

PROVOCATIONS: Learning Stimulus for Secondary School teachers

A major part of engaging with an archive reflexively has been about starting to unpick the provocations and debates the stories offer. In addition to being interested in exploring Morris and Country dancing forms and enriching those forms with contemporary dance vocabularies, the Mary Neal learning programme has aimed to explore such provocations through storytelling, dance and debate.

What follows could be fun, stimulating and inspiring, if worked through curriculum interests and needs, and through a range of art forms: poetry/ lyrics/ dance forms and dramatic improvisation.

Some interesting questions around the project that could be provocations for further work at a secondary school level:

Tradition and Modernity

- Authority and Ownership: how are England's indigenous song and dance traditions inherited and to whom do they now belong?
- What is tradition and what is the role of creativity in tradition?
- How does 'learning by heart' contribute to the passing on of cultural traditions?

Subjugated Histories

- What processes lead to some voices being silenced in the dominant narrative?
- What frames can be found for re-visiting a multi-focal view of history and how are conflicting histories reconciled?

Subjugated Knowledges

- The recovery of women's lost stories and the subjugation of women's ways of knowing, also children and the poor
- Children and young people's roles in the passing on of traditional material, its reinvention and dissemination.

Performance and reclaiming orate space

- Can English 'traditional' dance forms ever be recovered or have they mutated beyond recognition? How is this relevant to contemporary dance?
- What performative processes are involved in the creation of liminal spaces?
- How is knowledge transferred through oral and literary means?
- How do traditions of performance, ephemeral in essence, survive? How are they 'reinvented' with each performance?
- How can ritual effect a re-evaluation of the past and an opening up of new possible futures?

Englishness, Identity, and Class/ Citizenship

- How does the Neal/Sharp quarrel throw light on current debates about identity, 'Englishness' and class?
- How do traditional forms relate to questions of national identity and Englishness?
- Do the symbolic and social nature of rituals and ceremonies lead to social cohesion and cultural integration?

References

For a stimulating discussion on engaging in a dialogue with social, political and historical discourses with secondary students, refer to Kathleen Berry's book (2000) *The Dramatic Arts and Cultural Studies: Acting against the Grain*, Falmer Press: New York.

What other areas does this archive throw up for your class?
What are the characters and stories that inspire further creative exploration?