pressure to describe their work in reductively superlative terms (e.g., as absolutely unique or superior). Spatz’s research has responded to this need through the creation of a new theory of embodied knowledge and a set of new concrete methods, which have been shared through numerous public engagement activities since 2016. In 2017, the Judaica Project team led a series of events at more than 20 venues in the UK, USA, and Poland, reaching more than 600 people through performances, workshops, and talks. In 2019, the *Windows into Worlds* exhibition in Huddersfield welcomed more than 200 visitors to an audiovisual installation showcasing Spatz’s video work alongside that of theatre and dance companies in the UK, USA, Spain, Italy, Germany, and Poland. Spatz’s publications are also read and taught by professionals, leading to measurable impacts in diverse contexts. Through these pathways, Spatz’s work has impacted three international professional networks; numerous arts professionals in the fields of music, dance and theatre; programmes at 13 higher education institutions in the UK, USA, Canada, Ireland, Hong Kong, and Singapore; three charities in the UK and USA; two heritage organisations in Switzerland; and an NHS Mental Health Trust in Northwest England. The scale of the impacts detailed below is not only wide-ranging geographically, extending across five continents, but also demonstrates benefits occurring at both organisational levels across the arts, heritage and mental health fields, and individual changes adopted by practitioners and educators.

**Enhancing music, dance, and theatre practice, performance and pedagogy**

Spatz's research has impacted many individual performing arts practitioners working in various countries. One of the ways in which artists working outside academia encounter Spatz's work is through international practitioner networks. Since 2012, the International Interdisciplinary Artists Consortium based in New York City has led a programme of annual residencies and collaborative projects that directly reach more than 400 people each year. The lead Founder and Director of this organization explains how Spatz's research led him to propose a new collaborative track during its annual residency, also stating that '*my editorial eye has shifted*' following an encounter with Spatz's videographic research [5.1]. In 2017, when artists from Belgium, the Netherlands, and Brazil launched Cross Pollination as an 'an open and international network of theatre artists and researchers' supported by the renowned Odin Teatret in Denmark, they quoted two questions posed in *What a Body Can Do* [3.1] as key sources of inspiration for their new 'Parliament of Practices'. These quotes were then prominently displayed on the network's website [5.1]. Another example stems from 2019, when Spatz launched the *Windows into Worlds* project to share new video creation techniques with professional theatre and dance companies. This project now involves 12 participating companies based in the UK, USA, Poland, Germany, Spain, and Italy. As a result of the project, two of the participating companies have published video material online directly following the horizontally organized "Catalogue" format developed by Spatz [5.1].

The impact of Spatz's research through such networks has sometimes been profound. A London-based professional violinist, who works across commercial and experimental music (including with the London Contemporary Orchestra and with popular bands like Radiohead and Goldfrapp), performs internationally in 40–50 concerts per year, and has a catalogue of 30 published albums, writes: '*What a Body Can Do* [3.1] *has affected my practice more profoundly than any other text I've ever read.*' [Reading this book] '*has changed the way I understand the relationship between my body and my professional practice*' [5.2]. Additionally, this book is now the 'core text' of her teaching: '*As an educator, I have found that being able to offer this alternative definition of technique ... can have a profound effect on students*'. She has given copies to at least 12 people and writes: '*I present ideas from it to every student I have. I use it every day*' [5.2]. A US-based teacher of dance and somatic bodywork, who works with theatre directors, dancers, singers, writers, therapists, and other embodied practitioners around the world (including about 100 professional practitioners per year, who reach thousands through their own work in Europe, Asia, the Middle East, North America and Latin America) calls the same book [3.1] '*one of the key theoretical resources for my practice*', noting that the ideas in this book have '*changed the way I teach, offered new language to explain what I am offering, and helped me to expand the application of my own knowledge*' [5.3]. This individual's practice was transformed by a series of 2017 workshops Spatz led, which played '*an important role in helping me put into action a new approach to teaching online*' [5.3]. Before participating in these workshops, she says she would have approached video as a '*limiting factor... and not, as it became, an area of research*' [5.3].

A professional singer based in Poland, who previously worked for 15 years with one of the best-known theatre companies in that country, describes how participating in Spatz's *Judaica* project transformed her approach to musical performance and teaching: '*The way I have recorded my most recent album was ... different. I brought other kinds of questions into the studio. ... I no longer treat songs only as music, which should be beautiful and entertaining, but as meaningful actions, which can also make people uncomfortable*'. In December 2020, this singer released a new album, *Carmina Judaica*, thanking Spatz in the liner notes '*for the priceless perspective of diving into the inner worlds of individual songs thanks to appropriately posed research questions*' [5.4]. Another Polish voice and theatre artist, explains how Spatz's work led her to increase the use of video in the Brave Kids project, an annual festival which in 2018 involved 365 participating children from 21 countries and was presented in 13 Eastern European cities, culminating in a Warsaw performance for 1,400 spectators. As a result of Spatz's work, she '*began to use more of the video material ... to communicate with children and young people. ... [W]hile creating a manual for the artistic instructors (who came from Poland, Georgia, Romania, Estonia, Slovakia, Iran, Spain, Brazil), we added many videos from the workshops and rehearsals to share our embodied knowledge, instead of trying to describe it with words*' [5.1].



To achieve further reach, in 2017 Spatz launched the videographic *Journal of Embodied Research (JER)* for both academics and practitioners, which has been recognized in *Times Higher Education* as one of the 'only major exceptions' to a still-powerful resistance against videographic research [5.5]. Since 2018, *JER* has published 12 open-access video articles from contributors in Portugal, Switzerland, Denmark, Finland, Singapore, Australia, Turkey, and elsewhere, plus two video editorial essays. These videos have been viewed 12,215 times and downloaded 611 times, with the top article registering 1,762 views. They have directly impacted the contributing artists and been used by them as teaching tools. A Turkish contributor, based in Paris and presenting internationally, explains how an encounter with Spatz's work transformed her approach to video and her professional identity: '*After I saw your videos, I began to develop a new artistic language in video... Before encountering your work, I would not have called myself a video artist, but now I describe myself as an artist who works between theatre, performance, and video*' [5.6]. A contributor in Finland describes the inspiration arising from work on the journal: '*Based on my experience with Ben as editor, I have proposed video essays where I combine a compilation of artworks and an academic text for other journals as well. Moreover, I have experimented with using mixed-mode or semi-academic style text formats in artworks, too. So, quite an important inspiration!*' [5.1]. A contributor teaching at Lasalle College of Arts in Singapore attests to the value of Spatz's video techniques in the context of an MA Arts Pedagogy and Practice degree, where they '*opened up many conversations about collaboration and interdisciplinary interventions*', leading some participants to introduce elements to their own undergraduate students [5.1].

From 2018 to 2019, Spatz was Co-Investigator on an ESRC-funded (£99,936) 'Somatics Toolkit' project, decisively shaping the decision to use audio tracks rather than written texts as the primary means for sharing embodied knowledge in professional and educational contexts. The finished online Toolkit offers 26 'guided listening' audio tracks created in collaboration with 13 bodywork practitioners in the UK and USA, as well as the successful podcast *Remember Your Body!*, which had 7,294 downloads as of December 2020. A UK dance educator reflects on using the Toolkit with undergraduate students: '*The students were deeply engaged and said it was very helpful. I got a sense of how I can start to use the toolkit in a more methodical way next year... [A] very positive day from a teaching learning perspective*' [5.1]. Spatz's work has also impacted teaching and learning in Higher Education Institutions in the UK, USA, Canada, Ireland, Hong Kong, and Singapore. The monograph *What a Body Can Do* [3.1] has sold more than 1,000 copies and been assigned on courses at Royal Holloway and the University of Kent (UK); University of California Berkeley, Princeton University, Yale University, Northwestern University, University of Rochester, University of Vermont (USA); Simon Fraser University and University of Ottawa (Canada); NUI Galway (Ireland); Lingnan University (Hong Kong); and Lasalle College of Arts (Singapore) [5.7].

### **Enhancing professional practice in wellbeing, heritage, and clinical contexts**

While designed for performing arts contexts, Spatz's frameworks for articulating embodied knowledge have also enabled the growth of several charity and non-profit organizations devoted to the promotion of embodied practices. The organization Intercultural Roots serves more than 800 people each year in the UK and abroad, providing workshops and teacher training related to Tai Chi, Yoga, Pilates, and Dance. The organization's Founder and Executive Director writes that Spatz's book [3.1] '*offers a framework to explain and define what we are doing, as well as how to negotiate differences and connections between traditional, indigenous, and contemporary embodied practices*' and serves as a '*reference point*' for both '*thinking and teaching*' embodied arts [5.8]. Intercultural Roots quoted directly from Spatz's book [3.1] in its successful application to the UK Charity Commission in 2019: '*as part of making the case that such an organization is needed*'. This has since allowed it to raise more than £28,000 as a registered charity [5.8]. The same individual writes that, through Spatz's work: '*I have changed my approach to documentation... As a result, I have developed a more open-ended approach to documentation, which is now used across Intercultural Roots' projects*' [5.8]. A Co-Founder of Evexia Foundation, a registered health and wellbeing charity in London that works with about 180 people each year, writes that Spatz's work '*modified and developed our thinking and understanding of some of the tensions and fears faced by those who do not fit hetero and psycho normative roles within society*' [5.1]. The Co-Director of The Art Monastery, a registered non-profit arts organization in Vermont (USA) serving about 100 participants per year, explains how they '*reformulated our years of*

*embodied research into a new workshop curriculum through a collaborative process which referred frequently to the first and second chapters of Spatz's book' [5.1].*

Spatz's research has also impacted the work of heritage professionals, who have used Spatz's formulation of the difference between *technique* and *practice* to more precisely describe and teach the relationship between historical and contemporary practices. In one significant case, the Head of Scientific Research and Pedagogical Activities at the Castle of Morges in Switzerland, a Swiss heritage institution that serves more than 30,000 visitors each year, has described how Spatz's research [3.1] '*opened my eyes*' and became '*instrumental*' to his work on the promotion and pedagogy of historical European embodied practices such as martial arts. This individual is responsible for pedagogical workshops that reach approximately 1,000 children (and their parents) per year. In addition, through the Swiss Federation for Historical Martial Arts, he designs and leads training and certification programmes for teachers and practitioners of Historical European Martial Arts (HEMA), a growing sport with more than 600 practitioners across Switzerland. In both of these contexts, he writes, '*I use Spatz's theory of embodied technique to explain the differences between restoration and revival and between experience and experiment, as well as the limits of the written word in transmitting bodily knowledge and the challenges of reconstructing practice from historical documents*' [5.9]. The visual presentation that he uses to train both teachers at the Castle of Morges and HEMA instructors '*includes explicit references to Spatz's research and quotations from his book*' [5.9].

A further implementation of Spatz's research is in mental health contexts, where specific new video techniques developed by Spatz have been used to analyse embodied practice. The Team Manager of a Staff Wellbeing Service that works with approximately 5,000 staff in a large NHS Mental Health Trust in Northwest England wrote to Spatz: '*Using video with patients is already common in mental health, but your work is different because the staff can also be involved and their own embodied knowledge revealed. When I saw myself as a subject in the video, I realized how much this could enrich current practices in mental health and somatics... My use of video in teaching now is a direct result of my participation*' in the Windows into Worlds gallery exhibition organized by Spatz. '*Now I have introduced the use of video into an NHS proposal we are developing to help mental health staff deal with issues of low morale, sickness, and other problems. This will be based on what [Spatz] describes as "video labs"*' [5.10]. On the use of the camera as a tool, the same individual writes: '*It contributed to us feeling, as a community of embodied researchers, that we are all part of a larger global community that reaches outside the room through that kind of documentation which can be shared far and wide. It raised my consciousness, as if saying: Don't just be in this room, in this space, you can be in a much bigger space, feeling a part of a much bigger work*' [5.10].

These professional wellbeing, heritage, and clinical practices have benefited directly from Spatz's research, demonstrating its value beyond performing arts.

## 5. Sources to corroborate the impact

[5.1] Collection of emails and webpages attesting to a wide range of professional impact.

[5.2] Testimonial: Professional touring violinist (London).

[5.3] Testimonial: Professional teacher of dance and somatics (Pennsylvania, USA).

[5.4] Testimonial: Professional singer and theatre performer (Lublin, Poland), with 2020 album liner notes.

[5.5] Matthew Reisz, "Does a film count as research – and can a journal publish it?" *Times Higher Education*, 5 March 2017.

[5.6] Testimonial: Professional theatre, performance, and video artist (Paris).

[5.7] Collection of university syllabi showing inclusion of *What a Body Can Do* [3.1].

[5.8] Testimonial: Founder and Executive Director, Intercultural Roots for Public Health and Intercultural Roots for Traditional Embodied Arts (London).

[5.9] Testimonial: Head of Scientific Research and Pedagogical Activities, Castle of Morges, Switzerland; Chairman of the Swiss Federation for Historical European Martial Arts.

[5.10] Testimonial: Team Manager, Staff Wellbeing Services, NHS Trust (Halifax, UK).